

**FLORIDA CONSUMER CONFIDENCE INDEX**  
**December 31, 2008**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**



From:  
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*Consumer Confidence*

Consumer confidence among Floridians increased in December to 67, up five points from November. Four of the five components that make up consumer confidence increased. The only component to decline was perceptions of personal finances compared to a year ago. That component fell to a new record low of 39. This drop was particularly sharp for seniors and low-income households. Perceptions of personal finances a year from now rose to 87. Perceptions of U.S. economic conditions over the next year rose to 62 while perceptions of U.S. economic conditions over the next five years rose to 78. Perceptions of whether it is a good time to buy big-ticket consumer items also rose in December to 71.

"Overall Floridians were more optimistic in December," said Chris McCarty, the Survey Director. "Consumers are looking forward to a shift in the economy toward something better in 2009. The one disturbing result from the December survey is the new record low for the component measuring perceptions of personal finances. That component is perhaps the most telling when trying to predict consumer spending. As with the past month, consumers are confident that the new administration will resolve the economic crisis and that much of the intervention so far will work. However they are reporting the worst financial situation for themselves since we started the index in the mid 1980s."

About the only bright spot for Floridians is the lower cost of gasoline and energy prices overall. Those have shown steep declines over the past several months and seem resistant so far to attempts by the oil-producing countries to prop them up. Interest rates have come down, although lines of credit are still out of reach for many consumers. Housing prices continue to fall, although some areas of Florida appear to have turned the corner and may actually benefit from the spring real estate season if credit becomes more available. Retail sales this holiday season have been abysmal, reflecting a pullback in consumption that is in line with the severity of this prolonged recession.

"Some media outlets are characterizing the pullback in consumption as a sign of a paradigm shift in patterns of consumer behavior," said McCarty. "It is worth noting that in most recessions, the 2001 recession excluded, a pullback in consumption is the normal pattern. There is no doubt that the decrease in consumption and borrowing are much higher than most recessions, but we should be cautious about declaring this a new era for the American consumer. That being said, there is reason to believe that this recession will last well into 2009. Job losses have been severe and are unlikely to have peaked. Florida has been particularly hard hit compared to other states, shedding more than 200,000 jobs in the past year. With unemployment at 7.3 percent, it will be at least six months before consumer confidence improves considerably. In all likelihood confidence will decline again as the first quarter of 2009 progresses and consumers don't see immediate relief."

**FLORIDA ECONOMIC AND CONSUMER SURVEY†**  
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	Dec-07	Jan-08	Feb-08	Mar-08	Apr-08	May-08	Jun-07	Jul-08	Aug-08	Sep-08	Oct-08	Nov-08	Dec-08
<b>Consumer Confidence Index</b>													
FLORIDA	74	70	73	70	66	63	59	61	67	68	63	62	67
Men	79	75	79	74	67	70	61	65	72	71	67	64	69
Women	70	66	68	66	65	59	57	58	63	67	58	60	65
Under age 60	75	72	73	69	67	64	58	61	65	68	64	64	67
Aged 60 and over	72	68	74	70	64	63	60	60	70	68	62	61	67
Income under \$30,000	64	58	66	62	60	58	56	52	69	61	60	61	62
Income \$30,000 and over	77	74	76	74	67	66	59	62	66	68	65	63	70
<b>Personal financial situation now compared to a year ago</b>													
FLORIDA	64	65	65	64	59	55	51	46	51	49	41	40	39
Men	69	75	71	69	61	68	53	53	56	50	43	46	42
Women	61	56	59	59	58	47	50	41	47	49	38	34	36
Under age 60	67	67	66	67	63	56	56	52	52	50	46	43	40
Aged 60 and over	58	62	64	59	54	56	46	38	47	48	35	37	38
Income under \$30,000	41	42	50	47	40	43	35	34	40	30	38	37	24
Income \$30,000 and over	70	73	71	71	64	61	55	51	52	52	45	41	43
<b>Personal financial situation expected one year from now</b>													
FLORIDA	87	82	84	88	79	77	73	80	82	85	86	81	87
Men	89	83	89	90	80	82	72	84	83	84	88	83	88
Women	85	82	80	87	78	73	73	77	81	87	83	78	86
Under age 60	96	92	91	98	89	84	84	85	86	95	87	89	93
Aged 60 and over	75	70	76	73	65	65	57	68	77	72	83	72	78
Income under \$30,000	77	77	75	72	56	70	68	67	79	82	80	76	90
Income \$30,000 and over	91	89	89	94	85	78	74	81	84	86	88	84	90
<b>Expected national economic conditions over the next year</b>													
FLORIDA	65	55	65	58	52	51	51	51	64	65	57	55	62
Men	72	56	72	60	55	54	54	51	69	68	61	47	62
Women	60	54	59	56	50	48	48	51	61	62	53	63	62
Under age 60	62	56	64	50	49	49	47	48	59	63	56	58	58
Aged 60 and over	68	54	66	67	55	53	55	55	73	65	59	52	65
Income under \$30,000	66	52	66	54	48	50	58	46	75	69	57	64	62
Income \$30,000 and over	66	56	64	60	51	52	48	50	60	60	58	52	62
<b>Expected national economic conditions over the next 5 years</b>													
FLORIDA	79	74	83	76	72	70	69	68	80	77	77	73	78
Men	83	79	86	82	71	75	73	72	88	78	82	73	80
Women	77	71	80	71	73	66	66	66	75	76	72	73	77
Under age 60	78	72	81	71	69	69	64	65	76	76	76	75	77
Aged 60 and over	81	79	86	83	76	71	76	73	88	78	79	71	80
Income under \$30,000	66	58	77	70	46	69	78	58	84	78	79	76	85
Income \$30,000 and over	84	78	84	80	71	72	67	70	78	73	77	72	76
<b>Is this a good time to buy major household items?</b>													
FLORIDA	75	74	69	64	67	64	50	59	57	66	54	62	71
Men	82	81	75	71	69	71	51	66	65	73	62	70	74
Women	70	68	64	58	66	59	50	55	52	59	46	54	67
Under age 60	73	72	62	60	65	60	41	55	51	58	55	53	69
Aged 60 and over	76	77	75	70	68	71	65	66	65	74	54	73	73
Income under \$30,000	71	63	64	68	56	60	42	54	64	47	57	53	49
Income \$30,000 and over	75	75	70	66	64	64	50	58	55	69	58	66	78

\*Revised. †Preliminary.

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**CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS FOR CURRENT MONTH**

<b>Sample Size</b>	427	<b>Race</b>		<b>Gender</b>	
		% Non-white	15	% Male	54
<b>Average age</b>	57	% White	85	% Female	46
<b>Income Characteristics</b>		<b>Hispanic Origin</b>		<b>Region</b>	
% less than \$20,000	12	% Yes	9	% North	26
% \$20,000 to \$29,999	11	% No	91	% Central	19
% \$30,000 to \$49,999	22			% Southeast	24
% over \$50,000	55			% Southwest	31