

For Immediate Release

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**NEW AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP CHRISTMAS FORECAST REVEALS
HIGHEST NUMBER OF SHOPPERS NOT BUYING AT ALL OVER WEEKEND
IN RECENT YEARS AT 44.6% OF FAMILIES**

TOP THREE GIFT CATEGORIES OF HOLIDAY SEASON

**TOYS AT 32.2% - ELECTRONICS AT 24.5% - CHILDREN'S CLOTHES AT 17.2%
19.3% BOUGHT A TV THIS SEASON WITH WALMART AT 47.7% MARKET SHARE
GIFT CARDS ARE UP FOR SEASON FROM 46.4% LAST YEAR TO 57.1% THIS
27.6% OF PARENTS CUT BACK SPENDING FOR EACH OTHER
WALMART OWNS THE WEEKEND GETTING 62.4% OF SHOPPERS TO BUY
ONLINE SHOPPING LEVELS UP FOR ENTIRE SEASON AT 45.6%**

CHARLESTON, SC – December 22, 2014 – According to the America's Research Group (ARG) Christmas Shopping Forecast, the sixth and last of the season, more consumers reported that they did not make a purchase at all this weekend at 44.6% versus 32.9% last year, 39.3% in 2012 and 29% in 2010. And mall traffic continues to be way down with only 20.4% of consumers reporting going to a mall this weekend. “Shoppers continue to be extremely conservative and cautious this season,” said ARG Chairman and CEO Britt Beemer. “Retailers are going to be very disappointed with weekend shoppers because 44.6% of families did not buy anywhere.”

The one bright spot was Walmart, which drew 62.4% of weekend shoppers into its stores with Target a very distant second with 19% of shoppers.

Gift cards are still the hot gift item of 2014 – up from 46.4% last year to 57.1% this year. “This season we are continuing to see consumers go into neighborhood stores and buying gift cards from their displays,” said CEO Britt Beemer. “This quick one-stop-shopping is a key trend. It is also part of the overall consumer caution in that consumers can control the amounts they spend and there are no shipping and handling costs involved. They also save time which can involve money as well. And there's no stress involved because they don't have to wait in long lines.”

The caution also played out in the fact that only 63.1% of parents report being finished with their children's gift-shopping; and 27.6% of parents report cutting back on spending for each other in order to buy their children Christmas gifts. Only 78.4% of families have completed 75% or more of their Christmas shopping. As Chairman Britt Beemer said, parents are clearly waiting for bigger deals on their children's apparel closer to Christmas.

Results also included: The top three gift categories of the 2014 Christmas season are toys at 32.2%, electronics at 24.5% and children's clothes at 17.2%. 19.3% bought a TV this season with Walmart at a 47.7% market share and Best Buy a very distant second at 11.4%. 36.7% bought video games this season with Walmart at 54.5% and Best Buy and Target each a very distant second at 10.9%. Online shopping levels are up for the season at 45.6% from 37.8% last year and 41.7% in 2012.

“The question of the season as it comes to a close,” said Britt Beemer, “and the big issue is that consumers’ having no time has doubled in the last two years so the question is, of those Americans that have shopping to do, will they be able to find time in their work weeks to shop when they cannot find time over the weekend? This is the big question.”

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

The ARG research consisted of 1000 telephone interviews with consumers conducted December 19-21, 2014 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, 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.