



10/12/2025

# REPORT

**The Merry Index: A Peek Behind the Christmas Curtain**



## AUDIENCE

### Demographics

United Kingdom, Age 18 to 55

### Custom Screening

Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

**Qualified:** Christmas is a big deal for me, I really get into it

**Unqualified:** I enjoy Christmas but I'm not that fussed, It's not something I really celebrate, Prefer not to say



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## OBJECTIVE

To understand how people experience Christmas across both emotional and commercial dimensions, exploring the feelings, expectations and cultural meanings of the season alongside the behaviours, priorities and decision-making that drive festive spending. The aim is to uncover the interplay between emotional needs and commercial choices to inform more resonant seasonal strategies.

## BURNING QUESTION

How do cultural meanings of Christmas (tradition, togetherness, generosity) influence UK consumers' choice of shopping channel (local shops, supermarkets, online) and purchase timing (early vs last-minute)?



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Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

## CHAT GUIDE

1. How would you describe what Christmas usually looks like for you?
2. What is the first feeling that comes to mind when you think about Christmas?
3. Thinking about your surroundings, how does the atmosphere in your home or community change as Christmas approaches?
4. Which, if any, Christmas traditions are most important to you and your family? Why?
5. Thinking about Christmas overall, please rank the following emotional priorities from most to least important to you.

Answers: Feeling connected with family or loved ones, Creating meaningful memories, Relaxing and taking a break, Keeping traditions alive, Feeling festive or in the Christmas spirit

6. Looking back, can you share a positive or memorable Christmas experience that stands out for you? What made it special?
7. How do you usually prepare for Christmas? What are the key steps or moments for you in the weeks leading up to it?
8. Thinking about buying gifts, food and decorations...how do you decide where to shop?
9. Where do you tend to spend the most time or money at Christmas?



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## CHAT GUIDE

10. What makes certain brands feel 'right' for Christmas?

11. Are there styles of Christmas advertising that feel tired or out of touch?

12. How do the people you celebrate with influence what you buy or how you prepare for Christmas?

13. Which of these do you find most stressful when preparing for Christmas?

Choices: Finding the right gifts, Managing the budget, Preparing food and meals, Arranging travel or visits, Fitting everything in

14. If you could change one thing about the way people shop or celebrate during Christmas, what would it be and why?

15. When you think about your ideal Christmas, what would you want to feel, do and experience?

16. How have your expectations of Christmas changed as you've grown older?



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## AI SUMMARY

For UK consumers who deeply embrace the Christmas season, the cultural meanings of tradition, togetherness, and generosity are central to both their emotional experience and their commercial behaviours. Across a diverse range of ages and family situations, Christmas is consistently described as a time for connection, nostalgia, and the creation or continuation of meaningful rituals—whether that’s baking together, sharing special meals, or gathering for games and films. These emotional drivers strongly influence shopping channel choices and purchase timing. Many participants value the sensory and communal aspects of in-person shopping—such as visiting Christmas markets, picking out a real tree, or browsing decorated high streets—which evoke nostalgia and a sense of festivity. However, the realities of modern life, including busy schedules, stress, and the desire to avoid crowded or overwhelming environments, mean that online shopping (especially for gifts) is increasingly favoured for its convenience, variety, and ability to facilitate early, stress-free preparation. Supermarkets and large retailers are popular for food and decorations, with decisions often based on a mix of tradition (familiar brands, classic treats), value, and convenience.

The timing of purchases is closely linked to emotional priorities: those who cherish tradition and togetherness often plan and shop early to ensure a relaxed, joyful lead-up and to avoid last-minute stress, while still leaving room for spontaneous, meaningful finds. Generosity is expressed not just through the giving of gifts, but through thoughtful, personalised choices and the desire to make others—especially children—feel special and included. There is a clear tension between the desire for heartfelt, less materialistic celebrations and the pressures of commercialisation, social media, and advertising, which many feel can detract from the true spirit of the season. While some enjoy the magic of festive advertising, others find it increasingly out of touch or overly commercial, preferring brands and shopping experiences that feel authentic, inclusive, and attuned to real family needs. Ultimately, the interplay between emotional needs and commercial choices is dynamic: tradition and togetherness inspire early, considered shopping and a mix of channels, while generosity and the wish to create lasting memories drive both the selection of gifts and the prioritisation of time spent with loved ones over material excess.



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## KEY INSIGHTS

### Emotional Fulfilment Trumps Materialism: The Core Value of Connection and Tradition

- For UK consumers who view Christmas as a 'big deal,' the overwhelming emotional priority is 'Feeling connected with family or loved ones.' This is consistently ranked highest across all participants, highlighting that the true spirit of the season lies in togetherness and shared experiences, rather than material acquisitions.
- As consumers mature, their expectations shift from receiving many gifts to cherishing family time and keeping traditions alive, especially those that foster genuine interaction (e.g., baking, playing games, sharing meals). This signifies a desire to protect the 'magic' of Christmas from purely commercial pressures and instill meaningful memories, particularly for children.
- The perceived stress around Christmas often stems from the pressure to overspend on gifts (managing budget, finding 'right' gifts) and logistical challenges (fitting everything in, travel arrangements), rather than the core activities of celebrating. This indicates a tension between cultural expectations of lavish gifting and the personal value of heartfelt connection.

### Quotes:

"I would say that giftgiving is a bit too commercialised now and there's a lot of cost and a lot of debt that the people put themselves into trying to make sure that they appalled the stereotypical giftgiving of Christmas. I think traditional values of Christmas such as a small gift that comes from the heart Would be more magical"

Age 37, Female

"It's what Christmas is all about. Everything has gone commercial and money oriented, but it's a time to be with family"

Age 26, Female

"It's the quality time that we spend together and the memories that we instill into our eight-year-old daughter to make sure that it's the most magical time of year for her to keep her believing as long as possible in Santa and the traditions such as elf on the shelf, just trying to recreate the magic that myself and my husband experienced as we were children and that time of year just to make sure that her childhood is as memorable as possible."

Age 37, Female

"Together with my family we share the traditions to bake Christmas desserts together, also we sing Christmas Carols together."

Age 20, Female





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## KEY INSIGHTS

### Strategic and Value-Driven Shopping Dominates, with Online Channels Bridging Gaps

- Consumers adopt a strategic and organised approach to Christmas shopping, starting weeks or months in advance to leverage deals (e.g., Black Friday) and avoid last-minute stress. Price comparison, promotions, and the balance between affordability and quality are key drivers in purchasing decisions across gifts, food, and decorations.
- Online platforms, notably Amazon, are heavily relied upon for their extensive variety, convenience, and speedy delivery, especially for gifts and 'specialised bits.' This often serves as a primary channel or a fallback when physical stores are perceived as stressful, overcrowded, or lacking unique options.
- While physical supermarkets (e.g., Tesco, Asda) remain the go-to for food due to habit, convenience (e.g., delivery contracts), and specific festive ranges, the high street is often explored first for gifts but can be quickly abandoned for online options if the experience is not seamless or meaningful.

### Quotes:

"I start shopping just after September. Look to plan Santa to visit October November time ready for a late December visit so as close to Christmas as possible those slots tend to book up quite fast some tend to be quite early in booking. I make the most of the black Friday deals when finishing off my Christmas shopping for the family and my daughter. We tend to go and get our Christmas tree from a Christmas tree lot on the first week of December. And then December is filled with our annual Christmas quiz with friends in a local cricket club visiting my daughter's school concert visiting Santa making sure that the last gifts are bought and trying to make them the most of the week all the weekends in December by visiting the Winter Wonderland and a few other places And then I always finish work around the 19th of December one day before my daughter and my husband Jess, so I can get the last Christmas gift wrapped prepared ready for the big day"

Age 37, Female

"I'll usually have a look on the street itself and try physical shops first. They're not what they used to be though, so I usually end up online"

Age 26, Female

"Mostly Amazon and Asda some other places online for more specialised bits."

Age 32, Female

"It matters that there is a good balance between a good and affordable price and also a product that has a good quality and is durable. However if a product has a recognisable better quality I am willing to pay a bit more for it."

Age 20, Female



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## KEY INSIGHTS

### Bifurcated Perceptions of Brands and Advertising: Authenticity Over Spectacle

- Consumer response to Christmas advertising is mixed: while some genuinely enjoy all festive ads for boosting their 'Christmas mood,' a significant portion expresses fatigue with 'tired or out of touch' styles. Criticisms include adverts being 'too perfect/non-inclusive,' 'overly commercialised,' 'pushy' with prices, suggesting a craving for more authentic and relatable messaging.
- The 'right' brands for Christmas are not universally defined by grandeur or traditional associations. Instead, they are often chosen based on practical considerations like strong promotions, reliable quality, perceived ethical practices (e.g., Amazon trying to be ethical), good reviews, and the ability to offer variety or unique/personalised items (e.g., John Lewis, Etsy).
- There's a growing inclination towards supporting smaller businesses and eschewing brands perceived as 'loud' or overtly commercial, indicating a preference for genuine value and less aggressive marketing tactics that align with a more heartfelt vision of Christmas.

### Quotes:

"a mix of the 3 but mostly over commercialised. they try and push an agenda which they don't even care about, they are companies with no feelings, it's about whatever brings in the most money"

Age 18, Male

"I think sometimes the adverts show Christmas as it being too perfect, which in realistic Christmas is not like that for everyone and some people go through struggles during Christmas time so it's not very inclusive."

Age 20, Female

"Usually the smaller brands stand out to me. I like supporting people with small businesses"

Age 26, Female





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## KEY INSIGHTS

### The Quest for a Calmer, More Mindful Festive Experience Amidst Commercial Chaos

- Despite Christmas being a cherished time, the lead-up is frequently marked by stress, particularly related to financial management, finding meaningful gifts amidst abundant 'tat,' and the logistical challenge of 'fitting everything in.' This highlights a fundamental tension between the desired emotional experience and the practical realities of a commercialised holiday.
- There's a strong desire to change the more negative aspects of Christmas, such as the pressure to buy expensive gifts, the rudeness of shoppers, excessive over-eating/over-catering, and particularly the 'overcrowding of shops.' These sentiments point towards a yearning for a more mindful, less chaotic celebration.
- The 'ideal Christmas' is consistently described as relaxed, filled with laughter, good food, and quality time with family, often harking back to nostalgic childhood memories or simple rituals. Consumers wish for environments (shopping and celebratory) that foster peace and genuine connection rather than contributing to stress and commercial pressure.

### Quotes:

"definitely the overcrowding of shops, it's so annoying to deal with but it realistically couldn't be changed"

Age 18, Male

"I would probably change the mentality that you have to buy a lot of gifts and presents, because I think being with your loved ones is more important than material things."

Age 20, Female

"It'd be all my family in the living room with good food, old films and good laughs"

Age 26, Female

"I'd have it more relaxed. Calming lighting, seats for people and wide open spaces"

Age 26, Female





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### Demographics

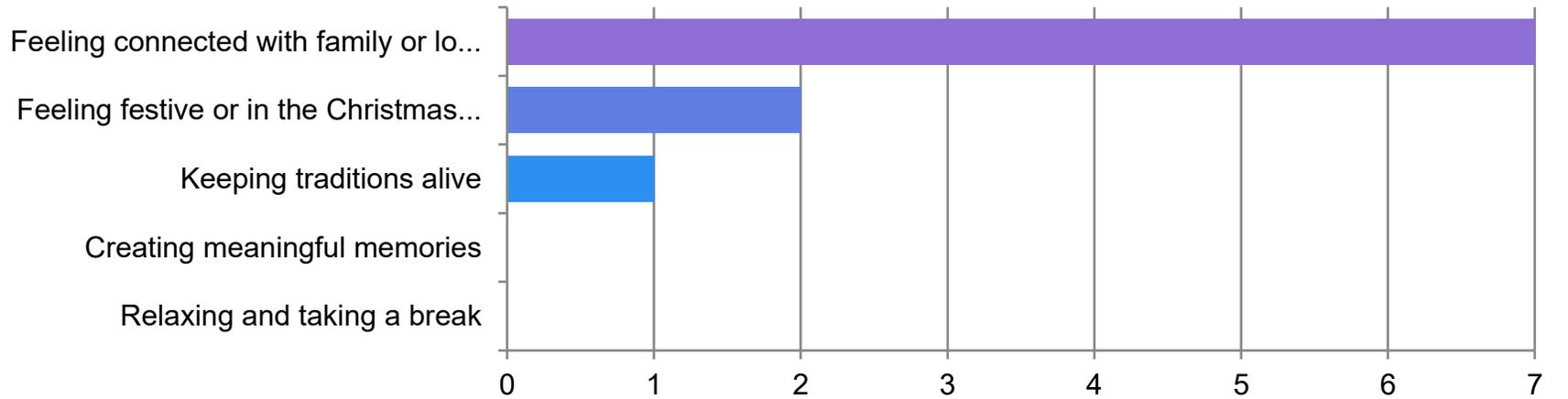
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Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

## METRICS

Thinking about Christmas overall, please rank the following emotional priorities from most to least important to you.





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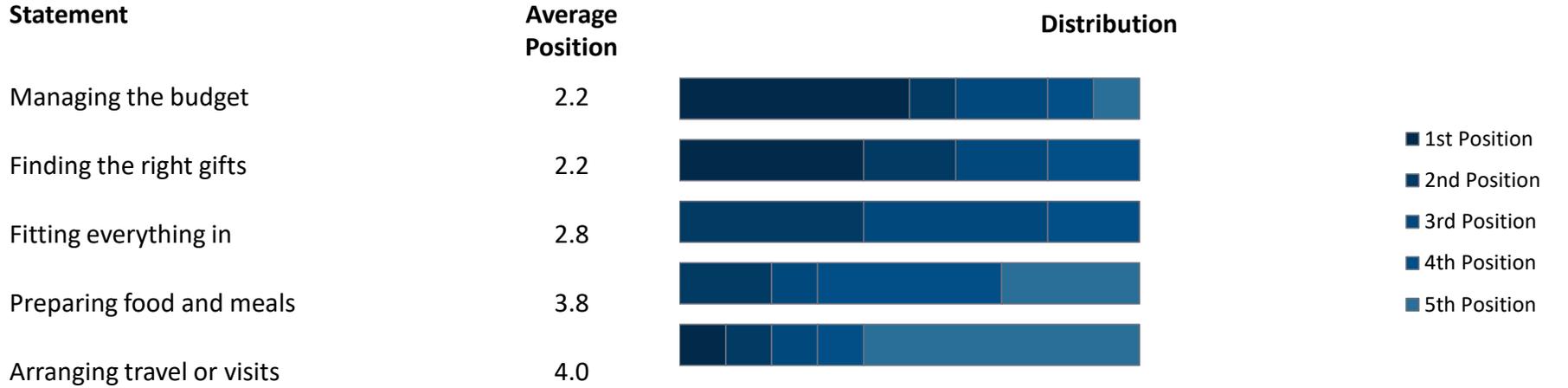
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## METRICS

Which of these do you find most stressful when preparing for Christmas?



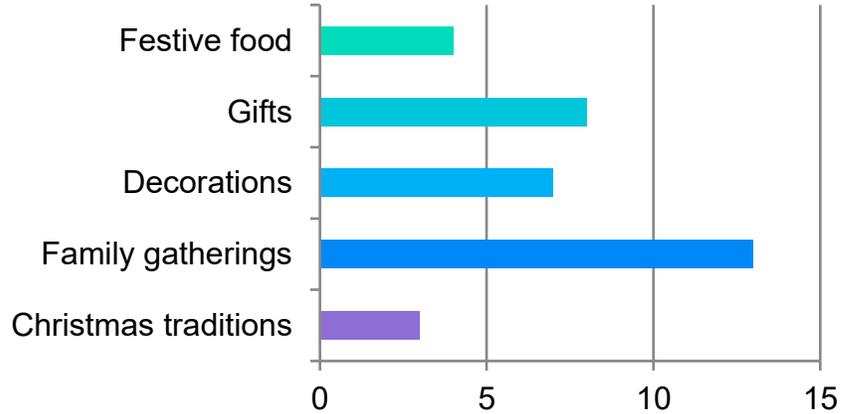
# TOPICS

## AUDIENCE

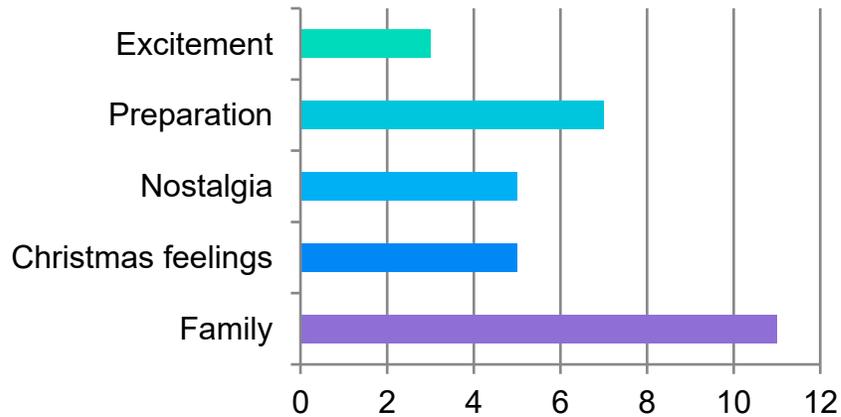
**Demographics**  
United Kingdom, Age 18 to 55

**Custom Screening**  
Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

How would you describe what Christmas usually looks like for you?



What is the first feeling that comes to mind when you think about Christmas?



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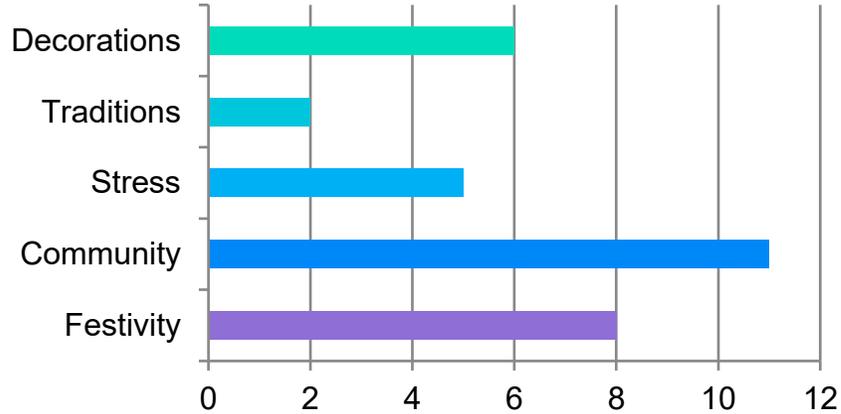
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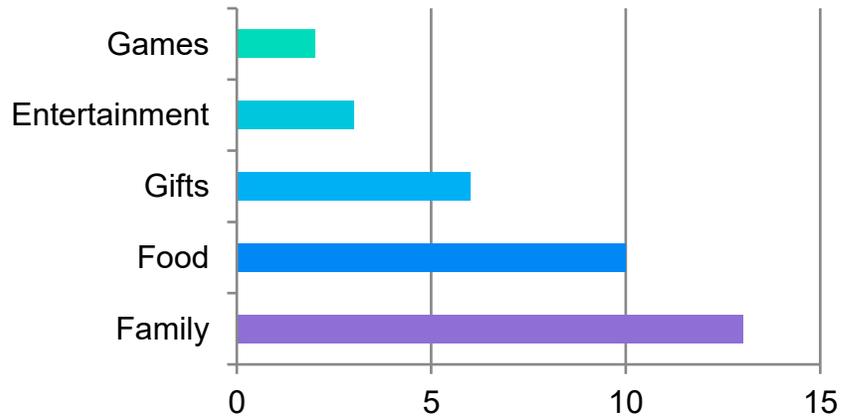
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## TOPICS

Thinking about your surroundings, how does the atmosphere in your home or community change as Christmas approaches?



Which, if any, Christmas traditions are most important to you and your family? Why?



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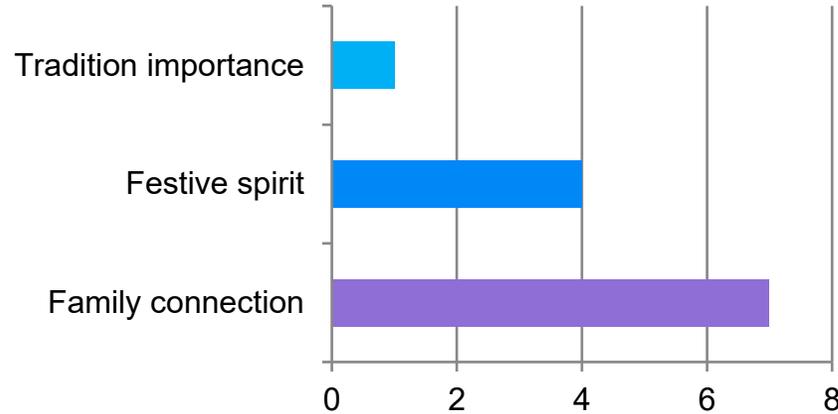
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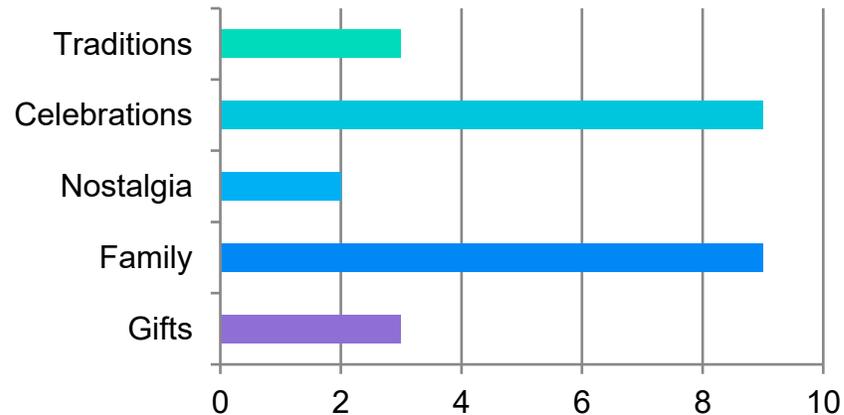
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## TOPICS

Thinking about Christmas overall, please rank the following emotional priorities from most to least important to you.



Looking back, can you share a positive or memorable Christmas experience that stands out for you? What made it special?



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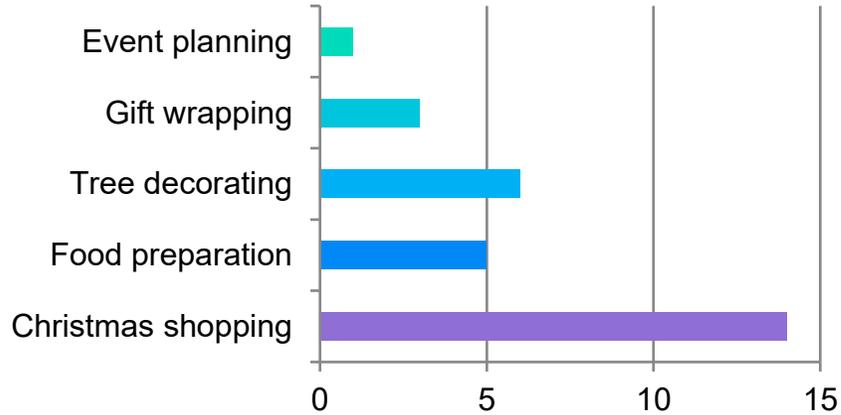
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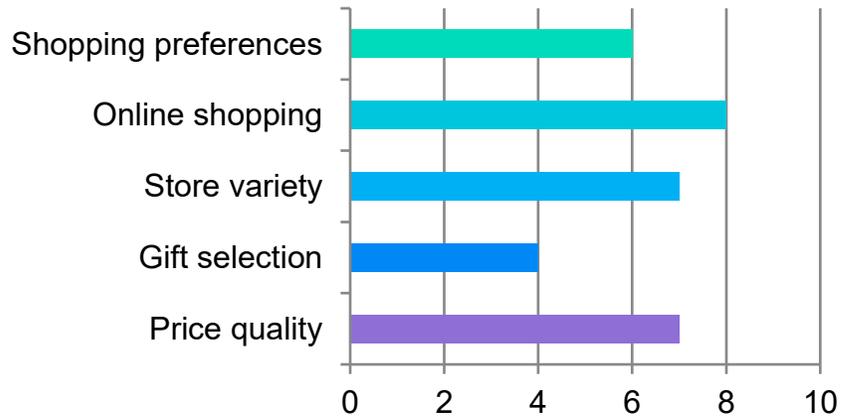
Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

## TOPICS

How do you usually prepare for Christmas? What are the key steps or moments for you in the weeks leading up to it?



Thinking about buying gifts, food and decorations...how do you decide where to shop?



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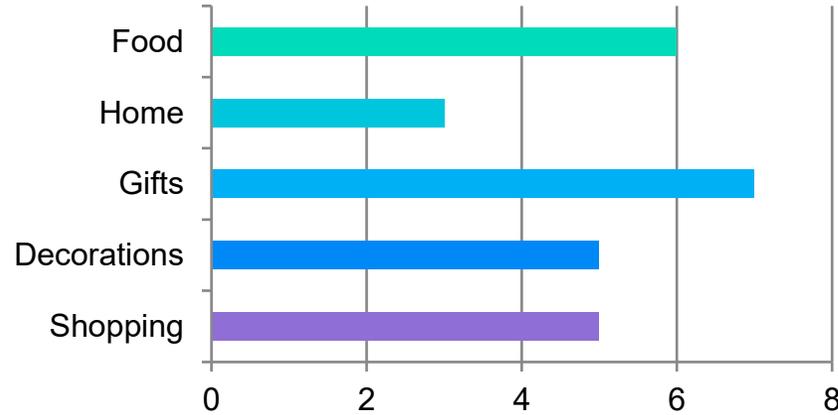
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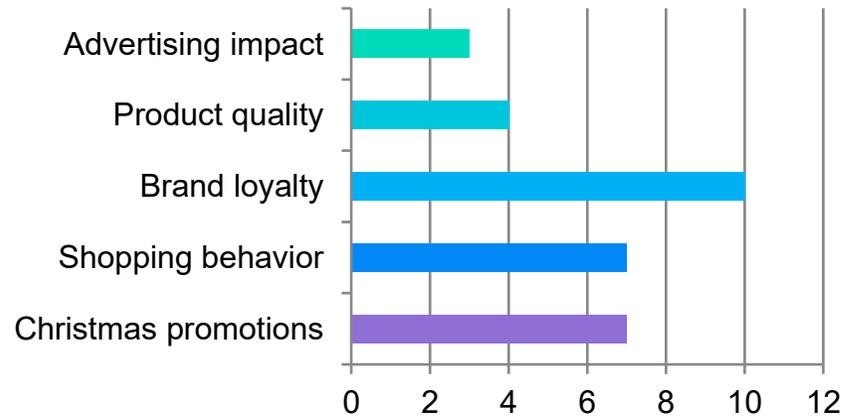
Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

## TOPICS

Where do you tend to spend the most time or money at Christmas?



What makes certain brands feel 'right' for Christmas?



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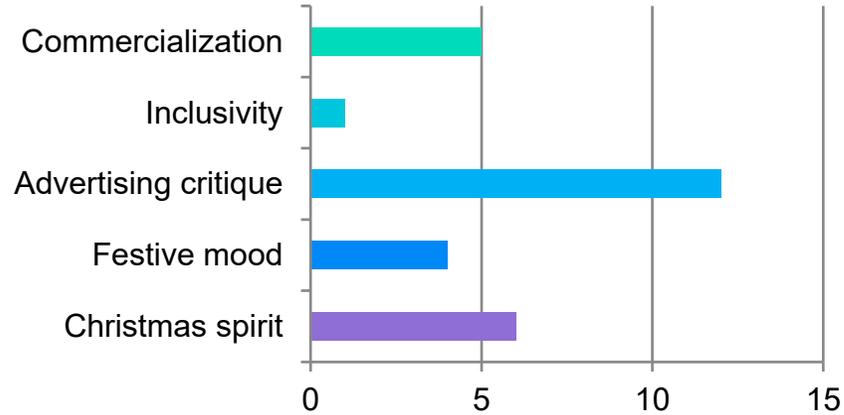
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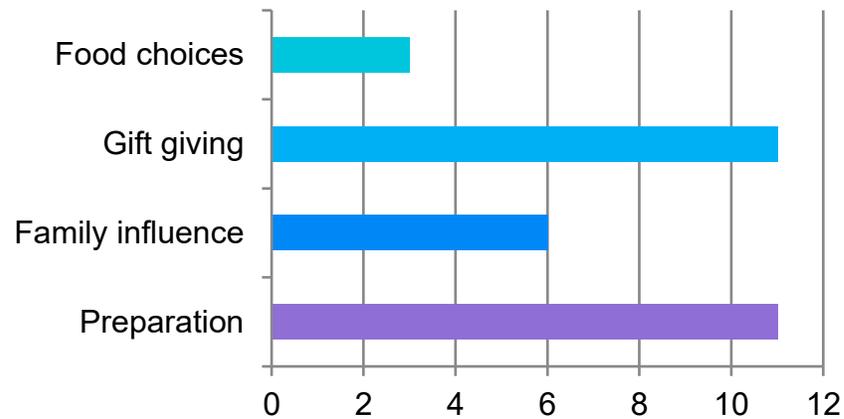
Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

## TOPICS

Are there styles of Christmas advertising that feel tired or out of touch?



How do the people you celebrate with influence what you buy or how you prepare for Christmas?



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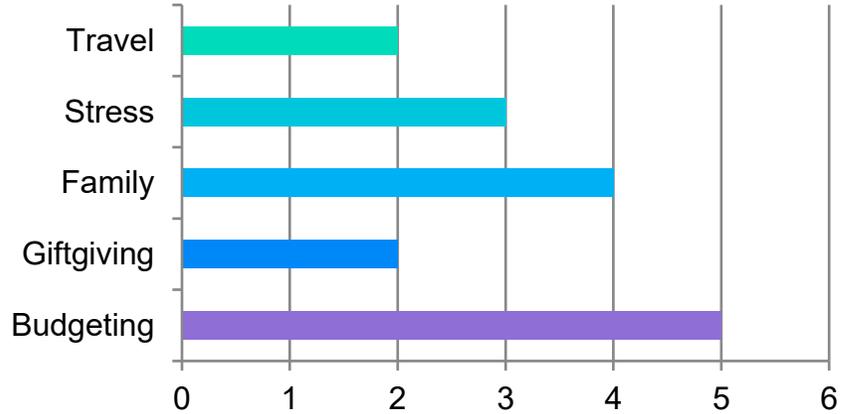
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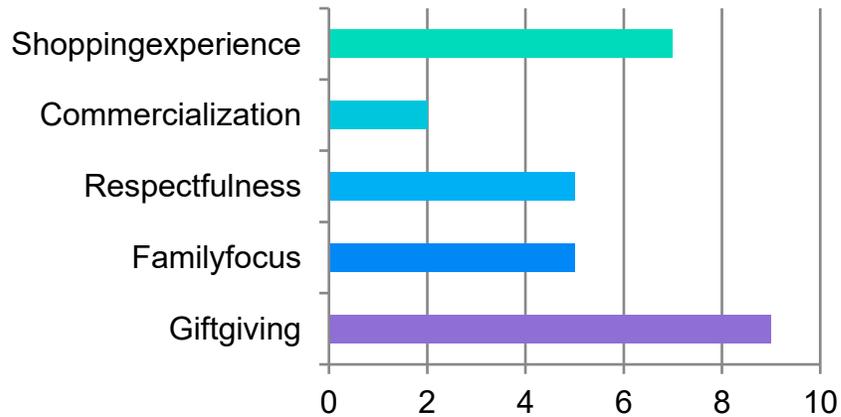
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## TOPICS

Which of these do you find most stressful when preparing for Christmas?



If you could change one thing about the way people shop or celebrate during Christmas, what would it be and why?



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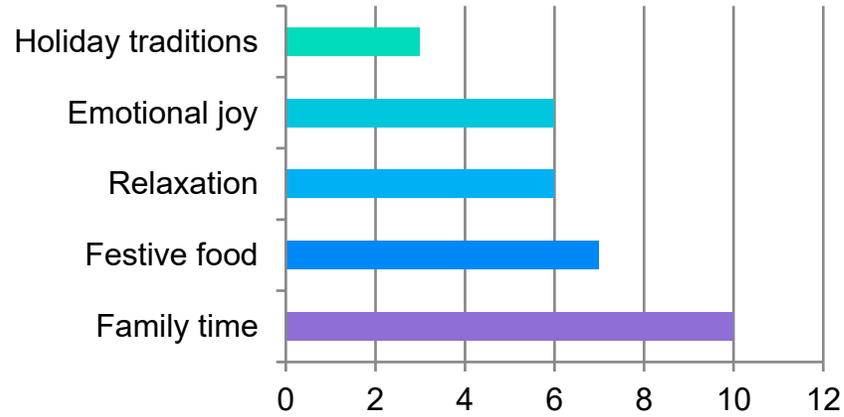
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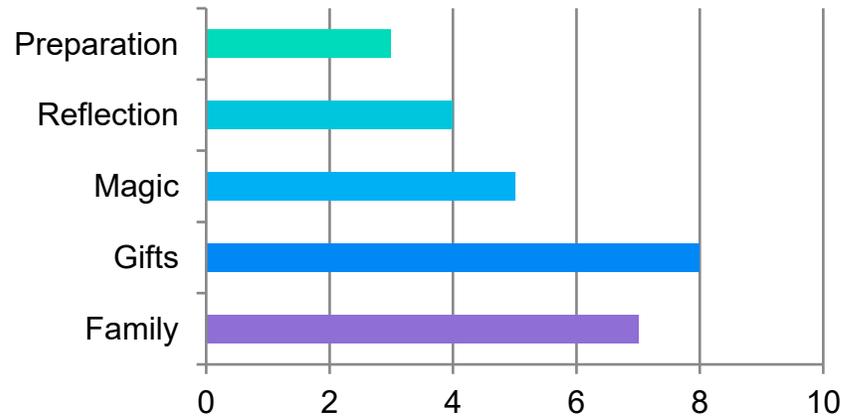
Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

## TOPICS

When you think about your ideal Christmas, what would you want to feel, do and experience?



How have your expectations of Christmas changed as you've grown older?



**AUDIENCE****Demographics**

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**Custom Screening**

Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

**The Cherished Connection Seeker****Description:**

- This persona, typically a young adult (18-26) or a parent (40s), deeply values family and emotional connections during Christmas. For them, Christmas is less about material gain and more about shared experiences, warmth, and nostalgia.
- They actively engage in traditions like baking, family dinners, and playing games, viewing these as opportunities for genuine interaction and strengthening familial bonds. Childhood memories, especially those involving family togetherness, are highly cherished and often inform their current approach to the holiday.
- While practical in their preparations (buying gifts early to avoid stress, seeking quality over quantity), their underlying motivation for shopping is to find thoughtful, meaningful items that enhance the celebratory experience rather than just accumulating possessions. They are critical of overly commercialized advertising and social media pressures that shift focus away from true connection.

**Insights:**

- The primary driver for this persona's Christmas engagement is the desire for authentic family connection and the emotional warmth it brings. Brands should focus on facilitating shared experiences and emotional resonance rather than purely product-centric messaging.
- Advertising that portrays genuine, inclusive family moments and highlights the value of togetherness will resonate more strongly than 'perfect' or overly aspirational depictions. Messaging should emphasize emotional benefits and memorable moments.
- While they appreciate quality gifts, the thought and meaning behind them are paramount. Retailers can cater to this by offering personalized options, experiences, or focusing on durable, lasting products that contribute to shared family time, rather than promoting excessive or trendy consumerism.



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## The Festive Architect

### Description:

- This persona, often a younger adult (21-37) or a parent (30s-40s), is enthusiastic about orchestrating and immersing themselves in the full festive atmosphere of Christmas. They actively create the holiday spirit through decorations, traditions, and seeking out festive events.
- They enjoy the entire preparation process, from picking out a real Christmas tree to putting up decorations and listening to Christmas music. Traditions are crucial for 'keeping the magic alive,' especially when creating a memorable experience for children or reliving their own cherished childhood memories.
- Shopping decisions are influenced by convenience, variety, and the ability to find items that contribute to the festive mood, often utilizing large stores or online platforms for their wide selection. They generally appreciate Christmas advertising for its ability to enhance the festive spirit.

### Insights:

- This persona values the sensory and experiential aspects of Christmas (sights, sounds, smells, events) as key to feeling 'festive.' Brands can engage them by offering a wide range of festive products, décor, and highlighting unique holiday experiences.
- Convenience and variety in shopping are highly valued due to their extensive planning and desire to create a comprehensive festive environment. Multi-channel retailers offering seamless access to diverse Christmas-themed goods will appeal to them.
- Creative and visually appealing Christmas advertising that showcases the joyous spectacle and traditional elements of the season will resonate, as it directly contributes to their sense of excitement and immersion in the holiday spirit.



**AUDIENCE****Demographics**

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Which of the following best describes how you typically approach Christmas?

**The Mindful Manager****Description:**

- This persona, typically a middle-aged adult (21-48), navigates Christmas with a highly pragmatic and budget-conscious approach. They prioritize efficiency, value, and ethical considerations, often facing logistical challenges like complex family dynamics or financial pressures.
- They are strategic shoppers, starting early, seeking deals, comparing prices, and valuing good reviews and quality. While they appreciate thoughtful gifts, they actively discourage excess, clutter, and unnecessary spending, often reusing decorations or opting for practical presents.
- Stress points for this persona include managing budgets, coordinating complex travel arrangements, and avoiding over-catering. They express disdain for aggressive commercialization and unrealistic advertising, advocating for a more relaxed, respectful, and less wasteful Christmas experience.

**Insights:**

- Financial prudence and efficiency are paramount for this persona. Brands should focus on transparent pricing, value for money, deals, and clearly communicate the quality and utility of their products, avoiding flashy or overly aspirational marketing.
- Their aversion to over-commercialization and wasteful consumption presents an opportunity for brands to offer sustainable, ethically sourced, or practical gifts and services that align with a mindful approach to Christmas.
- Addressing their specific stressors, such as offering solutions for budget management (e.g., flexible payment options, clear price comparisons) or convenient services that simplify complex logistics (e.g., easy return policies for gifts, delivery reliability), would be highly valued.





**REACH OUT TO US IF YOU HAVE  
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REPORT**

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