

Christmas becoming less religious in U.S.

20th December, 2013



A new report says Christmas in the USA is becoming less religious. Nine out of ten Americans celebrate Christmas, but only about half think it is a religious holiday. The report is from the Pew Research Center. It asked 2,001 adults about their opinions on Christmas. Just over half of those questioned thought Christmas was a religious

celebration, while 32 per cent said it was, "more of a cultural holiday". Greg Smith from Pew Research said: "Younger adults are less likely than older adults to see Christmas as a religious rather than cultural holiday. They're less likely to say they will attend [church at] Christmas...and they are less likely to believe in the virgin birth."

People are also changing what they say to each other at Christmas and what they write in cards. More and more people are choosing to say "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas". This is because there are also non-Christian holidays happening around the same time as Christmas. Many people want to include all holidays in their holiday wishes. The research also found that 79 per cent of Americans will watch a Christmas movie, but only 59 per cent will go to church. Just 36 per cent will read the Christmas story in the Bible. The average amount of money people spend on Christmas is \$914. Ten per cent of Americans spend over \$2,000. People most look forward to spending time with their family.

Sources: *The Washington Post* / *The Huffington Post*

Writing

It is sad that fewer people are celebrating religious holidays. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

report / religious / celebrate / holiday / opinions / questioned / adults / attend church / changing / Merry Christmas / non-Christian holidays / wish / average / look forward to

True / False

- A new report say 80% per cent of Americans celebrate Christmas. T / F
- A research company asked over 20,000 people about Christmas. T / F
- Older people are more likely to see the religious side to Christmas. T / F
- Older people are more likely to do to church than younger people. T / F
- More people are saying "Happy Holidays" instead of "Merry Christmas". T / F
- Over 80% of Americans will watch a Christmas movie. T / F
- More than 40% of Americans will read the Bible's Christmas story. T / F
- People look forward to spending time with family most. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. report | a. rather than |
| 2. half | b. probable |
| 3. opinions | c. opting |
| 4. likely | d. study |
| 5. attend | e. discovered |
| 6. choosing | f. thoughts |
| 7. instead of | g. total |
| 8. happening | h. be present at |
| 9. found | i. taking place |
| 10. amount | j. fifty per cent |

Discussion – Student A

- Do you think Christmas is the best holiday of the year?
- What do you want for Christmas?
- What is your favourite Christmas song?
- Is Christmas better in the cold Northern Hemisphere or on a beach in the Southern Hemisphere?
- How important is it to celebrate occasions from other religions?
- Would you like to spend Christmas in another country?
- Is it OK to spend a lot of money on Christmas?
- What questions would you like to ask the head of Pew Research?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Nine out of | a. church |
| 2. Just over half of | b. to say "Happy Holidays" |
| 3. see Christmas as a religious rather | c. in the virgin birth |
| 4. They're less likely to say they will attend | d. they say to each other |
| 5. they are less likely to believe | e. money people spend |
| 6. People are also changing what | f. than cultural holiday |
| 7. more people are choosing | g. time with their family |
| 8. happening around the same | h. those questioned |
| 9. The average amount of | i. time as Christmas |
| 10. look forward to spending | j. ten Americans celebrate |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you do at Christmas?
- Why is Christmas becoming less religious in America?
- Do you like Christmas?
- Why do many people get stressed at Christmas?
- How should a very traditional Christmas be spent?
- Have your feelings towards Xmas changed since you were a child?
- Is Christmas too commercial nowadays?
- Should people go to church at Christmas?

Spelling

- eaeebtrlc Christmas
- about their nopisoni on Christmas
- Just over half of those unoteidesq
- more of a latulucr holiday
- less eyklil
- older atdsul
- hgancnig what they say to each other
- holidays gpnaihpne around the same time
- dlcienu all holidays
- holiday ehwsis
- The aagvree amount of money
- look wdfaror to

Answers – Synonym Match

1. d	2. j	3. f	4. b	5. h
6. c	7. a	8. i	9. e	10. g

Role Play

Role A – iPad

You think an iPad is the best present for your class to buy your teacher. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): a restaurant meal, chocolates or an iTunes voucher.

Role B – Restaurant meal

You think a restaurant meal is the best present for your class to buy your teacher. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): iPad, chocolates or an iTunes voucher.

Role C – Chocolates

You think chocolates are the best present for your class to buy your teacher. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): a restaurant meal, iPad or an iTunes voucher.

Role D – iTunes voucher

You think an iTunes voucher is the best present for your class to buy your teacher. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them things that are wrong with their ideas. Also, tell the others which is the worst of these (and why): a restaurant meal, chocolates or iPad.

Speaking - Presents

Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the (same-price) presents you'd want most at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------------|
| • iPad | • expensive meal |
| • clothes | • sports equipment |
| • books | • a painting |
| • jewellery | • chocolate |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.