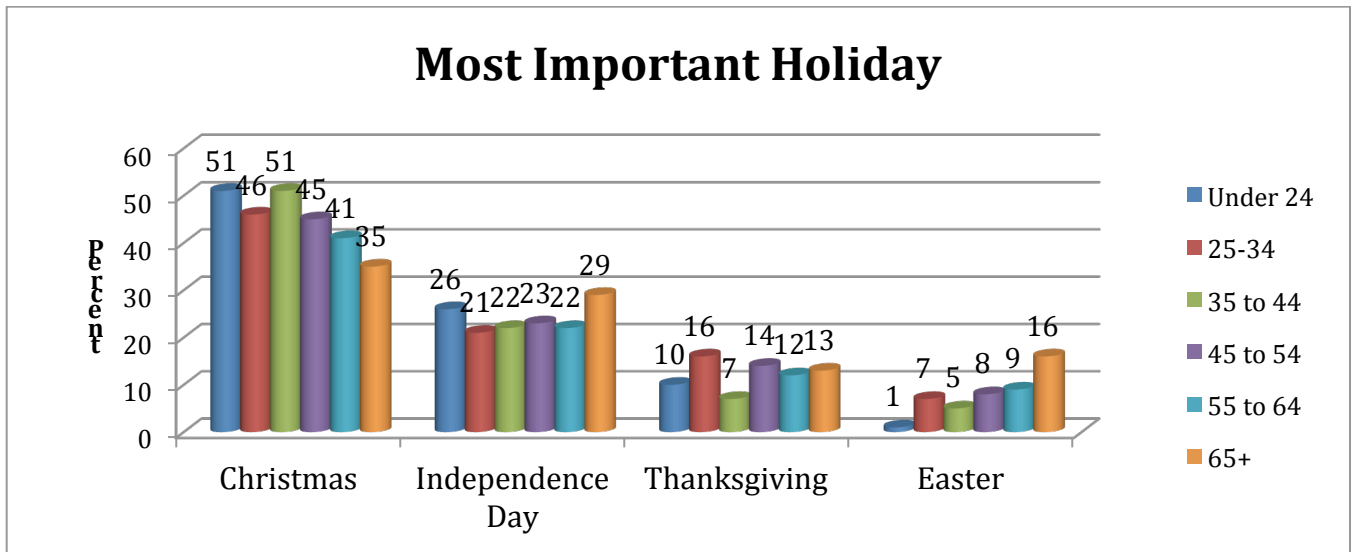


2011 American Holiday Study United Methodist Communications

Love the holidays or hate them? Well, it seems that we Americans love our holidays, with 90 percent of all Americans taking part in the celebration of Christmas. In fact, even 80 percent of atheists warm up to the yuletide.

Our 2011 American Holiday Study being released here shows that Christmas is by far the most important holiday celebrated among Americans. Surprisingly, Independence Day outranks Thanksgiving and Easter as the second most important holiday. Certainly, the fact that Americans are patriotic is seen in this data, possibly impacted by the ten years in which the U.S. military has been engaged in wars.

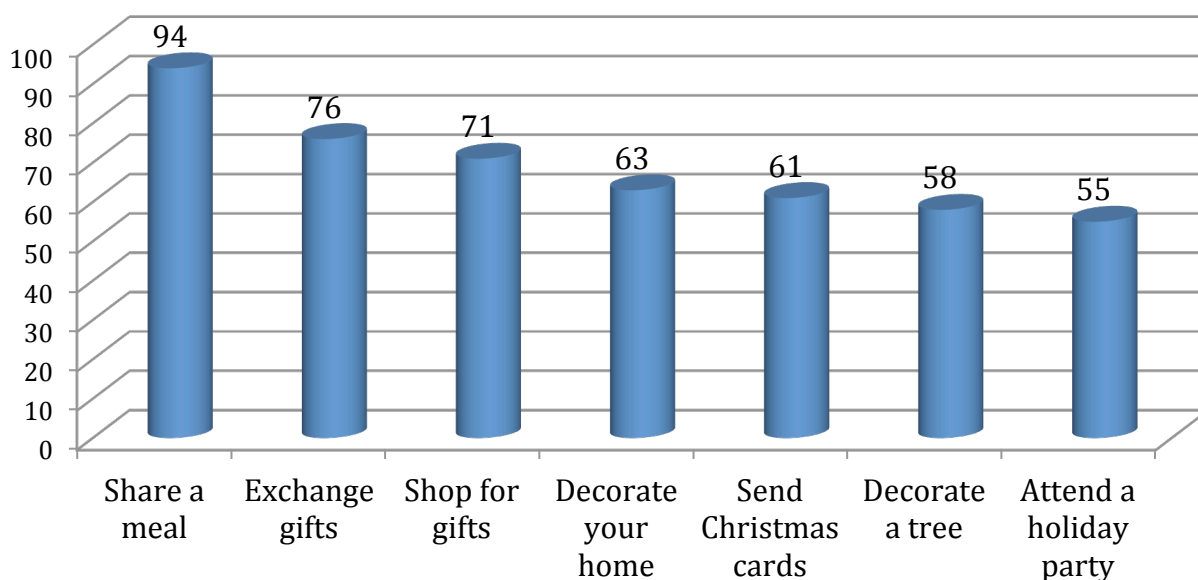


Most important Christmas activities

Dickens got it right; old Scrooge was wrong. The top Christmas activities revolve around meals, gifts, decorations and parties. Seventy-six percent of us will exchange gifts, 63 percent will decorate their homes and 58 percent will trim a tree.

Interestingly, more people will attend a holiday party than a worship service; 55 percent will make merry compared to 47 percent attending worship services. Watching our special holiday movies (48 percent) ranks right alongside worship.

Top Christmas Activities - Participation In

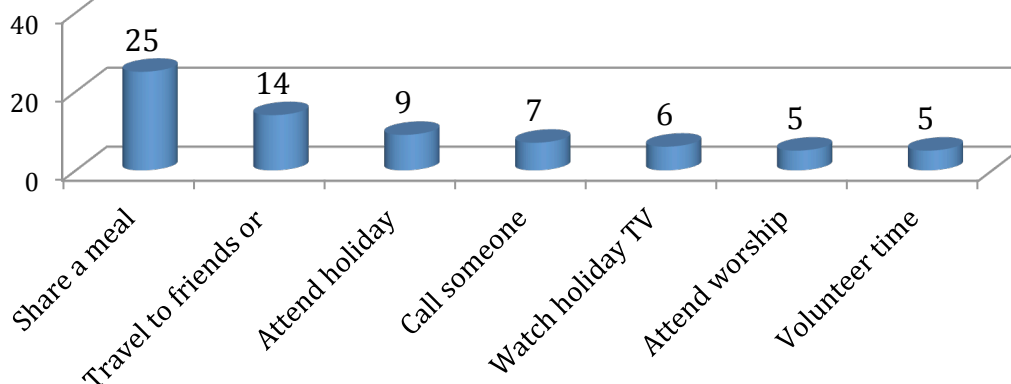


And while some of us “elf ourself” and send Christmas emails (36 percent), most Americans (61 percent) will still send Christmas cards. More of us will buy a present for ourselves this year (31 percent) than volunteer time to an organization serving the poor (21 percent). However, donations become an important part of our activity at Christmas, with 42 percent making a monetary donation.

What we enjoy most, least

The most enjoyed activities at the holidays seem to center around connecting with others. Sharing a meal rated the highest at 25 percent, followed by 14 percent traveling to visit friends or family. Attending worship services (5 percent) and volunteering time (5 percent) were among the top seven Christmas activities Americans enjoy.

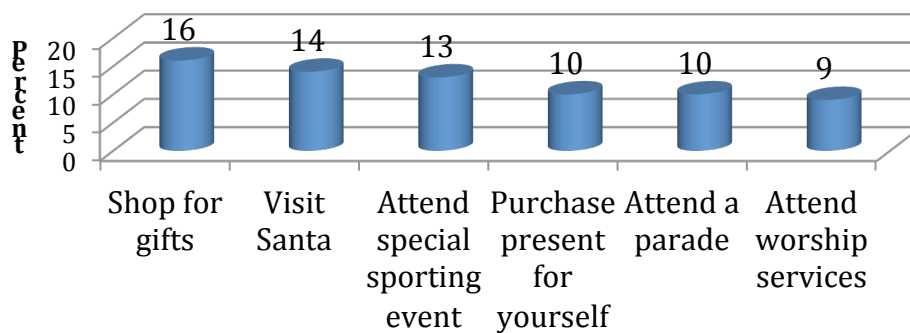
Christmas Activities Enjoyed the Most



Santa, take note: the activities that we enjoy least about the holidays include shopping for gifts, visiting Santa, attending a sporting event, purchasing a present for ourselves, attending a parade and attending worship services.

Attending a worship service was the only activity listed among the top six in both the most and least enjoyed.

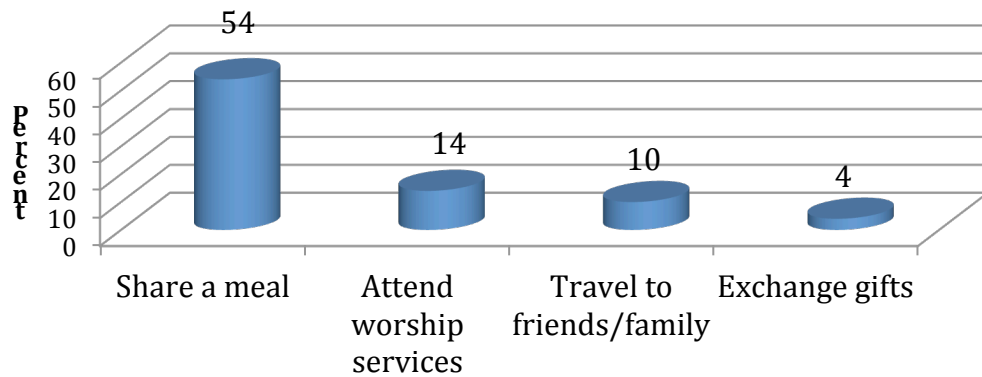
Christmas Activities Enjoyed the Least



The activity with the most meaning

The activities that have the most meaning to us are sharing a meal (54 percent), attending worship services (14 percent), traveling to friends/family (10 percent) and exchanging presents (4 percent).

Christmas Activity with Most Meaning To You



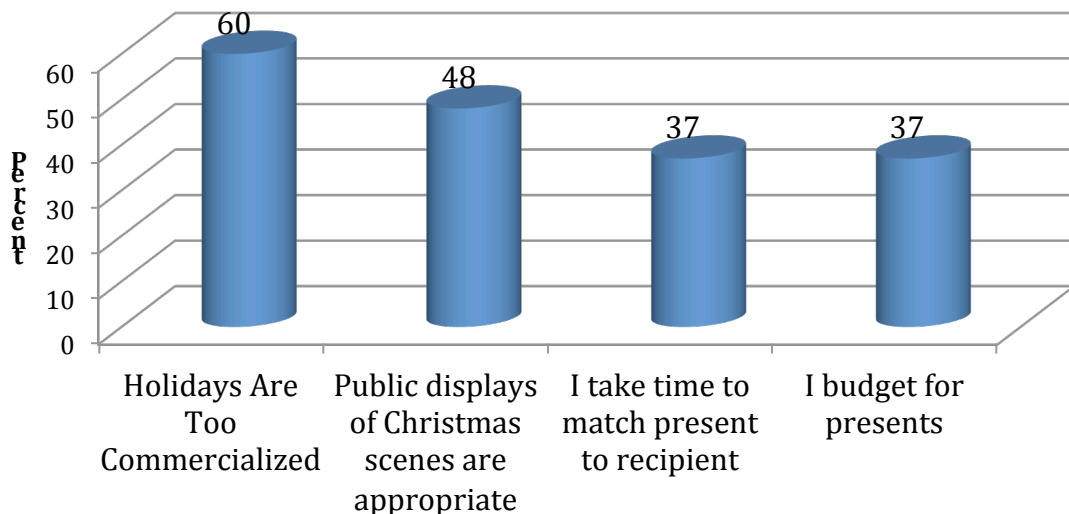
Those of us involved in planning meaningful worship experiences might take pause at some of these facts. While worship is meaningful to 14 percent of Americans, what is making a worship service one of the most and least enjoyed activities?

'Holidays are too commercialized'

Generally, attitudes toward Christmas remain positive, but 60 percent of us think the holidays are too commercialized, and 32 percent wish they were simpler.

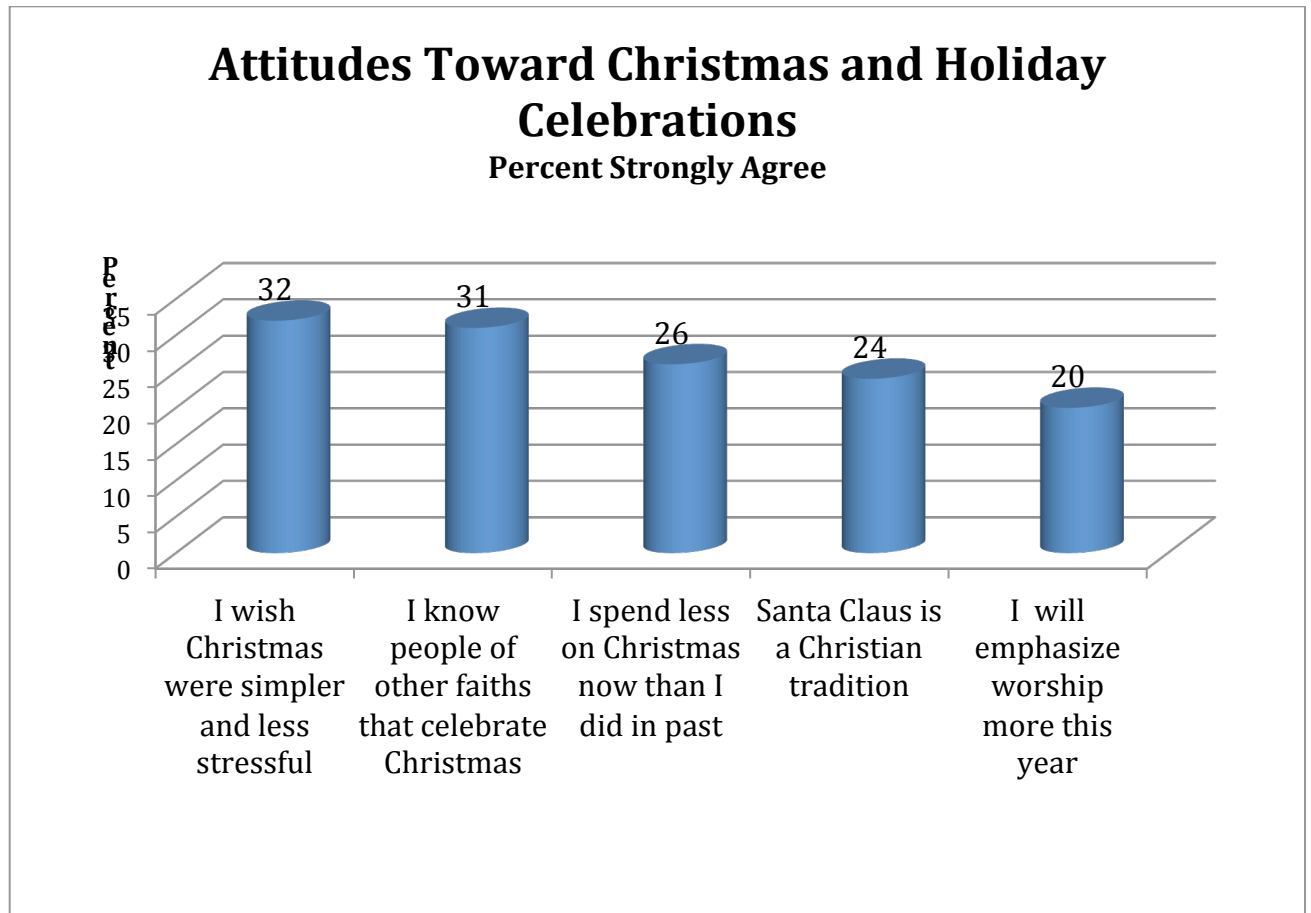
Attitudes Toward Christmas and Holiday Celebrations

Percent Strongly Agree



Most Americans do not think Christmas is overrated or that the holidays have lost their meaning. A majority of respondents indicate they are likely to give more to the needy this year (58 percent) and to emphasize worship more (54 percent).

Most Americans appear more pragmatic about Christmas spending as well. We will create budgets for presents and take time to match presents with the recipient. Most people will spend \$250-\$499 on presents.



Americans like to show their Christmas spirit. Forty-eight percent believe public displays of Christmas scenes are appropriate. But many say that spending on decorations for themselves will be limited to less than \$50.

Giving to charities during the holidays will be higher among older age groups, with about a third of respondents 55 and older indicating they will give more than \$100 this year.

This study was commissioned by United Methodist Communications. A third party conducted the consumer opinion poll on the agency's behalf in June, canvassing 870 adults 18 years of age and older.

