

CONSUMERS STRIVE TO BE  
**MERRY MASKED**  
 AND  
**VAXXED**  
 THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

**2021 celebrations fewer than pre-pandemic**

More consumers plan on celebrating the 2021 holidays compared to 2020, but gatherings remain fewer than normal.

**80%** of consumers expect to celebrate one or more upcoming holidays – Thanksgiving, Christmas and/or New Year’s – normally and free of COVID-19 restrictions

**14%** have not and will not celebrate holidays normally until 2022 or later

Among those who normally celebrate a holiday, this year:

- 21%**  
won't celebrate Thanksgiving
- 20%**  
won't celebrate Christmas
- 22%**  
won't celebrate New Year's

**Implication:** Demand for holiday goods higher than 2020 holiday season, but still lower than pre-pandemic levels. Help keep holidays bright with supply chain transparency.

**Shoppers prioritizing holiday groceries over gifts**

Compared to last year, shoppers will spend more on food for the holidays and less on gifts as quality time remains a cherished treat.

More than **70%** agree the pandemic has significantly shifted their perspective on life priorities and **84%** feel that “time spent with the people I love is the best gift.”

Net change in spending:

- 4%** Gift spending
- +8%** Thanksgiving food spending
- +10%** Christmas food spending
- +4%** New Year's food spending



**Expect another year of virtual holiday shopping**

**59%** of adults are comfortable browsing stores with a mask. Only **13%** say they have no plans to get vaccinated. Still, more than half of holiday shoppers (**57%**) expect to spend online this holiday season, while the remaining **43%** plan to shop exclusively in-store.

- As more consumers move online, the roles of in-store and digital shopping are reversing. Brick-and-mortar shoppers prioritize efficiency and browse online.
- An extended, e-commerce-driven season is expected with shoppers starting early as they search for deals online.
- Shoppers discover and purchase more via social media, with **28%** expecting to use social media for holiday shopping this year.

Top holiday retailers such as Walmart, Target and Best Buy plan to close their stores on holidays like Thanksgiving and move 2021's major sales events (including Black Friday) online.

**Implication:** Maximize online shopping by offering curated holiday shopping lists. Be transparent about out-of-stocks and low stock for holiday items online.

Most say COVID-19 continues to impact their holiday plans. They anticipate smaller gatherings, financial struggles or health concerns.

**Those who are celebrating expect to go even bigger this year**

Early signs indicate consumers who plan to celebrate are going bigger and planning early for the 2021 holiday season.

- **61%** of holiday shoppers say they plan to shop early to avoid items being out of stock
- Most expect to attend about the same number of events
- **11%** will be celebrating normally for the first time since the pandemic
- Around **30%** expect more people at events compared to 2020, while only **10%** expect fewer



**Implication:** Brands should accommodate both large events and small holiday gatherings at home when making package size decisions.

**Financially strapped respondents plan to cut back on holiday spending**

Many shoppers plan to spend less this holiday season, with **29%** of shoppers saying their financial status is worse now than before the pandemic.

Among those planning to purchase less due to financial stress:

- 29%** spending less on holiday gifts
- 26%** spending less on Christmas food
- 23%** spending less on Thanksgiving food
- 29%** spending less on New Year's food

**Implication:** Provide coupons and promotions for the financially strapped shopper. Offer value deals to assemble holiday meals on a budget and make gifting easy.



Sources: AdWeek – “How Can Brands and Retailers Prepare for the 2021 Holiday Season?” October 2021; AdAge – “How CPG Brands Are Redefining Their Approach to Holiday Season” October 2021 Insights; Numerator – “Know More About Consumers’ Shifting Holiday Expectations” Q4 2021 Holiday Report; Mintel – “COVID-19’s Impact on U.S. Consumers: Fall 2021” October 14, 2021; SMART COVID-19 Sentiment Study, Base – 1,352; Mintel – “Celebrate Thanksgiving at Home” June 17, 2021; Statista – “Expected Social Media Usage in the U.S.” October 2021; Statista – “In-Store vs Online Holiday Shopping Plans in the U.S.” October 2021