

**For Immediate Release**

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**NEW AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP CHRISTMAS FORECAST REVEALS  
MORE CONSUMERS HAVE COMPLETED 75% OR MORE  
OF HOLIDAY SHOPPING - AN ALL-TIME HIGH  
COMP STORE SALES FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON PREDICTED AT 3.2% -  
RESULT OF SHOPPERS SPENDING LESS  
GIFT CARD SALES IN LOWER \$16-\$20 RANGE DOUBLE  
FEWER CONSUMERS BUY APPAREL –  
PART OF MAJOR HOLIDAY TREND  
18.8% OF PARENTS SAY WORRY ABOUT COLLEGE COSTS  
CUT INTO HOLIDAY SPENDING VERSUS 4.9% IN 2013 - A RECORD  
CYBER MONDAY SHOPPING LEVELS SAME THIS YEAR AS LAST**

CHARLESTON, SC – December 8, 2014 – According to the America's Research Group (ARG) Christmas Shopping Forecast, the fourth of the season, more consumers reported that they have completed 75% or more of their holiday shopping at 42.6%. Fewer shoppers shopped this past weekend at 58% versus 63.7% in 2013 “because Black Friday drained many shoppers of available cash to spend,” said ARG Chairman and CEO Britt Beemer. And the number of shoppers who did not make a purchase this week went up to 45.9% from 35.4% last year for the same reason.

Key results also included: More shoppers expect to be done shopping on the weekend before Christmas at 61.8% versus 56.9% last year; gift cards exploded in sales this season at 42.2% versus 32.2% last year; in addition, the number of gift cards in the lower \$16-\$20 range doubled from 6.8% last year to 12.6% this year; and, overall, 26.6% expect to spend more this season versus 16.2% last year but those who expect to spend less is up from 21.8% last year to 30.6% this year.

The loser this season is still the enclosed mall, where only 29.4% of consumers shopped the weekend before this one – an all-time low. Those who reported giving apparel as gifts is down this year to 40.8% from 47% last year. According to Chairman Britt Beemer, consumers did not shop malls because malls did not provide the hot category of the season – electronics, notably flat panel TVs at bargain-basement prices.

Cyber Monday shopper levels were flat at 32.4% last year and 32% this year. Consumers who reported shopping more online this past weekend went from 23% to 23.9% this year; and those who reported going online less this past weekend is up to 18.4% this year from 11.1% last year.

More significantly, there was a big jump in parents reporting that they are worried about saving for their children's college educations; and are therefore cutting back on holiday spending at 18.8% this year versus 4.9% last year – an all-time high. More parents also finished shopping for their children's gifts this year at 34.4% versus 31.2% last year.

Fewer TVs sold this week at 7.5% versus 10.5% last year; fewer computers were purchased this week as well at 5.5% this year versus 10.3% last year; and video games were flat at 22% last year versus 22.1% this year. There were also fewer impulse items purchased this season so far at 35% versus 38.6% last year.

“The big question of the season now,” said Britt Beemer, “is whether retailers will offer deals to draw the many gift card holders back to stores right after Christmas. Overall, the savvy shoppers who shopped Black Friday are holding back for bigger deals and bigger discounts; and with so many done shopping and fewer shoppers in the stores overall, savvy retailers will need to offer much bigger bargains to get the consumer's attention.”

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

The ARG research consisted of 1000 telephone interviews with consumers conducted December 5-7, 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 12-14, 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 35<sup>th</sup> 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.