

Trends & Tudes

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Keeping you informed of current topics in youth and education research.

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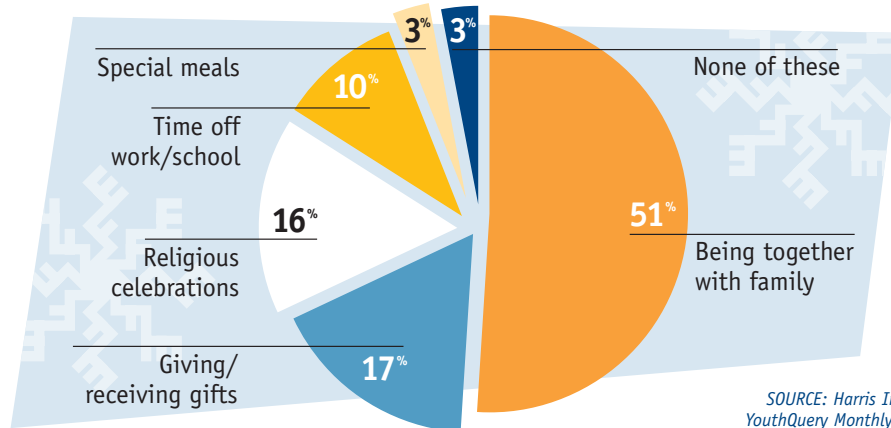
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'Tis the Season – For Being With Family

The holiday season is in full swing and along with it comes excitement, enthusiasm and some anxiousness among children and teens aged 8 to 18. Giving and receiving gifts, spending time with family, religious observances, school vacations. How do young people feel about some of the most common activities associated with the holidays?

To find out, we placed questions about the holiday season in our YouthQuerySM omnibus service. Results indicate that the holidays are a time of great joy and anticipation among the young. As the chart below shows, the opportunity to spend time with family tops all other responses. Tweens/teens told us, in fact, that gift exchanges and religious observances are not the most important aspect of the holiday season.

What Do You Feel Is Most Important About The Holidays?



SOURCE: Harris Interactive YouthQuery Monthly Omnibus

Almost all respondents (96%) aged 8 to 18 plan to give presents to others this holiday season and the majority of young people feel gift giving helps make the holidays special. Of those who are giving gifts, 80% are going to buy them rather than make them. Where will they buy them? At the mall, of course! When it comes to holiday shopping, 78% of girls and 75% of boys said they are going to head to the mall. About one in five (20%) expect to purchase a gift online.

This should be a strong holiday season among youth – 42% tell us they will spend more on gifts than they did last year while half (50%) tell us they will spend about the same as last year. Those buying gifts will buy an average of about 10 presents and spend an average of \$116. Average spending on holiday gifts increases with age: 8 to 9-year-olds will spend an average of \$52 while 16 to 18-year-olds will spend an average of \$182. Harris Interactive estimates that holiday spending among 8 to 18-year-olds this holiday season will total \$5.1 billion.

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YOUTH AND EDUCATION

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Editorial: Our Take On It

by John Geraci

VP Youth & Education Research

The holiday season is a critical time of year for many youth marketers. Spending on youth and by youth is at its peak, and many a marketing plan succeeds or fails based on these few weeks. Harris Interactive conducted a short poll to provide a youth perspective on the season. Today's young people live in an increasingly commercial society, and the commercialism reaches a crescendo this time of year. How are children coping with the myriad of messages they are receiving? What is the role of commercialism in the context of the holidays?

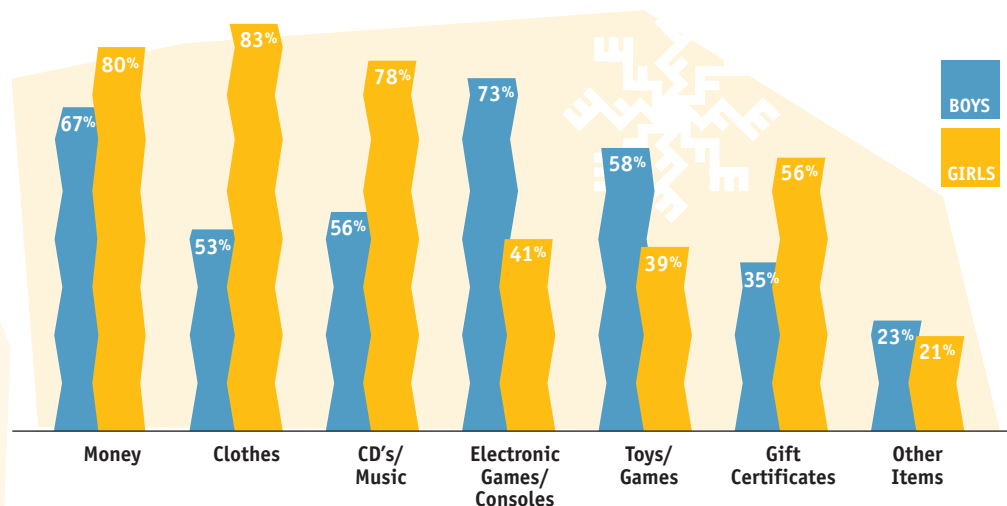
It is comforting to hear in our poll that young people tell us they place commercialism surrounding the holidays in a healthy perspective. Yes, they look forward to giving and receiving gifts. And they will spend substantial amounts of their own money (more than \$5 billion in total) this holiday season. Still they tell us that being with family is the most important aspect of the holidays and that they do not feel pressured to buy more gifts than they can afford. To them, gift exchanges add to the excitement and anticipation of the holidays. Holiday commercialism is an important supporting element of the family gatherings during the season. The poll results suggest that holiday shopping and gift exchanges add to the enjoyment of the season rather than detract from it.

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Giving gifts is popular among young people, but so is the idea of receiving gifts! A majority 93% tells us that they expect to receive gifts this holiday season. As the chart below shows, boys and girls have different types of items on their holiday wish lists. Highest on the list for girls were clothes, money and music. For boys, electronic games/consoles, money, and toys/games were the most commonly hoped for items.

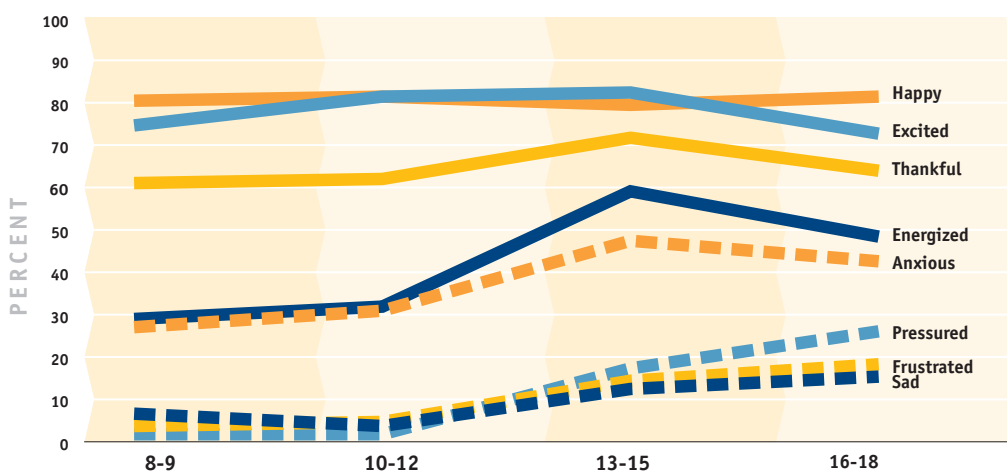
What Types Of Gifts Would You Most Like To Receive This Holiday Season?



SOURCE: Harris Interactive YouthQuery Monthly Omnibus

Today's younger generation has told us they like to give, receive and spend money on gifts during the holidays. But what is their general feeling about the holiday season and what it represents? As the chart below shows, the most common emotions young people are feeling are positive—happiness, excitement and thankfulness. The chart also shows that some negative emotions increase with age. Older teens are more likely to feel pressured/stressed, frustrated, or sad. The holidays may create a certain amount of stress and anxiety, but positive emotions dominate the feelings of today's youth during this time of year. They are excited about celebrating the holidays.

How Does The Holiday Season Make You Feel?



SOURCE: Harris Interactive YouthQuery Monthly Omnibus

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Popular items this season will be clothes for girls and gaming/consoles for boys. Most gift shopping by youth will be done in traditional outlets—in the mall or in a bricks-and-mortar store. Online shopping is growing—with 20% telling us they plan to buy online (25% of the boys, 14% of the girls). We've shown in many previous studies that shopping is a social activity for young people, so we expect online shopping to supplement, and not supplant, traditional shopping.

Celebrating the religious aspects of the holidays is secondary in importance to tweens and teens. Just 16% told us that religion was the most important aspect of the season. Young people say that religion is about equal to gift giving in importance.

Anxiety around the holidays is mostly confined to older teens. It is clear that pressure to purchase more gifts than you can afford, stress, depression and anger around the holidays builds with age. That said, the predominant emotions being felt by young people are positive ones.

The poll did give a sense that young people feel the holiday season is too long. We asked, in an open-ended fashion, what should be the earliest date during the year that retailers put up their holiday displays. The median response was November 19th. It seems that the holiday season officially kicks off in the minds of young people just before Thanksgiving, but certainly not in September or October.

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Recent Research for Public Release

From time to time, the Harris Interactive Youth Research team is fortunate to work with media, leading foundations and non-profit organizations, and we often are able to release the results of these studies publicly.

MetLife Survey Shows Students Need More From School, Home and Community

MetLife recently released the results of *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 2002: Student Life—School, Home and Community*. The survey, conducted by Harris Interactive, explores the factors and forces at work in students' lives that encourage or inhibit their success in and out of school. Results of this survey—the 19th in an annual series—show that students' lives at school, at home and in the community are closely related. This year's survey also underscores that responsibility for education does not belong to schools alone; however, educators could serve students better by doing more to understand students' interests, needs, and lives outside of school. Key findings include:

- Teachers are nearly twice as likely as are students to believe that their school is preparing students extremely well to go to college (29% vs. 15%).
- Only 18% of students believe that teachers respect all students; 24% believe that teachers are interested in what's best for all students.
- 54% of students wish for more time with their parents.
- Failing and nearly failing students are twice as likely to never eat breakfast as "A" students (31% vs. 16%) and are more likely to get fewer than seven hours of sleep on a school night (43% vs. 33%).
- Students who get A's in school are more likely than those who get D's and F's to participate in sports (56% vs. 26%), dance and music programs (30% vs. 8%), drama programs (25% vs. 3%), or to read for fun at least a few times a week (46% vs. 17%).

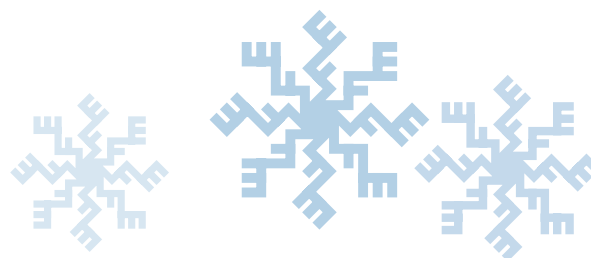
The complete survey is available at www.metlife.com.

Professional Football Widens Its Lead Over Baseball as Nation's Favorite Sport, According to Harris Interactive Research

Auto Racing, Basketball, Golf, Hockey and Soccer Are All More Popular Than They Used To Be

When asked to pick their favorite sport, the largest number of adults who follow sports selected professional football (27%), followed by baseball (14%), men's professional basketball (11%) and auto racing (10%). Pro football's lead over baseball has widened from seven points in 1994 to 13 points this year. In 1985, football and baseball were virtually equal (at 24% and 23%, respectively).

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Our poll results made us think about *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. In this story, Charlie Brown finds himself dejected at Christmas time, searching for the true meaning of the season amidst the glitz and commercialism of a modern society. Charlie Brown found his answer in a Bible passage. Our poll shows that today's youth have found their answer close to home – in their family. Reviewing our results, we couldn't help thinking that youth regard the holidays with better perspective than many adults. It is only when they approach being adult in age that negative emotions regarding the holidays begin to surface. It is truly a great time of year to be young.

At Harris Interactive, we'd like to wish all of you the best this holiday season!

Contact Us:

To discuss this newsletter or your upcoming research project, call

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Since 1985, *The Harris Poll* has tracked the percentage of people who follow various sports and has asked them to identify their favorite sport. Over the last 17 years, several sports have attracted an increased number of fans:

- Professional football, up from 59% to 60%
- Men's professional basketball, up from 32% to 40%
- Auto racing, up from 21% to 31%
- Golf, up from 20% to 29%
- Hockey, up from 14% to 18%
- Soccer, up from 10% to 18%
- Men's college basketball, up from 32% to 33%

Sports that have fewer fans today than in 1985 include:

- Baseball, down from 54% to 46%
- College football, down from 47% to 45%
- Track and field, down from 21% to 18%
- Horse racing, down from 21% to only 12%
- Bowling, down from 18% to 13%

These are the results of *The Harris Poll*, a nationwide telephone survey conducted by Harris Interactive among a sample of 1,011 adults from September 19 through 23, 2002.

Ask a Question...

Have a burning question you would like to ask kids and teens? Here's your chance to submit a free question for our upcoming YouthQuery youth omnibus. Just send us an email with your suggestion. We will pick one question each month and then publish the results in the next issue of this newsletter.

...Get an answer

Doug Hall from the United States Olympic Committee submitted the following question:

For Each Sporting Event Below, Please Indicate How Much You Like The Event

