

Most Americans Plan To Celebrate The Upcoming Winter Holidays At Home, In Small Groups And Virtually

Nearly Half of Consumers Express Optimism Nation Will Be Healthier in 2021 According to NCSolutions Consumer Survey

NEW YORK, Dec. 10, 2020 /PRNewswire/ -- Americans plan to approach the upcoming winter holidays inclusive of Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and New Year's Eve cautiously with health top of mind, as 79% say they plan to celebrate at home and 54% in smaller groups, according to a new consumer survey commissioned by NCSolutions (NCS).

WHEN DO AMERICANS BELIEVE THE NATION'S COLLECTIVE HEALTH WILL IMPROVE?

Looking ahead to 2021, consumers indicated optimism that the nation's health would improve. Almost half (45%) are optimistic that the conditions will improve, 32% think it will stay the same and 23% believe it will decline.

Optimistic Americans, those who believe the country's overall health situation will improve, also plan to celebrate the winter holidays at a greater rate (94%), according to the survey findings. In addition, more than one in four (26%) say they plan to spend more this year than they did last on food and in-home meals/celebrations, compared to 14% of those who feel the situation will stay the same and 17% who feel it will decline.

"Consumers are optimistic about the future and have warm associations with celebratory foods around the holiday season," said Linda Dupree, CEO, NCSolutions. "In general, holiday advertising planning is a critical time for brands. Consumers have emotional associations and loyalties to the products found at the tables and celebrations for all holidays throughout the year. In 2020, in particular, more people will be celebrating at home - and cooks are more likely to experiment with new dishes, ingredients and food items. It's an excellent moment for brands to connect and engage new and loyal buyers alike."

When asked when they thought the COVID-19 pandemic would subside in the U.S., Americans voiced a range of predictions including 68% who said 2021, 20% who are looking to 2022, and 12% who believe it will be 2023 or later.

NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATIONS WILL PROCEED BUT WITH FEWER PARTICIPANTS AND VIRTUAL ELEMENTS

Two-thirds (66%) of Americans plan to celebrate New Year's Eve this year, and 28% are planning to hold a virtual New Year's Eve celebration or participate in a virtual watch party. This rate is even higher among those who expect the country's health situation to improve: 35% of these optimistic Americans plan to have a virtual New Year's Eve celebration.

When looking for recipes or meal inspiration, these virtual celebrators plan to do the following:

- 61% plan to use social media
- 54% indicate they will use cooking websites
- 47% say they will watch TV

"The news that consumers are optimistic about 2021 is a powerful call-to-action for both retailers and CPG brands," Dupree said. "The consumer behavior changes we've seen in 2020 will be fundamental inputs to advertising plans in the first half of 2021. However, positive consumer sentiment paired with intentions to spend more on holiday celebrations and meals this season — as shown in our recent survey — is a reflection that collectively consumers see a light in these darker days of the pandemic. We all yearn and look forward to an era of less pandemic-focused living."

NOVEMBER 2020 CONSUMER PACKAGED GOODS SPENDING SLIGHTLY DOWN BUT HIGH COMPARED TO 2019

NCS purchase data—from sources across point of sale retail partners in grocery, drug, mass market, and ecommerce—reveals consumer packaged goods spending decreased slightly in November (1%) compared to October but remained 15% higher, year over year. While grocery purchasing is still up in a robust way compared to the pre-pandemic period, November had headwinds due to potentially smaller Thanksgiving gatherings in 2020. Grocery spending remains elevated at 22% during the Home-Confined Phase measured from March 22-November 30.

Top-selling CPG categories for November 2020 look a lot like those of November 2019, with a few exceptions: toilet paper now makes the top 20 list, ranked at #14 in total U.S. spend compared to #26 one year prior (consumers are starting to stock up). Upper respiratory medicine has dropped in rank as consumers stay inside and rely on their prior stocks. Top-growing categories year-over-year include the COVID necessities and comforts like hand sanitizer, premixed alcohol cocktails, shelf-stable breakfasts, frozen meat and a bevy of cleaning supplies like bleach, soap, and disinfectants.

ABOUT THE CONSUMER SURVEY

The online survey was fielded between November 27-29, 2020. It has 2,004 respondents, ages 18+, with the results weighted to be representative of the overall U.S. population (variables available upon request). NCS, the leading company for improving

advertising effectiveness for the consumer packaged goods ecosystem, provides data and regular insights to brands to help them optimize their advertising outreach and achieve improved return on advertising spend.

ABOUT NCS

NCSolutions (NCS) makes advertising work better. Our unrivaled data resources powered by leading providers combine with scientific rigor and leading-edge technology to empower the CPG ecosystem to create and deliver more effective advertising. With NCS's proven approach, brands are achieving continuous optimization everywhere ads appear, through purchase-based audience targeting and sales measurement solutions that have impacted over \$25 billion in media spend for our customers. NCS has offices in NYC, Chicago, Tampa, and Cincinnati. Visit us at ncksolutions.com or to learn more.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Additional insights from the NCSolutions omnibus survey are available to members of the media upon request. NCS CEO Linda Dupree and Chief Revenue Officer Lance Brothers are also available for print and broadcast interviews regarding the findings.

PRESS CONTACT:

Feintuch Communications
Henry Feintuch / Doug Wright
914-548-6924 / 201-952-6033
ncksolutions@feintuchpr.com

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