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Annual Statewide Poll of Holiday Spending Plans

Majority Plan to Keep Budget & Names on the List Unchanged in 2014

Holiday Spending Aimed at Practical; Spending Should Match Last Year

75% Will Donate to Help Needy; 36% Plan to Volunteer

Most NY'ers Say Looking Forward to Winter; Figuring out how to Endure Snow They Predict Will Meet or Exceed Average

Loudonville, NY – Fifty-nine percent of New Yorkers plan to spend about the same this year as last on holiday gifts while 32 percent plan to lessen their spending and 7 percent intend to spend more according to a new statewide survey of consumers released today by the Siena College Research Institute (SRI). Nearly two-thirds are buying gifts for the same number of people and 58 percent are budgeting the same dollars per individual this year as last. Similar to 2013, 64 percent (61 percent last year) plan to hold their gift spending under \$600 while 23 percent (25 percent last year) have budgeted \$1000 or more.

“Despite increasing overall consumer sentiment, holiday spending appears likely to be similar to last year. Every indicator – intended spending target, number of people on your list and actual dollars budgeted – looks nearly identical to last year’s plans,” according to SRI Director, Don Levy.

Fifty-eight percent of New Yorkers, down from 72 percent a year ago say that they are excited about the upcoming holiday season while 41 percent are either not very or not at all excited.

“Perhaps as part of the new economic normal, by two to one New Yorkers say that, as much as they can, they will buy practical gifts more than splurging on impractical items. While we won’t be wrapping up coal, it is more likely we’ll see needs, rather than wants, under the tree,” Levy said. “And, as a sign that consumers hope to stay within their budget, over eighty percent plan to pay now rather than let the bills extend well into 2015.”

Plans to shop online increased slightly this year as now 49 percent of New Yorkers intend to conduct at least 25 percent of their shopping online, up from 46 percent a year ago.

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Charitable Giving and Volunteering

Seventy-five percent of all New Yorkers say that they will be making donations of money, food or gifts to charitable organizations that focus on the needy during the holiday season.

“The warmth of New Yorkers is evident in this survey as even in the face of a sluggish economy, across every demographic group, overwhelming majorities plan to give to help others enjoy this season. Even among those making less than \$50K, nearly two-thirds plan to donate,” Levy notes.

Thirty-six percent, up slightly from 33 percent last year, will volunteer some of their time this holiday season for organizations that help people during the holidays.

Mixed Feelings about Winter and Snow

Asked to assess their feelings about winter, 60 percent of New Yorkers said that while ‘it may be cold, it is a special time of year’ and that they look forward to winter activities and all the season provides but 36 percent admit that they ‘dread it’ especially the cold and the darkness. Thirty-nine percent of New Yorkers (the survey was conducted prior to the recent record snowfall in Western NY) predict more than average snow this year, 37 percent expect an average accumulation while only 16 percent expect less than average snow.

“A strong majority is excited about winter’s arrival but sentiment flips when the topic is snow. A majority, when thinking about the white stuff, describes themselves as someone that figures out how to endure it and as one that wouldn’t be upset if we had very little of it rather than as someone that gets excited as the flurries start to add up and the skis and snowshoes beckon,” according to Levy.

Tree and Greetings

Seventy percent of all New Yorkers put up a Christmas Tree for the holidays but of those, 61 percent have an artificial rather than real tree. A majority, 51 percent, most often use ‘Merry Christmas’ as their holiday greeting rather than ‘Happy Holidays’ (38 percent) or ‘Seasons’ Greetings’ (6 percent).

The SRI survey of Holiday Spending Plans was conducted November 3-17, 2014 by random telephone calls to 809 New York adults via landline and cell phones. Data was statistically adjusted by age, race/ethnicity and gender to ensure representativeness. SRI reports this data at a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of ± 3.4 points. The Siena College Research Institute, under the direction of Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in New York State. For more information or comments, please call Dr. Don Levy, Director Siena College Research Institute, at 518-783-2901. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at www.siena.edu/sri/resesearch



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Siena College Holiday Poll Trends – November 2014

As the holiday season begins, would you say you are very excited, somewhat excited, not very excited or not at all excited about the upcoming holiday season?

DATE	VERY EXCITED	SOMEWHAT EXCITED	NOT VERY EXCITED	NOT AT ALL EXCITED	DON'T KNOW
2014	23	35	23	18	0
2013	28	44	14	13	1
2012	26	41	18	15	0
2011	22	45	20	12	1
2010	24	45	18	13	0
2009	22	42	19	17	0
2008	24	39	25	12	1

Compared to last year (past years), do you plan to spend more money on holiday gifts, less money or about the same?

DATE	MORE MONEY	LESS MONEY	ABOUT THE SAME	DON'T KNOW
2014	7	32	59	1
2013	10	29	57	4
2012	13	33	53	2
2011	7	34	55	3
2010	4	37	57	2
2009	4	48	45	3
2008	5	53	41	1
2007	8	35	54	2

Are you buying gifts for more, fewer or the same number of individuals as last year?

DATE	MORE	FEWER	SAME	DON'T KNOW
2014	13	22	63	2
2013	15	18	65	2
2012	15	16	67	2
2011	14	21	61	3
2010	10	20	67	3
2009	8	25	64	3
2008	10	29	60	1
2007	12	20	67	1

Per individual on your list, are you spending more money, less money or about the same as last year?

DATE	MORE MONEY	LESS MONEY	ABOUT THE SAME	DON'T KNOW
2014	13	27	58	3
2013	13	23	60	4
2012	16	25	56	3
2011	11	29	56	3
2010	8	32	56	4
2009	8	34	55	4
2008	7	42	48	3
2007	12	24	60	3

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What is the total amount of money you plan to spend on gifts this holiday season?

DATE	\$0- \$299	\$300- \$399	\$400- \$499	\$500- \$599	\$600- \$699	\$700- \$799	\$800- \$899	\$900- \$999	\$1000+
2014	31	11	11	11	5	4	2	3	23
2013	28	12	8	13	5	2	3	3	25
2012	23	10	10	14	4	3	3	3	29
2011	27	14	9	13	3	4	3	2	26
2010	26	13	14	11	4	2	4	3	23
2009	30	13	11	11	4	3	2	3	23
2008	28	11	10	13	4	4	3	3	23
2007	21	11	8	14	5	3	3	2	33

What percentage of your holiday shopping is done online?

DATE	NONE	0-25%	25%-50%	50%-75%	75%-100%	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
2014	34	16	19	17	13	1
2013	33	20	18	18	10	2
2012	43	21	16	12	7	1
2011	43	21	14	13	9	0
2010	45	29	16	7	2	1
2009	51	22	15	7	4	1
2008	51	28	12	5	2	1

As you plan your holiday spending, do you intend to pay for all your gifts and other spending in cash or as soon as the bill arrives, or do you plan to pay off your holiday spending over a period of time that could extend well into (the next year)?

DATE	PAY NOW	PAY LATER	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
2014	83	13	4
2013	84	12	4
2012	84	12	5
2011	83	12	4

This year will you be making any donations of money, food or gifts to charitable organizations that focus on the needy during the holiday season?

DATE	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
2014	75	23	3
2013	76	20	4
2012	77	19	4
2011	77	20	3
2010	77	19	4
2009	72	20	7
2008	77	21	1
2007	81	17	2

Do you plan to volunteer any of your time this holiday season for organizations that help people during the holidays?

DATE	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
2014	36	62	2
2013	33	63	4
2012	39	58	4
2011	31	66	3
2010	33	63	4
2009	30	65	4
2008	37	62	1
2007	34	65	1

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Of the following, during this time of the year, which greeting is the one you yourself most often use, is it...

DATE	MERRY CHRISTMAS	HAPPY HOLIDAYS	SEASONS' GREETINGS	OTHER/DON'T KNOW/ REFUSED
2014	51	38	6	5
2013	47	44	4	5
2012	55	38	5	2
2011	53	37	8	2
2010	53	38	5	3
2009	56	35	3	7

Do you put up a Christmas Tree in your home for the holiday season?

DATE	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
2014	70	30	0
2013	73	27	0
2012	75	24	1
2011	75	25	0
2010	74	26	1

(If put up Christmas Tree) Do you have a real tree or an artificial tree in your home?

DATE	REAL TREE	ARTIFICIAL TREE	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
2014	38	61	1
2013	42	57	1
2012	39	60	1
2011	40	59	1
2010	42	58	0

Would you say you believe in Santa Claus or not?

DATE	BELIEVE	DO NOT BELIEVE	DON'T KNOW/REFUSED
2014	30	68	1
2013	30	69	1
2012	37	62	1
2011	30	69	1
2010	30	69	1