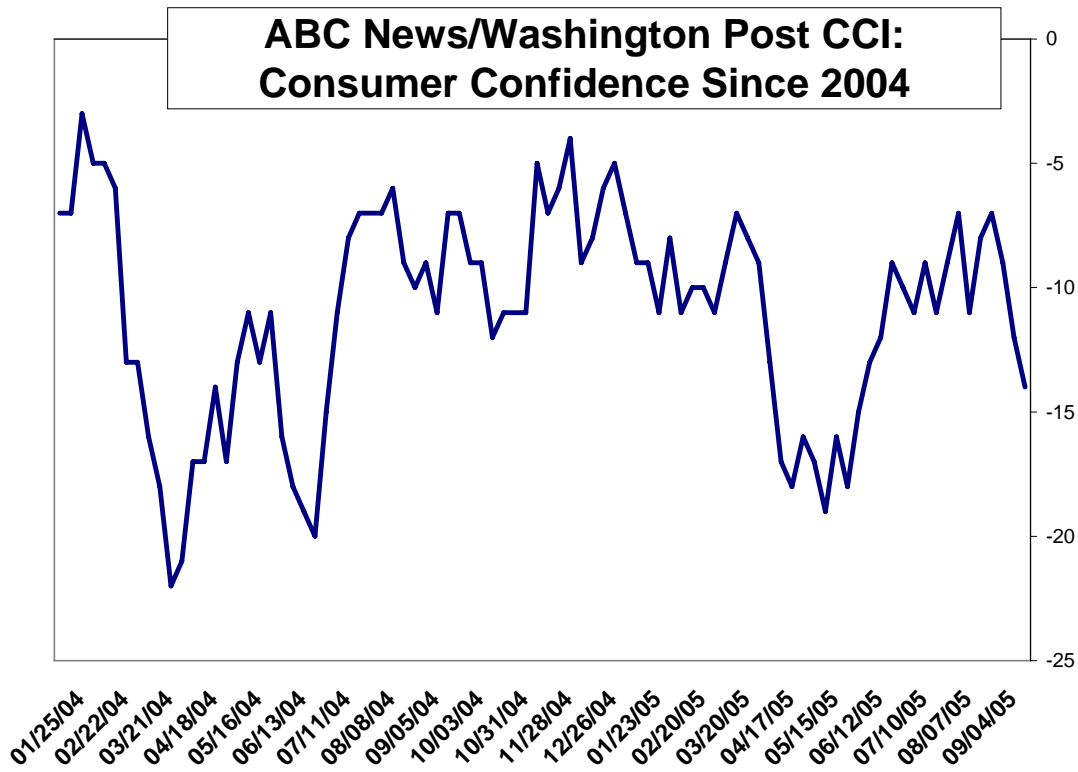


## **Confidence Continues Down; its Lowest Since Memorial Day**

Consumer confidence reached its lowest level since just before Memorial Day this week, led by declining ratings of the national economy and a worsening outlook in the South.

Hurricane Katrina may be playing a role, but the decline predates Katrina. The ABC News/Washington Post Consumer Comfort Index has lost seven points in the last three weeks, dropping from -7 to -14 on its scale of +100 to -100. The decline in the South, similarly, began before Katrina hit.

Gasoline prices, at a record \$3.07 today, are a major irritant. In a separate ABC/Post poll released Sunday, only 20 percent of Americans approved of the federal government's response to oil supply issues and rising gasoline prices in Katrina's wake. And 72 percent said they believe oil companies and gas dealers are taking advantage.



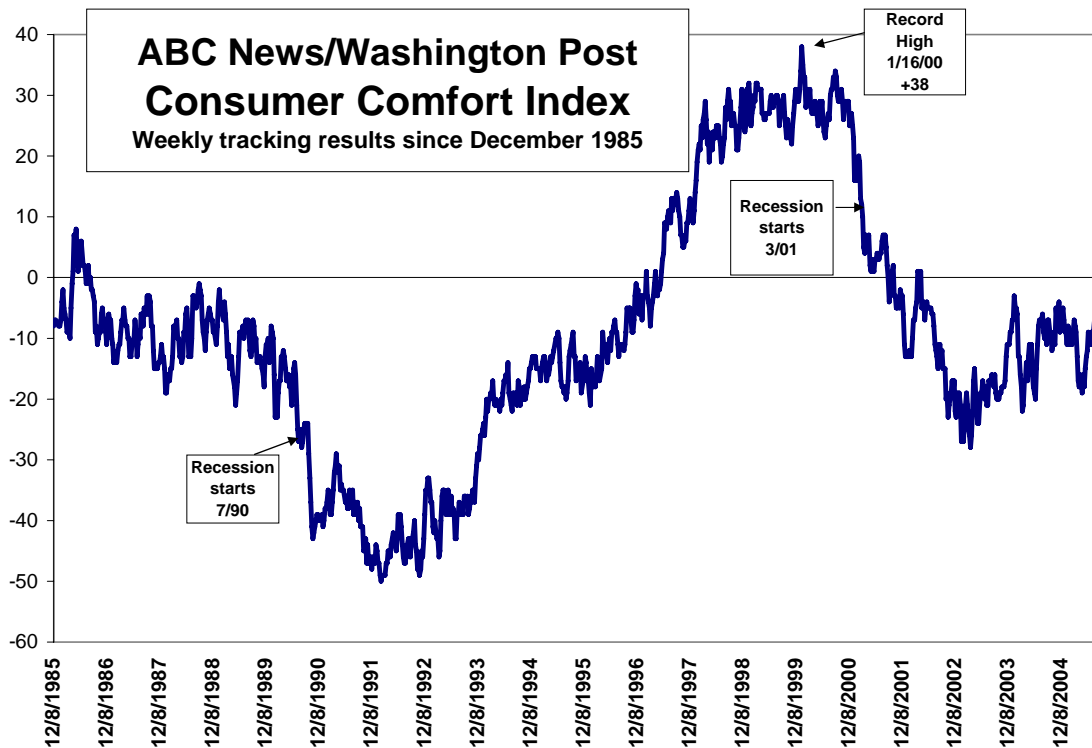
INDEX – The ABC/Post CCI is based on Americans' ratings of the national economy, the buying climate and their personal finances. This week 34 percent rate the economy positively, the fewest since May 15. That's not unexpected: In an Aug. 21 ABC News

poll, 81 percent expressed concern that rising gas prices would damage the broader economy.

In this week's CCI, 36 percent call it a good time to buy things, while more, 58 percent, say their own finances are good. These have been steadier than the national economy rating – both are at their 2005 averages, while national economy ratings are four points below the year's average. The overall index is its lowest since May 22.

	ABC News/Washington Post CCI			
Positive ratings of:	This week	Last week	2005 avg.	19-yr. avg.
National economy	34%	37	38	40
Buying climate	36	36	36	39
Personal finances	58	59	58	57
Consumer Comfort Index	-14	-12	-11	-9

TREND – At -14, the index is below its average of the year so far, -11, and its long-term average, -9 in polls since December 1985. The index reached an all-time high of +38 in January 2000, and an all-time low of -50 in February 1992. This year, it's been as high as -7 and as low as -19.

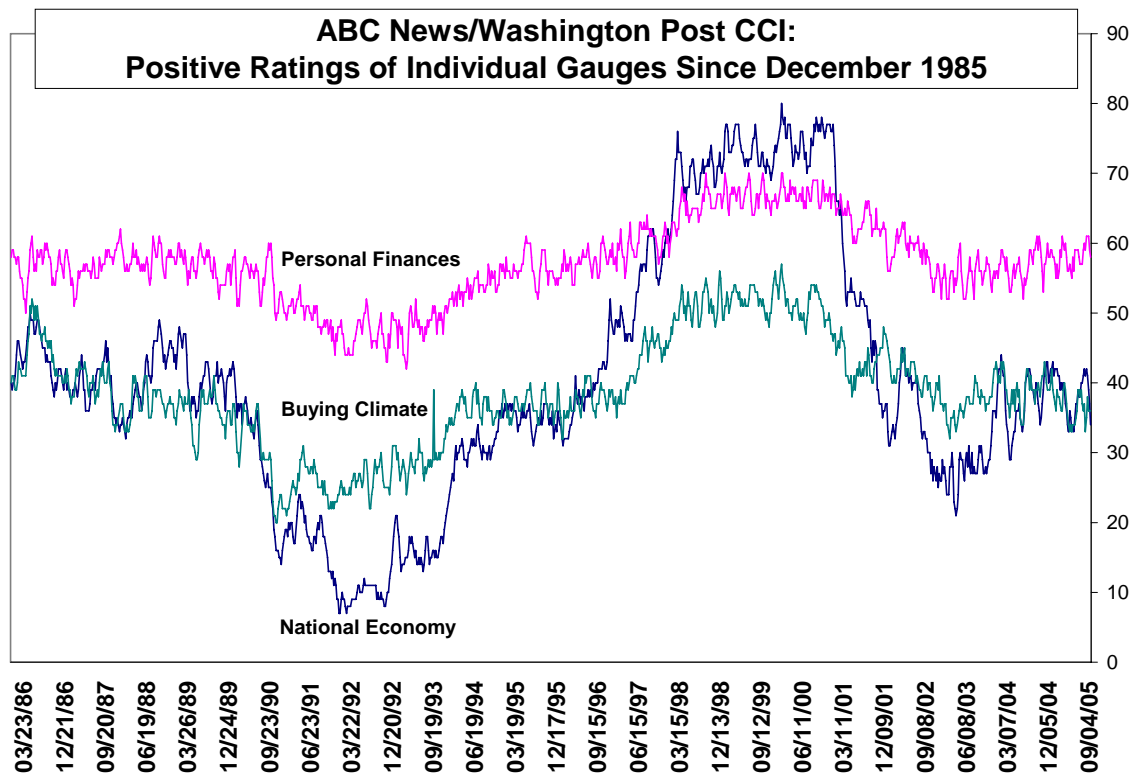


	ABC/Post CCI
Today	-14
Last week	-12
Three weeks ago	-7
2005 low	-19
	May 1

2005 high	-7	August 14, July 24, March 6
2005 average	-11	
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** – As usual, the CCI is higher overall in better-off groups. It's +35 among higher-income Americans while -54 among those with the lowest incomes, 0 among college graduates while -25 among those who haven't finished high school, -9 among whites but -38 among blacks and -7 among men while -21 among women.

As noted, over the past three weeks, the index has declined particularly in the South. Since August 14, the index in the South has gone from +2 to -13, while it's been more stable in other regions. This decline has continued in the aftermath of Katrina, but it started before the Hurricane. This week's data are the first to include post-Katrina interviews.



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

**NATIONAL ECONOMY** – Thirty-four percent of Americans rate the economy as excellent or good; it was 37 percent last week and, as noted, 41 percent three weeks ago.



GENERAL POPULATION:

Overall Index	-14	-12	-8	-12	-7	-4	-19	-10
State of Economy	-32	-26	-16	-26	-20	-14	-34	-23
Personal Finances	17	18	22	18	20	22	6	16
Buying Climate	-28	-28	-30	-28	-22	-14	-34	-25

OVERALL INDEX BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS

Sex:								
Men	-7	-2	2	-3	-4	9	-16	-2
Women	-21	-19	-18	-21	-10	-10	-25	-18
Age:								
18 - 34	-14	-12	-3	-16	-7	3	-23	-8
35 - 44	-2	-2	-6	-3	-7	6	-27	-9
45 - 54	-23	-17	-14	-25	-6	10	-34	-11
55 - 64	-18	-14	-4	-10	-2	-2	-25	-13
65+	-20	-12	-15	-2	-14	-1	-32	-13
Income:								
Under \$15K	-54	-58	-49	-54	-49	-35	-75	-52
\$15K To \$24.9K	-37	-30	-46	-43	-33	-13	-52	-39
\$25K To \$39.9K	-28	-26	-16	-29	-2	-2	-37	-21
\$40K To \$49.9K	-24	-13	-5	12	-20	17	-37	-11
Over \$50K	18	18	18	10	22	35	10	20
\$50K To \$74.9K	9	8	4	-5	15	28	-9	6
\$75K To \$99.9K	8	12	25	17	18	37	4	22
Over \$100K	35	34	38	28	32	51	19	37
Region:								
Northeast	-20	-22	-16	-19	-13	2	-28	-14
Midwest	-14	-6	-18	-17	-12	-3	-26	-13
South	-13	-9	0	-1	-5	4	-18	-8
West	-12	-9	-3	-19	1	5	-21	-8
Race:								
White	-9	-3	-4	-9	-3	2	-15	-5
Black	-38	-52	-31	-38	-33	-20	-56	-40
Politics:								
Republican	25	31	26	35	47	47	10	30
Democrat	-36	-33	-39	-37	-31	-27	-45	-36
Independent	-21	-21	-12	-21	-24	-7	-30	-17
Education:								
< High School	-25	-25	-29	-36	-35	-21	-55	-38
High Sch. Grad.	-31	-24	-22	-26	-15	-2	-32	-18
College +	0	2	7	4	7	10	-6	4
Home:								
Own	-8	-4	-2	2	2	7	-9	-2
Rent	-34	-31	-23	-43	-30	-20	-44	-32
Marital Status:								
Single	-16	-18	-14	-20	-19	-11	-31	-19
Married	-5	0	4	-4	6	15	-5	3
Sep/Wid/Div	-39	-30	-33	-22	-26	-22	-49	-32
Employ. Status:								
Full-Time	-5	-4	-3	-5	4	12	-7	0
Part-Time	-29	-13	-1	-10	-7	-1	-35	-15
Not Employed	-22	-21	-17	-22	-21	-15	-31	-22

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