

**For Immediate Release**

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**NEW AMERICA'S RESEARCH GROUP CHRISTMAS FORECAST REVEALS  
AMERICANS MORE BARGAIN DRIVEN THAN EVER  
HIGHEST NUMBER *EVER* TO SHOP THANKSGIVING NIGHT -  
TO BE 60% AS BIG AS BLACK FRIDAY!  
MASSIVE CROWDS BLACK FRIDAY  
AMERICANS USING SMARTPHONES TO SCAN FOR MEGA BARGAINS  
IN RECORD NUMBERS  
AMERICANS AD-DRIVEN AS NEVER BEFORE - MANY MORE WILL SHOP  
IF OFFERED MEGA THANKSGIVING DAY DEALS  
CASH STILL KING  
GAS PRICES AFFECT HOLIDAY SPENDING**

CHARLESTON, SC - According to the America's Research Group Christmas Shopping Forecast released today, Black Friday will give retailers a boost with 43.2% of Americans reporting that they will shop Black Friday. But the big news is that the night before Black Friday from 6 pm until midnight, 29.5% of Americans say they will shop for early bird specials. That means that 60% as many people will be out Thanksgiving Night as will be out on Black Friday, presaging massive crowds from 6 pm Thursday through Black Friday. In the Survey, consumers looked at it as an extended Black Friday.

"Crowds will be massive this year," said Britt Beemer, Chairman and CEO of America's Research Group, "the most important aspect of which is that Americans are more bargain-driven than ever. 29.5% of Americans tell us that they will be out before Black Friday - on Thanksgiving night - looking for mega deals and creating a shopping 'spree' second only to Black Friday. It could appear to be even more 'crazy' since it's packed into a four or five-hour time period.

"If retailers don't continue to come through with mega deals after Black Friday, in the first half of December, consumers tell us they will 'hibernate' until the last five days before Christmas - what we're calling Christmas Friday through Monday - in order to get what they believe will be the biggest bargains of the entire season - the 50%, 60% and 70% off. We're calling this 'Christmas Hibernation' and it could be the first-ever as well."

According to Beemer, "The Survey also shows that advertising - online and off - will be more important in terms of the massive crowds expected Thursday night through Black Friday. Even among those who said they will not shop Black Friday (40%), when asked if they see an insert offering a mega deal on Thanksgiving Day, will they change their minds, a whopping 38% said 'yes'; this could increase the already massive crowds of Thursday and Friday bargain hunters by an additional 20 % more shoppers.

"Americans also tell us they are looking at online ads for the biggest Black Friday bargains of their lives in record numbers and earlier than ever before," said Beemer. "32.9% of Americans have already gone online to look (versus on 14% last year!); and, of that early group, 54% said they are now more likely to shop Black Friday. This is the first Survey to show that Early Online Viewers could just be the most important new shopping group for retailers to target.

"In addition, Americans who scanned prices to look for the best bargains last year are proving to be a formidable shopping force this year as well. Of those who used their smart phones to scan prices last year, a whopping 64.4% - twice as many as a year ago (33.6%) - report that they will use them to scan prices in order to find the mega bargains. Watch out for this group of consumers as well.

"Bargain fever has affected American shopping behavior across the board," said Beemer. "But again, retailers must maintain an aggressive advertising strategy focused on mega-discounts if they want to see more shoppers into their store than they did overall last Christmas season and to satisfy the record hunger for bargains. This is key as there are other trends afoot: in the wake Hurricane Sandy and the Election, Americans last week told us that they are making more homemade gifts than ever before; they are buying for few people (five or less); and that most of their gifts will be small. This week they told us in record numbers that that they will spend less due to heat and gas prices (22.1% this year versus 10.8% last year); they will pay for their Christmas gifts more by cash and check (37.9% this year versus 31.8% last year); and more Americans - 7.4% - told us that they 'can't afford to shop at all,' up from 4.8% last year.

"The outgrowth of the recession is that more Americans are telling us that they are waiting to get paid to shop," said Beemer. "18% this year, up from 9.6% last year. This is a huge leap and tells us that Americans go out to shop when they get paid - and not a day before. This has already been occurring for non-holiday shopping but is new as a major Christmas Shopping Season trend."

Christmas retail sales should rise 1.8% to 2.8% this year.

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

The ARG research consisted of 1000 telephone interviewed November 15-16, 2012 at ARG headquarters in Charleston, SC. The error factor is plus or minus 3.8%. The next ARG shopping survey will be conducted November 25, 2012. 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, marked its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009. 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 2012 American Business Award for Executive of the Year - Business Services and Company of the Year - Business Services.