

# HERE'S WHAT HOLIDAY SHOPPERS ACTUALLY DID IN 2023

Black Friday still reigns, and big boxes dominate. Here's what retailers need to know to prep for the holidays next year.

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GAME CHANGERS



## KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1. Shopping time:** Recognizing that the afternoon is a popular shopping time, retailers should strategize their staffing, promotions and in-store events around this peak period.
- 2. Staffing:** While most shoppers felt staffing levels were adequate, retailers should ensure there are enough staff during peak times to assist shoppers, handle requests, and manage checkouts efficiently.
- 3. Clear pricing:** Retailers should ensure that pricing is clearly marked to avoid confusion or missing sales.
- 4. Stock availability:** Ensuring items are in stock is crucial. Retailers should focus on their supply chain and inventory management to prevent out of stocks, especially for popular items.
- 5. Promotional signage:** Retailers need to ensure that their promotional signage is noticeable, and the offers are relevant to their shoppers.

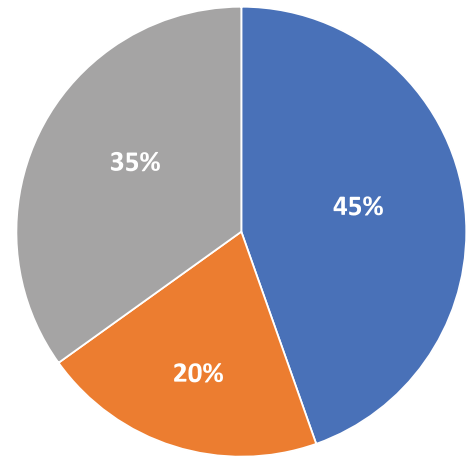
Despite inflation-boosted prices, continued supply chain disruptions, and the transformation of what consumers expect from their favorite retail brands, one in three U.S. consumers told Ipsos they [planned to increase their holiday shopping budget this year.](#)

So how are retailers meeting the moment this holiday season? Ipsos conducted a holiday shopping study surveying 832 members of our proprietary mystery shopper panel to see just what they experienced in retail stores between late November and early December.



## Where and when to meet your holiday shopping customers

For starters, there is strong alignment around where customers shopped, with one in four panel participants saying their most recent holiday shopping stop was at Walmart (25%), followed by Target (9%), Kohl's (7%) and Macy's (3%). But that doesn't mean these are the only places people are shopping – there were a total of 191 brands mentioned as the most recent in-store shopping stops, and just over 2% of all store visits were to local, independently owned retail stores.



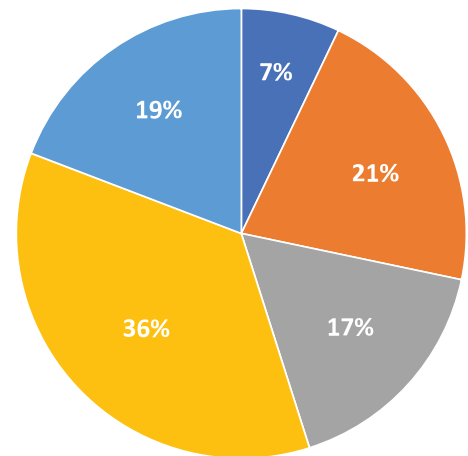
- Before Black Friday
- Black Friday (November 24)
- After Black Friday

While shoppers have more options to get deals earlier and later in the holiday season than they used to, Black Friday is still a critically important shopping day for in-person retailers: 20% of all holiday shopping visits in the 2023 holiday season occurred on that date, as of early December.



## When should retailers staff the heaviest

Our data suggests all hands should be on deck in the afternoon, when more than one in three people (36%) say they shopped. But a good portion of our panel also liked to shop early in the day – 28% shopped before 11 a.m., and (7%) shopped before 9 am. And of those who went early, the vast majority suggested that it was either much less or less crowded than they expected (70%).



- Early Morning (before 9am)
- Morning (9 - 11 am)
- Lunch (11am - 1pm)
- Afternoon (1 - 5pm)
- Evening (5pm or later)

Many retailers indicated that increasing staffing levels was going to be important this season, not only to support increased customer traffic, but [also as a hedge against shoplifting](#). And some of our shoppers have noticed a difference compared to the rest of the year: A sizable portion (33%) noticed more staff in stores for the holiday season. And despite continued labor challenges in retail, almost three in five (58%) noticed no reduction in staffing levels during their holiday shopping.

## Clear pricing and signage: A win for the bottom line

Even with increased staffing, many stores don't have enough staff to engage every customer who is shopping, so pricing must be clearly marked to ensure shoppers have confidence to put things in their cart. The good news from our study was that most respondents (79%) said the price for their intended items was clearly marked, and they did not require any assistance to understand the price. However, a small percentage of shoppers (5%) had to ask about the price before they bought an item because it was not marked. And to substantiate the importance of clearly marked merchandise, 2% chose not to make the purchase because they just couldn't tell what the price of an item was – a small number, but one that could nevertheless be meaningful to retailers' bottom line.

The majority of our shoppers surveyed (72%) found it easy to locate items they were looking for and, thankfully, those items were in stock. However, there were some shoppers who had difficulty and frustration; 17% found the items they were shopping for easily, but they were not in stock: More than one in eight items that our shoppers were looking to buy were simply not available to purchase.

A significant portion of respondents (36%) noticed promotional signage, but the promotion was not relevant to them. This could indicate a mismatch between the promotions being offered and the needs or interests of consumers. Additionally, 26% of respondents did not notice any promotional signage at all. These findings suggest that retailers may need to work on making their promotional signage more noticeable and ensuring that the offers they promote are relevant to their holiday shoppers.

## How to succeed

Overall consumer spending for the holidays in 2023 is predicted to be \$957.3 to \$966.6 billion, [according to the National Retail Federation](#) – a 3 to 4% increase over 2022. To capture their fair share of this growth, retailers should ensure that they have adequate staffing levels across the entire holiday period (not just Black Friday), clearly marked pricing, relevant promotional offers throughout the store, and be focused on supply chain issues that might impact in-stock conditions of popular products.

Want to track your performance and better prepare for the holiday shopping season in 2024? Reach out to the Ipsos Channel Performance team to discuss our holiday shopping preparation audit and mystery shopping solutions.



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