



**Southeastern Consumers Voice Confidence In Local Economy;  
RBC CASH Index Affirms Region's Momentum**

**Washington, DC, July 25, 2005** – During the first six months of the year, consumers in Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia and Florida expressed greater optimism than U.S. consumers overall about key economic indicators, including jobs, investments, assessment of the current economic conditions and outlook for the future, according to a survey of consumer attitudes commissioned by RBC.

"The combination of more positive views about the regional economy, investment and jobs has produced robust consumer confidence in the Southeast since January," said Craig Wright, RBC vice-president and chief economist. "This is not surprising, since the Southeast has enjoyed better than average growth in recent years, and key economic indicators point to continued positive performance for the region."

The RBC CASH Index (Consumer Attitudes and Spending by Household) is a composite measure of national consumer attitudes toward the state of local economies, personal financial situations, savings and investment and job security. The recent six-month analysis includes a focused look at the Southeast region, where RBC Centura serves customers through its retail banking network.

"The positive outlook the CASH Index is reporting is real, and it's no surprise to our bankers," said RBC Centura CEO Scott Custer. "Our customers and the communities we serve across the Southeast are showing continued signs of stable and sustainable growth. It's a great market for us and for our customers."

The overall RBC CASH Index is further broken down to include four sub indices: the *RBC Current Index* (measuring attitudes toward the present strength of local economies and personal financial situations); the *RBC Expectations Index* (measuring confidence in future economic prospects); the *RBC Investment Index* (measuring consumers' attitudes toward spending and saving for the future); and the *RBC Jobs Index* (measuring attitudes about job security and experiences with job loss).

From January through June 2005, the RBC CASH Index showed Southeastern consumer perceptions of the economy were significantly brighter than the national view:



January 2005 – June 2005	Southeast	National
<i>RBC CASH Index</i>	101.0	83.9
<i>RBC Current Conditions Index</i>	112.3	91.7
<i>RBC Expectations Index</i>	70.8	55.4
<i>RBC Investment Index</i>	100.4	86.3
<i>RBC Jobs Index</i>	123.7	114.6

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*Baseline of January 2002 = 100*

RBC CASH Index highlights for the period include:

- One quarter (25%) of respondents rate their current local economy as strong (6-7 on a seven-point scale); nationally, fewer than one-in-five (17%) rate their local economy as strong.
- In the Southeast, those most likely to rate the economy as strong are: men (31%); those aged 65 or older (32%); college degree-holders (34%); those with a total household income of \$75,000 or more (39%); and individuals who feel the country is headed in the right direction (37%).
- Nearly one-third (31%) of Southeastern residents feel their local economy will be stronger six months from now; just over one-quarter (27%) nationally feel so optimistic.
- Southeastern subgroups more likely to rate the local economy as stronger six months from now include those age 65 or older (37%); those who rate their current financial situation as strong (39%); and those who feel the country is headed in the right direction (41%).



- In addition, residents of the Southeast are slightly more likely to have positive views about investment. More than four-in-ten (43%) respondents from the region expressed more confidence with their ability to invest (compared to 41% nationally).
- Finally, residents of the Southeast also are less likely to have direct job loss experience. Fewer than one-third (31%) have either lost their job in the past six months or personally know someone who has lost a job in the last six months due to economic conditions (compared to 36% nationally).

### **RBC Cash Index**

The RBC CASH Index is a monthly national survey of consumer attitudes on the current and future state of local economies, personal financial situations, savings, and confidence to make large investments. The Index is benchmarked against a baseline score of 100, assigned in January 2002 when the Index was introduced. The RBC CASH Index is conducted by Ipsos-Public Affairs. Results in this report include combined interviews of monthly surveys from January 2005 to June 2005. National results include 6,004 total interviews and have a margin of error of +/- 1.3 for all adults. The Southeast regional results include 954 total interviews with a margin of error of +/- 3.2 for all adults. The Southeast region covers interviews in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia.

### **For more information, please contact:**

Brian R. Scanlon  
Ipsos Public Affairs  
202.463.2146  
[brian.scanlon@ipsos-na.com](mailto:brian.scanlon@ipsos-na.com)

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