



Unwrapped: Perceptions of Winter Holiday Consumerism, Gift Giving and Waste

U.S. Survey Results

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**CENTER for
BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY**

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I. Executive Summary



Holidays are a time of joy, connection and tradition – but are often excessively wasteful. The way many Americans consume during times of celebration, especially around the winter holidays, harms the planet. For example, the amount of household waste in the United States in the month of December is 23% higher than in other months of the year.¹ But it's not just the extra trash that's a problem. All the fossil fuels, trees and other natural resources that go into producing unnecessary plastic toys, novelty gifts and wrapping paper make the winter holidays dreary for wildlife and the habitat they need to survive.

Holiday consumption also causes emotional and financial stress. A 2022 study conducted by Aflac found that the holidays are a time of increased anxiety for more than 50% of Americans.²

It doesn't have to be this way. Efforts to replace excessive holiday consumption and wasteful traditions with alternative gifts and Earth-friendly traditions are underway and can benefit both people and the planet. The Center for Biological Diversity's free Simplify the Holiday's campaign includes toolkits and tips for environmental professionals and the public to inspire long-term behavior change.

But to create the widespread change needed, it's important to understand the general public's perspectives on holiday waste and alternative gift giving and what inspires or holds them back from celebrating in a less wasteful way.

To gain this insight, in 2022 the Center conducted an online survey of the U.S. public to understand their perceptions about the environmental toll of the winter holiday season. The results of this survey highlight the benefits of giving alternative gifts and challenging cultural norms that influence material gift-giving behaviors. The survey also revealed generational differences in gift-giving trends. The results of this survey will be used to inform future Center campaigns.

II. Key Findings



Holiday Materialism:

- 90% of Americans agree that they wish the holidays were less materialistic. This is up from 78% in 2005.
- 88% of Americans agree that the holidays should be more about family and caring for others. This sentiment has remained consistent over time.

Exchanging Gifts:

- 84% of Americans agree that giving and receiving gifts is awarded too much importance. This is up from 74% in 2005.
- 67% of survey respondents reported that they are very likely/likely to consider the environmental impacts of a gift before purchasing it.
- 3 out of 4 survey respondents (76%) said they are very likely/likely to shop at a local small business for gifts.

Alternative and Secondhand Gifts:

- When referring to a gift that isn't purchased new from a large online retailer or through a brick-and-mortar big box store, the terms "alternative gift" and "eco-friendly gift" resonate most strongly with people (39% and 32% respectively).
- Saving money was the primary perceived benefit of buying secondhand gifts (41%).
- In relation to alternative gift giving, over half of the respondents are very likely/likely to:
 - Give gifts of time or skill (59%)
 - Give secondhand gifts (56%)
 - Give handmade gifts purchased from a business (69%)
 - Make their own handmade or DIY gift (68%)
 - Donate to a nonprofit as a gift (60%)

III. Introduction



Winter holiday household consumption comes with a suite of environmental impacts. The intense pressure of consumerism for extravagant celebrations and long gift lists increases demand for natural resources, pollutes ecosystems, creates long-distance supply chains and increases the global waste burden.

The winter holiday season produces an enormous amount of waste. A 2021 analysis by the Center found that Americans generate 23% more household waste during the month of December than in other months of the year.³ Gift wrapping and packaging, excess food at holiday feasts, and decorations all contribute to the increased waste. As many as 30 million real Christmas trees are sold every year, the majority of which are discarded by the new year.⁴

Current traditions of holiday gift giving have a significant impact on the amount of seasonal waste produced and on personal finances. Americans spend an average of \$1,447 on gifts, travel and entertainment around the holiday season,⁵ yet more than \$8.3 billion is estimated to be wasted on unwanted gifts each year.⁶ When those gifts are returned, they're likely to end up in a landfill instead of back on the shelves. In 2019 retailers dumped 5 billion pounds of returned products into U.S. landfills.⁷

Winter holiday household consumption comes with a suite of environmental impacts. The intense pressure of consumerism for extravagant celebrations and long gift lists increases demand for natural resources, pollutes ecosystems, creates long-distance supply chains and increases the global waste burden.⁸

In addition to the growing environmental harm, consumerism around holiday traditions can cause extra stress for people who feel pressure to buy material gifts. While ads and commercials try to convince people that giving the latest gadget or newest hip toy will bring happiness, research suggests that buying material gifts creates limited happiness when compared to experiences.⁹

Although holiday waste is growing, so too is an interest in reducing the environmental impact of the holidays and redefining holiday celebrations in ways that respect land, waters and wildlife. In the 2022 national survey conducted by the Center, 90% of respondents said that they wish the holidays were less materialistic, up from 78% in a 2005 conducted by a partner organization.¹⁰ And 87% of respondents said they believe that the holidays should be more about family and caring for others, not giving and receiving gifts.¹¹

Shining the light on how dissatisfied many Americans are with holiday gift giving – and the environmental cost of unsustainable consumption – can help make holiday traditions more meaningful and less environmentally harmful. And while it’s unlikely that holiday gift giving will disappear altogether (or that Americans would want it to), alternative and nonmaterial gifts, such as Do-it-Yourself presents, experiential gifts like concert tickets, and preloved or secondhand gifts are part of a larger transition in the way we consume. They also support small businesses and the environment.

Shifting the cultural and social expectations surrounding holiday gift giving requires actions from advocates willing to use resources about alternative gift-giving options as well as individuals who are willing to engage their family and friends in conversations about new celebration ideas and traditions. This survey, our corresponding Simplify the Holidays campaign, and the Center’s emerging alternative economy work intends to help with that.



IV. Survey Methodology



In an effort to understand how willing people are to alter holiday traditions to reduce the impact of their celebrations, the Center deployed a survey about perceptions of consumerism around the winter holidays. The survey contained some questions that were originally asked in a 2005 survey launched by the Center for the New American Dream,^{1,2} alongside new and modified questions.

The survey results detailed in this report include the following two survey samples:

- A national, random, paid, age 18+ sample of the general public conducted via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), carried out by geographic location with representative population samples, henceforth referred to as the random sample.
- A national, unpaid, convenience sample shared with Center members, online supporters, and employees along with friends and family and external partners, henceforth referred to as the convenience sample.

Respondents in the random sample were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online marketplace that compensates people for participating in surveys. All respondents in each of the samples completed surveys in the platform Survey Monkey and the results were processed and verified in Microsoft Excel. The survey was translated into Spanish and both an English and a Spanish version were deployed using MTurk.

Respondents in the national, random, representative MTurk sample were paid \$0.20 for completion of the 5-minute survey. The MTurk samples were carried out in batches of 20 on a regional geographic basis. The random sample included a total of 845 responses.



The survey included some quality-control (QC) questions to ensure a quality standard and prevent responses from bots. We used consistency in age, city and state, and a question requiring respondents to select the correct answer as three quality-check metrics. Given that some low-quality responses were still present following quality-control measures in previous surveys, using multiple quality-control questions allowed us to better sort through low-quality responses.

The unpaid national convenience sample was garnered from survey links shared in Center newsletters, on personal and organizational social media pages and on various listservs. In the convenience sample, the majority of respondents were from the coastal United States, with significant numbers from California and New York. We recorded a total of 428 responses for the convenience sample. Although the convenience sample did not include quality-control questions, incomplete surveys were removed, leaving a total of 407 responses.

Furthermore, unlike the paid, MTurk sample, the convenience sample also included a small number of international responses, with 21 respondents from nations in the European Union, Canada and New Zealand. The majority (52%) of international respondents indicated that they were from Canada*. All results were collected in Survey Monkey and processed with quality control in Microsoft Excel.

Several of the questions prompted respondents to write in their own responses or allowed respondents to specify “other” responses. That qualitative data was analyzed and aggregated based on similarities in language and themes. All written responses are presented in italics with minor edits for spelling and/or clarity.

*International respondents demonstrated minimal variance from the larger data set. They were slightly more likely to wish that they would receive fewer material gifts, slightly more likely to give gifts of experience and unlikely to give gifts of time and skill. Respondents in the international cohort did however have stronger resistance toward shopping online. The survey found that 77% of respondents in the international subgroup of the convenience sample indicated that they were not likely to shop online via Amazon or other big box stores websites, compared to 47% in the larger sample.



V. Survey Results



In the paid, random sample, questions 1 and 2 functioned as quality control questions, allowing respondents to input their age in years and select which state they live in from a drop-down menu. In the analysis, these metrics were verified with the responses inputted in the demographic questions. Respondents whose responses did not match were excluded from the analyzed data.

Questions 3-8 were multiple choice questions aimed at gaining an understanding of respondent's perspectives on the winter holiday season overall and the social expectations of gift giving and sought to understand perceptions of alternative gift-giving behaviors and motivations. The final section includes the demographic questions. A complete list of questions can be found in the Appendix.

After recognizing differences in data trends, the Center further processed the results by age and split them into two separate age cohorts for ease of analysis: the younger cohort included respondents who presented their ages as between 18-49 and the older cohort included respondents who indicated that they were 50 and older. While age was a useful factor in separating responses, around 9% of random sample respondents opted to exclude their exact ages and were thus removed from the weighted calculations. The convenience sample demonstrated the most significant age-based differences.

The survey results detailed in this report include the following two survey samples:

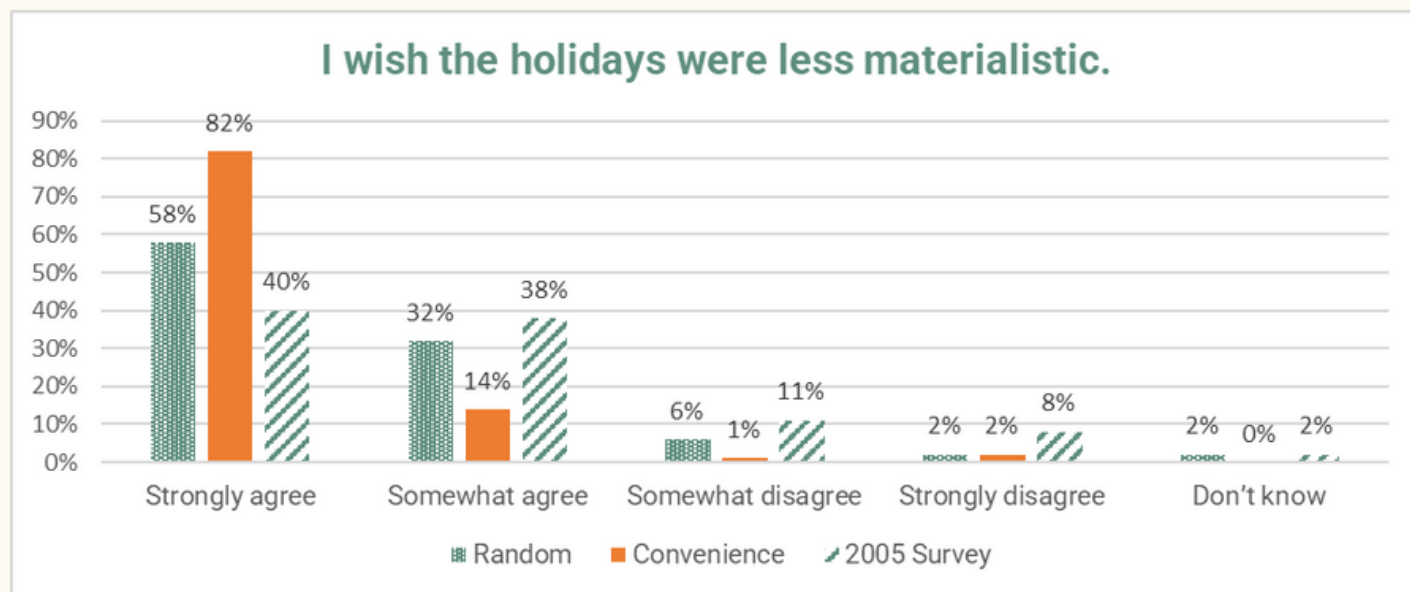
- A national, random, paid, age 18+ sample of the general public conducted via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), carried out by geographic location with representative population samples, henceforth referred to as the *random sample*.
- A national, unpaid, convenience sample shared with Center members, online supporters, and employees along with friends and family and external partners, henceforth referred to as the *convenience sample*.

A. Perceptions of Gift Giving

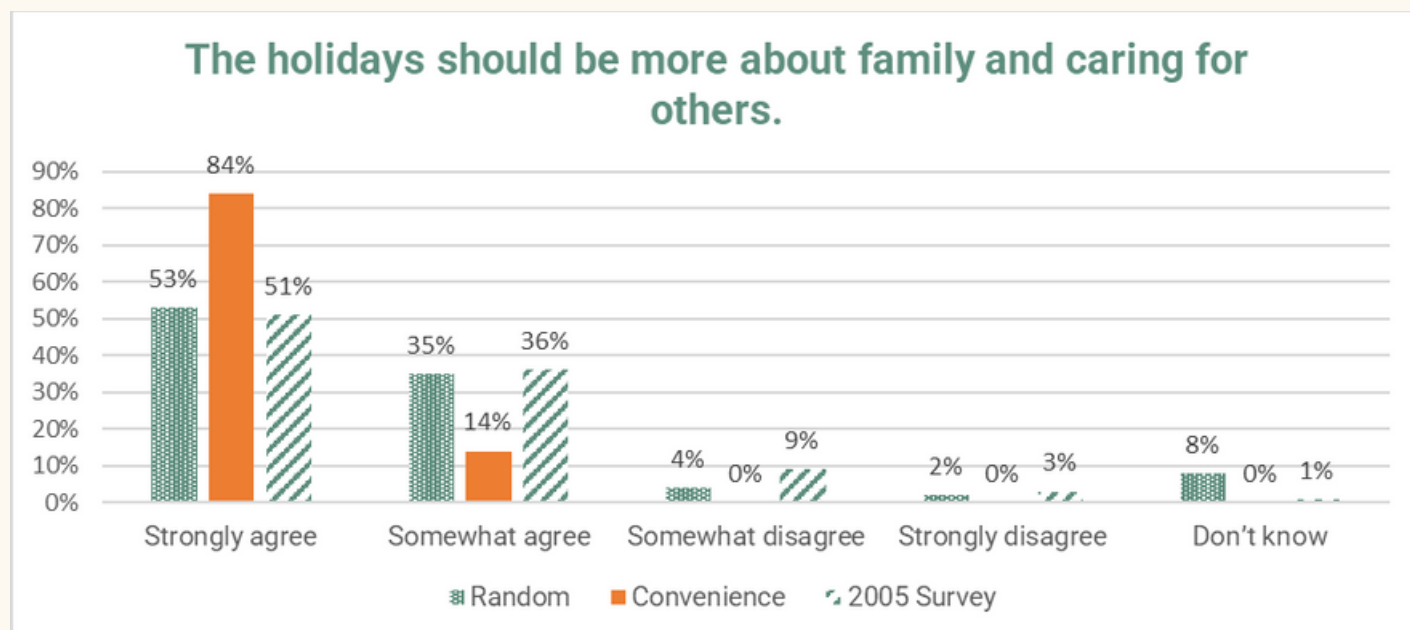
The following three questions were taken directly from a random national survey conducted in 2005. The goal of asking similar questions in the 2022 survey was to see change over time.

Please indicate the level of agreement you have for each statement below:

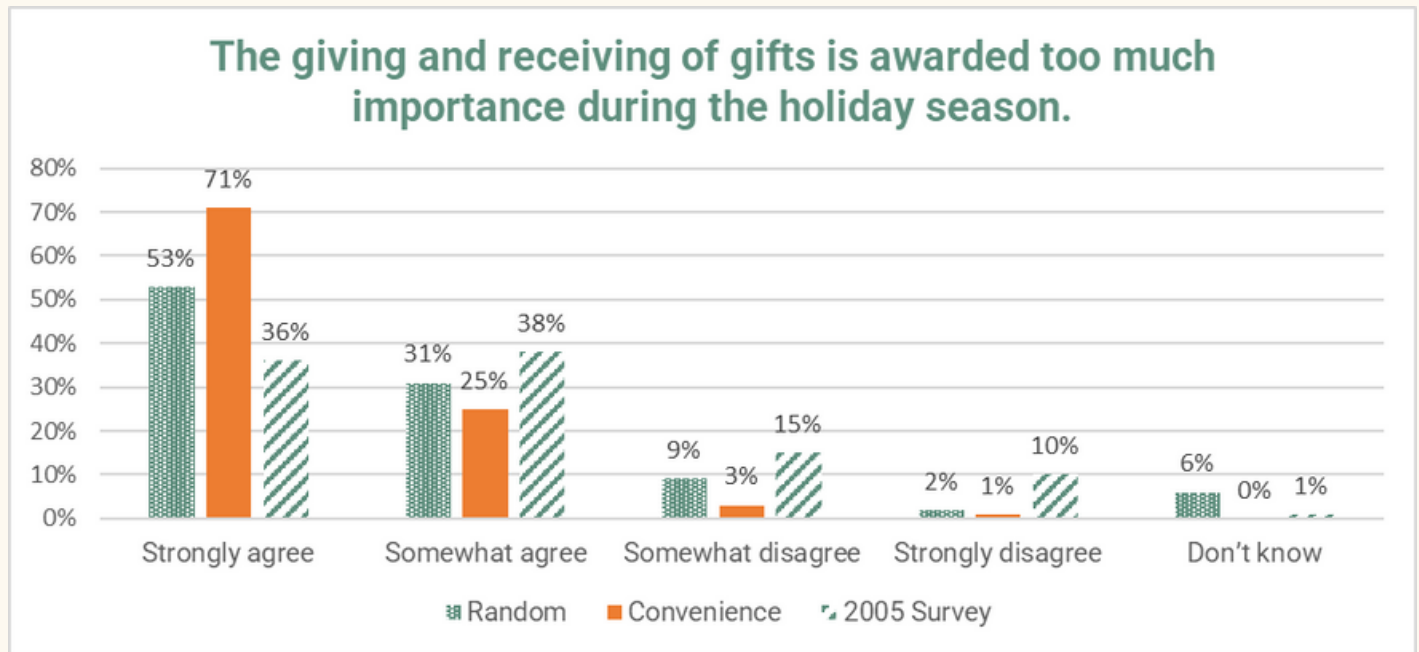
I wish the holidays were less materialistic.



The holidays should be more about family and caring for others.



The giving and receiving of gifts is awarded too much importance during the holiday season.



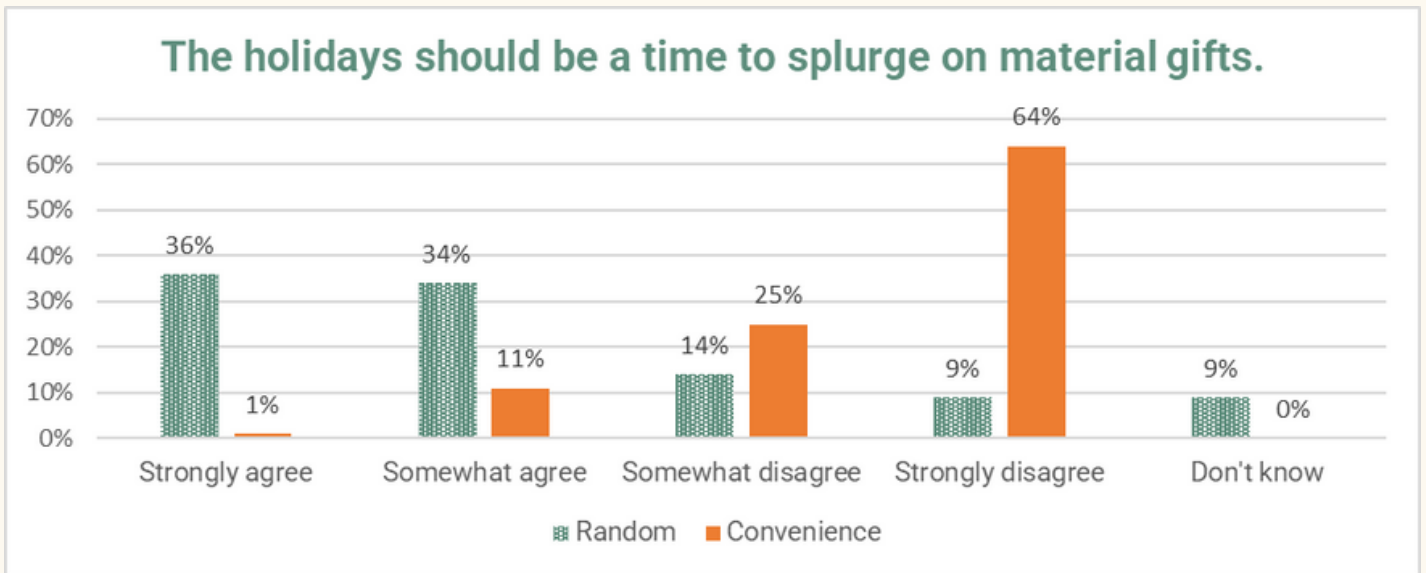
The majority of respondents in the 2022 random sample agreed (both somewhat and strongly) with the three statements about materialism around the holidays. Compared to the 2005 sample, respondents in the 2022 random sample were more likely to agree that the holidays were too materialistic (78% agreed in 2005 and 90% agreed in 2022). Similar trends – a 10% increase between 2005 and 2022 – were observed when respondents were asked about gifts being awarded too much importance during the holidays. When asked whether they believed the holidays should be more about family, the results remained consistent over time: 88% of 2022 respondents agreed compared to 87% of 2005 respondents.

Respondents in the convenience sample displayed low variance in their responses, with over 96% agreeing (both somewhat and strongly) that they wish the holidays were less materialistic. 98% agreed that the holidays should be more about family and caring for others.

The responses to this question in the convenience sample varied slightly by age. The younger cohort did not agree quite as strongly with the sentiment that the holidays are too materialistic, with 22% choosing *somewhat agree* and 75% choosing *strongly agree*, compared to 10% and 86% respectively in the older cohort.

This question was a new addition to the 2022 survey.

The holidays should be a time to splurge on material gifts.



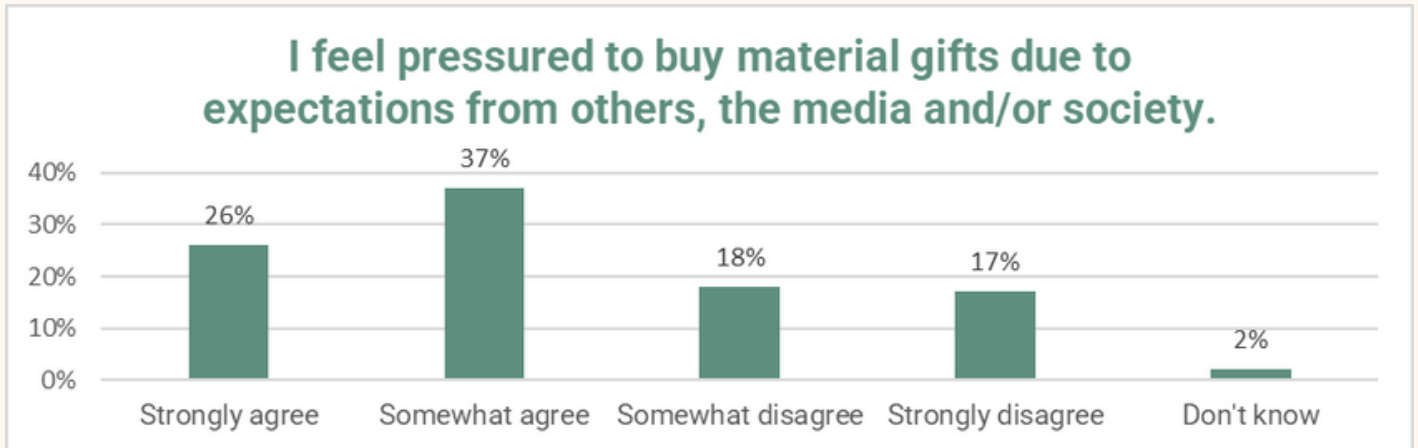
When evaluated against the random sample, the respondents in the convenience sample were more than 7 times more likely to strongly disagree with the statement: *The holidays should be a time to splurge on material gifts.*

The most notable difference between the age cohorts in the convenience sample was in response to the statement about splurging on material gifts. Around 40% of the younger respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that the holidays should be a time to splurge on material gifts compared to 64% of the older cohort. Similarly, 22% of the younger respondents somewhat agreed with the statement compared to less than 11% of the older sample. Less than 1% in both age cohorts strongly agreed.

The following question was added into the convenience survey after the launch of the random survey, so it was not included in the random survey.



I feel pressured to buy material gifts due to expectations from others, the media and/or society.

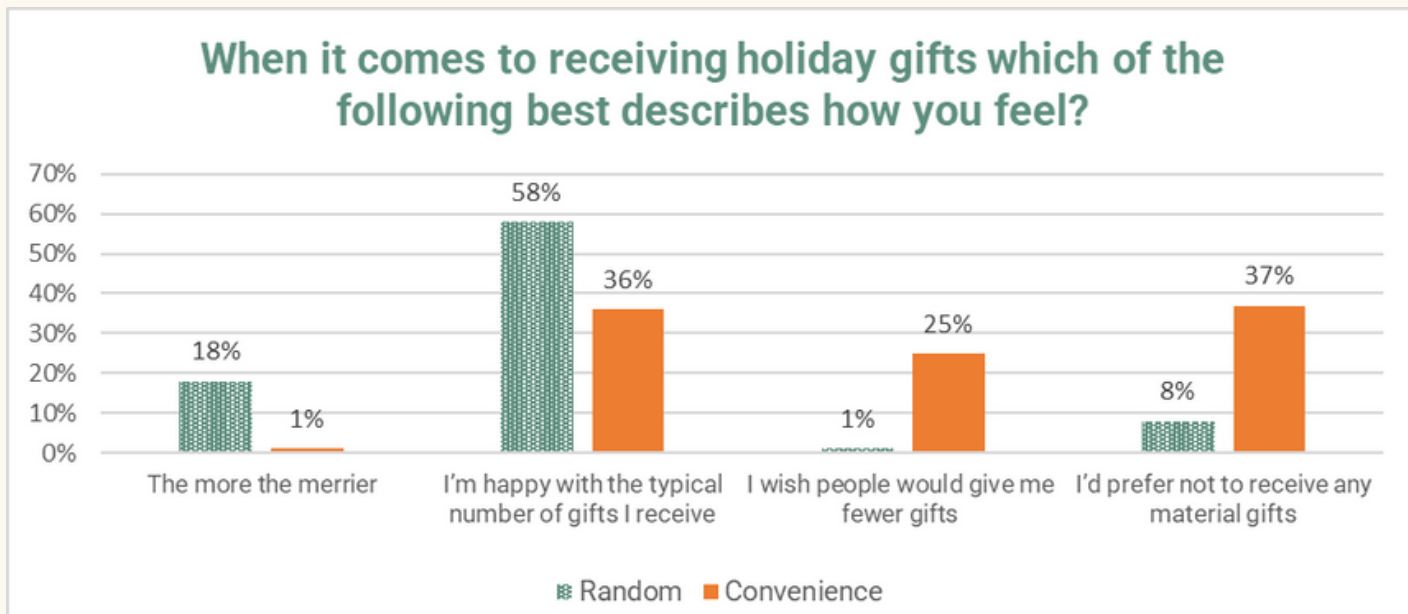


The younger cohort was more likely to strongly agree that they felt pressured to buy when compared to the older cohort. But around one-third of respondents in both cohorts (43% and 34% respectively) selected *somewhat agree*.

Table 1: Please indicate the level of agreement you have for the statement below: I feel pressured to buy material gifts due to expectations from others, the media and/or society.

	Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Strongly agree	32%	24%
Somewhat agree	43%	34%
Somewhat disagree	11%	21%
Strongly disagree	6%	20%
Don't know	7%	1%

When it comes to receiving holiday gifts which of the following best describes how you feel?
(Choose only one.)



The majority of respondents in the random sample indicated that they were happy with the number of gifts they currently receive. There were notable differences between the random and convenience samples with respect to the desire for more gifts and the desire for fewer gifts. Respondents in the random sample were more likely to desire more gifts (*the more the merrier*) and respondents in the convenience sample were more likely to *prefer not to receive any material gifts*.

In the convenience sample, more younger people (44%) were happy with the current number of gifts they receive compared to older people (33%), and none of them chose *the more the merrier* for their attitude toward receiving gifts. Respondents in the older cohort were more likely to prefer not to receive any gifts.



Table 2: Question: When it comes to receiving holiday gifts, which of the following best describes how you feel?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
The more the merrier	17%	15%	0%	1%
I'm happy with the typical number of gifts I receive	59%	57%	44%	33%
I wish people would give me fewer gifts	15%	19%	32%	22%
I'd prefer not to receive any material gifts	8%	8%	24%	44%



When it comes to giving material gifts (i.e., toys, electronics and clothes), which of the following best describes how you feel? (Choose only one.)



Respondents in the convenience sample were more likely than respondents in the random sample to prefer giving no material gifts (32% vs 4%, respectively). This mirrored the results in the previous question about receiving material gifts (37% vs 8%). The percentages of respondents who were most concerned about stress and expense were largely consistent across both samples. Additionally, when compared to the convenience sample, the respondents in the random sample were more than twice as likely to indicate that they *enjoy giving material gifts to friends and family*.

There were also considerable differences in responses depending on age in the convenience sample, with 32% of younger respondents indicating that they enjoyed giving gifts compared to 21% of older respondents. The largest percentage of older respondents indicated that they preferred not giving any material gifts, compared to 15% in the younger cohort.



Table 3: Question: When it comes to giving material gifts, which of the following best describes how you feel?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
I enjoy giving material gifts to friends and family	59%	60%	32%	21%
Buying material gifts is stressful	23%	22%	36%	22%
Buying material gifts is expensive	14%	15%	17%	15%
I'd prefer not to give any material gifts	4%	3%	15%	41%



B. Alternative Gifts Perceptions and Motivations

What term do you use for a gift that isn't purchased new from a large online retailer or through a brick-and-mortar big box store (e.g., an experiential gift, a charitable donation, or a homemade gift)? (Choose only one.)



The term *alternative gift* was favored by respondents in the random sample, whereas *eco-friendly gift* was the top choice for the convenience sample.

Around one-third of respondents in the convenience sample selected *other*, writing in their own responses. The most common written response in the convenience sample was, *just a gift* and 41% of the *other* responses said *gift* or *I don't label it*, rejecting the descriptive terms. Some of the *other* responses in the convenience sample also included: a *heartfelt gift*, a *sustainable gift*, and a *justice gift*. Around 9% of the *other* respondents wrote in *homemade* or *handmade* gifts and 4% noted that a *regifted gift* was another option.

Younger respondents (between the ages of 18-30) in the convenience sample were more likely to write in *other* responses.

Respondents in the random sample wrote in similar terms in the *other* responses, such as a *gift is a gift* or a *regular gift*. Eight respondents wrote in *thoughtful* or *meaningful* gift.

Which of the following do you see as being the greatest benefit of buying secondhand gifts (items that have been used previously)? (Mark only one.)

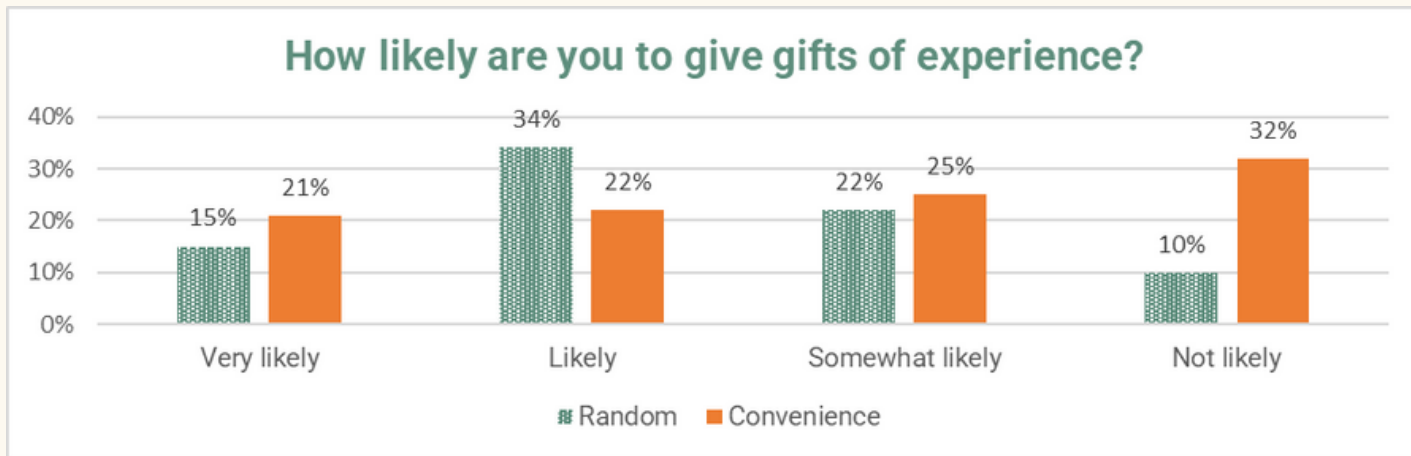


The respondents in the convenience sample were more likely to select benefits associated with environmental motivations such as *minimizing waste* or *protecting the planet* when compared to respondents in the random sample.

The following 11 questions were presented in a matrix in which respondents selected their likelihood of performing certain gift giving actions.



Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: giving gifts of experience.



While over 30% of all respondents in the convenience sample indicated they were not likely to consider giving gifts of experience, there were notable differences between younger respondents (ages 18-49) and older respondents (ages 50-90). Of the older respondents, 41% indicated that they were *not likely* to give gifts of experience compared to just 12% of the younger respondents. Over 30% of younger respondents were *very likely* to give these gifts, compared to 17% of the older respondents. Overall, 63% of the younger respondents in the convenience sample indicated that they were *likely* or *very likely* to give gifts of experience.

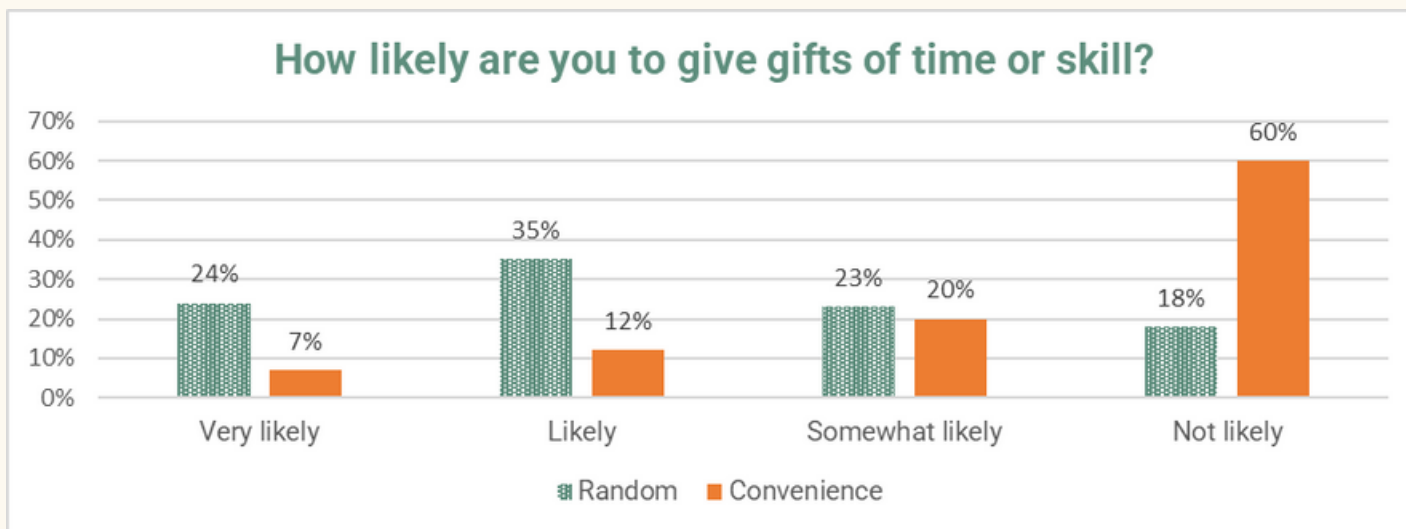
Younger and older age cohorts in the random sample did not demonstrate noticeable differences in their likelihood of giving gifts of experience.



Table 4: How likely are you to give gifts of experience?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	15%	13%	31%	17%
Likely	53%	54%	32%	18%
Somewhat likely	21%	22%	25%	24%
Not likely	11%	10%	12%	41%

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: giving gifts of time or skill.



Respondents in the random sample were more likely to consider giving gifts of time and skill, whereas the majority of respondents in the convenience sample indicated that they were not likely to give these gifts. Unlike the previous question, the difference between age cohorts in the convenience sample was not as significant, with 65% of the older cohort indicating that they were unlikely to give gifts of time or skill compared to 55% in the younger cohort.

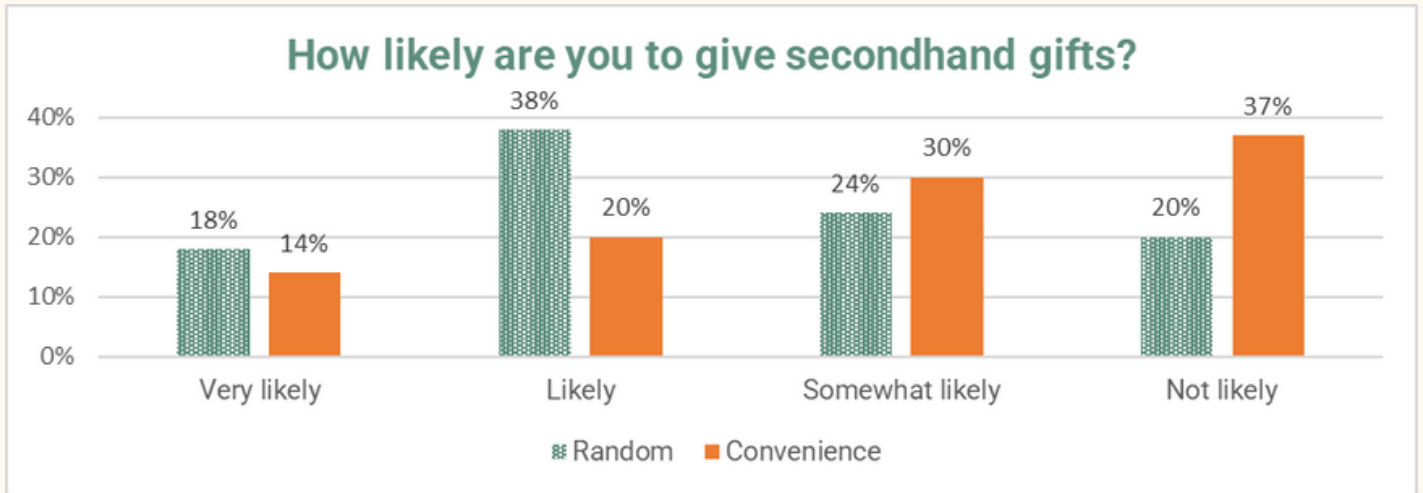
Younger and older age cohorts in the random sample did not demonstrate noticeable differences in their likelihood of giving gifts of time or skill.

Table 5: How likely are you to give gifts of time or skill?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	24%	25%	7%	7%
Likely	34%	35%	14%	11%
Somewhat likely	22%	22%	24%	18%
Not likely	20%	21%	55%	65%



Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: giving secondhand gifts.



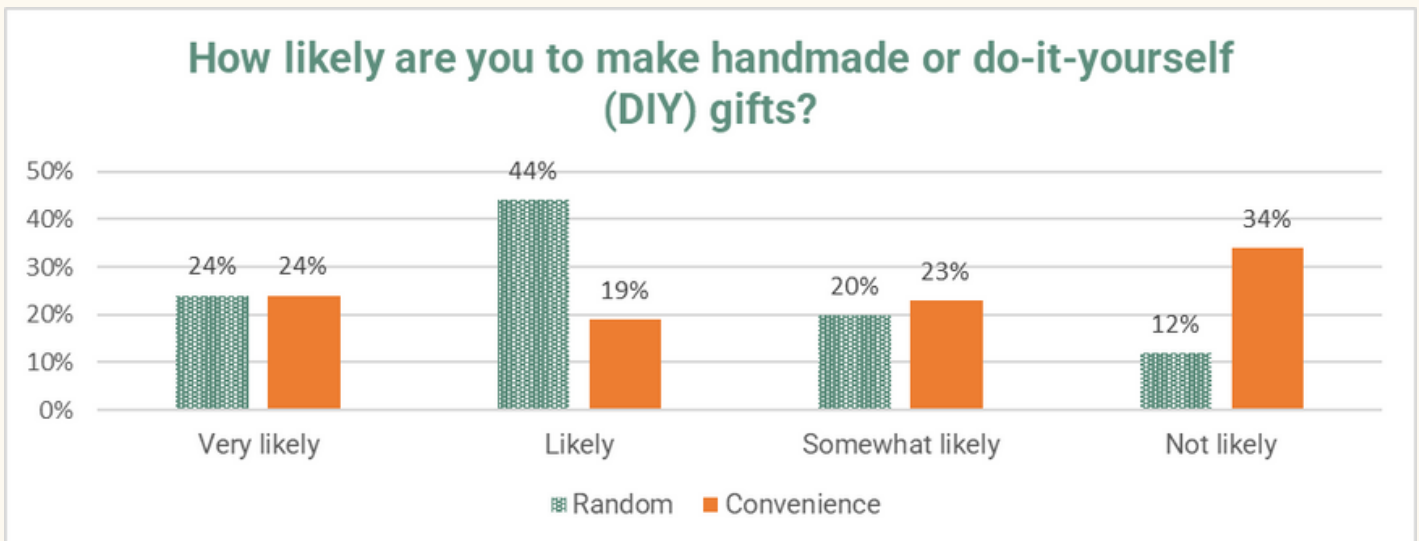
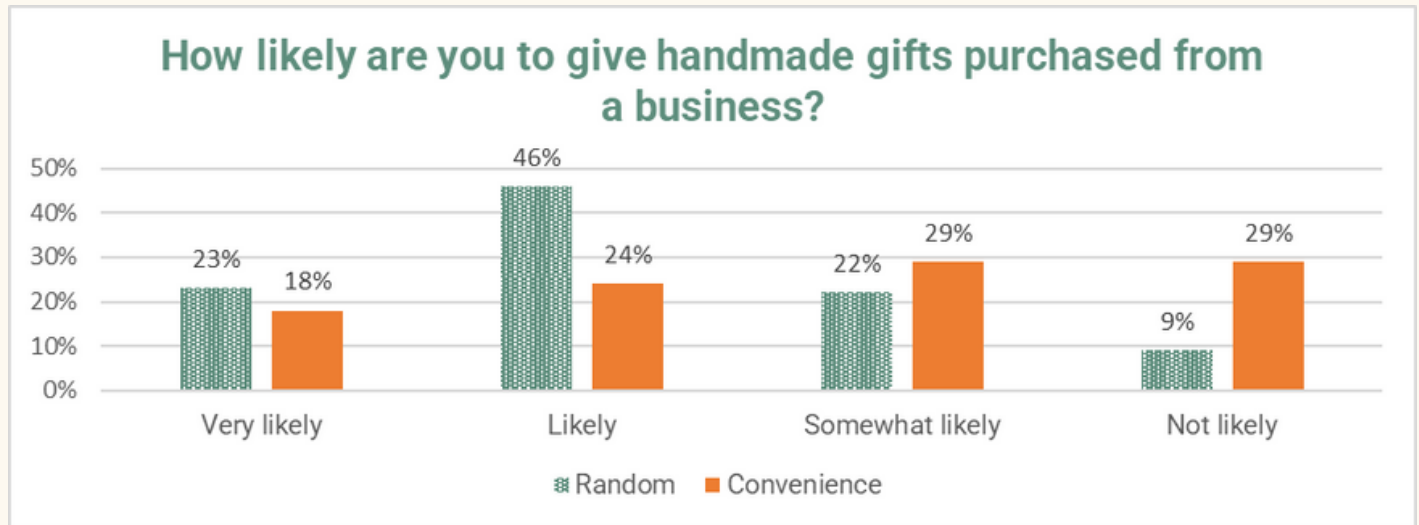
A total of 56% of respondents in the random sample indicated that they were *likely* or *very likely* to give secondhand gifts, compared to 34% of respondents in the convenience sample. Age was not as significant a factor in the convenience sample for this question, with 38% of younger respondents selecting *very likely* or *likely* to give these gifts compared to 33% of older respondents. However, older respondents in the convenience sample were more likely to indicate that they were not likely to give secondhand gifts.

Younger and older age cohorts in the random sample did not demonstrate significant differences in the overall likelihood of giving secondhand gifts.

Table 6: How likely are you to give secondhand gifts?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	17%	20%	14%	14%
Likely	38%	34%	24%	19%
Somewhat likely	24%	25%	34%	27%
Not likely	22%	21%	29%	40%

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: giving purchased or handmade/ DIY gifts.



Similar to previous trends, respondents in the random sample demonstrated higher likeliness of purchasing or making handmade gifts.

Respondents in the convenience sample demonstrated age-based differences in their likelihood of purchasing or making handmade gifts. Respondents in the younger cohort were more likely to purchase or make handmade gifts, with 61% indicating they were *very likely* or *likely* to give a purchased handmade gift compared to 33% of the older cohort. Additionally, 52% of the younger cohort indicated that they were *very likely* or *likely* to make a handmade or DIY gift compared to 39% of respondents in the older cohort. In both age cohorts in both samples, there was a notable difference in the favorability in making gifts and buying handmade gifts, possibly aligned with the time-cost of gift making and the concerns about the reception of the gift described in a subsequent question.

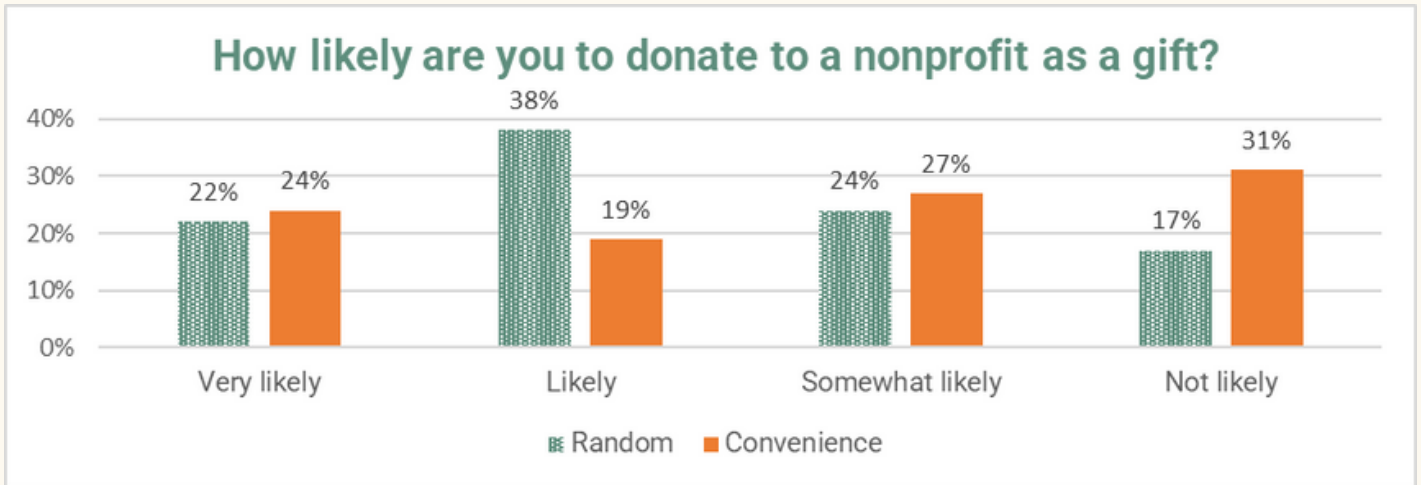
Table 7: How likely are you to give handmade gifts purchased from a business?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	23%	21%	30%	12%
Likely	47%	47%	31%	21%
Somewhat likely	20%	27%	24%	31%
Not likely	10%	6%	15%	35%

Table 8: How likely are you to make handmade or DIY gifts?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	25%	21%	26%	23%
Likely	42%	45%	26%	16%
Somewhat likely	19%	24%	20%	25%
Not likely	14%	10%	28%	37%

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: donating to a nonprofit as a gift.



Continuing the trend of the random sample favoring the middle-of-the-road response, the largest proportion of these respondents selected the *likely* and *somewhat likely* option, whereas the convenience sample was skewed slightly toward the *not likely* option. Although the differences were not statistically significant, 60% of younger respondents in the random sample selected *very likely* or *likely* compared to 58% of the older cohort.

Unlike younger respondents in the random sample, younger respondents in the convenience sample indicated that they were less likely to donate to a nonprofit, with 37% of respondents under 50 selecting *not likely*, while only 27% of respondents over 50 selected this.

Table 9: How likely are you to donate to a nonprofit as a gift?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	21%	24%	19%	27%
Likely	39%	32%	15%	21%
Somewhat likely	21%	28%	30%	25%
Not likely	19%	15%	37%	27%

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: shopping at local small businesses.



Respondents in the random sample were more favorable toward the idea of shopping at small businesses when compared to the respondents in the convenience sample. However, similar to previous questions, there were noticeable response differences by age in the convenience sample. Around 75% of respondents in the younger cohort indicated that they were *likely* or *very likely* to shop at a local small business for gifts compared to less than 49% of respondents in the older cohort.

Table 10: How likely are you to shop at local small businesses for gifts?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	19%	21%	49%	21%
Likely	58%	53%	26%	28%
Somewhat likely	18%	22%	19%	30%
Not likely	6%	4%	6%	21%

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: shopping online through Amazon or big box stores.



Respondents in the convenience sample were significantly less likely to shop online at Amazon or a big box store to purchase gifts than the random sample respondents.

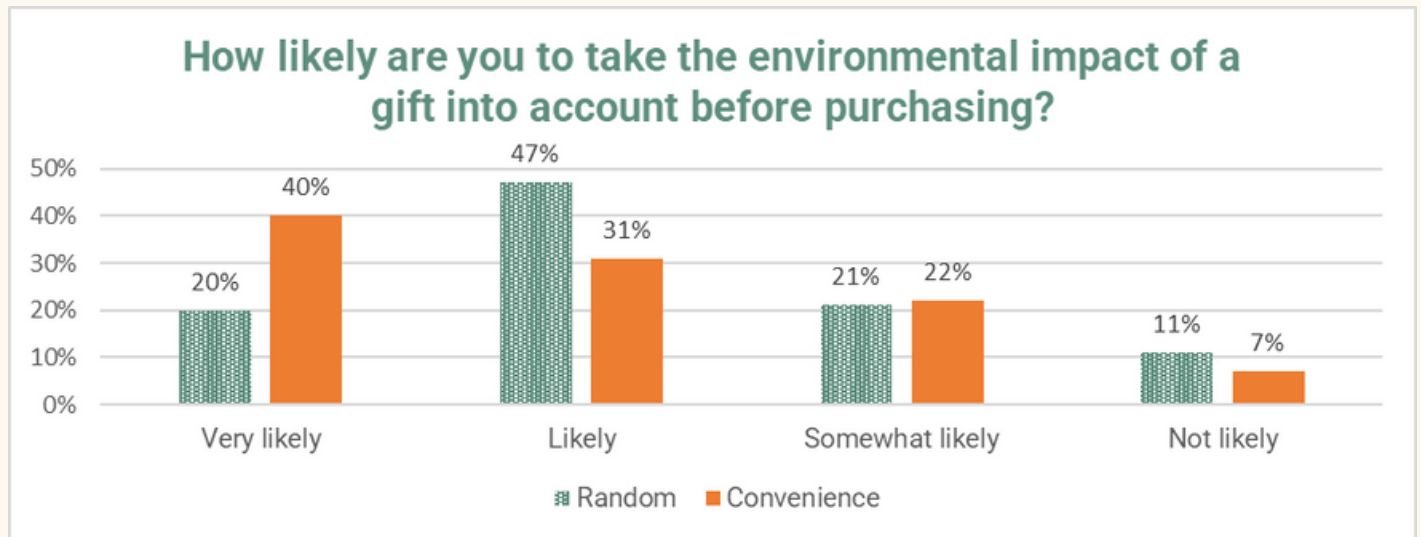
Similar to previous questions, the random sample did not display significant differences between age cohorts; however, younger respondents were slightly more interested in shopping online than their older counterparts. In the convenience sample, younger respondents perceived shopping online at Amazon or a big box store more favorably, with 35% of respondents saying they were *very likely* or *likely* compared to 21% of the older cohort. Overall, 55% of respondents in the older cohort indicated that they were *not likely* to shop online at Amazon or a big box store to purchase gifts, compared to 34% of respondents in the younger cohort.



Table 11: How likely are you to shop online through Amazon or a big box store to purchase gifts?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	39%	34%	18%	10%
Likely	35%	42%	17%	11%
Somewhat likely	22%	22%	31%	24%
Not likely	4%	3%	34%	55%

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: considering the environmental impact of a gift.



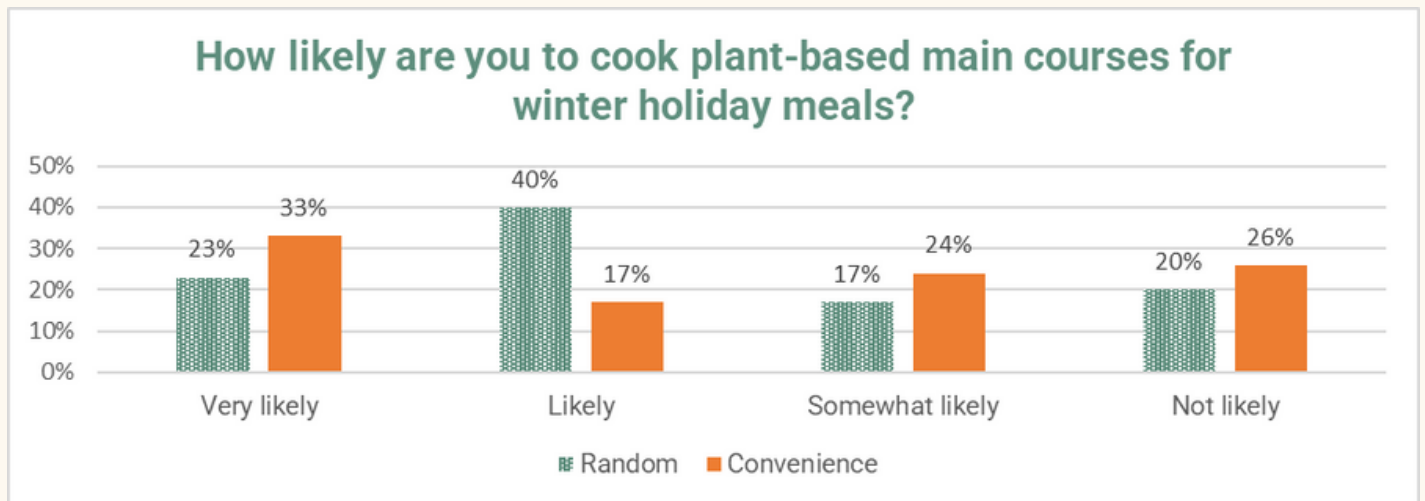
Both samples demonstrated significant interest in considering the environmental impact of a gift before purchasing, with a total of 67% of the random sample and 71% of the convenience sample indicating that they were *very likely* or *likely* to consider the environmental impact of the gift.

Both samples demonstrated limited age-based differences.

Table 12: How likely are you to take the environmental impact of a gift into account before purchasing?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	18%	23%	39%	40%
Likely	47%	44%	30%	32%
Somewhat likely	22%	21%	25%	20%
Not likely	13%	11%	6%	8%

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: cooking plant-based meals for the winter holiday season.



The random sample displayed the greatest share of favorable sentiments toward plant-based holiday meals with 63% selecting *very likely* and *likely*, compared to 50% in the convenience sample.

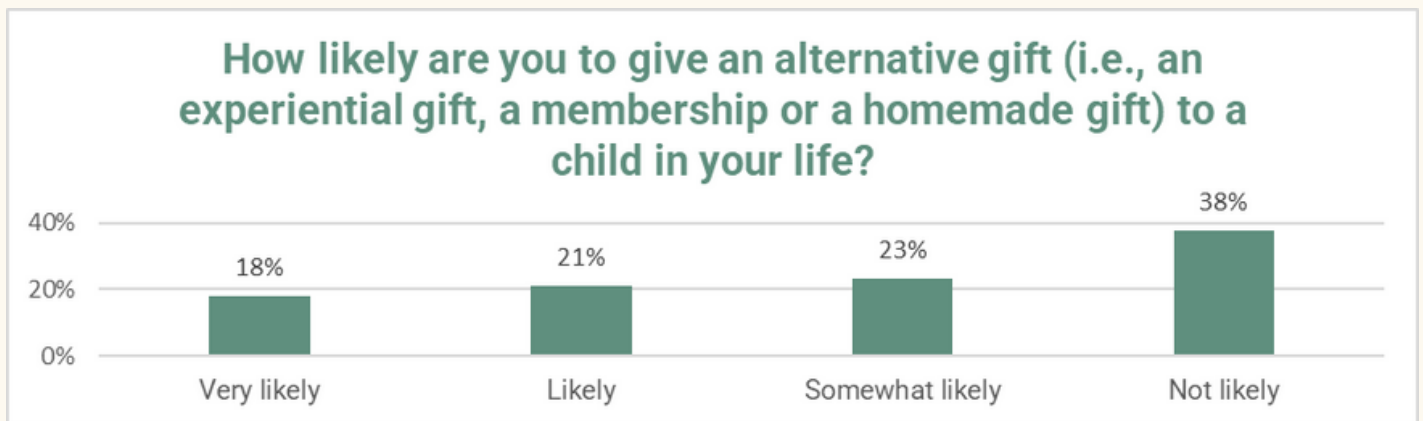
There were minimal differences between the younger and older cohorts in both samples, although younger respondents in the convenience sample were slightly less likely to cook plant-based meals.

Table 13: How likely are you to cook plant-based main courses for winter holiday meals?

	Random sample		Convenience sample	
	Younger cohort	Older cohort	Younger cohort	Older cohort
Very likely	23%	26%	35%	33%
Likely	38%	38%	14%	19%
Somewhat likely	16%	18%	17%	27%
Not likely	23%	18%	35%	22%

The convenience survey included one additional action for respondents to consider: the likelihood of giving an alternative gift to a child.

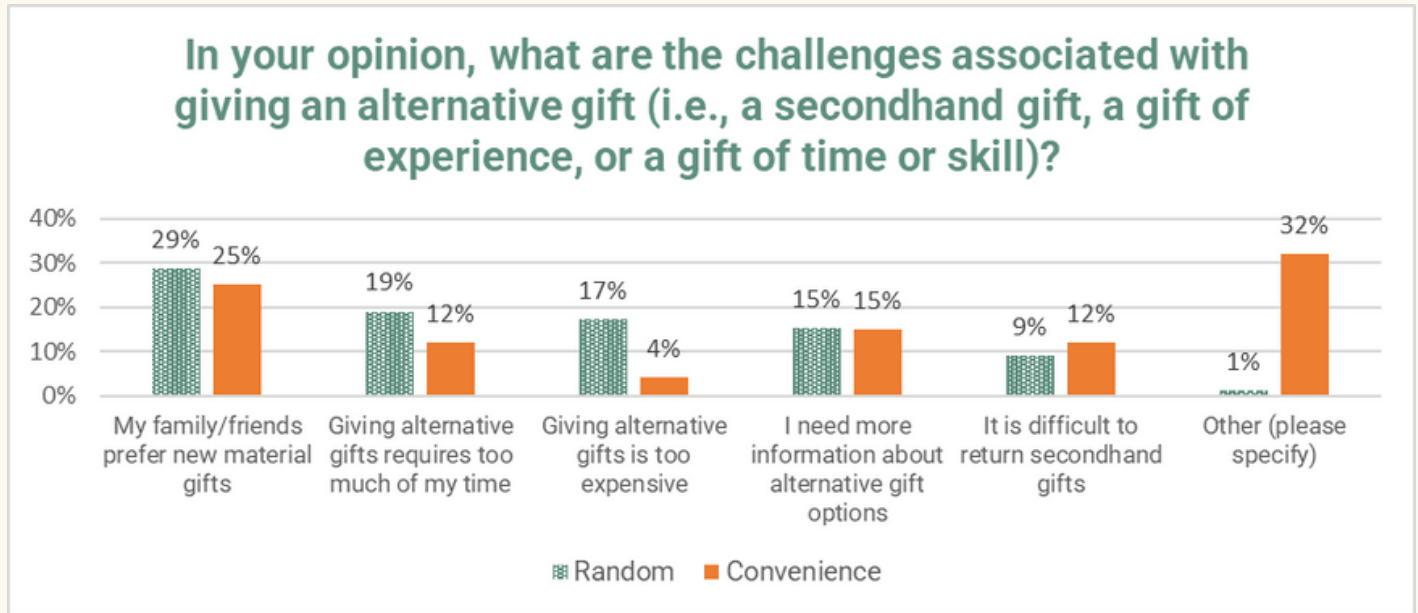
Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this holiday season: giving an alternative gift to a child (convenience sample only).



The largest proportion of respondents indicated that they were unlikely to give alternative gifts to children.

The question follows a trend observed in the convenience sample, where respondents were slightly less likely to indicate that they enjoyed giving alternative gifts in general during the holiday season. On average across the different questions, 36% of respondents in the convenience sample selected *not likely* to questions relating to giving alternative gifts compared to 12% of respondents in the random sample.

In your opinion, what are the challenges associated with giving an alternative gift (i.e., a secondhand gift, a gift of experience or a gift of time or skill)? (Check all that apply.)



Respondents were able to select multiple responses in this question. The most selected response in both samples was *My friends and family prefer new material gifts*. Only a few respondents in the random sample included *other* responses that noted difficulties in finding good options in secondhand goods and concerns about how people perceive receiving secondhand gifts. One respondent wrote about the challenges in *finding what you want that is secondhand*, and three others considered the pressures in finding gifts that people might enjoy while there are expectations for material gifts.

Nearly one-third of respondents in the convenience sample selected *other* to write in their own response, compared to just 1% of the random sample. The most significant portion (24%) of respondents who selected the *other* response indicated that they did not see a challenge with giving alternative gifts. Other common responses included *not celebrating the holidays*, *fears about being perceived as cheap* and *concerns about knowledge of or the ability to research experiential gifts*. Some respondents also indicated that they had no problems giving gifts like food, drinks or money.

Table 14: Categories of *other* responses in the Convenience Sample

Qualitative <i>other</i> response category	Response percentages
No challenges associated with giving alternative gifts	24%
Alternative gifts are unappreciated or are perceived negatively by friends and family	19%
Giving alternative gifts requires more effort, time, or preparation	15%
I don't give gifts *	13%
Giving other kinds of gifts (i.e. cash)	9%
Giving alternative gifts requires too many resources	2%

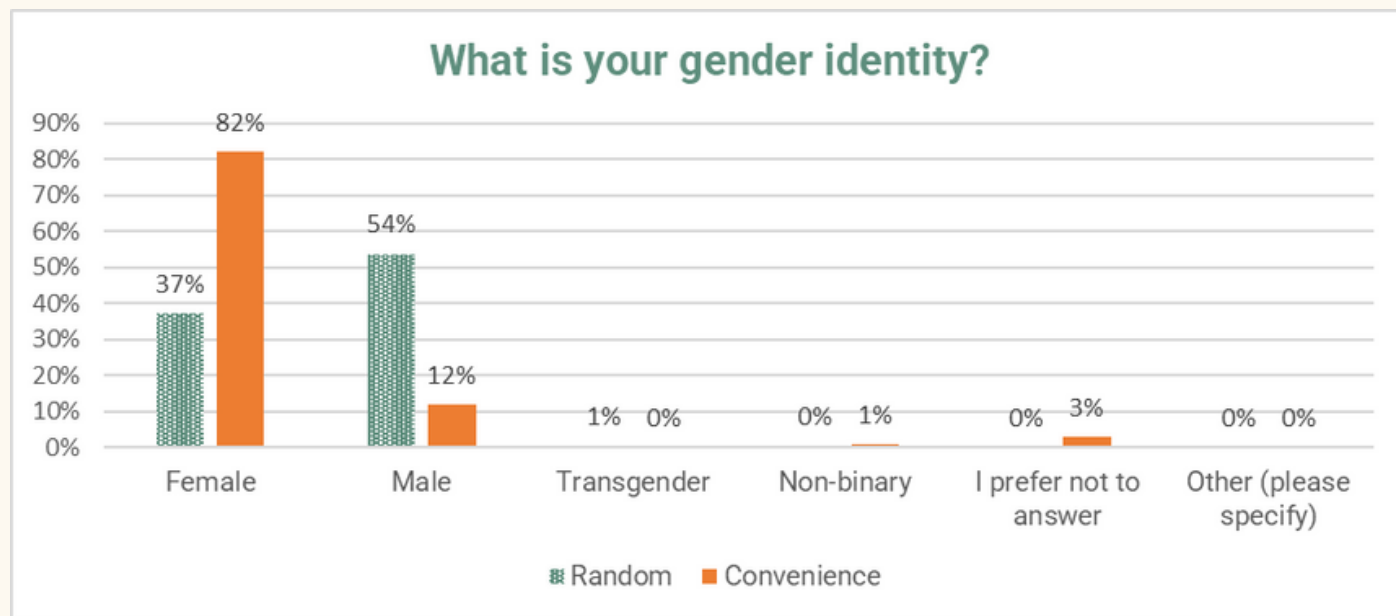
* Nine of the respondents who selected this option indicated that they did not celebrate winter holidays.



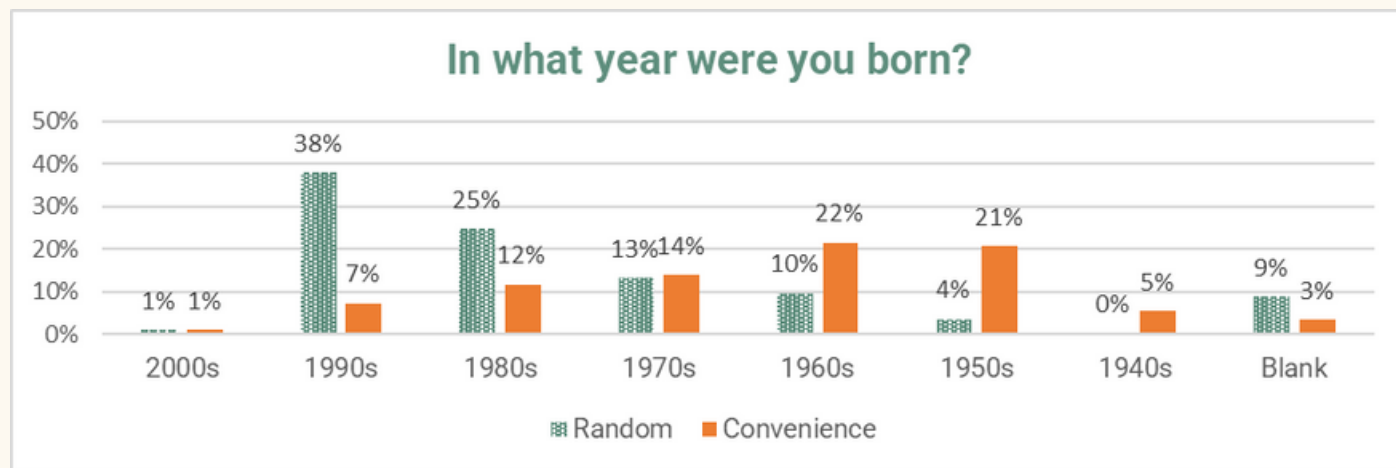
C. Demographic Results

Among those who responded, the demographic self-report suggests that the average demographic profile for the random sample was predominantly young, male, white and Democrat, with a household income of between \$50,000 and \$75,000. The average demographic profile for the convenience sample was older, female, white and Democrat, with a household income of over \$75,000. Respondents in the convenience sample were also more likely to write in *other* responses or skip demographic questions.

Question: What is your gender identity? (Choose only one.)



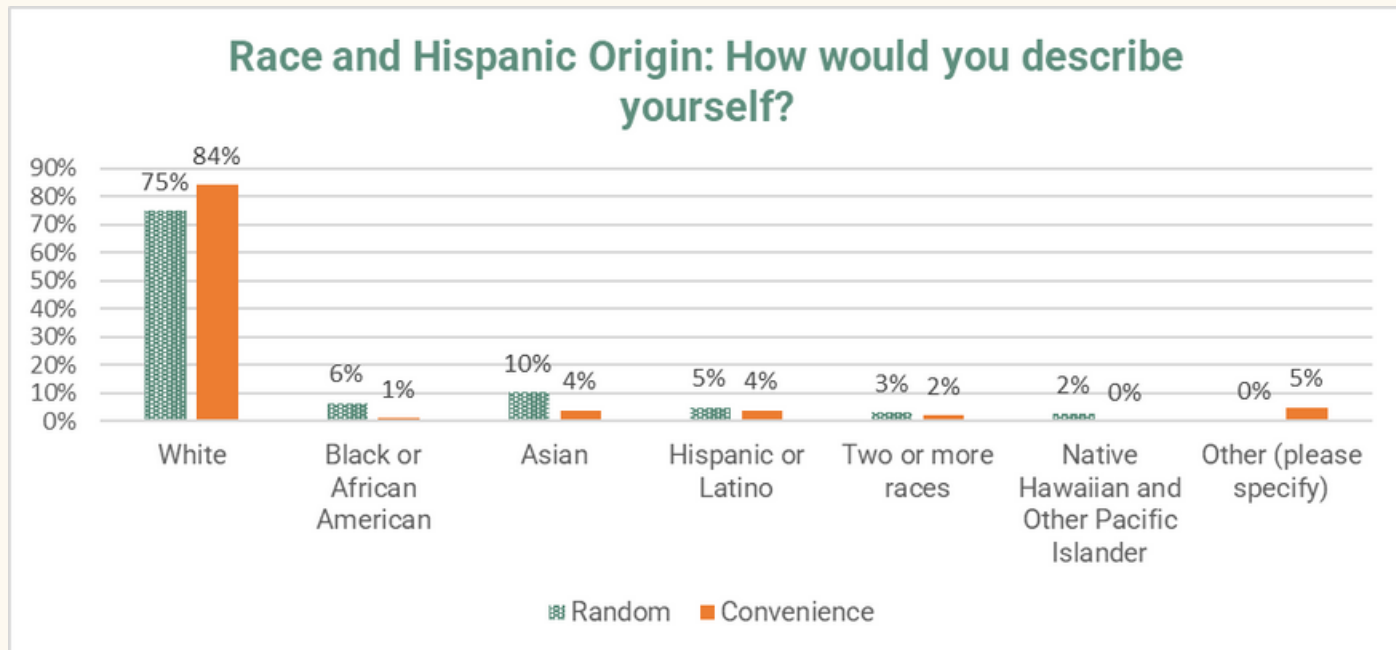
In what year were you born? (Please enter 4-digit year only.)



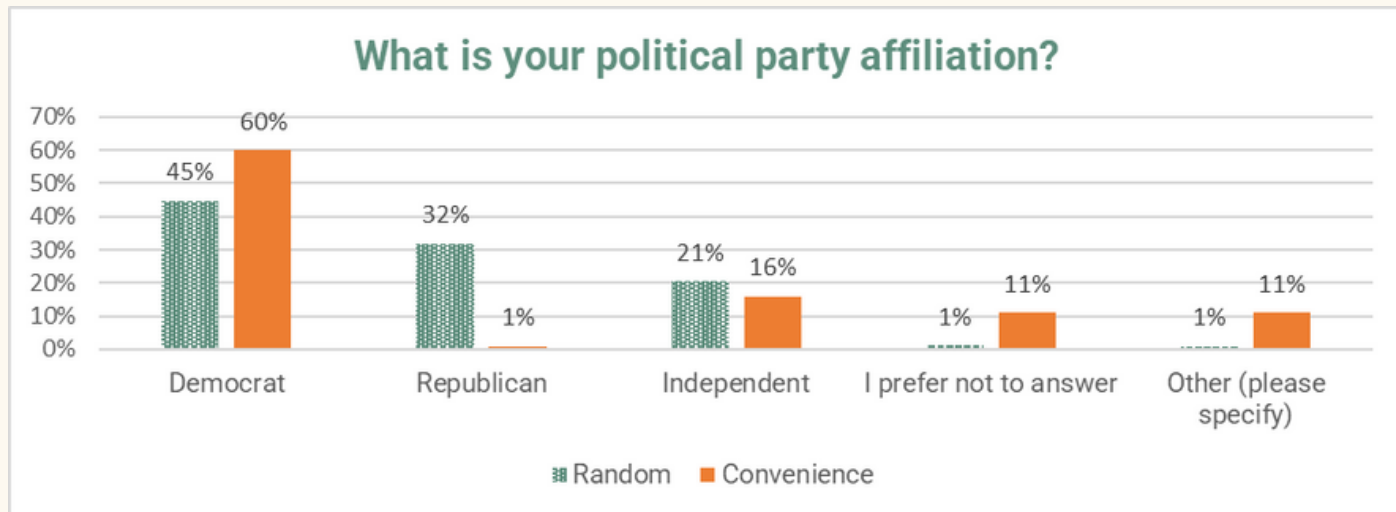
For the age questions and other demographic questions, many respondents in the convenience sample wrote in ranges for their ages, generations, or N/A, often citing the desire to not provide information about their demographics.

For those that did provide an age, many of the respondents in the convenience sample were significantly older than respondents in the random sample. The mean age for the convenience sample was 56, whereas the mean age for the random sample was 38.

Question: Race and Hispanic origin: How would you describe yourself? (Choose all that apply.)

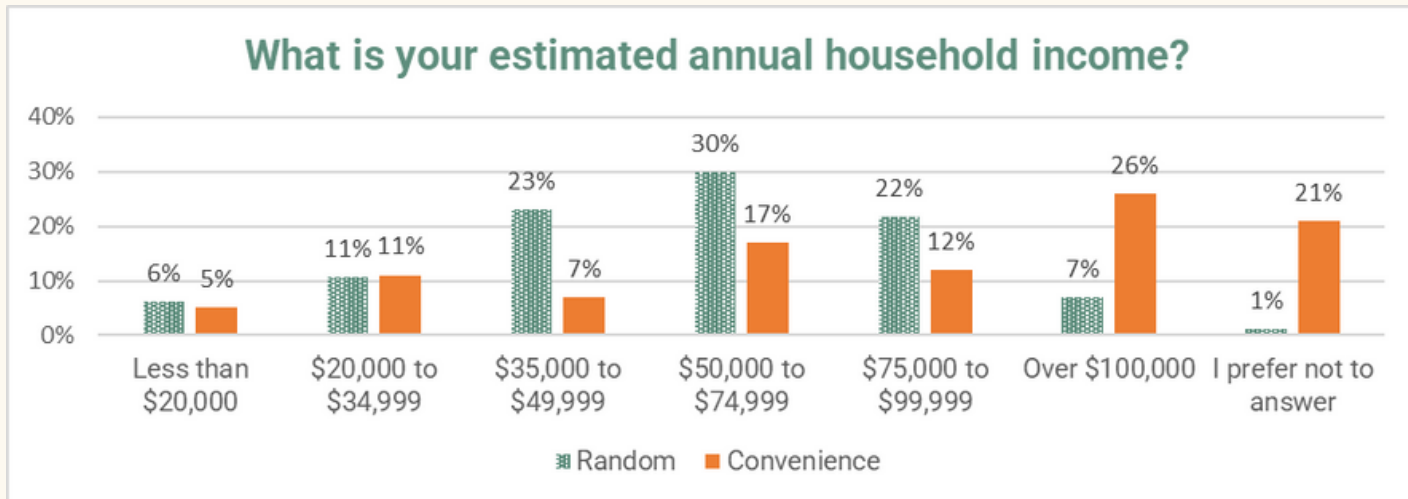


Question: What is your political party affiliation? (Choose only one.)



Respondents in the convenience sample wrote in *other* responses such as *progressive*, *Green*, *Democratic socialist* and *don't vote in the U.S.*

Question: What is your estimated annual household income? (Choose only one.)



VI. Recommendations



These survey results provide crucial insight into gift-giving practices and perceptions of the holiday season. The findings in this report can help inform future outreach and advocacy campaigns as well as future research.

1) Campaigns should emphasize alternative gift options and their benefits.

The majority of respondents perceived the holidays as too materialistic and focused on gift giving. However, respondents in the random sample also viewed the holidays as a time to splurge on material gifts. To address this sentiment, campaigns can highlight ways to splurge on nonmaterial gifts with ethical, environmental and social benefits through the gift of time or skill, local experiences or donations.

Because saving money was a primary perceived benefit of buying secondhand gifts (favored by over 40% of respondents in the random sample), campaigns that challenge new gifts as the default can highlight both the financial and environmental benefits of secondhand gifts.

Over 60% of respondents in the random sample were likely or very likely to give handmade and DIY gifts, presenting new opportunities for collaboration with creatives and to support local artists and artisans. The random sample also favored purchasing gifts from small businesses (76%), which is an opportunity to promote shopping small and support a connection to community investment for the development of local economies.

Additionally, over half of the respondents in the random sample (63%) were very likely or likely to cook a plant-based main course for a winter holiday meal. Campaigns can continue to highlight affordable, accessible, and culturally inclusive plant-based holiday meal options.

Future education and outreach could also recommend alternative gift giving as a year-round behavior, promote the quality/thoughtfulness of a gift over the number of gifts given, address barriers to giving alternative gifts, normalize eco-friendly gift giving through creative media and highlight new opportunities for conscious consumption gift giving.

2) Campaigns should challenge external influences on gift-giving behaviors by calling for increased corporate transparency and providing support for individuals trying to transform family traditions.

Since almost 70% of respondents in the random sample indicated that they are likely or very likely to consider the environmental impacts of a gift before purchasing it, future campaigns could focus on increasing corporate transparency to help people evaluate the environmental impact of an item in a way that is understandable and accessible while also presenting easy and affordable options to swap.

Responses also present useful insight into holiday-specific advocacy. Those in the convenience sample reported feeling pressure to buy material gifts due to external expectations. Future work could help increase the reach and accessibility of existing resources such as the Simplify the Holidays guide on talking to your family about transforming traditions by collaborating with other sustainability influencers doing similar work.

3) Additional research is needed to better understand generational differences in gift giving behaviors and expectations.

The survey results reflect a need for additional research into the pressures associated with gift giving and how these pressures vary by generation. Gift giving was reported as a universal practice by respondents; however, the expectations associated with gift giving may vary by culture, age and other demographic factors. The age variation noted in the data begs additional questions: With the rise of online shopping and digital gift cards, are individuals feeling less pressure to give physical gifts? Additionally has social media changed the expectations around gift giving practices?

Beyond the external pressures of gift giving, comments from the convenience sample suggest that additional research is necessary to consider how the gift recipient's age affects the type of gift they are willing to give and the associated expectations of gift giving. Recognizing the prominence of marketing in media directed at children, additional research could allow for a clearer understanding of the pressures to give specific types of gifts to children.

Finally, related to the need for additional information about external pressures such as marketing to children, the survey results suggest additional consideration of how advertising, marketing and “influencer culture” impacts the pressure people feel to buy material gifts.

VII. Conclusion



These survey results help build the knowledge base related to holiday materialism, conscious consumption and alternative gift giving, along with providing new outreach and advocacy campaign ideas for advocates to continue building equitable, inclusive and environmentally friendly holiday traditions.

VIII. Appendix



Appendix A: Question Bank

1. What is your age in years? (Quality control question)
2. From the dropdown menu, pick what state/territory you reside in.

Please indicate the level of agreement you have for each statement below.

3. I wish the holidays were less materialistic.
4. The holidays should be more about family and caring for others.
5. The acts of giving and receiving gifts are awarded too much importance during the holiday season.
6. The holidays should be a time to splurge on material gifts.
7. I feel pressured to buy material gifts due to expectations from others, the media and/or society.
8. When it comes to receiving holiday gifts which of the following best describes how you feel?
9. When it comes to giving material gifts (i.e., toys, electronics, and clothes), which of the following best describes how you feel?
10. What term do you use for a gift that isn't purchased NEW from a large online retailer or through a brick-and-mortar big box store (e.g. an experiential gift, a charitable donation, or a homemade gift)?
11. Which of the following do you see as being the GREATEST benefit of buying secondhand gifts (items that have been used previously)?

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this winter holiday season.

12. Give gifts of experience (i.e., membership passes, lessons, tickets).
13. Give gifts of time or skill (i.e., babysitting, house cleaning, computer repair).
14. Give secondhand gifts.
15. Give handmade gifts purchased from a business.
16. Make handmade or Do-it-Yourself (DIY) gifts.
17. Donate to a nonprofit as a gift.

Please indicate how likely you are to take each of the following actions this winter holiday season.

18. Shop local small businesses for gifts.
 19. Shop online through Amazon or big box stores to purchase gifts.
 20. Take the environmental impact of a gift into account before purchasing.
 21. Cook plant-based main courses for winter holiday meals.
 22. Give an alternative gift to a child.
23. In your opinion, what are the challenges associated with giving an alternative gift (i.e., a secondhand gift, a gift of experience or a gift of time or skill)? (Check all that apply.)
24. For quality control purposes, please select the response that is a color.
25. What is your gender identity? (Choose only one.)
26. In what year were you born? (Please enter 4-digit year only.)
27. Race and Hispanic Origin: How would you describe yourself? (Choose all that apply.)
28. What is your political party affiliation? (Choose only one.)
29. What is your estimated annual household income? (Choose only one.)
30. What town or city do you live in? (Quality control question)



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