

Step Aside, Santa: Online Shopping's on the Rise

Step back, Santa: The number of Americans who plan to buy holiday gifts on the Internet has nearly tripled this year, to more than one out of every six adults.

Eighteen percent in a new ABC News survey say they'll buy Christmas or other holiday gifts online this year, compared to just seven percent who say they did so last year. That's an increase of nearly 22 million individuals in the world of Internet commerce.

The holiday shopping season, a make-or-break time for most retailers, traditionally begins after Thanksgiving. It's especially critical this year for online merchants, hoping their investment in this new channel can draw enough buyers to produce profits.

This survey suggests ultimate success – not only because of the extraordinary rate of growth in online buying, but also because these shoppers seem to have money: In households with annual incomes over \$50,000, holiday buying online soars to 32 percent, or nearly one in three adults.

	Buying online this year	Bought online last year
All Americans	18%	7
Income \$50,000+	32%	12
Income under \$50,000	10	4

The split is very similar among education groups. (Education is closely correlated with income.) Among people who haven't gone beyond high school (half the public), just eight percent say they'll buy gifts online this year. Among those who've earned a college degree, online buying soars to 36 percent.

DIVISIONS – There are other divisions in online shopping. It's most popular among young adults; a quarter of them say they'll be buying holiday gifts online. That falls off sharply among their elders, to just five percent of retirement-aged adults.

There also are regional differences; online holiday shopping is most popular in the Northeast – twice as popular as in the South. These age and regional differences are far sharper now than in online buying last year.

	Buying online this year	Bought online last year
All Americans	18%	7
Age 18-34	25%	8
35-49	19	6
50-64	14	8
65+	5	2
Northeast	27%	8
West	20	7
Midwest	16	5
South	13	7

One area, though, shows much less division – the sexes. This year 20 percent of men say they'll buy holiday gifts online; so will nearly as many women, 16 percent.

METHODOLOGY - This ABC News.com survey was conducted by telephone Nov. 17-21, 1999, among a random national sample of 1,012 adults. The results have a three-point error margin. Fieldwork by ICR-International Communications Research of Media, Pa.

Analysis by Gary Langer.

ABC News polls can be found at ABCNEWS.com on the Internet at:

<http://www.abcnews.com/sections/us/PollVault/PollVault.html>

25. Did you use the Internet to buy Christmas or other holiday gifts last year, or not?

	Yes	No	No opin.
11/21/99	7	93	*

26. Will you use the Internet to buy Christmas or other holiday gifts this year, or not?

	Yes	No	No opin.
11/21/99	18	79	3