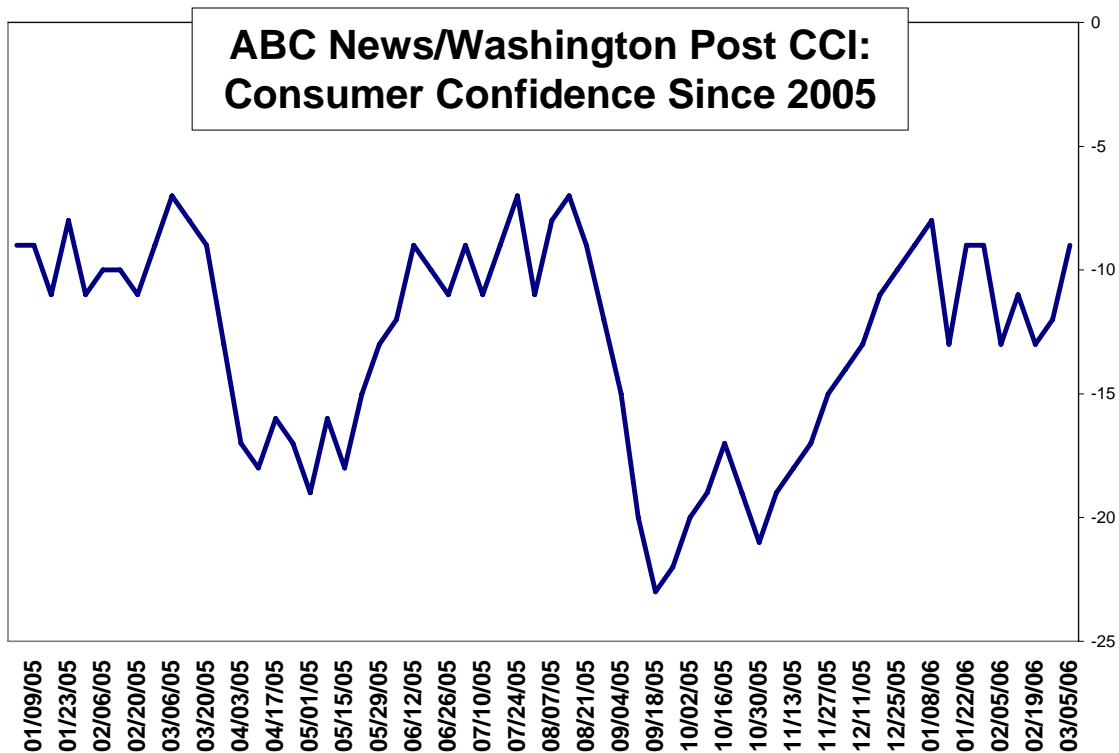


## **Confidence Edges Up, Matches 20-Year Average**

Consumer confidence ticked up this week, breaking out of a February freeze to match its long-term average.

The ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index stands at -9 on its scale of +100 to -100, up three points from last week after ranging from -11 to -13 for four consecutive weeks. But with gas prices up eight cents a gallon this week, to \$2.33, it bears watching.

In addition to equaling its average in weekly polls since 1985, the CCI about matches its average during the Bush administration, -10. In a separate ABC/Post poll this week, only 18 percent of Americans said their financial situation has improved under Bush; indeed the index is now 26 points lower than it was when he took office (when gas was \$1.47).

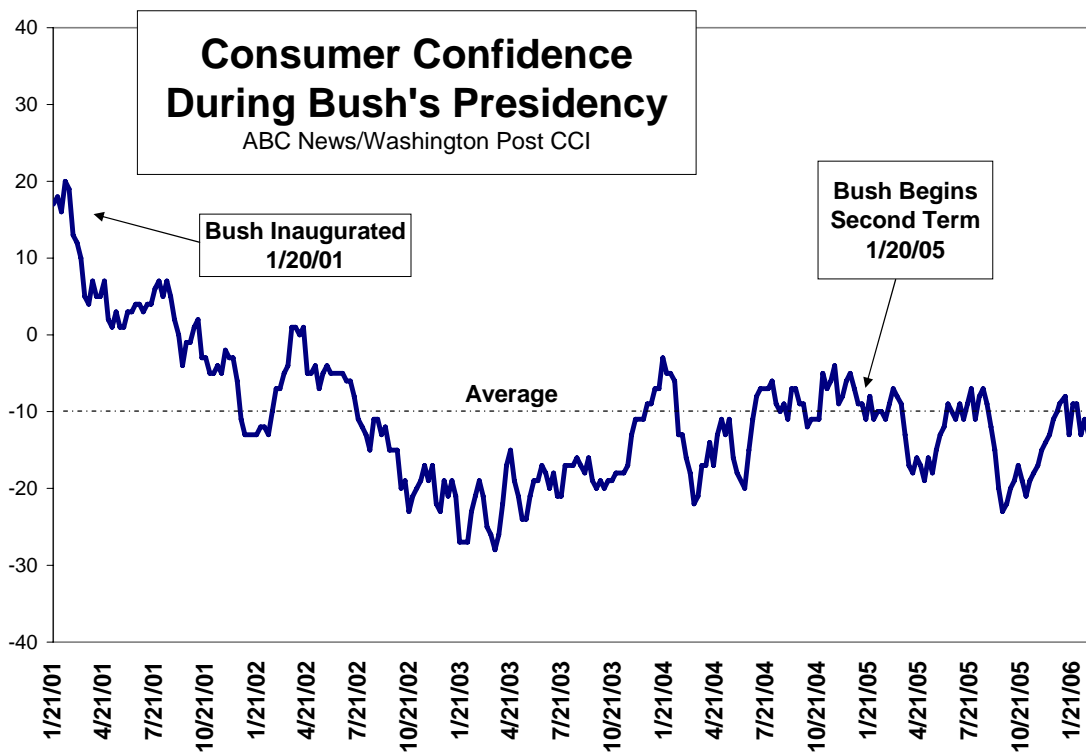


INDEX – The ABC/Post index is based on Americans' ratings of the current national economy, the buying climate and their personal finances. This week 39 percent rate the

economy positively and 38 percent call it a good time to buy things. As usual, more, 59 percent, say their personal finances are in good shape.

	ABC News/Washington Post CCI			
Positive ratings of:	This week	Last week	2005 avg.	20-yr.avg.
National economy	39%	39	37	40
Buying climate	38	36	36	38
Personal finances	59	57	58	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-9	-12	-13	-9

**TREND** – The CCI is back near its position at the start of the year and well up from its recent low, -23 when gas prices spiked after Hurricane Katrina last fall. It’s ranged from a high of +38 in January 2000 to a low of -50 in February 1992.



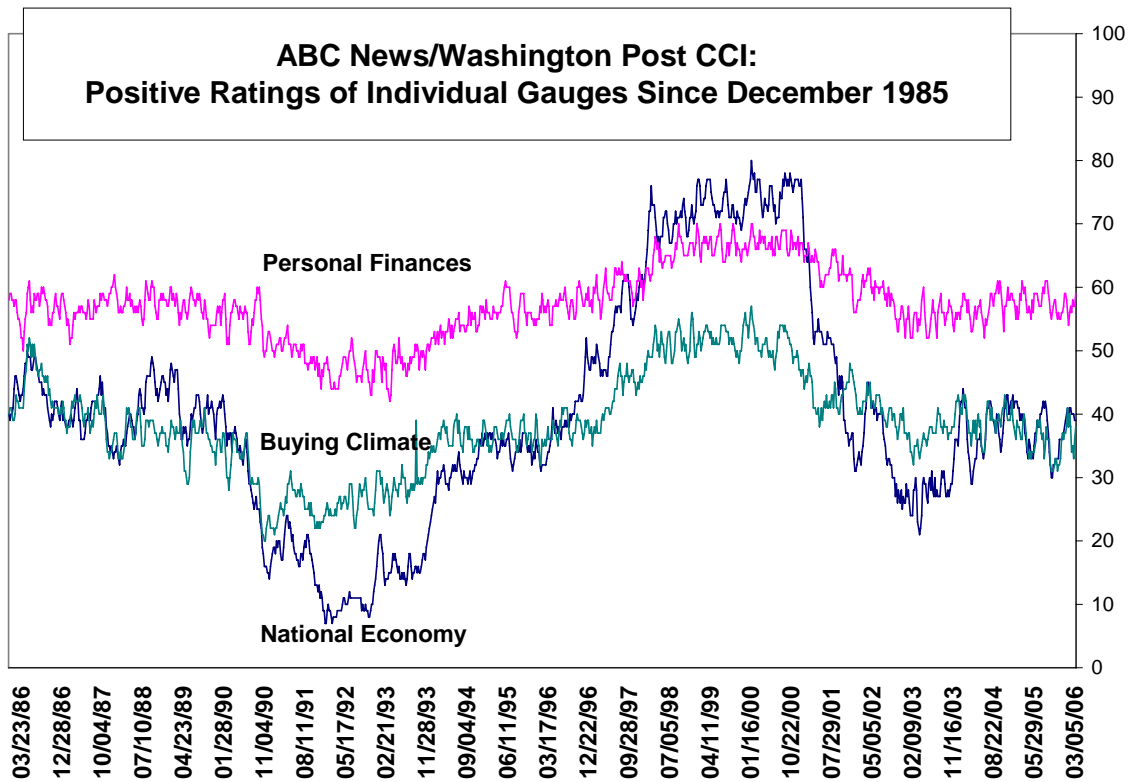
	ABC/Post CCI	
Today	-9	
Last week	-12	
Recent high	-8	Jan. 8, 2006
2005 high	-7	Aug. 14, July 24, March 6
2005 low	-23	Sept. 18
2005 average	-13	
2004 average	-11	
2003 average	-19	
2000 average	+29	Best full year
1992 average	-44	Worst full year
Jan. 16, 2000	+38	Record high

Feb. 9, 1992                      -50    Record low  
 Average since 12/85              -9

**GROUPS** – The index as usual is stronger among better-off groups. The index is +41 among higher-income Americans but -48 among those with the lowest incomes, +8 among college graduates while -41 among those who haven't finished high school, -3 among whites but -35 among blacks and +2 among men while -18 among women.

The CCI is higher among Republicans (+32) than among independents (-12) and Democrats (-29). Since 2001, it's been little changed among Republicans (+5), while losing 47 points among Democrats and 18 points among independents.

Regionally, at +3 the index is best in the West, compared with -13 in the Northeast, -12 in the South and -10 in the Midwest.



Here's a closer look at the three components of the ABC/Post CCI:

**NATIONAL ECONOMY** – Thirty-nine percent of Americans rate the economy as excellent or good, unchanged from last week. The highest was 80 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The lowest was seven percent in late 1991 and early 1992.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	39	5	34	61	38	23
Avg. since 12/85	40	3	37	60	40	20

PERSONAL FINANCES – Fifty-nine percent say their own finances are excellent or good; it was 57 percent last week. The best was 70 percent on Aug. 30, 1998, matched in January 2000. The worst was 42 percent on March 14, 1993.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. NET	Not good	Poor
This week	59	7	52	41	29	12
Avg. since 12/85	57	5	52	43	30	13

BUYING CLIMATE – Thirty-eight percent say it’s an excellent or good time to buy things; it was 36 percent last week. The best was 57 percent on Jan. 16, 2000. The worst was 20 percent in fall 1990.

	Pos. NET	Excel.	Good	Neg. net	Not good	Poor
This week	38	3	35	62	42	20
Avg. since 12/85	38	3	36	62	41	21

METHODOLOGY – Interviews for the ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index are reported in a four-week rolling average. This week’s results are based on telephone interviews among a random national sample of 1,000 adults in the four weeks ending March 5, 2006. The results have a three-point error margin. Field work by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

The index is derived by subtracting the negative response to each index question from the positive response to that question. The three resulting numbers are added and divided by three. The index can range from +100 (everyone positive on all three measures) to -100 (all negative on all three measures). The survey began in December 1985.

Analysis by Drew Allen.

ABC News polls can be found online at <http://abcnews.com/pollvault.html>.

Media contact: Cathie Levine, (212) 456-4934.

03/05/06	This Week	Last Week	4 Wks Ago	3 Mo. Ago	1 Yr. Ago	12 Mo High	12 Mo Low	12 Mo Avg
Group	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
GENERAL POPULATION:								
Overall Index	-9	-12	-13	-14	-7	-7	-23	-13
State of Economy	-22	-22	-20	-28	-20	-16	-40	-26
Personal Finances	18	14	12	12	20	22	8	15
Buying Climate	-24	-28	-32	-26	-22	-18	-38	-29
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	OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS							
Sex:								
Men	2	2	-6	-2	0	9	-16	-4
Women	-18	-26	-20	-23	-14	-14	-36	-22

Age:								
18 - 34	-8	-8	-9	-18	-4	-1	-28	-11
35 - 44	-5	-16	-9	-11	-10	5	-27	-11
45 - 54	-12	-15	-27	-8	-7	-5	-34	-17
55 - 64	-6	-6	-7	-10	-11	-1	-36	-15
65+	-15	-19	-14	-18	-8	-1	-32	-15
Income:								
Under \$15K	-48	-45	-43	-64	-46	-33	-75	-55
\$15K To \$24.9K	-37	-34	-47	-30	-30	-13	-65	-43
\$25K To \$39.9K	-17	-20	-28	-43	-21	-12	-44	-28
\$40K To \$49.9K	-14	-35	-24	-3	-15	26	-40	-10
Over \$50K	26	20	18	24	20	26	4	17
\$50K To \$74.9K	15	3	6	5	7	17	-14	3
\$75K To \$99.9K	26	20	21	18	20	37	-1	18
Over \$100K	41	49	31	50	38	50	18	35
Region:								
Northeast	-13	-18	-15	-19	-1	-1	-41	-18
Midwest	-10	-10	-22	-15	-4	-3	-27	-16
South	-12	-14	-13	-14	-15	3	-27	-12
West	3	-7	-4	-5	-3	7	-20	-8
Race:								
White	-3	-7	-6	-10	-3	-1	-18	-9
Black	-35	-34	-51	-40	-34	-25	-57	-44
Politics:								
Republican	32	28	29	34	34	36	9	25
Democrat	-29	-30	-32	-36	-29	-27	-46	-37
Independent	-12	-14	-17	-24	-15	-10	-31	-19
Education:								
< High School	-41	-48	-46	-63	-35	-24	-63	-42
High Sch. Grad.	-19	-20	-23	-21	-13	-12	-35	-23
College +	8	4	4	6	6	10	-9	2
Home:								
Own	0	-7	-8	-1	-2	4	-17	-5
Rent	-31	-29	-32	-43	-21	-20	-49	-34
Marital Status:								
Single	-12	-12	-17	-17	-15	-8	-31	-19
Married	1	-5	-3	-3	5	7	-14	-2
Sep/Wid/Div	-29	-33	-40	-36	-29	-22	-49	-35
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	3	-1	-6	-5	4	4	-13	-3
Part-Time	-10	-14	-12	-25	-26	-1	-35	-18
Not Employed	-26	-29	-24	-21	-15	-15	-43	-24

\*\*\*END\*\*\*