

2023 Holiday Shopping Trends

How Americans Spend This Holiday Season

November 2023 • The Harris Poll Thought Leadership Practice





Methodology

This survey was conducted online within the U.S. by The Harris Poll from October 13th to 15th, 2023, among a nationally representative sample of 2,079 U.S. adults.

This research comprises 258 Gen Z (ages 18-25), 623 Millennials (ages 26-41), 506 Gen X (ages 42-57), and 692 Boomers (ages 58 and older).





Top Highlights

- **Holiday Dash:** Over six in 10 Gen Z and Millennials have already started their holiday shopping for this year, with 95% planning to buy gifts.
- **Mall Rats:** Amazon remains the top choice for holiday shopping among Americans, while young consumers prefer mall visits over retailer websites.
- **Homebound Heartfelt Giving:** Family gifts take precedence in Americans' holiday spending plans this year, with 83% focusing on them.
- **One for Me:** Six in 10 Gen Z and Millennials plan to treat themselves during the holidays, focusing on luxury and personal spending rather than gifts for others.
- **Lucky Pets:** Gen Z and Millennials are allocating a significant portion of their budget to pet gifts, with 57% planning to do so; more than 10% are willing to spend over \$100 on pet presents.
- **Eco-Santas + Brands that Match the Vibe:** Two-thirds of Americans, especially young consumers, are striving for sustainable holiday shopping, with over half willing to pay extra for eco-friendly options. Americans are open to sustainable purchases but expect brands to make it convenient; 75% of Gen Z and Millennials believe brands are responsible for ensuring their sustainability during the holidays.
- **AI Santas: Hits & Misses:** Gen Z and Millennials envision AI as a solution to their holiday-induced stress (62% feel anxious about holiday gift shopping), saving them time and money. Nearly half of young consumers are willing to pay \$100 for AI to select all their holiday gifts, as they trust AI more than their own gift ideas. However, the general sentiment among Americans is that AI-picked gifts are creepy and disappointing.
- **Bending Budgets:** Despite having budgets, a majority of Gen Z and Millennials view them as guidelines rather than strict rules, with almost half ending up in debt. 80% of them are willing to exceed their budget to find the perfect gift for someone they cherish.
- **Gift Hunters:** Gen Z and Millennials are strategic spenders, utilizing discount days and seeking donations, finding joy in the gift-hunting process, especially Gen Z.

Shifting holiday spending mindsets





Over six in 10 Gen Z and Millennials have already started their holiday shopping for this year, with 95% planning to buy gifts

When did you start, or when do you plan on starting the majority of your holiday gift shopping for the upcoming holiday season?



62%
Gen Z + Millennials

“I have **already started**¹ my holiday shopping for this year.”

68% Latinx
64% Gen Z
61% Millennials
54% Americans
48% Gen X + Boomers

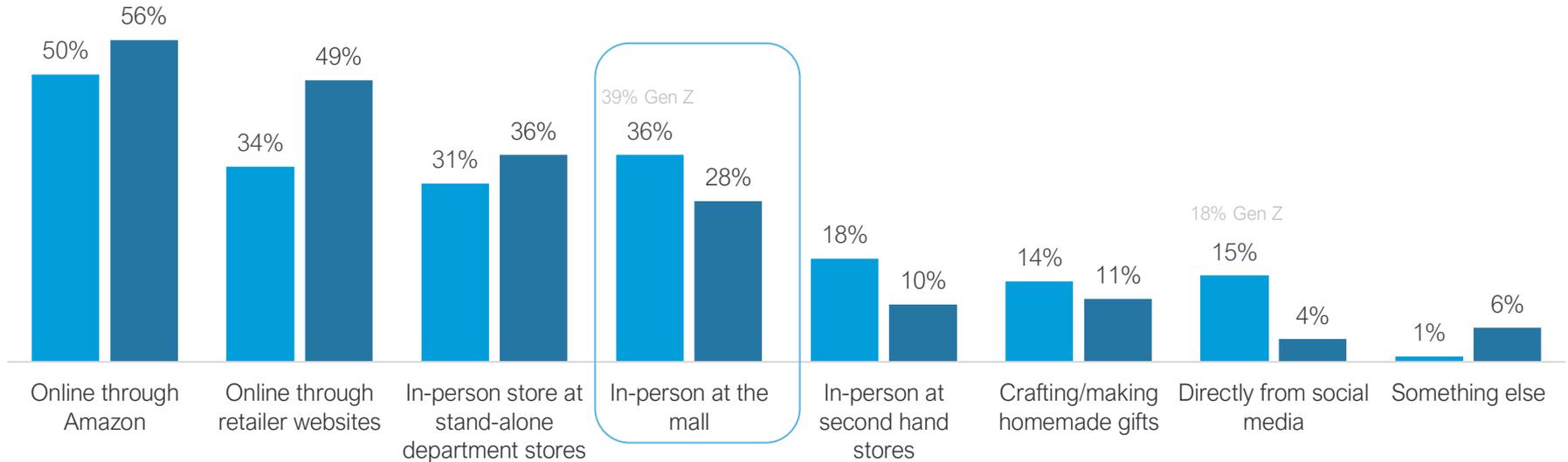
HS02 When did you start, or when do you plan on starting the majority of your holiday gift shopping for the upcoming holiday season? (n=2,079 total) | 1=As of mid-October (10/13-10/15)
HS09 How much do you agree or disagree with the following? (Top 2= Strongly/somewhat agree; n=2,079 total)



Amazon is Americans' main holiday shopping source; meanwhile, young consumers are heading to the mall, even more so than retailer websites

Americans' main way of holiday shopping

■ Gen Z/Millennials ■ Gen X/Boomers+

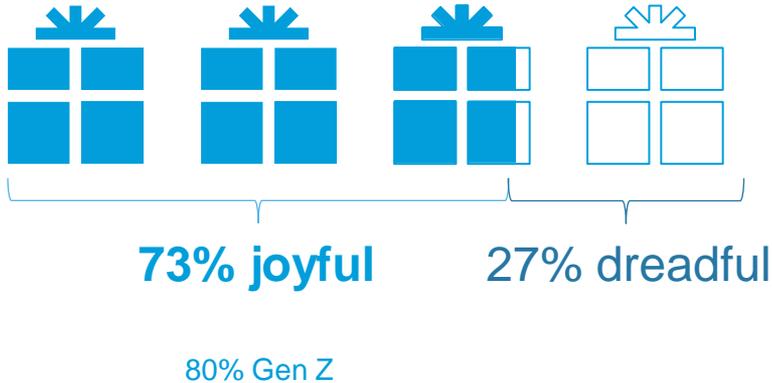




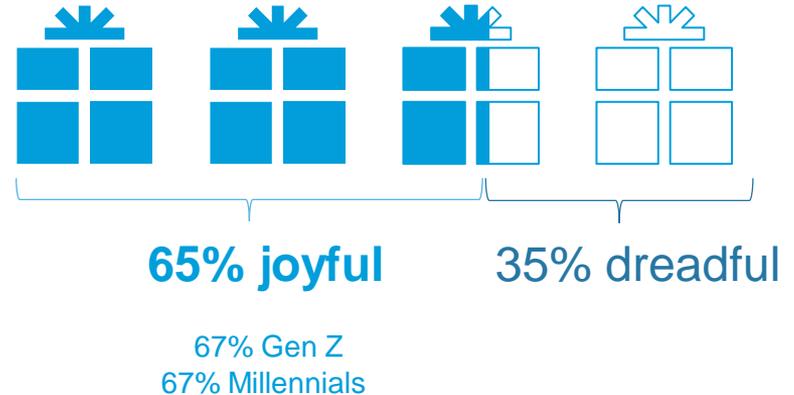
Spending is joyful, when it's tied to giving – especially for Gen Z

Aspects of holiday shopping Americans find **joyful** vs. **dreadful** Among All Americans

Finding what kind of gifts I am gifting people



Deciding who I need to buy gifts for





Heartfelt Giving: Americans prioritize family in holiday splurges

Who they're spending on:

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Gen Z</i>	<i>Millennials</i>	<i>Gen X</i>	<i>Boomers</i>
 Gift(s) for family members	\$417	\$229	\$295	\$363	\$636
 Gift(s) for my significant other	\$213	\$111	\$258	\$219	\$205
 Gift(s) for myself	\$134	\$338	\$166	\$123	\$38
 Gift(s) for friends	\$85	\$116	\$116	\$82	\$48
 Gift(s) for pets	\$35	\$56	\$49	\$33	\$15
 Gift(s) for coworkers	\$34	\$17	\$55	\$42	\$15
Total	\$918	\$867	\$939	\$862	\$957



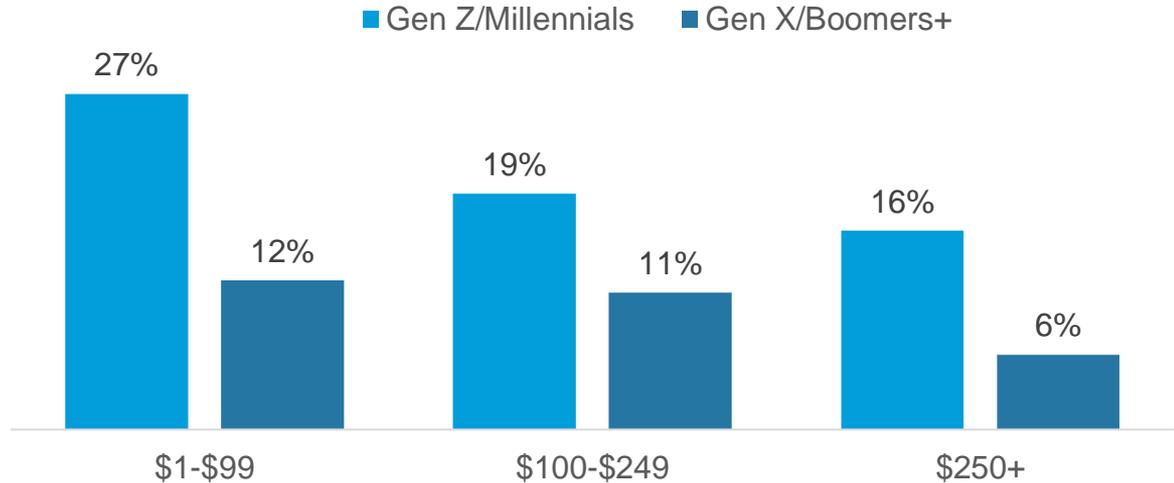
Merry Me-Time: Six in 10 Gen Z and Millennials deck the halls with self-gifts, with nearly a quarter spending over \$100

61%
Gen Z & Millennials

Plan to spend on holiday gifts for **themselves**.

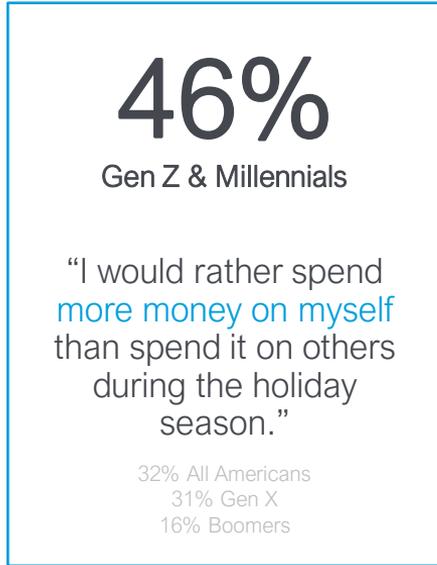
42% All Americans
39% Gen Z
21% Boomers

Thinking about this year's upcoming holiday season, how much money do you plan to spend on **gift(s) for yourself?**





Six in 10 Gen Z and Millennials plan to indulge in self-gifting during the holidays, prioritizing luxury and personal spending over gifts for others





Gen Z and Millennials are spending on pets; over one in 10 plan to spend over \$100 on pet gifts

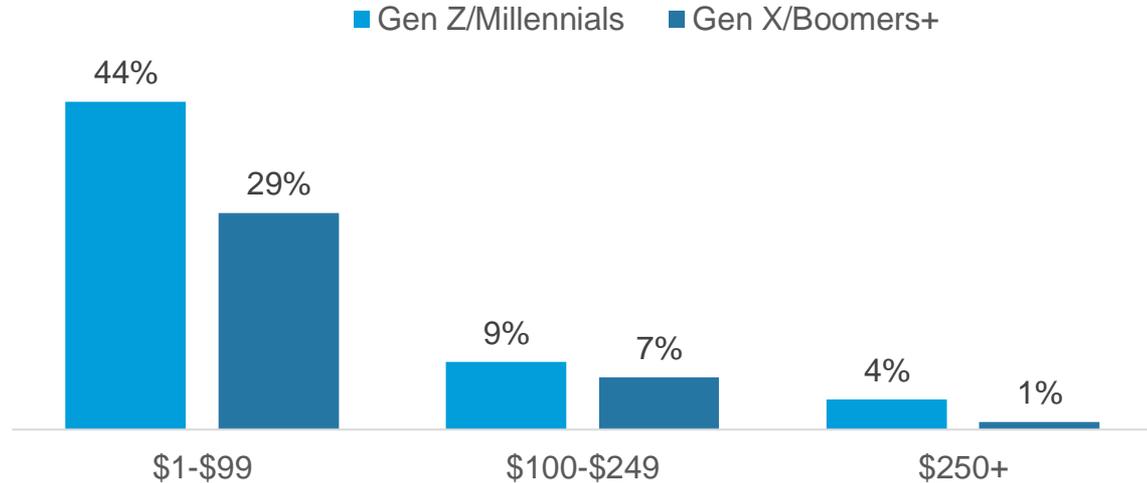
57%
Gen Z & Millennials

Plan to spend on holiday gifts for **pets**.

46% All Americans
50% Gen X
28% Boomers



Thinking about this year's upcoming holiday season, how much money do you plan to spend on **gift(s) for pets**?





Most parents are determined to make the holiday season extra magical, as they're spending most on expenses that make up "the moments"

<p>77% Parents</p> <p>"I want to make this holiday season extra magical for my kids after a challenging year."</p>	<p>54% Parents</p> <p>"My kids have high expectations during holidays because of social media."</p>
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Who parents are spending on

Family members

\$532

vs. \$254 non-parents

Themselves

\$120

vs. \$160 non-parents

What they're buying

	Parents	Non-parents
Travel	\$454	\$164
Food and drinks	\$265	\$140
Clothing	\$167	\$72
Decorations	\$114	\$47
Entertainment	\$108	\$69

Reclaiming the moments
of joy this holiday season



This year, Americans are focusing on the little things that make up the big moments

85%

Americans

“This year, I am going to focus on enjoying the **little things** that come with the holiday season.”

83% Gen Z & Millennials
87% Gen X & Boomers

77%

Americans

“I plan to indulge in **‘the moment’** this holiday season.”

81% Gen Z & Millennials
74% Gen X & Boomers

64%

Americans

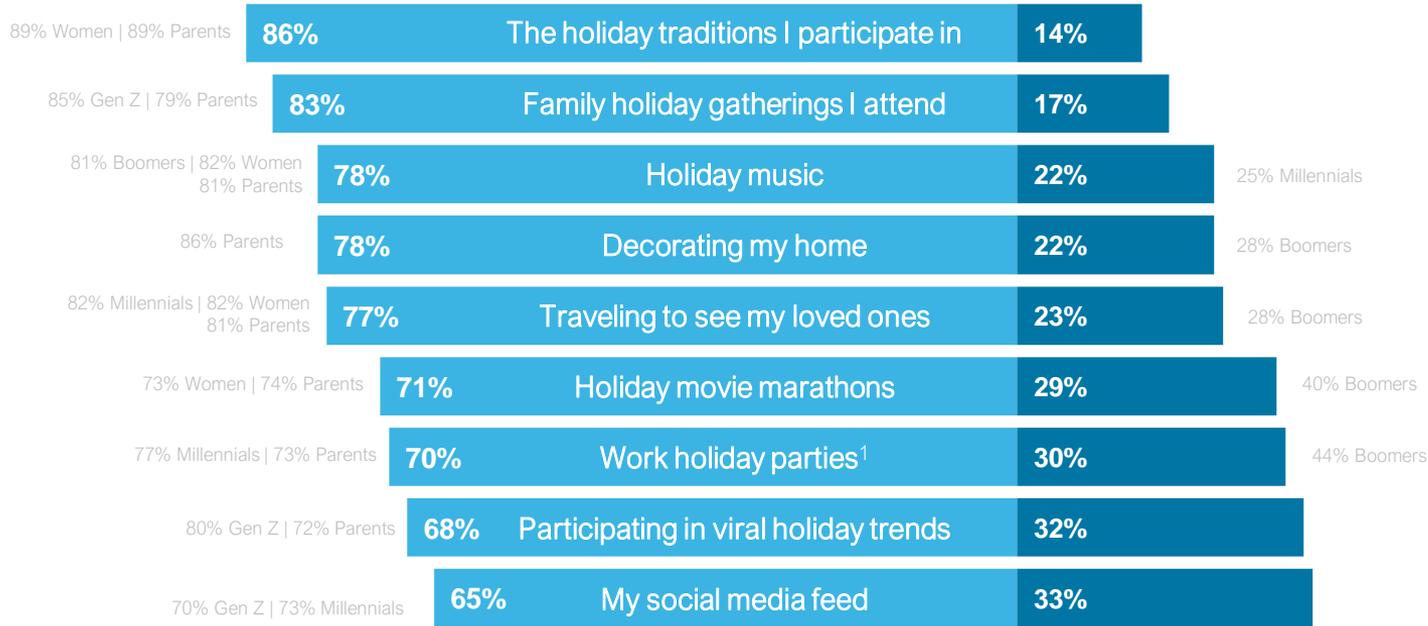
“I rely on **little treats** to get me through this holiday season.”

74% Gen Z & Millennials
56% Gen X & Boomers



Americans are finding joy in “the moments,” especially those centered around tradition and family

Aspects of the holiday season Americans find **joyful** vs. **dreadful**



80%
Americans

“I wish I still did the traditions I did as a child during the holiday season.”

J O Y F U L

D R E A D F U L



Americans want retailers to amplify affordability, joy, respite, and magic this holiday season

More than ever, this holiday season, I need retailers to give me...



AI Santa: Hits & Misses



Gen Z and Millennials imagine AI relieving their holiday-induced anxiety; saving them time and money

62%

Gen Z & Millennials

“Holiday gift shopping is giving me anxiety.”

51% All Americans
43% Gen X & Boomers

59%

Gen Z & Millennials

“AI could save me from having anxiety this holiday season.”

45% All Americans
34% Gen X & Boomers



69%

Gen Z & Millennials

“I wish AI could help me find great deals on holiday gifts this season.”



60%

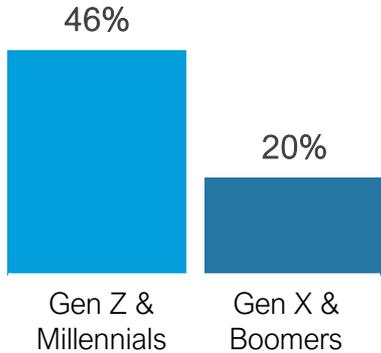
Gen Z & Millennials

“AI would save me time by creating more personalized holiday gifts.”

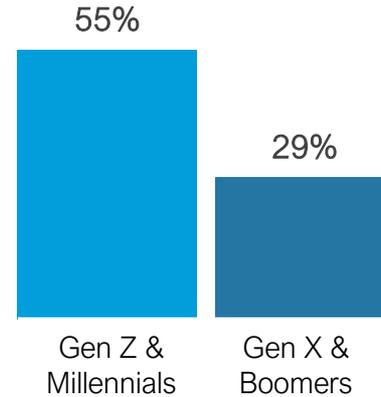


Almost half of young consumers would pay \$100 for AI to pick all their holiday gifts; the majority trust it over their own gift ideas

“I would pay a \$100 fee for an AI-enhanced service that found and purchased all my holiday gifts for me.”
% Agree



“I trust AI to help me find the perfect gifts over my own ideas.”
% Agree





Shhh! Don't tell! Although half of young consumers trust AI to pick a gift, generally, Americans would be disappointed if they found out it came from AI

82%

Americans

“People should **sign their own holiday cards** and not have AI write them.”

80% Gen Z & Millennials
83% Gen X & Boomers

68%

Americans

“I think it's **creepy** that gift-giving could come from AI and not actual people.”

67% Gen Z & Millennials
68% Gen X & Boomers

53%

Americans

“If I found out my loved one bought me a gift through AI and not their own thinking, I **would feel disappointed.**”

59% Gen Z & Millennials
49% Gen X & Boomers

Eco-Santas: Aspiring toward a green holiday





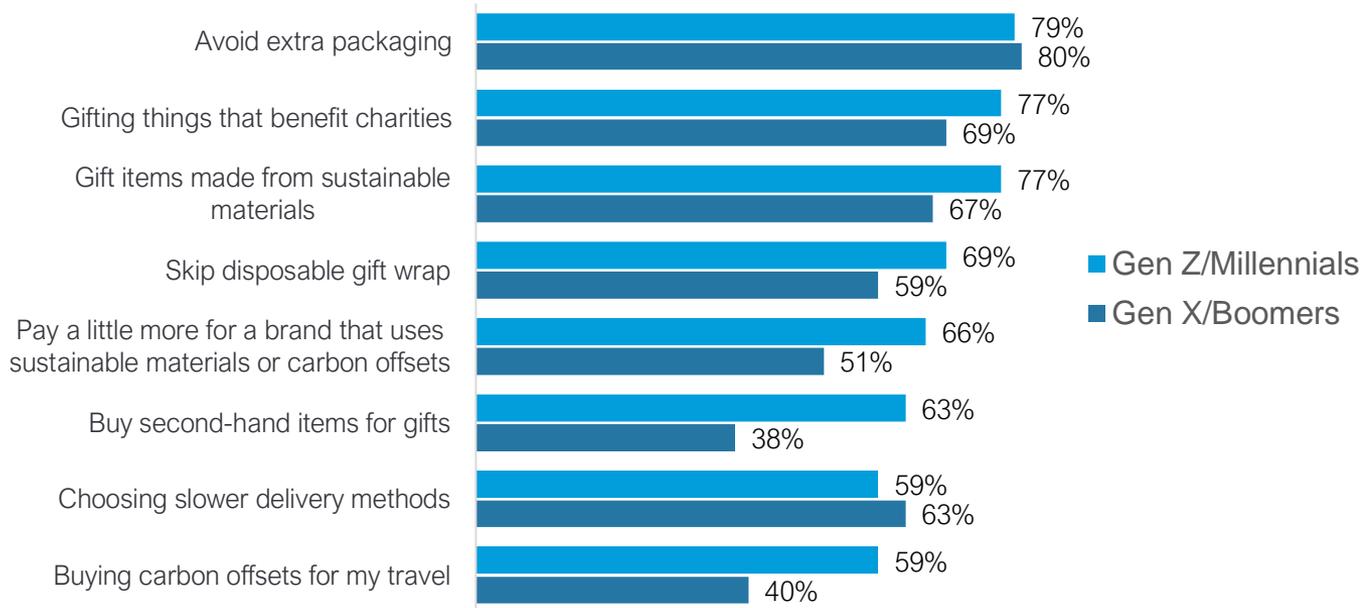
Two-thirds of Americans, especially young consumers, are trying to shop sustainably this holiday season, and over half are willing to pay more to do so





Generally, consumers are willing to make sustainable holiday purchases, but they're counting on brands to make it convenient

Willingness to take the following sustainable actions when shopping for gifts this holiday season



75%
Gen Z & Millennials

“Brands are responsible for ensuring I am being sustainable during the holidays.”

58% Gen X & Boomers

Budget Benders + Primed for Deals

Gen Z and Millennials' money mentality
when it comes to holiday shopping



Most Gen Z and Millennials view their budgets as guidelines, not rules – as almost half have gone into debt





This year is no different: For the most part, Gen Z and Millennials know they can't afford to spend, but that's not stopping them from doing so

62%

Gen Z & Millennials

"I am **not financially prepared** for this upcoming holiday season."

44% Gen X & Boomers

51%

Gen Z & Millennials

"I can only afford to gift others if I **pursue no-cost gifts.**"

30% Gen X & Boomers



80%

Gen Z & Millennials

"I'm **more than willing to splurge** beyond my budget if it means finding the ideal gift for someone I truly adore."

63% Gen X & Boomers



But they're not spending carelessly: Gen Z and Millennials leave no stone unturned in finding funds – relying on discount days, and wishing for donations

74%

Gen Z & Millennials

“I rely on discounts on days like [Prime Day](#), [Black Friday](#), and [Cyber Monday](#) to buy holiday gifts.”

60% Gen X & Boomers

54%

Gen Z & Millennials

“I wish I could [start a Go-Fund-Me](#) for my holiday wish list because no one/I can't afford to get what I really want.”

31% Gen X & Boomers

Appendix



The majority of Americans, especially older generations, agree that the holidays start way too early these days



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