American Experiences Survey:

A Nationally Representative Multi-Mode Survey

July 2021 Omnibus Results

Overview of Methodology

Each month, Consumer Reports fields the American Experiences Survey (AES) to track consumer attitudes and behaviors over time. July results are based on interviews conducted from July 12-21, 2021. This document includes all sections of the omnibus survey for this month: holiday shopping, economy reopening and inflation, customer service, and concern about COVID-19.

The survey was administered by NORC at the University of Chicago through its AmeriSpeak® Panel to a nationally representative sample. Interviews were conducted in English and in Spanish, and were administered both online and by phone. In total NORC collected 2,184 interviews, 2,057 by web mode and 127 by phone mode. Final data are weighted by age, gender, race/Hispanic ethnicity, housing tenure, telephone status, education, and Census Division to be proportionally representative of the US adult population.

The margin of error for results based on the total sample is +/-2.93 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Smaller subgroups will have larger error margins, and only those subgroups for which there are at least 100 unweighted cases are included.

TOPLINE RESULTS WITH MONTHLY TRENDS

The questions presented below were shown to respondents in this order unless otherwise noted. Where appropriate, question verbiage, response answer choices, or direction of scales were randomized or rotated and those instances are noted below.

Also shown, where available, are trends over time. Not every item was asked on every recent omnibus survey, and where minor revisions to the wording of an item or response choices were made, they are noted below. *Note these changes may impact comparability of results.*

Note that the July omnibus contained four blocks of questions. Respondents saw the first three blocks in a random order (holiday shopping, economy, and customer service), followed by a block on concern about COVID-19.

Prepared by CR Survey Research Department, August 2021

www.cr.org

Survey Notes for Monthly Trends

July 2021 results are based on interviews conducted from July 12-21 with a nationally representative sample of 2,184 US adults.

June 2021 results are based on interviews conducted from June 11-22 with a nationally representative sample of 2,280 US adults.

May 2021 results are based on interviews conducted from May 7-17 with a nationally representative sample of 2,079 US adults.

April 2021 results are based on interviews conducted from April 9-19 with a nationally representative sample of 2,288 US adults.

March 2021 results are based on interviews conducted from March 4-15 with a nationally representative sample of 2,144 US adults.

February 2021 results are based on interviews conducted from February 4-15 with a nationally representative sample of 2,514 US adults.

January 2021 results are based on interviews conducted from January 7-19 with a nationally representative sample of 2,233 US adults.

December 2020 results are based on interviews conducted from December 10-21 with a nationally representative sample of 2,982 US adults.

November 2020 results are based on interviews conducted from November 5-16 with a nationally representative sample of 2,851 US adults.

October 2020 results are based on interviews conducted from October 8-26 with a nationally representative sample of 2,670 US adults.

September 2020 results are based on interviews conducted from September 11-21 with a nationally representative sample of 2,303 US adults.

August 2020 results are based on interviews conducted from August 7-19 with a nationally representative sample of 2,236 US adults.

July 2020 results are based on interviews conducted from July 9-20 with a nationally representative sample of 2,031 US adults.

June 2020 results are based on interviews conducted from June 4-16 with a nationally representative sample of 1,014 US adults.

May 2020 results are based on interviews conducted from May 8-18 with a nationally representative sample of 2,085 US adults.

HOLIDAY SHOPPING

HOLIDAYINTRO. *[TEXT SHOWN TO RESPONDENTS.]*

For this section of the survey we are interested in your experiences and expectations regarding the upcoming holiday season, which typically begins with Thanksgiving and ends with New Year's Eve.

[SHOPPING HABITS SUBSECTION]

HOLIDAYA0. *[RESPONDENTS PROMPTED TWICE.]*

Do you plan to shop for gifts this upcoming holiday season?

	Total
	%
Yes	87
No	13
Base: All respondents	2,181

HOLIDAYA1. *[SHOW IF HOLIDAYA0 = "YES." ROTATE SCALE ORDER.]*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us turned to online shopping.

Compared to before the pandemic, which of the following BEST describes your plans for shopping online for holiday gifts this year?

	Total
	%
I always did much of my holiday shopping online before the pandemic and this year will be no different	43
I am more likely to shop online this year than I did before the pandemic	29
I am less likely to shop online this year than I did before the pandemic	8
I never did much of my holiday shopping online before the pandemic and this year will be no different	21
Base: Respondents who plan to shop for gifts this holiday season	1,877

HOLIDAYA2. *[SHOW IF HOLIDAYA0 = "YES."]*

Have you started on your holiday gift shopping already this year?

	Total
	%
Yes, I bought holiday gifts on Amazon Prime Day or other early holiday sales	8
Yes, I bought holiday gifts already but NOT during any Amazon Prime Day or other early holiday sales	10
No, I haven't started yet	82
Base: Respondents who plan to shop for gifts this holiday season	1,880

HOLIDAYA3. *[IF HOLIDAYA0 = "YES," QUESTION STEM SHOWN AS "…FOR YOURSELF OR FOR GIFTS" AND RESPONSE OPTIONS INCLUDED: "YES, FOR GIFTS"; "YES, FOR MYSELF"; "YES, FOR GIFTS & MYSELF"; "NO, I DO NOT PLAN TO SHOPS THESE DAYS." IF HOLIDAYA0 NOT EQUAL TO "YES," QUESTION STEM SHOWN AS "…FOR YOURSELF" AND RESPONSE OPTIONS INCLUDED: "YES"; "NO."]*

Are you planning to shop on Black Friday or Cyber Monday for…

among those who plan to shop for holiday gifts: **yourself or for gifts?**
among those who do not plan to shop for holiday gifts: **yourself?**

		Among those who:	
	Total	Plan to shop for holiday gifts	Do not plan to shop for holiday gifts
	%	%	%
SUBNET: Yes	***58***	***64***	***23***
Yes, for gifts and for myself	36	42	N/A
Yes, for gifts	16	18	N/A
Yes, for myself	6	3	23
No, I do not plan to shop on these days	42	37	77
Base: All respondents	2,166		

[PAYING FOR AND RECEIVING GIFTS SUBSECTION]

HOLIDAYB1. *[SHOW IF HOLIDAYA0 = "YES."]*

Do you plan to make a budget for purchasing gifts this holiday season?

	Total
	%
Yes	66
No	34
Base: Respondents who plan to shop for gifts this holiday season	1,877

HOLIDAYB2. *[SHOW IF HOLIDAYA0 = "YES." ROTATE ORDER OF "LESS"/"MORE" RESPONSE OPTIONS. "ABOUT THE SAME" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

Compared to last year's holiday season, do you anticipate spending…?

	Total
	%
About the same amount of money on gifts	61
Less money this year on gifts	22
More money this year on gifts	17
Base: Respondents who plan to shop for gifts this holiday season	1,877

HOLIDAYB3. *[RANDOMIZE ITEMS, WITH "OTHER" AND "NONE OF THESE" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

In the past 12 months, which, if any, of the following methods of payment have you used when shopping?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Major credit cards	67
Cash	63
Debit cards	62
Gift cards	49
Contactless payment methods (e.g., Google Pay, Apple Pay, Samsung Pay, Venmo, Zelle, PayPal, etc.)	31
Store-issued credit cards	22
Checks	11
Other	1
None of these	1
Base: All respondents	2,184

HOLIDAYB4. *[SHOW IF HOLIDAYA0 = "YES." RANDOMIZE ITEMS, WITH "NONE OF THESE" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST. RESPONDENTS WERE LIMITED TO THREE SELECTIONS.]*

Which of the following are most important to you when deciding which method of payment to use when purchasing holiday gifts this year?

Select up to three responses.

	Total
	%
Being convenient to use	59
Earning cash back or other rewards	47
Making it easier to track the amount of money you are spending	28
Minimizing the risk of data breaches or fraud	24
Limiting how much you can spend	20
Having more time to pay off the gifts you purchase	16
Offering a purchase protection program	11
Limiting human contact	11
Being able to make purchases without being tracked by anyone	11
None of these	5
Base: Respondents who plan to shop for gifts this holiday season	1,883

HOLIDAYB5. *[SHOW IF HOLIDAYA0 = "YES."]*

In total, about how much do you think you will spend on gifts this holiday season?

	Total
	%
Less than $100	3
$100 to $249	13
$250 to $499	23
$500 to $799	21
$800 to $999	9
$1,000 to $1,499	15
$1,500 to $1,999	5
$2,000 to $2,999	4
$3,000 to $3,999	1
$4,000 to $4,999	0
$5,000 or more	1
Don't know/Unsure	5
Base: Respondents who plan to shop for gifts this holiday season	1,871

HOLIDAYB6. *[RANDOMIZE ITEMS, WITH "OTHER" AND "HAVE NOT LOOKED FOR DISCOUNTS" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

In the past 12 months, which, if any, of the following have you used to find discounts or coupons?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Letters or mailers sent from retailers	33
Coupons that print out with my receipt at checkout	32
Shopping apps on my phone for cash back, coupons, and promotions (like Rakuten or Ibotta)	23
Newspapers or mass mailings (such as Valpak or TheClipper)	22
My credit cards' websites' or apps' "deals" or "offers" section	22
Websites that archive coupon codes and promotions (like RetailMeNot or SlickDeals)	22
Internet browser add-ons that identify coupon codes (such as Honey or Capital One Shopping)	21
Groupon or other daily deal sites	18
Social media sites like Facebook or Twitter	12
Tips from blogs or other websites	10
Other	2
I have not looked for discounts or coupons for my purchases	21
Base: All respondents	2,184

HOLIDAYB7. *[RANDOMIZE "REWARDS CREDIT CARD" AND "STORE-ISSUED CREDIT CARD" ITEMS.]*

Have you ever signed up for each of the following types of credit cards to save money, or would you consider doing so this holiday season?

	Total
	%
A credit card that offers rewards (often these rewards are in particular spending categories such as gas or air travel)	
Yes, I have done this to save money	53
No, I have not done this but would consider it this holiday season to save money	18
No, I have not and would not do this to save money	29
Base: All respondents	2,164
A store-issued credit card that offered a discount off your first purchase using it (you usually sign up for these at the retailer when making a purchase)	
Yes, I have done this to save money	44
No, I have not done this but would consider it this holiday season to save money	15
No, I have not and would not do this to save money	41
Base: All respondents	2,155

[GIFT CARDS SUBSECTION]

HOLIDAYC1.

Have you purchased a gift card as a gift for someone within the past 12 months?	
	Total
	%
Yes	65
No	35
Base: All respondents	2,177

HOLIDAYC2.

Have you received a gift card as a gift within the past 12 months?	
	Total
	%
Yes	67
No	33
Base: All respondents	2,162

HOLIDAYC3. *[ROTATE ORDER OF "GIFT"/"GIFT CARD" IN QUESTION STEM; ROTATE "GIFT"/"GIFT CARD" IN RESPONSE OPTIONS TO MATCH ORDER IN QUESTION STEM. "NO PREFERENCE" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

Would you rather receive a gift or a gift card?	
	Total
	%
Gift card	41
Gift	15
No preference	44
Base: All respondents	2,179

HOLIDAYC4.

About how many unused gift cards do you currently have?

Please include all gift cards that have any remaining balance left on them, including those that have been partially used or never been used.

	Total
	%
None	46
1	17
2	16
3 or more	18
Unsure	2
Base: All respondents	2,181

ECONOMY REOPENING AND INFLATION

ECONOMYINTRO. *[TEXT SHOWN TO RESPONDENTS.]*

Across the country, states and local areas have lifted many of the restrictions that were put in place to minimize the spread of COVID-19. This section is about how these reopenings are impacting consumers.

ECONOMY1. *[RANDOMIZE ITEMS, KEEPING BOTH "PRICES" ITEMS TOGETHER, BOTH "SHORTAGES" ITEMS TOGETHER, AND BOTH "DELAYS" ITEMS TOGETHER. "HAVE NOT EXPERIENCED ANY" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

Which, if any, of the following have you experienced in the past three months?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
SUBNET: Higher than expected prices for products, services, or home purchase/rentals	***74***
Higher than expected prices for products	68
Product shortages (that is, you were unable to find an item you were looking for because it was out of stock)	60
Product delays (that is, you were told a product you wanted to buy was going to take longer than expected to arrive)	58
Higher than expected prices for services	38
Service delays (that is, you were told there would be a longer than expected wait time to get a service you were interested in)	33
Service shortages (that is, you were unable to get or use a service you were interested in because it was unavailable)	25
Higher than expected home purchase or rental prices	22
Higher than expected interest rates	7
I have not experienced any of these in the past 3 months	10
Base: All respondents	2,184

ECONOMY2. *[SHOW IF "HIGHER PRICES FOR PRODUCTS" SELECTED IN ECONOMY1. RESPONSE OPTIONS "EVERYDAY ITEMS" AND "BIG TICKET PURCHASES" ROTATED, WITH VERBIAGE IN QUESTION STEM ALSO ROTATED TO MATCH RESPONSE CHOICE ORDER. "BOTH" AND "NEITHER" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST IN THAT ORDER.]*

You mentioned that you have seen higher than expected prices for products recently.

Have you noticed inflation on everyday items (such as groceries or gas), on big ticket purchases (such as electronics or large home appliances), or both?

	Total
	%
Both	51
Everyday items	43
Big ticket purchases	3
Neither - the higher than expected prices on products I've seen are in another category	3
Base: Respondents who have experienced higher than expected prices for products	1,525

ECONOMY3.

In the past three months, have you put on hold, reconsidered, or decided against a major purchase or other large expense because of inflation, product or service shortages, or delays?

	Total
	%
Yes	47
No	53
Base: All respondents	2,179

ECONOMY4. *[SHOW IF ECONOMY3 = "YES." RANDOMIZE ITEMS. "OTHER" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

In the past three months, which of the following have you put on hold, reconsidered, or not done because of inflation, product or service shortages, or delays?

Select all that apply.

	Total	*Of All Respondents*
	%	%
Having home improvements or remodeling done	51	24
Buying a major appliance (such as a washing machine or dishwasher)	30	14
Having a medical or dental procedure	27	13
Buying/leasing a car or vehicle	26	12
Making a major purchase of something other than a car/vehicle or buying a home	24	11
Buying a home	20	10
Moving out of a friend's or family member's home	5	3
Starting a business	5	3
Having a wedding or other large event	5	2
Other	4	2
Base: Respondents who have put on hold, reconsidered, or decided against a major purchase or large expense	1,044	2,184

Note: The question was only asked of those who responded "Yes" in Economy3, and results using this base are shown in the first column above. For reporting purposes, an additional column has been added in this table using all respondents as the base.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

SERVICEINTRO. *[TEXT SHOWN TO RESPONDENTS.]*

The next few questions are about your experiences with customer service departments or representatives. Sometimes people contact customer service to ask questions before buying a product or signing up for a service. Or, people may have an issue with, or a question about, a product they already own or a service they use, and contact customer service to get their question answered or the problem resolved.

SERVICE1. *[RESPONDENTS PROMPTED TWICE.]*

When thinking about the products or services you own or have used in the past 12 months, have you had a question or issue for which you contacted, or considered contacting, the company's customer service?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Yes, I have contacted customer service in the past 12 months	61
Yes, I have considered contacting customer service in the past 12 months	12
No, I have not done this in the past 12 months	31
Base: All respondents	2,184

SERVICE2. *[SHOW IF "YES, CONTACTED CUSTOMER SERVICE" IS SELECTED IN SERVICE1. RESPONSE OPTIONS WERE SHOWN IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER, WITH "OTHER" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

You mentioned that you have contacted customer service in the past 12 months. For which, if any, of the following types of companies did you contact customer service?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Cable, phone, or internet services	57
Retail (a store or store website)	43
Financial services (such as a bank or credit card)	37
Health services (such as medical insurance or doctor bills)	33
Product manufacturer	30
Utilities (such as gas or electricity)	20
Travel (such as an airline, hotel, or car rental)	19
Other	6
Base: Respondents who contacted customer service	1,430

SERVICE3. *[SHOW IF "YES, CONTACTED CUSTOMER SERVICE" IS SELECTED IN SERVICE1. RANDOMIZE ITEMS, WITH "OTHER" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

Which, if any, of the following methods did you use when you contacted customer service?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Phone	86
Email	45
Online live chat	41
Website	29
In-store	18
Via their social media pages	3
Video chat	2
Other (e.g., fax, mail)	1
Base: Respondents who contacted customer service	1,430

SERVICE4. *[RESPONSE OPTION "HAVE NOT HAD A PROBLEM" ONLY SHOWN IF SERVICE1 IS BLANK OR "NO" SELECTED IN SERVICE1. RANDOMIZE ITEMS, WITH "OTHER" AND "HAVE NOT HAD A PROBLEM" ALWAYS SHOWN LAST.]*

Thinking about questions or issues you have had with products or services in the past 12 months, which, if any, of the following have you done instead of (or in addition to) contacting customer service?

Select all that apply.

	Total
	%
Cancelled your service or returned a product	32
Wrote a negative review on a review website	16
Contacted corporate headquarters	10
Complained on social media	7
Filed a complaint with a government agency	3
None of the above	39
I have not had a problem or issue with a product or service in the past 12 months*	14
Base: All respondents	2,184

**Note: The final response option was only shown if a respondent had not contacted or considered contacting customer service; however, for reporting purposes the percentage shown is out of all respondents.*

SERVICE5. *[SHOW IF "YES, CONTACTED CUSTOMER SERVICE" IS SELECTED IN SERVICE1.]*

In the past 12 months, were you able to get your customer service requests resolved?

	Total
	%
Yes, I got the help or answers I needed	54
Yes and no, some requests were resolved and others were not	37
No, I still have questions or issues that are unresolved	9
Base: Respondents who contacted customer service	1,428

SERVICE6. *[SHOW IF SERVICE5 = ANY "YES."]*

Thinking about the times in the past 12 months that you've contacted customer service and were able to get the help or answers you needed, was it typically resolved during the first contact?

	Total
	%
Yes	62
No, it took multiple contacts to get it resolved	38
Base: Respondents who contacted customer service and got at least some requests resolved	1,306

COVID-19

COVCONCERNNOW.

How concerned or not concerned are you about COVID-19 continuing to spread in your local area over the next month?

	JULY 2021 AES	JUNE 2021 AES	MAY 2021 AES	APRIL 2021 AES	MARCH 2021 AES	FEBRUARY 2021 AES	DECEMBER 2020 AES	NOVEMBER 2020 AES	OCTOBER 2020 AES	SEPTEMBER 2020 AES	AUGUST 2020 AES	JULY 2020 AES	JUNE 2020 AES	MAY 2020 AES
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very concerned	25	14	19	28	30	40	51	51	44	42	44	53	41	41
Somewhat concerned	34	35	34	38	34	36	30	30	32	33	34	29	34	36
Not too concerned	25	33	33	22	25	17	13	14	17	18	16	12	16	18
Not concerned at all	16	17	15	12	11	7	6	5	6	7	6	5	8	6
Base: All respondents	2,178	2,278	2,078	2,287	2,140	2,514	2,977	2,850	2,668	2,300	2,233	2,031	1,014	2,082

COVCONCERN6MOS.

How concerned or not concerned are you about COVID-19 continuing to spread in your local area over the next 6 months?

	JULY 2021 AES	JUNE 2021 AES	MAY 2021 AES	APRIL 2021 AES	MARCH 2021 AES	FEBRUARY 2021 AES	DECEMBER 2020 AES	NOVEMBER 2020 AES	OCTOBER 2020 AES	SEPTEMBER 2020 AES	AUGUST 2020 AES	JULY 2020 AES
	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Very concerned	25	15	17	26	26	35	44	49	45	41	44	53
Somewhat concerned	34	34	35	37	36	38	34	32	31	35	33	29
Not too concerned	24	34	32	25	27	20	15	14	18	17	17	13
Not concerned at all	17	17	16	12	12	8	6	6	7	7	6	6
Base: All respondents	2,162	2,251	2,055	2,275	2,123	2,505	2,948	2,809	2,643	2,282	2,214	2,031

CONTACT:

Kristen Purcell
Chief Research Officer
Kristen.Purcell@consumer.org

@kristenpurcell