

**For Immediate Release**

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**AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP HOLIDAY FORECAST #6 REVEALS  
WEEKEND SHOPPING HUGE DECEMBER 17-18 AT 65% - ALL-TIME HIGH  
MOST NOT FINISHED HIGHEST IN YEARS WITH ONLY 43.1% DONE SHOPPING  
FAMILIES WORKING 2-3 JOBS WITH NO TIME TO SHOP AT ALL-TIME HIGH  
OF THOSE SPENDING MORE, 33.9% POSITIVELY INFLUENCED BY ELECTION  
SELF-GIFTING HIGHEST IN 20 YEARS WITH 42.6% BUYING FOR THEMSELVES  
AT 30% SHOPPERS WALK AWAY FROM STORES WITH POOR SERVICE –  
NEW TREND THIS SEASON**

CHARLESTON, SC - According to America's Research Group's sixth Christmas forecast of the 2016 season, American consumers shopped this past weekend of December 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> in numbers surpassing those of the past 30 years of surveys at 65%. "This is the last big weekend before Christmas and consumers just had to get their holiday shopping done," said Britt Beemer, Chairman of America's Research Group. "This is going to be a good Christmas retail-wise but it could have been a lot better if retailers had offered better deals earlier in the season."

Additional key results include: The most Americans in six years are not finished with their shopping at 43.6% versus 41.1% in 2010. Last week's survey showed that those not finished were unsure of what to buy at 52.8%, up from 18.4% the year before. As Mr. Beemer noted last week, retailers have not been aggressive enough in their final push and in directing consumers to what to buy.

Of American consumers who have not finished their shopping, the number-one reason that Americans reported to us is that they are working two to three jobs with no or little time to shop - at an all-time high of 34.9%. The reason they are working two to three jobs as reported is to purchase health insurance for their families.

As for the hot items this past weekend, toys led with a 35.6% share versus 31% last year. Computers sales are up big at 16.8% this past weekend versus 10.7% this same weekend last year. Walmart is up big in computers at 36.3% from 17.8% in 2015. TV sales are up slightly at 21.8% versus 20.1% with Walmart's share down to 22.9% compared to a much bigger 44.3% last year. Video games are up slightly at 32.6% last year compared to 35.2% this year. Walmart is way down in this category from 62.3% last year to 41.5% this year.

Self-gifting is at a 20-year high with 42.6% buying a gift for themselves. As Mr. Beemer has explained, “People are spending money this season because of the ‘Trump effect.’ A third of Americans who are spending more told us that they are doing so because they now believe after the election that things will get better. That third is a huge number; and that huge number is part of this new Trump-driven ‘positive attitude’ towards spending.”

Walmart led all stores with 41.4% of shoppers this past weekend, up significantly from 34% this time last year. Enclosed malls continued to see big seasonal growth this year from 21.3% who shopped in malls this time last year to 30.4% this year, in large part, as Mr. Beemer has explained, because mall-based stores offered better deals on children’s apparel.

The number of shoppers doing so online is down slightly from 54.7% of consumers last year at this time to 48.1% this year. Amazon is #1 but is down slightly with a 37.3% share versus 42.8% last year. And Walmart.com is up to 31.3% from 24.2% last year, a big jump. Ordering online and then picking up the items in a brick and mortar store is up slightly at 22.4% compared to 20% last year.

American consumers are also telling us that they are not willing to put up with shopping experiences that sap their time and/or energy. Over 40% of shoppers said in this survey that they experienced a store that was understaffed and nearly 30% of that number said they walked out without buying. This belongs to a trend that showed up in last week’s survey where consumers told us they were increasingly shopping at local stores instead of much larger ones because the lines at the latter stores were too long and they were unwilling to wait.

Consumers also told us that they believe, at 29.6%, that Kmart will go into bankruptcy next year.

“Retailers need to ‘wake up’ to what consumers are telling them,” said Mr. Beemer, “which is they want better deals earlier in the season and a shopping experience that is respectful to them, which in many cases, up until now, it has not been. Consumers are mad because they want to be able to get in and out of stores quickly.”

“We are predicting retail sales to be up between 2% and 3.5% this season - a good year but it could have been better.”

America’s Research Group has accurately predicted holiday season sales in 28 of the last 30 years within a half of one percent. ARG conducts the most comprehensive weekly surveys of the Christmas season.

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***For media on deadline, please call Britt Beemer directly at 843-345-0939***

The ARG research consisted of 802 telephone interviews December 16-18, 2016 with adults at ARG headquarters in Charleston, SC. The error factor is plus or minus 3.8%.

America's Research Group, one of the nation's foremost consumer research and strategic marketing firms, marked its 36<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015 and its 25<sup>th</sup> of doing these Christmas Surveys. CEO Britt Beemer is a key resource and advisor to leading brands and top retailers. He is author of *The Customer Rules*, published by McGraw-Hill. Britt Beemer is a winner of the American Business Award for Executive of the Year - Business Services and Company of the Year - Business Services.