

For Immediate Release

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**NEW AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP CHRISTMAS FORECAST REVEALS
AMERICANS STILL VERY CONSERVATIVE – ONLY 29.3% USING CREDIT CARDS
FOOD PRICES MAJOR INFLUENCE
BLACK FRIDAY BULLETIN! HUGE SHOPPING LEVELS FOR HDTVS
COMPUTER SALES TO SURGE
SMART PHONE UPDATE! FAR MORE AMERICANS TO USE THEM
TO COMPARE PRICES
OF THOSE WITH ONLINE ACCESS MORE WILL GO ONLINE
TO READ BLACK FRIDAY ADS – AT 63.1%!
SHOPPER HABITS LARGELY UNCHANGED
12.1% SAY ONLY BUYING NECESSITIES
14.3% TO SHOP ONLY WHEN GET PAID – UP FROM LAST YEAR**

*AS OF SUNDAY NOVEMBER 15 ONLY .5% FINISHED SHOPPING
41.1% NOT YET STARTED*

CHARLESTON, SC - November 18, 2015 – According to the second America's Research Group Christmas Shopping Forecast of the season, the mood of the American consumer is still surprisingly gloomy. “Americans seem very cautious and will wait until they see deals this year,” said Britt Beemer, Chairman and CEO. “Retailers can expect big crowds when they make ‘big offers’ but will be ‘retail museums’ if they don’t.”

Key survey results include: Food prices much bigger influence with 16.8% saying food costs ‘most definitely’ cut into holiday and Christmas shopping versus 9.5% last year. Those with online access remains steady at about 90%; of those more will go online this season to look at Black Friday ads at 63.1% this year versus 55.8% last year. The top reasons for the online increase: 16.2% say “each year, shop more” compared to 11.7% last year; and 14.1% say “easier than going out to shop”, up from 11.8% last year. Of shoppers not planning to shop Black Friday, a whopping 75.3% report they will nevertheless look at Thanksgiving Day newspaper inserts with 53.4% of that group reporting that if they find an early bird special that they want, they will change their minds and shop anyway.

More survey results regarding Black Friday: as of Sunday November 15 only .5% report being finished with their shopping and 41.1% say they have not yet begun. Perhaps most important for

Black Friday, Americans are cautious with 29.3% using credit cards, the same as last year, which was also cautious shopping-wise. Shopper habits are close to unchanged as well with 12.1% reporting only buying necessities this year versus 18.3% last year; 14.3% say they only shop when they get paid versus 9.6% last year.

As for hot products of the season, shopping levels for HDTVS will be “huge” with 19.4% of Americans planning to buy one this season versus 13.9% last year. Computer sales will also be very big with 16.3% of Americans planning to buy one this year versus 12.8% last year.

Deal “fever” has reached “fever pitch”. As the first ARG Christmas Forecast, out November 6, reported: More Americans, at 76.3%, want 60% off, a four-year high; and more Americans, at 67.2%, want 70% off, a five-year high. As for Black Friday weekend, of those shopping then, 71.1% say it’s very likely they will go for the early bird specials, up from 69.6% last year. And of those purchasing a big ticket item that weekend, 58.7% say it will be the first thing they buy – a five-year high.

And more Americans will compare prices with their smart phones this season at 37.5% this year versus 25.3% last year.

As CEO Mr. Beemer said of the results: “Consumers will shop Black Friday because TVs and computers will be highlighted and they will be going for big deals on these products. If retailers have the right deals and/or offers, we could see an explosion in Black Friday sales and that current ‘caution’ will be ‘thrown to the wind’.”

ARG holds the position that retail sales for the season will be down from -.8% to -1.5%.

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

The ARG research consisted of 1001 telephone interviews November 12-16, 2015 with adults at ARG headquarters in Charleston, SC. The error factor is plus or minus 3.8%. The next ARG shopping survey will be conducted November 26-29, 2015. The surveys will continue every week through the shopping season.

America’s Research Group, one of the nation’s foremost consumer research and strategic marketing firms, marks its 36th anniversary in 2015 and its 25th 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.