



THE PENNY HOARDER 2026 STATE OF HOLIDAY SPENDING REPORT: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Compared to this time last year, describe your household's **overall financial stability** in 2026:

- Better (28.76%)
- Worse (34.56%)
- About the same (36.68%)

Anticipated spending amount on the holidays in 2026, including gifts, decorations, food, celebrations, donations and travel:

- \$0 (2.79%)
- \$1 to \$100 (8.74%)
- \$101 to \$500 (28.94%)
- \$501 to \$1,000 (22.64%)
- \$1,000 to \$2,000 (16.78%)
- More than \$2,000 (8.78%)
- Don't know (11.33%)

Expected holiday spending for **2026 vs. 2025?**

- Spend more in 2026 compared to 2025 (34.47%)
- Spend less in 2026 compared to 2025 (30.38%)
- Spend the same amount (19.60%)
- Don't know (15.55%)

If you plan to **spend more** on the holidays in 2026 compared to 2025, what is the top reason?

- Inflation-related costs means I'll spend more to match last year's holiday (42.36%)
- I have more people to buy for (22.17%)
- I'm feeling more confident about my employment/finances (20.85%)
- I'm planning to travel more than last year (13.21%)

If you plan to **spend less** on the holidays in 2026 compared to 2025, what is the top reason?

- Inflation-related costs means I have to cut my holiday budget (41.57%)
- I don't plan to spend less this year (24.63%)
- I'm feeling less confident about my employment/finances (12.43%)
- I have fewer people to buy for (11.55%)
- I'm planning to travel less than I did last year (6.00%)

Primary method for **financing holiday gifts** in 2026:

- While 1 in 5 shoppers (20.06%) will use credit cards as their primary funding source, the majority of them (13.68% overall) intend to pay off the balance each month rather than carrying it over time (6.38%).
- To make the holidays happen, 7.33% of respondents are relying on side hustles or second jobs, while 4.15% are leaning on Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) services.



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- Only 12.41% of Americans plan to use dedicated savings accrued throughout the year as their primary method to pay for gifts.

Have you **used emergency funds** to pay for holiday purchases in the past?

- 57.32% never
- 30.13% occasionally
- 12.55% every year

How will elevated prices or inflation impact your 2026 holiday **gift-buying strategy**? (select all that apply)

- I will buy fewer items (46.06%)
- I will buy cheaper/smaller items (39.85%)
- I will limit my recipient list (26.21%)
- Inflation will not change my plans (22.81%)

Holiday purchases that are **non-negotiable** — you'll pay regardless of whether they are more expensive than you anticipated:

- Gifts for children (46.03%)
- Gifts for other family members (36.54%)
- Gifts for spouse or partner (35.43%)
- Gifts for myself (20.33%)
- Gifts for friends (19.49%)
- Gifts for pets (14.98%)

Financial pressures are forcing Americans to compromise on **holiday travel** by cutting back on destination activities (26.51%), staying with family or friends instead of hotels (24.09%), and skipping holiday travel altogether due to cost (21.61%).

Black Friday still anchors the deal calendar, with 61.54% of shoppers planning around it, ahead of Cyber Monday (42.20%) and Amazon Prime sales events (41.40%).

Over the past 6 months, which of the following everyday expenses have forced you to make the **biggest cutbacks** in discretionary spending?

- Groceries (55.68%)
- Gas prices (45.66%)
- Dining out and entertainment (33.51%)
- Utilities (31.19%)
- Housing or rent (24.55%)
- Medical expenses (15.19%)
- Car payments/auto loans (12.51%)



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Credit card debt/BNPL in 2026:

- More than half of Americans (52.82%) are carrying a credit card balance into the holidays, and for 22.20% that debt takes up a significant portion of their monthly budget.
- Roughly 1 in 6 Americans (16.64%) are still paying off debt from the 2025 holiday season as the 2026 season begins.
- 1 in 3 Americans (32.98%) are enrolled in at least one BNPL plan, and 17.81% are juggling two or more.

Strategies adopted in the past 6 months to **offset higher everyday prices**:

- Buying store brands/generic (57.31%)
- Shopping at discount grocers (46.11%)
- Delaying major purchases (48.17%)
- Canceling recurring subscriptions (33.16%)
- Using AI to find deals/best prices (12.73%)

Steepest **cuts to non-essential spending** in 2026:

- Dining out (36.63%)
- Travel and vacations (18.05%)
- Apparel and beauty (8.81%)
- Electronics and gadgets (8.56%)
- Gifts and celebrations (4.20%)

Cost-of-living inflation outweighs every other money worry, cited by 51.08% of Americans as their **top financial anxiety** for the rest of 2026.

More than half of Americans (52.61%) feel at least some social or family **pressure to spend** more on gifts than their budget safely allows, including 11.36% who feel significant pressure.

Expectations for household's financial situation in 2027:

- Stay the same (39.64%)
- Improve (37.43%)
- Worsen (22.94%)

Methodology

The Penny Hoarder surveyed 1,000 U.S. adults on August 8, 2026 using Pollfish, and asked them questions related to finances and holiday spending. Results were post-stratified to better align with the U.S. adult population based on age, gender, region, and income.

Post-stratified results, n=1,000 U.S. adults (Pollfish, Q3 2026). Each table shows stratified percentages; multi-select questions total more than 100%.