

2018

# HOLIDAY SPENDING REPORT



# Introduction

Predicting holiday season spending can be as mysterious as anticipating winter's first snowfall. From consumer confidence in the economy, to promotions offered by retailers, many factors come into play when considering how much Americans will spend.

CivicScience has been closely tracking trends around holiday gift spending since 2015. By looking back on our extensive data library and discerning patterns in consumer spending, CivicScience can make confident predictions around the season of holiday spending in 2018.

## Intent to Spend

**How much do you expect to spend this holiday season as compared to last holiday season?**

**2015**



● Will spend more ● Will spend about the same ● Will spend less

Based on 6,062 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2015 and 11/13/2015

**2016**



● Will spend more ● Will spend about the same ● Will spend less

Based on 5,403 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2016 and 11/13/2016

**2017**



● Will spend more ● Will spend about the same ● Will spend less

Based on 4,476 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2017 and 11/13/2017

**2018**



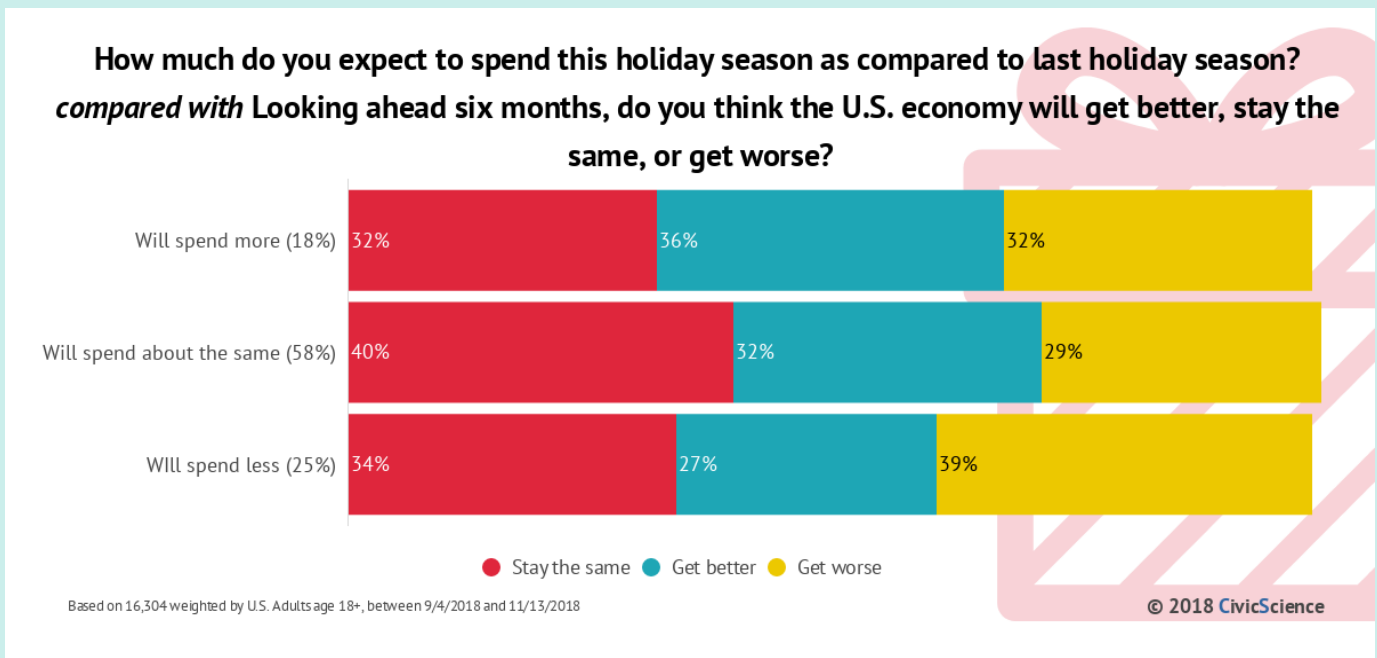
● Will spend more ● Will spend about the same ● Will spend less

Based on 8,183 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

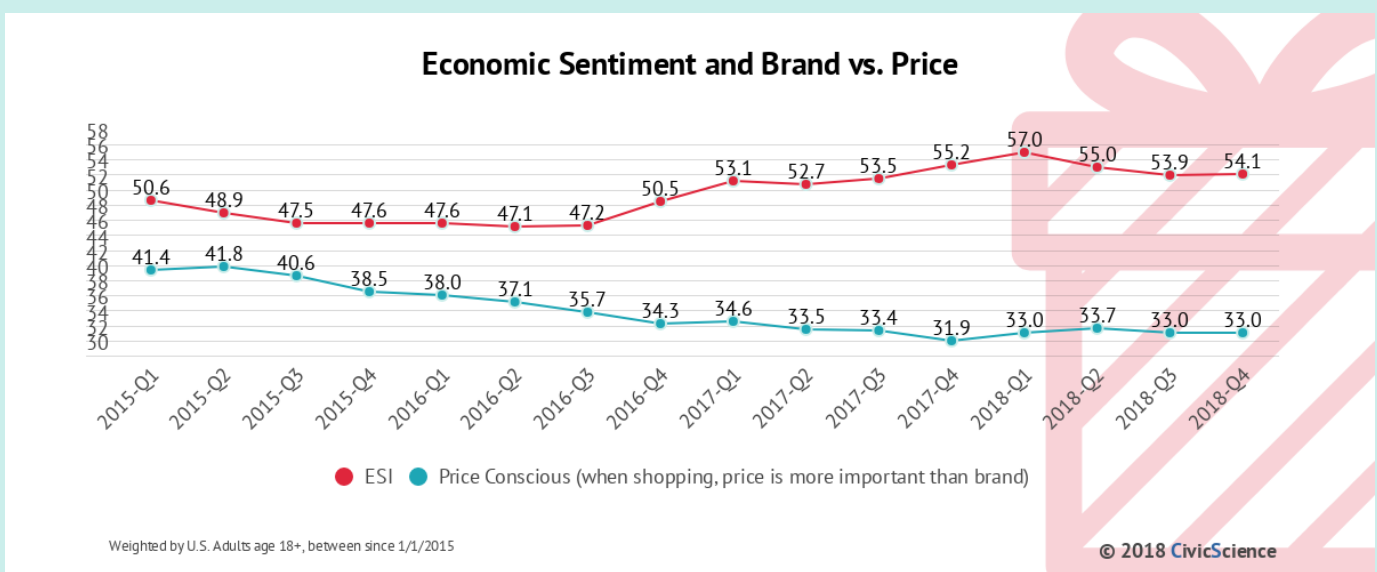
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This year, more shoppers are looking to spend "about the same" as they did last year. Comparing 2017 to 2018, there's a 6% drop in people who intend to spend less this year. Increased spending has been on a slight upward trend since CivicScience began tracking it in 2015, with shoppers intending to spend more in 2017 & 2018 than in 2015 & 2016.

Also worth noting is the downward trend of intending to spend less, which has decreased by two percentage points annually since 2016.

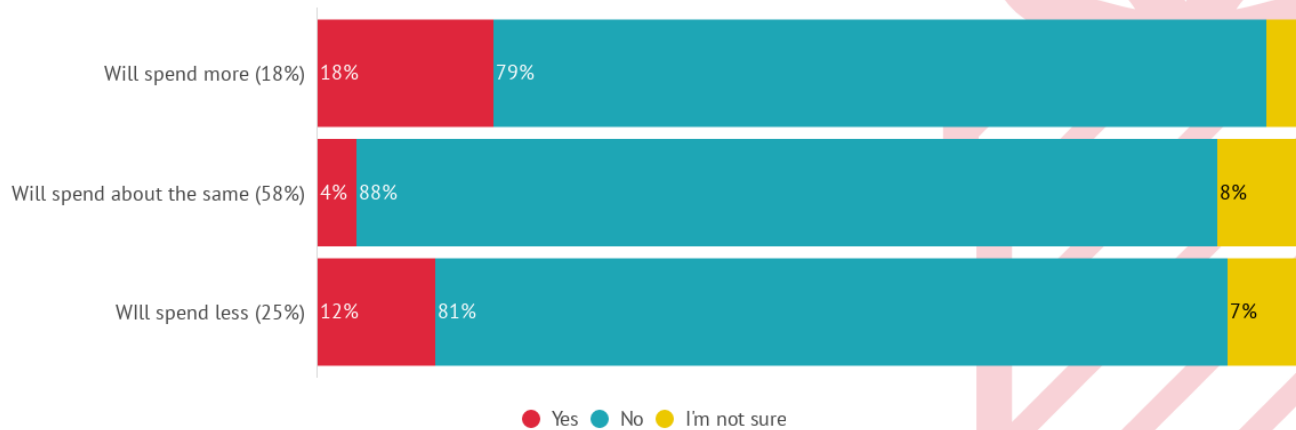


Intent to spend over the holiday season is often tied to the economic outlook of a consumer. People who think the economy will improve in six months are more likely to spend more this holiday season. People who think the economy will get worse in the next six months? They're planning to spend less this season.



No matter the economy, people want to bring light to the holiday season. Many of those who intend to spend more this year on gifts aren't doing so because of financial prosperity. 18% of holiday shoppers who will spend more this season say they also plan to take on debt from buying gifts.

### How much do you expect to spend this holiday season as compared to last holiday season? *compared with* Do you plan to take any amount of debt to buy holiday gifts this year?



Based on 540 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

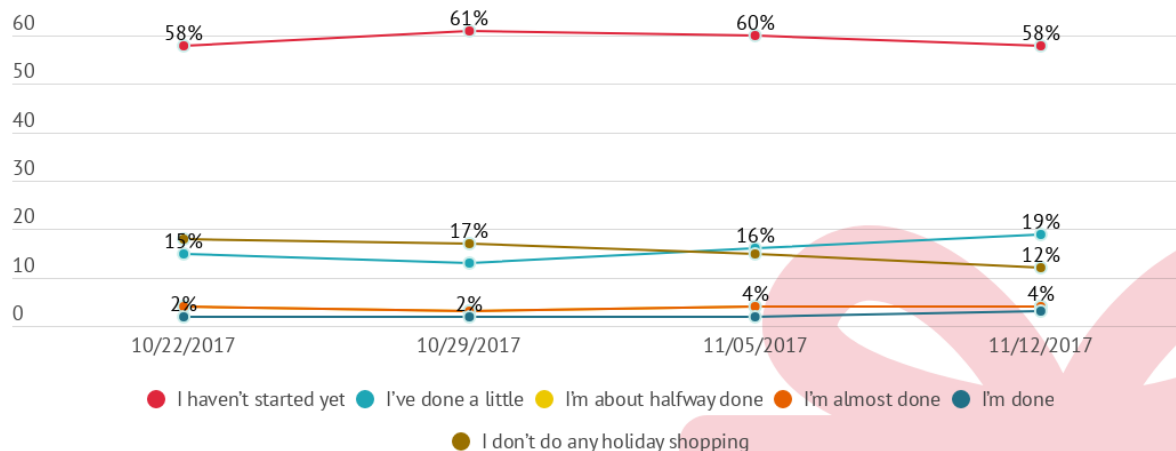
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## Holiday Shopping Progress

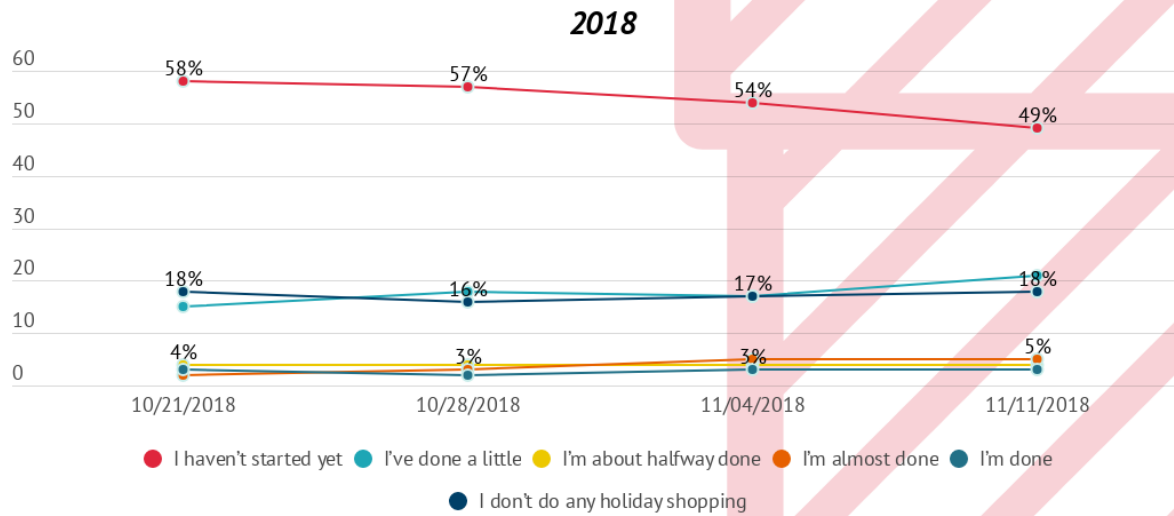
2018 is the most prepared holiday shoppers have been in recent years. At the time of polling (November 13, 2018), 49% of U.S. adults said they haven't started their holiday shopping yet. During the same week in 2017, 58% said they hadn't started yet.

### How far along are you in your holiday shopping?

2017



Based on 3,347 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2017 and 11/13/2017



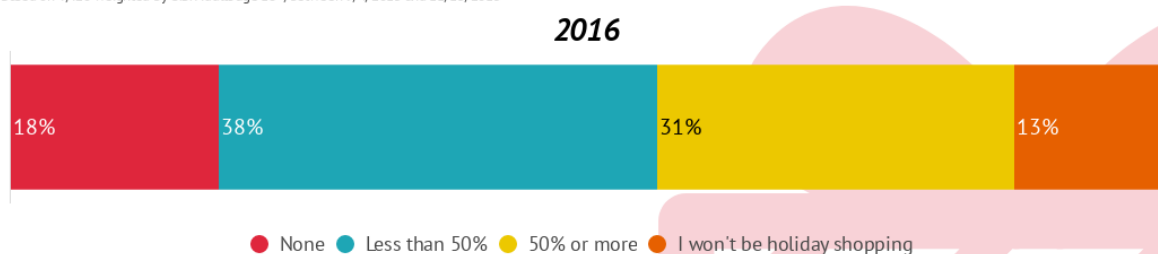
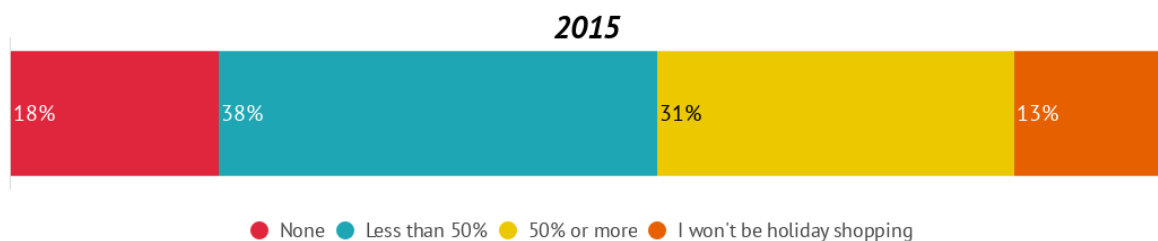
Shoppers are much more prepared for their holiday shopping this year. Shoppers who responded "I haven't started yet" has dropped 15% this season compared to 2017.

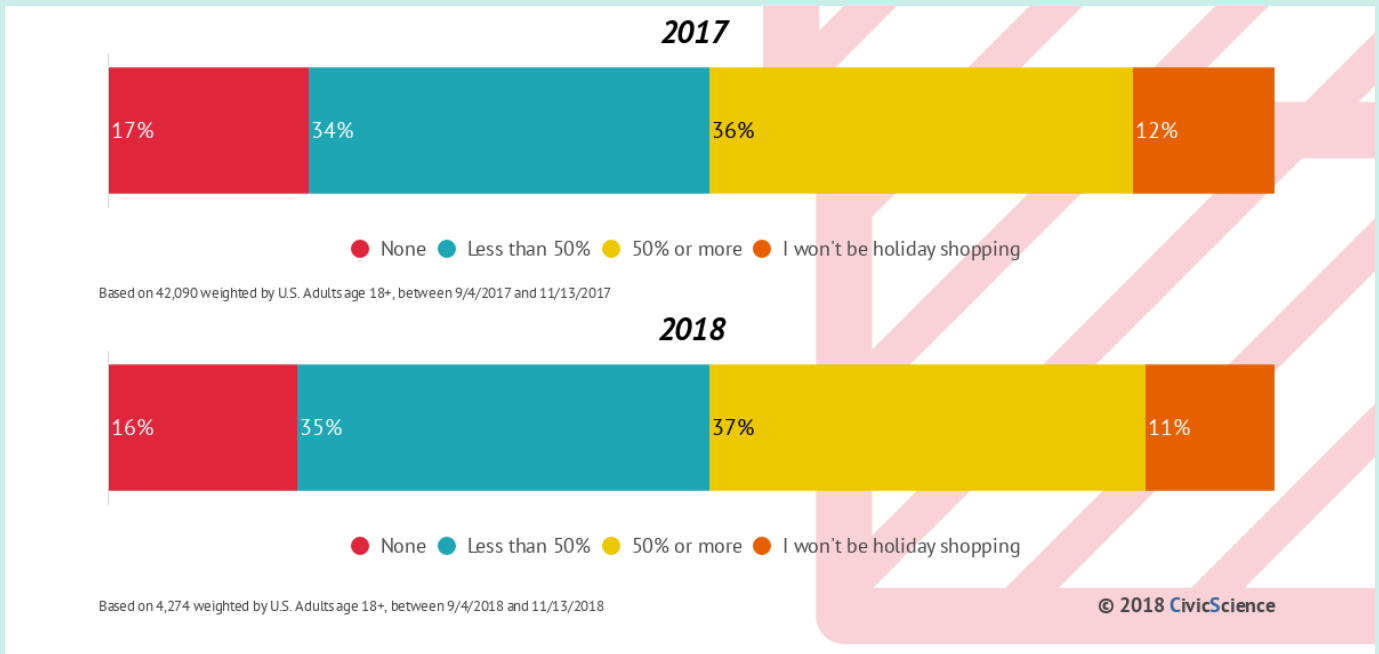
At the time of recording, 18% of U.S. adults said they won't do any holiday shopping this year, compared to 2017's 12%.

## In-person vs. Online Shopping

Primarily shopping online for the holidays continues to grow year over year with a 16% increase in the practice since 2015. The transition from holiday shopping in-store to online saw its largest jump between 2016 and 2017, with a 5 percentage point increase in customers buying 50% or more of their gifts online.

### What percentage of your holiday shopping will be done online this year?





Compared to 2017, 2018 will see a slight increase in people who will buy the majority of their gifts online.

That, coupled with the browsing and buying behaviors of primarily online holiday shoppers spells out a strong end of year for large online retailers. Many large sites have announced free shipping to anyone (with no order minimums) during the holiday season. Low-prices, coupled with free shipping, could mean trouble for smaller online stores. Those who do most of their holiday shopping online "window shop" for the lowest prices, meaning large retailers offering free shipping could see a jump in online sales this year.



## Thanksgiving Weekend Shopping

Shopping plans for Thanksgiving weekend have remained relatively stagnant year over year. There's a slight shift to shopping later in the weekend, with an 8% increase in those who intend to shop on the Saturday after Thanksgiving this year.

### Are you very likely to shop on Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend?

2017



● Yes ● No

Based on 2,041 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2017 and 11/13/2017

2018



● Yes ● No

Based on 2,629 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

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Those who choose to shop on the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend are up 17% from 2017.

### Are you very likely to shop on Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend?

2017



● Yes ● No

Based on 2,041 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2017 and 11/13/2017

2018



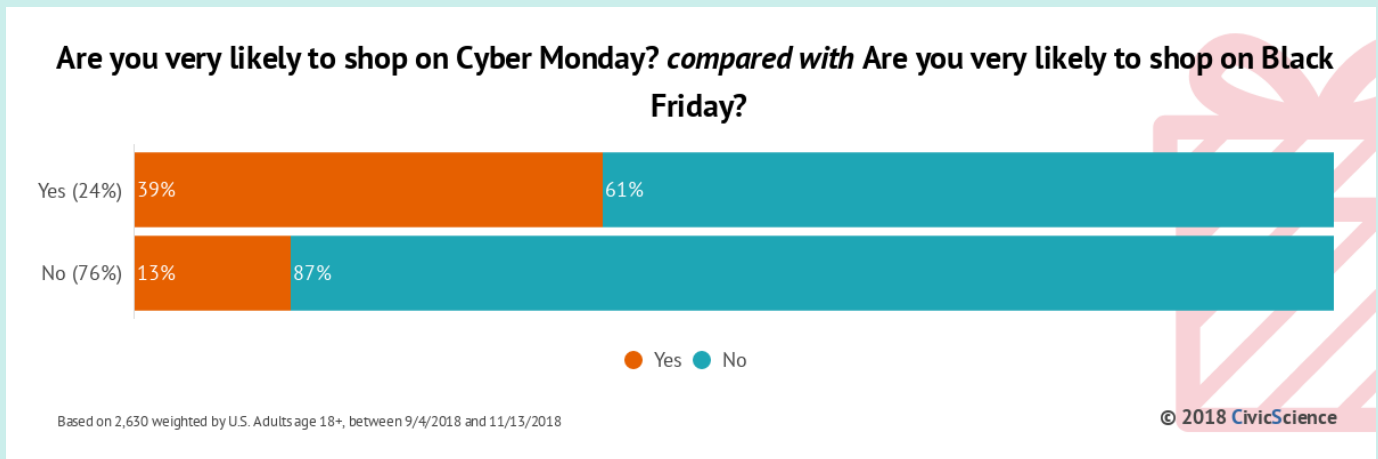
● Yes ● No

Based on 2,629 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

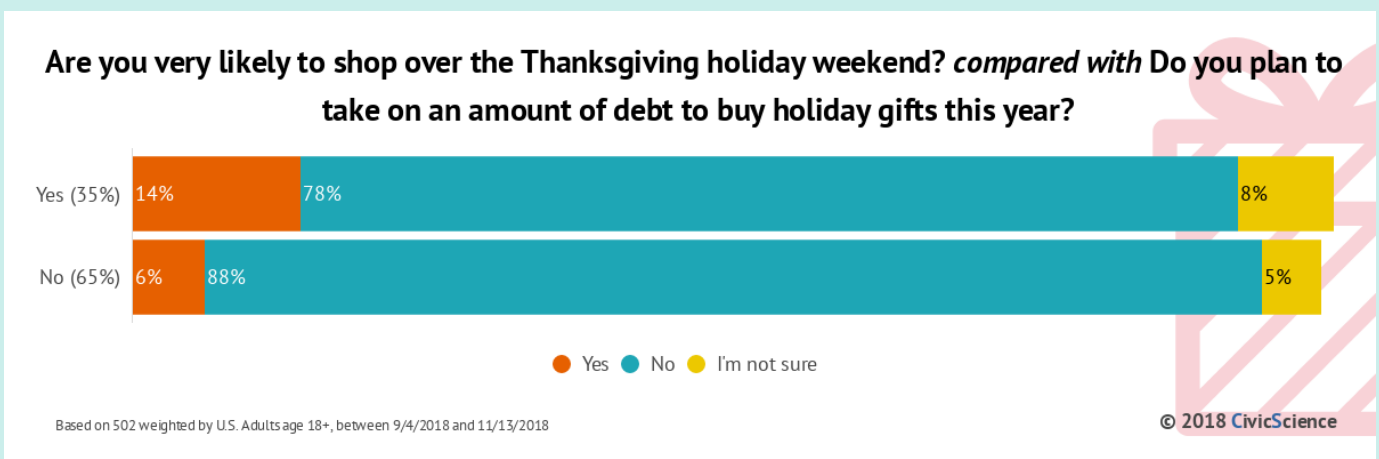
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As in previous years, the biggest shopping day over Thanksgiving weekend doesn't actually occur on the weekend. 23% of U.S. adults say they plan to shop on Cyber Monday. Given the low barrier to entry, Cyber Monday is in a league of its own in terms of participating shoppers.

However, holiday shopping doesn't have to be reduced to a single day. The largest overlap of shoppers is Black Friday and Cyber Monday--39% of Cyber Monday shoppers plan to shop on Black Friday as well.



While there's typically a narrative around doorbusters and savings during Thanksgiving weekend shopping, it seems to be dispelled for many. People who plan to shop over Thanksgiving weekend are more than twice as likely to take on debt than those who are not shopping the Thanksgiving sales.



Doorbuster deals or not, these shoppers aren't blind to the cost of the holidays.

## Voice-Activated Holiday Shopping

Voice-activated speaker ownership has grown in the past year, but the intent to use it when holiday shopping has not.



## Do you plan to purchase holiday gifts using a voice-activated speaker?

2017



● Yes ● No ● I don't own a voice-activated speaker

Based on 2,188 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2017 and 11/13/2017

2018



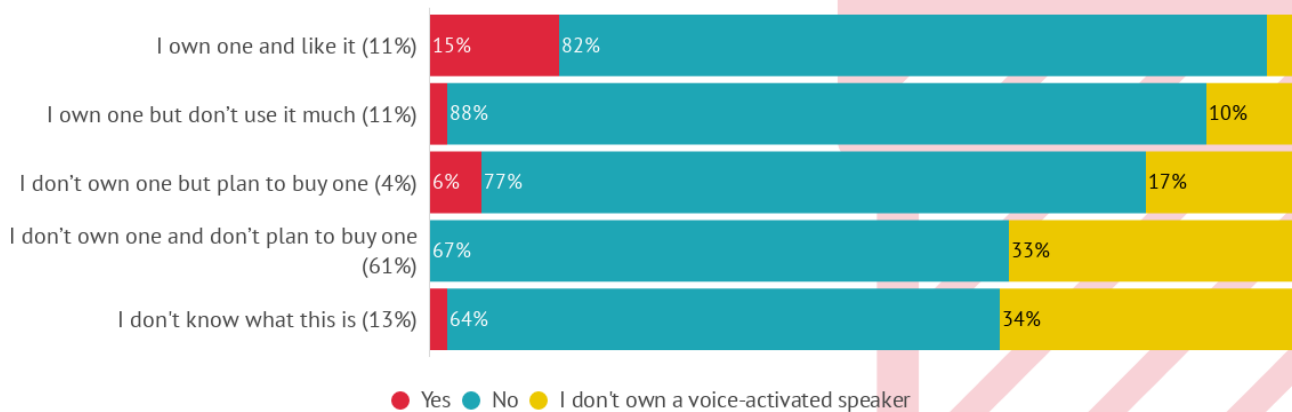
● Yes ● No ● I don't own a voice-activated speaker

Based on 4,487 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

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Voice-activated shopping is unlikely to catch on this holiday season. Of those who own a speaker and like it, only 15% intend to use it for shopping. It's telling that the majority of satisfied smart speaker owners won't use their device to shop.

## Which of the following best describes your experience with smart speakers? *compared with* Do you plan to purchase holiday gifts using a voice-activated speaker?



● Yes ● No ● I don't own a voice-activated speaker

Based on 2,289 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

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## Experiential Gift Giving

Intent to purchase an experience as a holiday gift has remained stagnant when compared to 2017. 14% of U.S. adults plan to purchase an experience, like a trip or concert tickets, as a holiday gift this year.

### Do you plan to purchase an experience (ex: trips, concert tickets) as a holiday gift this year?

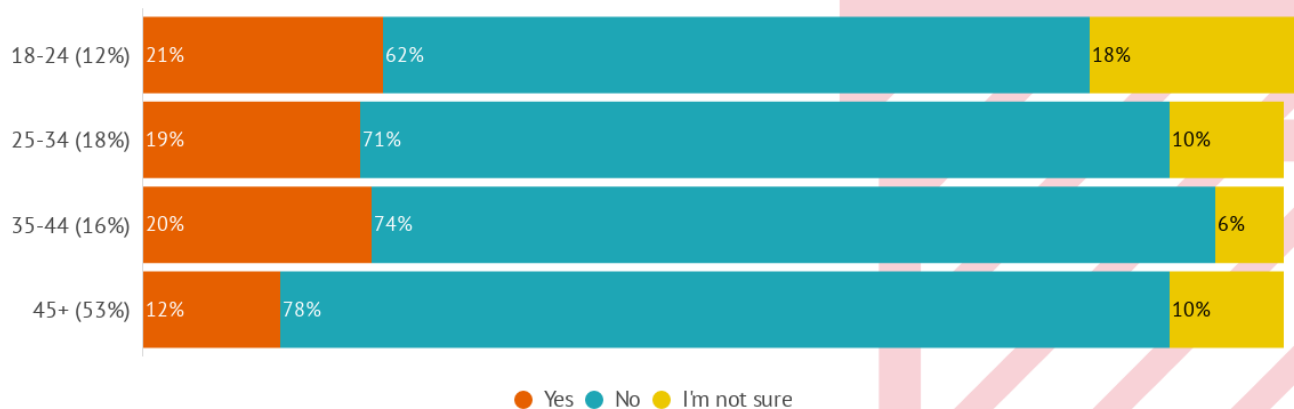


Based on 2,623 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

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On par with generational trends, younger Millennials are the most likely to purchase an experience as a gift, followed by 35-44-year-olds.

### To what broad age group do you belong? *compared with* Do you plan to purchase an experience (ex: trips, concert tickets) as a holiday gift this year?

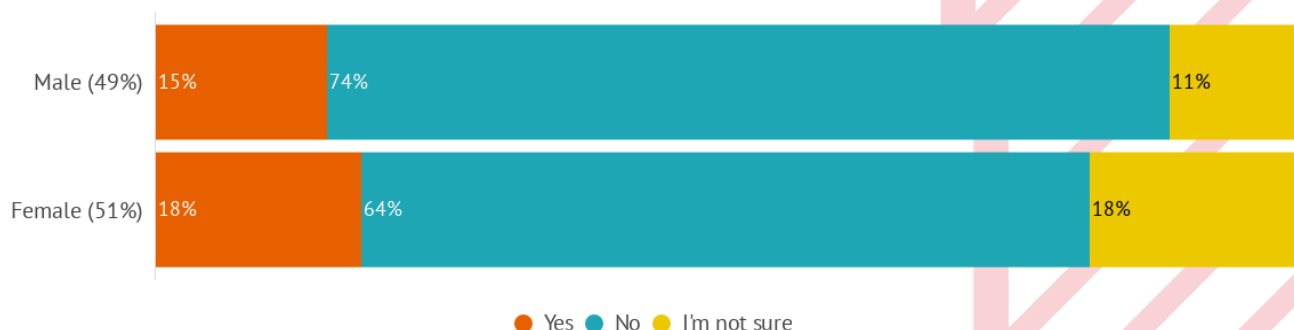


Based on 797 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

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Women are more likely to purchase an experience as a gift, but they're also more likely to be unsure of what they should purchase as a holiday gift.

### Please indicate your gender. *compared with* Do you plan to purchase an experience (ex: trips, concert tickets) as a holiday gift this year?

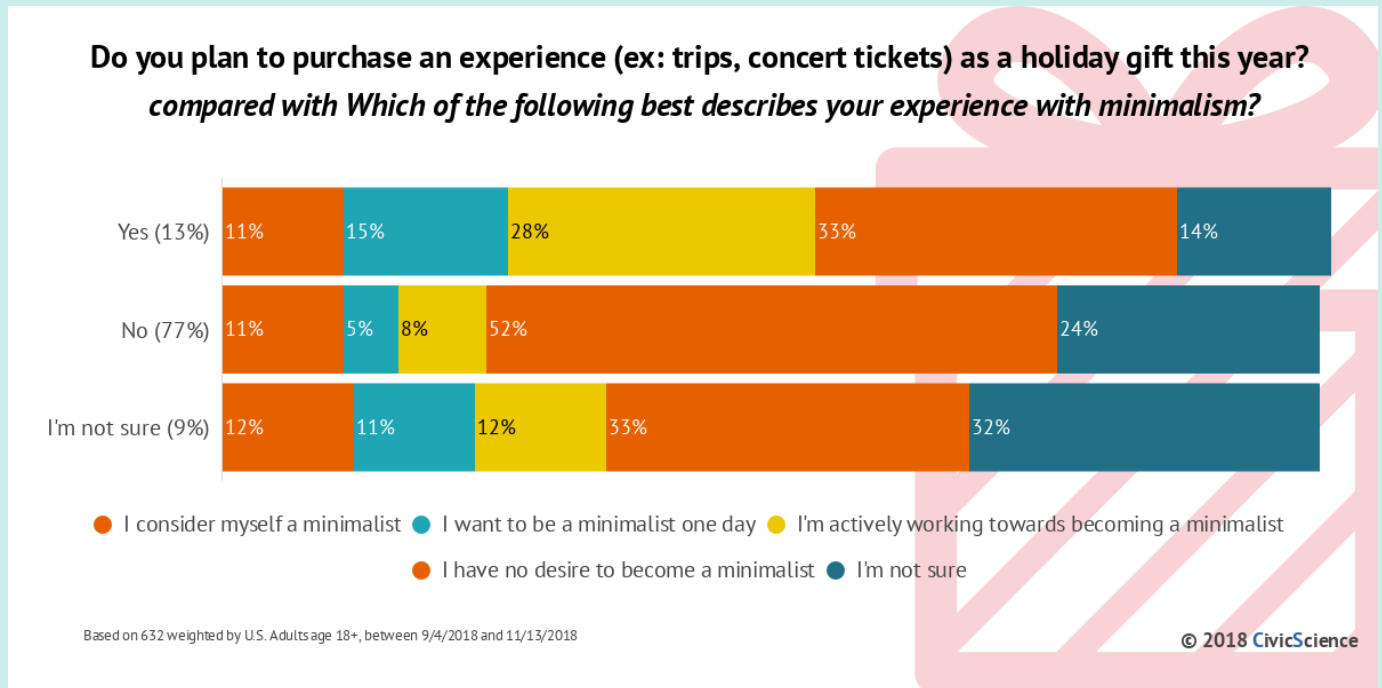


Based on 646 weighted by U.S. Adults age 18+, between 9/4/2018 and 11/13/2018

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Often the gift says much more about the giver, not the receiver--that's especially the case for people purchasing experiences as gifts this holiday season.

Taking a look at people's gifting habits can illuminate personal motivation. People who are giving experiential gifts this season are much more likely to be aspiring minimalists. If the social trend towards minimalism continues, it's likely we'll see an uptick in people purchasing experiences.



## Summary

Taking into account the spending habits of previous years, coupled with consumers' intent to spend in 2018, there's a good chance 2018 will see an increase in spending with online retailers. Given the increase in those who intend to shop Cyber Monday sales, it's likely a year over year jump in spending during the online-only holiday will occur. However, while retailers like Amazon might be encouraging consumers to shop and order via voice, the practice is still largely unadopted, even by satisfied smart-speaker owners.

Unlike previous years, holiday shoppers seem further along in their holiday gift buying. This, in part, could be because of healthy consumer confidence numbers earlier in the month. Consumer confidence has dropped in recent weeks, but it looks like a robust employment rate and early season economic confidence had shoppers buying gifts earlier than CivicScience has ever reported. While it's too soon to be certain, this pattern might

put a damper on late season holiday spending, specifically Super Saturday (the last Saturday before Christmas).

Both historical and current CivicScience data predict a growth in both shopping and spending this year.

For more information:  
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