

For Immediate Release

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**NEW AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP CHRISTMAS FORECAST REVEALS
CONSUMERS INCREASINGLY CAUTIOUS THIS SEASON WITH
41.2% REPORTING THEY DID NOT BUY THIS WEEK VERSUS 28.2% LAST YEAR
THOSE USING CREDIT CARDS MORE THAN THEY PLANNED
IS DOWN THIS YEAR TO 34.5% FROM 56% LAST YEAR
A YEAR AGO 60.2% WERE DONE SHOPPING FOR THEIR CHILDREN'S GIFTS
VERSUS 46.4% THIS YEAR
LOWER GAS PRICES HELPING SOME WITH 34.3% SPENDING SOME MORE
AMAZON THE BIG ONLINE WINNER**

CHARLESTON, SC – December 14, 2014 – According to the America's Research Group (ARG) Christmas Shopping Forecast, the fifth of the season, more consumers reported that they did not buy this week at 41.2% versus 28.2% last year. And those using credit cards more than they planned is way down this year to 34.5% from 56% last year. “Shoppers are extremely conservative and cautious this season,” said ARG Chairman and CEO Britt Beemer. “They are spending their money only after careful consideration.”

The one bright spot are gas prices. 34.3% said they are spending some more because of lower gas prices while 2.1% reported spending much more.

Gift cards are still the hot gift item of 2014 – up from 44.8% last year to 55.7% this year. “This season we are seeing consumers go into the likes of grocery stores and buying gift cards from their displays. This quick one-stop-shopping is a key trend; it is also part of the overall consumer caution.”

The caution also played out in the fact that 60.2% reported being done shopping for their children's gifts last year versus 46.4% this year. As Chairman Britt Beemer said, consumers are clearly waiting for bigger deals on their children's apparel closer to Christmas.

Results also included: Spending for children is up this year at 41.4% spending more versus 27.5% spending more last year. The major driver for this is the Xbox One. Only 27.8% bought more gifts than intended this year versus 26.6% last year; online shopping is up slightly this year at 42.5% versus 40.1% last year with Amazon the big winner with their market share rising to 42.1% this year from 28.7% last year; .

“The question of the season now,” said Britt Beemer, “is whether retailers will offer deals to draw consumers to stores before Christmas; and the many gift card holders back to stores right after Christmas. They will need to offer much bigger bargains to get the consumer’s attention. The consumer is spending less and there are fewer shoppers but at least with the right deals the consumer will be in the store.”

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

The ARG research consisted of 1000 telephone interviews with consumers conducted December 12-14, 2014 at ARG headquarters in Charleston, SC. The error factor is plus or minus 3.8%. The next ARG shopping survey will be conducted December 19-21, 2014. 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 35th anniversary in 2014. 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.