

A Study of Holiday Stress & Seasonal Perceptions

The holiday season is a busy time of year that's filled with shopping, decorating, hosting family members and many other activities. A schedule that puts too many demands on time can be stressful and distracting, which may lead to accidents.

The effects of stress are varied and profound, according to the American Institute of Stress (AIS). Common symptoms include, but are certainly not limited to, difficulty concentrating and making decisions, constant tiredness, fatigue, and excess anxiety.

Plymouth Rock wants to help everyone have a safe and happy holiday season. With this study, we sought to identify the concerns of New Jersey residents, both on the road and at home, and find out what stressors may cause distraction.

There are clear concerns that poll respondents expressed about the holidays, particularly when it comes to driving. In fact, 82% of poll respondents said that traffic will add to their stress level, making it the top cause of additional holiday stress in New Jersey. Holiday shopping and overly busy schedules were the second and third causes, respectively.

In addition to the overall trends, the study shows that a larger percentage of Millennials feel that holiday and related activities will add to their stress levels, compared with Gen Xers and Baby Boomers.

Even though the holidays can be stressful, the study identifies various ways that people cope. While many people take time for themselves to relax during the holidays, others enjoy the positive aspects of the season to help beat stress.

About this study

This poll was conducted between Thursday, Sept. 29, 2016, and Monday, Oct. 3, 2016, in partnership with online survey provider Cvent. It consisted of 1,000 consumers 21 years and older, who have valid New Jersey drivers' licenses. The sample was provided by eRewards, a service of Research Now Group Inc. Cvent and Research Now are independent research consultants and/or survey providers.

The Top Causes of Holiday Stress

Traffic is a clear cause of additional stress during the holiday season, with 82% expressing some agreement (Exhibit 1). Holiday shopping and having overly busy schedules were second and third. Decorating the home is the only other activity to crest 50%. The level of agreement declines in the subsequent activities.

I anticipate the following activities will add to my level of stress this holiday season. (Exhibit 1)						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Traffic on roads	8%	10%	27%	34%	21%	82%
Holiday shopping	13%	14%	29%	26%	19%	74%
Having an overly busy schedule	14%	15%	30%	27%	14%	71%
Decorating my home	23%	26%	28%	16%	7%	51%
Hosting overnight guests	28%	28%	21%	15%	7%	43%
A spouse/partner that doesn't help with the holiday workload	33%	27%	20%	14%	8%	42%
Attending office parties	33%	32%	21%	11%	4%	36%
Listening to seasonal music	39%	29%	16%	10%	7%	33%

What Is It About Traffic?

The data shows that respondents are concerned about being on the roads with other drivers (Exhibit 2). The largest percentage of respondents cited crowded parking lots, traffic jams and drunk drivers as their main stressors. Respondents have an expectation of encountering more aggressive drivers on the road during the holidays (Exhibit 3).

I anticipate the following activities will add to my level of stress this holiday season while I'm driving. (Exhibit 2)						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Crowded parking lots	4%	5%	24%	33%	33%	90%
Traffic jams	5%	6%	26%	35%	27%	88%
Drunk drivers	6%	7%	25%	32%	30%	87%
Bad weather	5%	10%	27%	33%	26%	86%
Others texting while driving	6%	10%	23%	29%	33%	85%
Driving long distances	11%	23%	29%	25%	12%	66%
Leaving items in my car that could be stolen	14%	29%	28%	20%	10%	58%
Short, local driving trips	15%	35%	28%	16%	7%	51%

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "Others drive more aggressively during the holiday season compared to other times of the year." (Exhibit 3)	
Choice	Response Percent
Strongly disagree	3%
Disagree	10%
Somewhat agree	38%
Agree	27%
Strongly agree	22%
Total	87%

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "I notice myself driving more aggressively during the holiday season compared to other times of the year." (Exhibit 4)	
Choice	Response Percent
Strongly disagree	18%
Disagree	47%
Somewhat agree	24%
Agree	8%
Strongly agree	3%
Total	35%

Shopping and Stressful Schedules

When it comes to holiday shopping, 73% of poll respondents experience pressure to give or receive gifts (Exhibit 5). In reference to overly busy schedules, 75% experience an increased level of multitasking during the holiday season.

Do you experience any of the following during the holiday season? (Exhibit 5)						
	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
Overeating	10%	14%	34%	28%	13%	75%
An increased level of multitasking	11%	15%	34%	27%	14%	75%
Pressure to give or receive gifts	12%	15%	31%	25%	17%	73%
An increased level of fatigue	13%	26%	34%	20%	7%	61%
Irritability	16%	28%	35%	16%	5%	56%
Consume more alcohol than usual	30%	23%	28%	14%	5%	47%

Safety Concerns at Home

Respondents are more mindful of home safety during the holidays to some degree (Exhibit 6). However, concerns at home vary (Exhibit 7).

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? "I am more mindful of home safety during the holidays compared to other times of the year." (Exhibit 6)	
Choice	Response Percent
Strongly disagree	5%
Disagree	24%
Somewhat agree	41%
Agree	20%
Strongly agree	11%
Total	72%

I anticipate having the following safety concerns in my home during the upcoming holiday season. (Exhibit 7)						
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Family disagreements	17%	26%	31%	17%	9%	57%
Break-ins/thefts	19%	32%	28%	14%	8%	50%
Electrical fires from decorations	21%	33%	25%	16%	6%	47%
Fires from candles	25%	32%	26%	12%	6%	44%
Cooking-related accidents (i.e. fires, etc.)	22%	36%	24%	13%	5%	42%
Plumbing issues (i.e. pipe bursts, frozen pipes)	22%	36%	25%	12%	5%	42%
Fireplace accidents	42%	31%	15%	10%	3%	28%

Generational Holiday Experience

When broken out by generation, a larger percentage of Millennials say that holiday and related activities will add to their level of stress, compared with Gen Xers and Baby Boomers (Exhibits 8 & 9). There is one outlier in this trend as a slightly larger percentage of Baby Boomers said other drivers texting will add to their stress level (Exhibit 9). A larger percentage of Millennials express having safety concerns at home, compared with other generations (Exhibit 10). Millennials appear to be more self-aware that they might drive more aggressively during the holiday season as opposed to other times of the year (Exhibit 12).

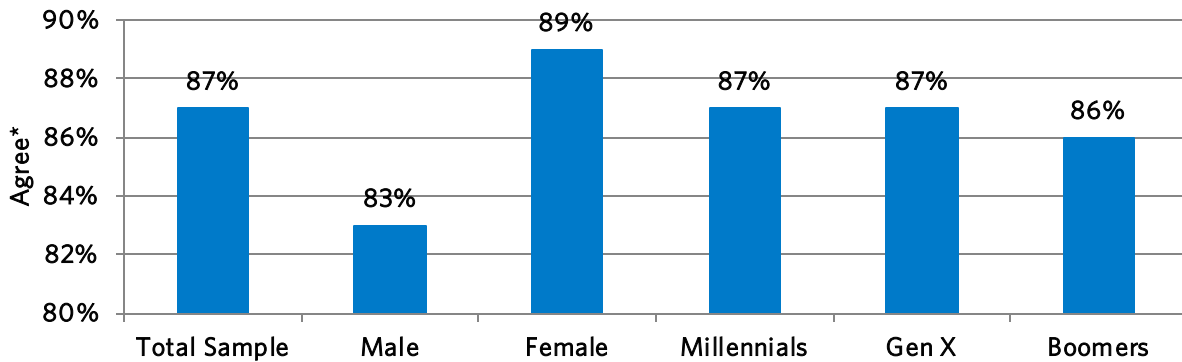
I anticipate the following activities will add to my level of stress this holiday season. (Exhibit 8)						
Activity	Total Sample	Male	Female	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Traffic on roads	82%	81%	84%	89%	82%	79%
Holiday shopping	74%	72%	74%	81%	76%	67%
Having an overly busy schedule	71%	65%	75%	81%	78%	60%
Decorating my home	51%	50%	53%	56%	53%	48%
Hosting overnight guests	43%	44%	43%	57%	43%	35%
A spouse/partner that doesn't help out	42%	33%	46%	55%	42%	31%
Attending office parties	36%	37%	34%	49%	41%	23%
Listening to seasonal music	33%	35%	31%	38%	32%	30%

I anticipate the following activities will add to my level of stress this holiday season when I'm driving. (Exhibit 9)						
Stress Influencers	Total Sample	Male	Female	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Crowded parking lots	90%	88%	92%	92%	91%	89%
Traffic jams	88%	86%	90%	91%	86%	89%
Drunk drivers	87%	86%	88%	90%	83%	88%
Bad weather	86%	80%	89%	86%	85%	85%
Others texting while driving	85%	84%	85%	85%	81%	86%
Driving long distances	66%	64%	67%	75%	67%	59%
Leaving items in my car that could be stolen	58%	55%	59%	64%	60%	51%
Short, local driving trips	51%	47%	53%	56%	55%	44%

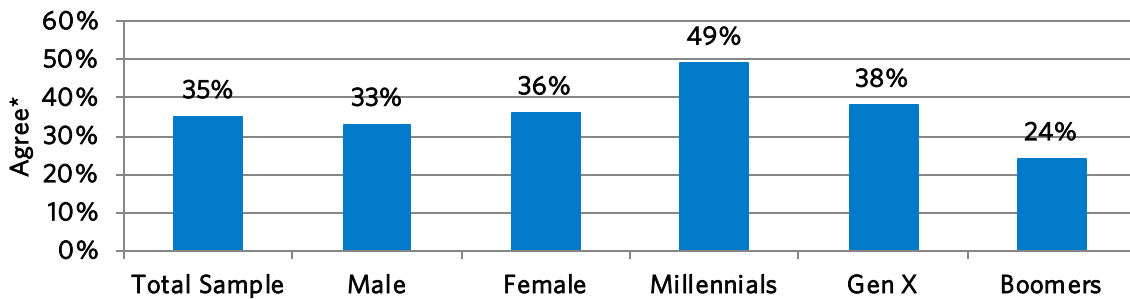
I anticipate having the following safety concerns in my home during the upcoming holiday season. (Exhibit 10)						
Stress Influencers	Total Sample	Male	Female	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Family disagreements	57%	55%	59%	69%	61%	48%
Break-ins/thefts	50%	45%	52%	60%	47%	44%
Electrical fires from decorations	47%	41%	50%	56%	45%	42%
Fires from candles	44%	41%	46%	56%	43%	37%
Cooking-related accidents (i.e. fires, etc.)	42%	40%	44%	60%	41%	32%
Plumbing issues (i.e. pipe bursts, frozen pipes)	42%	36%	46%	54%	42%	34%
Fireplace accidents	28%	27%	28%	42%	25%	20%

Generational Holiday Experience, continued.

Do you agree or disagree with the following: "Others drive more aggressively during the holiday season compared to other times of the year." (Exhibit 11)



Do you agree or disagree with the following: "I notice myself driving more aggressively during the holiday season compared to other times of the year." (Exhibit 12)



*Aggregate of somewhat agree, agree and strongly agree.

Do you experience any of the following during the holiday season? (Exhibit 13)						
Activity	Total Sample	Male	Female	Millennials	Gen X	Baby Boomers
Overeating	75%	73%	78%	78%	76%	75%
An increased level of multitasking	75%	67%	80%	82%	80%	66%
Pressure to give or receive gifts	73%	65%	78%	82%	73%	67%
An increased level of fatigue	61%	52%	68%	70%	65%	54%
Irritability	56%	51%	60%	66%	58%	48%
Consume more alcohol than usual	47%	48%	47%	59%	54%	36%

Relax.

The study shows that most respondents take time for themselves to cope with holiday stress (Exhibit 14). However, others use some of the positive aspects of the holidays to unwind, such as listening to seasonal music, spending time with family or admiring holiday decorations.

What helps you relax when the holidays get stressful? You may select more than one response for this question. (Exhibit 14)	
Choice	Response Percent
Taking time for yourself	59%
Listening to seasonal music	43%
Spending time with family	41%
Admiring holiday decorations	37%
Exercise (Gym, walking, other physical activities)	36%
Getting out of the house	31%
I don't get stressed around the holidays	13%
Other	5%

Poll respondents were also asked to write in the name of their favorite holiday song. These were the top ten most frequently mentioned songs, which included some ties (Exhibit 15).

Rank	Song Name (Exhibit 15)
1	Jingle Bells
2	Silent Night
2	White Christmas
4	All I Want for Christmas Is You
5	O Holy Night
6	Santa Claus is Coming to Town
7	Jingle Bell Rock
8	Little Drummer Boy
8	Rocking Around the Christmas Tree
10	Winter Wonderland

Demographics

- Millennial (ages 21-34) = **266**
- Gen X (ages 35-50) = **297**
- Baby Boomer (ages 51+) = **434**
- Men = **419**
- Women = **581**
- **1,000** total respondents (three declined to provide an age)