

For Immediate Release

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**NEW AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP POST BLACK FRIDAY
RETAIL FORECAST REVEALS
AMERICANS STILL VERY CONSERVATIVE – ONLY 29.3% USING CREDIT CARDS
FOOD PRICES MAJOR INFLUENCE
BIGGEST INFLUENCE ON RETAIL THIS SEASON: CONSUMERS KEEPING
SHOPPING LISTS AT 65% WITH 80% STICKING TO THEM
40% OF APPAREL SALES IN LUXURY APPAREL STORES TIED
TO HOLIDAY PARTIES –
PREDICT HUGE DROP AS COMPANIES CUT BACK**

**BLACK FRIDAY WEEKEND RESULTS:
WEEKEND SHOPPING LEVELS DOWN 16% - NUMBER OF BUYERS DOWN 14.4%
67% PRIMARILY BOUGHT EARLY BIRD SPECIALS
SEVEN-YEAR HIGH FOR FLAT SCREEN TVs, COMPUTERS, VIDEO GAMES
DISCOUNT STORES RULE AT 61%
HUGE LEAP IN ONLINE SHOPPING WITH 40.4% OF WEEKEND SHOPPERS
SAYING HAVE GONE ONLINE SINCE NOVEMBER 1
HUGE LEAP IN THOSE GOING ONLINE FOR WHAT CAN'T FIND IN STORES
26.5% SAY WAITING FOR CYBER MONDAY – SIX-YEAR HIGH**

CHARLESTON, SC - According to the latest America's Research Group Christmas Shopping Forecast, which includes Black Friday and Black Friday weekend results and predictions for the rest of the season, the mood of the American consumer is to save money at all costs with 65% saying they used a shopping list this season versus 30% last year. "Americans are very cautious this year. As a result, they are using the one tool – the shopping list - that is the bane of every retailer's existence. Of those who keep these lists, 80% stick to them," said Britt Beemer, Chairman and CEO. "Retailers can expect crowds on the weekend before Christmas – the next big shopping period - only if they have the big-time deals that these consumers are adding to these lists – and this year Americans tell us that means 60% or 70% off." More Americans also said they would compare prices using their phones at 37.5% this year versus 25.3% last year.

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%. 36.8% went online to find something they could not find in a store and 40.1% have gone online since November 1. 26.5% said they were waiting for Cyber Monday, a six-year high. 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. Amazon shopping was up in November - 30.4% versus 24.1% last year.

More survey results from Black Friday and Black Friday weekend include: Weekend shopper levels down 16% with number of buyers down 14.4%. Shoppers went to fewer stores at 82.9% going to four or less versus 70.2% last year; 61.1% went to discount stores on Thursday and Friday, making these stores the “rulers” of the season. Americans are cautious with 29.3% using credit cards, the same as last year, which was also a cautious year. 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, Black Friday weekend saw a seven-year high for flat screen TVs, computers and video games. The overall retail winners are Walmart and Best Buy (on Thursday and Friday Walmart had a 64% share for flat screen TVs alone).

Deal “fever” has reached an even higher pitch with 80.4% of Thursday and Friday shoppers feeling that the early bird deals would not be offered later in the season. 61.4% said these deals were “too good to pass.” 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. And Walmart took a real “hit over the bow” of Amazon’s business by offering their early bird specials online all day Thursday with actual in-store hours not beginning until 6 pm that day.

As CEO Mr. Beemer said: “The next wave will come when online retailers offer free shipping and brick and mortar stores offer 60% and 70% off with the same deals available online. The next wave is usually the weekend before Christmas.”

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 701 panel back interviews of consumers saying they would shop or might shop over Black Friday weekend and it took place November 26-29, 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 December 4-6, 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.