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‘Tis the Season: Americans’ Perceptions of the Holiday Season For Immediate Release

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This NPR/PBS NewsHour/Marist Poll Reports:

More Americans are in the holiday spirit than in the past. Nearly six in ten Americans (58%) say they find the holiday season to be more fun than stressful. 38% feel the opposite and say it is more stressful. This is a turnaround from 2010 when 59% of Americans said this time of year is more stress inducing. 38% reported it was more enjoyable. Americans who earn \$50,000 or more annually (64%) are more likely than those who earn less to find the holidays more fun than stressful. Still, 49% of those who earn less than \$50,000 a year find enjoyment in the holidays. 44% consider the holiday season to be stressful.

What do Americans dislike most about the holiday season? Crowds (33%) take the top spot. Finding the right gift (16%) and gaining weight (13%) follow. Being with certain relatives (11%), credit card debt (11%), and traveling (8%) round out the list. When this question was last reported in 2012, crowds (33%) was also most mentioned. Of note, the proportion of Americans who mention credit card debt though has declined from 18%.

Americans have increasingly turned to the digital marketplace to do their holiday shopping. 71% of Americans who spend money on holiday shopping say they plan to make at least some of their purchases online. This includes one in three holiday shoppers (33%) who do all or most of their shopping online. This is a marked increase from 2014 when 19% of holiday shoppers reported they bought most or all of their gifts online. 29%, down from 38%, say they only make their purchases in a brick and mortar store.

Not surprisingly, holiday shoppers under the age of 30 (43%) are more likely than their older counterparts to do all or most of their shopping online. Holiday shoppers who are 60 or older are the least likely to use the digital marketplace to make their purchases.

While cash is still king, a growing proportion of holiday shoppers use plastic to pay for their

holiday gifts. A majority (52%), down from 60% in 2014, pay for their purchases using cash. 44%, up from 37%, report they mostly use credit cards to pay for their holiday presents. Holiday shoppers under 30 (63%) are more likely than those who are older to use credit cards.

While 63% of holiday shoppers do not use any form of digital pay such as Apple Pay, Visa Pay, or PayPal, 37% of holiday shoppers say they do purchase some (27%) or all or most (10%) of their gifts.

Regardless of how they plan to pay for their holiday presents, a majority of Americans (52%) say they plan to spend about the same amount of money as they did last year. 35% report they will spend less money, and 14% say they plan to spend more. Little has changed on this question since it was last asked in 2014. At that time, 55% of Americans said they planned to spend the same amount on their holiday shopping as the previous year. Men (16%) are slightly more likely than women (11%) to say they plan to spend more this year than last.

Americans perceive their personal family finances to be steady. 49% report their financial picture in the coming year will be about the same as it currently is. 37% expect an improvement in their family finances, and 14% believe they will get worse. There is little change on this question since December 2016.

Based on their current financial situation, more than two thirds of Americans (68%) say they expect to give about the same amount of money to charities this year as they did last year. 17% report they will give more, and 13% say they will give less. Two percent are unsure.

Re-gifting has become less popular. 84% of Americans say they do not re-gift their holiday presents. This compares with 77% in 2009. 16% say they do re-gift. Americans living in big cities (26%) are more likely than those in other regions to say they re-gift presents.

More than seven in ten Americans (71%) consider *decorating* for the holidays to be more fun than stressful. In contrast, 23% say it is more stressful. When it comes to their Christmas tree, a majority of Americans (55%) plan to have an artificial tree. 21% will decorate a real tree, and 22% say they do not put up a tree in their home.

The meaning of the Christmas tree has become more secular. 82% of Americans, up from 69% reported in a 2005 Fox News/Opinion Dynamics Poll, say the tree is a cultural symbol. 13% think it is more of a religious symbol. Most Americans under 45 years of age (91%), including 96% of those under 30, perceive the Christmas tree to be more of a cultural symbol.

What is the preferred holiday greeting? 56% of Americans believe in December people should say *Merry Christmas*. 31% disagree and report *Happy Holidays* is the appropriate salutation. 11% say it does not make a difference, and 1% are unsure.

While majorities of older Americans think *Merry Christmas* should be used, a majority of Americans under 30 years of age (53%) say *Happy Holidays* is the better greeting.

Oh, and *whatever!* 'Tis also the season for the most annoying word or phrase. For a decade *whatever* (36%) has been chosen by Americans as the most annoying word or phrase used in casual conversation. 22% of Americans say *no offense, but* is the most irksome. 15% mention *you know what I mean* while 14% say *literally* gets on their nerves the most. *Actually* receives 6%, and 7% are unsure.

Last year, *whatever* topped the list with 33%. 23% of Americans chose *fake news*. *No offense, but* had 20%, and 11% selected *literally*. *You know what I mean* received 10%. Three percent were unsure.

While *whatever* is most mentioned among Americans 30 and older, residents under 30 say the most annoying word is *literally* (25%) followed closely by *you know what I mean* (22%).