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62% of Holiday Shoppers Have or Plan to Make Most Purchases Online Amid COVID-19 Concerns

51 million U.S. adults will start holiday shopping by the end of September

NEW YORK – September 13, 2021 – More than 3 in 5 (62%) holiday shoppers have made or plan to make most of their purchases online this year, according to a new CreditCards.com report. While this number is down from 71% in 2020, it is up from 51% in 2019. The most common explanations for shopping online this holiday season are convenience (70%), avoiding lines/crowds (62%), better deals/prices (46%), worries about COVID-19 (45%) and wider product selection/inventory (43%). As shipping and out-of-stock concerns linger, 51 million U.S. adults, or 27% of holiday shoppers, have already started or plan to start their holiday shopping by the end of September. Click here for more information:

<https://www.creditcards.com/credit-card-news/holiday-shopping-poll-2021/>

Overall, holiday shoppers' preferences for online shopping are similar across generations, with 65% of baby boomers (ages 57-75), 58% of Gen Xers (ages 41-56), 61% of millennials (ages 25-40), and 63% of Gen Zers (ages 18-24) planning to buy most of their holiday gifts online.

Among income levels, the highest earning households (earning \$80,000 or more annually) are the most likely group to do most of their planned holiday shopping online (71%), compared to 62% of households earning between \$40,000 - \$79,999 annually and 53% of households earning less than \$40,000 annually.

More than one-third of holiday shoppers (38%) say they will make most of their purchases in-person, with the most commonly cited benefit being the ability to touch and see merchandise before buying (67%), followed by instant access to purchases (45%) and supporting local businesses (44%). Other reasons for in-person holiday shopping included obtaining gift ideas (35%) and getting advice from store employees (14%).

Regardless of whether most of their holiday shopping will be done online or in-person, more than 1 in 4 holiday shoppers (27%) plan to begin their holiday shopping before the end of September, including 13% who started or planned to start by the end of August. Another 25% plan to start in October, while 35% plan to start in November, and 13% will wait until December.

As to who is most likely to start their holiday shopping early, 37% of holiday shoppers with children under the age of 18 have started or plan to start by the end of September, compared to 20% of non-parents.

“I think this will be a strong holiday shopping season for retailers despite consumers' entirely rational worries about COVID-19 and inflation,” said Ted Rossman, senior industry analyst at CreditCards.com. “Most Americans have boosted their savings and paid down debt over the past

year and a half. There's still a lot of pent-up demand and a desire for a happy, traditional holiday season. Starting your holiday shopping early gives you more time to comparison shop and spread out the impact of your purchases, plus it provides a cushion in case there are shipping delays or other supply chain disruptions.”

When it comes to paying for holiday purchases this year, 42% of holiday shoppers expect to make most of their purchases using a debit card, while 38% said they will use credit cards, 15% said cash, and 5% cited buy now pay later services such as Affirm, Afterpay and Klarna.

Payment method preference differs by income level, with credit cards favored most by shoppers in the highest income households (50%), followed by 41% of middle-income households and 25% of lower-income households. Debit cards and cash are most preferred by lower-income households (48% and 21% respectively) compared to middle-income households (42% and 13%) and higher-income households (35% and 10%).

As buy now pay later services become an increasingly attractive option, younger shoppers are more likely to utilize them this holiday season, with 9% of Gen Zer and 8% of millennial shoppers have or plan to use these services for most of their holiday purchases, compared to 4% of Gen Xer and 1% of baby boomer shoppers.

Methodology:

CreditCards.com commissioned [YouGov Plc](#) to conduct the survey. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,410 adults, of whom 1,810 qualified as holiday shoppers. Fieldwork was undertaken August 18-20, 2021. The survey was carried out online and meets rigorous quality standards. It employed a non-probability-based sample using both quotas upfront during collection and then a weighting scheme on the back end designed and proven to provide nationally representative results.

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