

NEWS

Black Friday History and Statistics



BLACKFRIDAY.COM STAFF
Updated December 19, 2019

A look back at how Black Friday began, how it's become so popular and how much shoppers are spending.

For millions of people Black Friday is the time to do some serious Christmas shopping -- even before the last of the Thanksgiving leftovers are gone! Black Friday is the Friday after Thanksgiving, and it's one of the major shopping days of the year in the United States, falling anywhere between November 23 and 29. While it's not recognized as an official U.S. holiday, many employees have the day off, except those working in retail.

In which U.S. city did the term Black Friday originate

The term "Black Friday" originated in Philadelphia. In the 1960's, police in Philadelphia griped about the congested streets, clogged with motorists and pedestrians, calling it "Black Friday." In a non-retail sense, it also describes a financial crisis of 1869: a stock market catastrophe set off by gold spectators who tried and failed to corner the gold market, causing the market to collapse and stocks to plummet.

Why is it called Black Friday?

The term “Black Friday” (in the retail sense) was coined in the 1960s to mark the kickoff to the Christmas shopping season. “Black” refers to stores moving from the “red” to the “black,” back when accounting records were kept by hand, and red ink indicated a loss, and black a profit. Ever since the start of the modern Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1924, the Friday after

Thanksgiving has been known as the unofficial start to a bustling holiday shopping season.

Why did Black Friday become so popular?

As retailers began to realize they could draw big crowds by discounting prices, Black Friday became the day to shop, even better than those last-minute Christmas sales. Some retailers put their items up for sale on the morning of Thanksgiving, or email online specials to consumers days or weeks before the actual event. The most shopped for items are electronics and popular toys, as these may be the most drastically discounted. However, prices are slashed on everything from home furnishings to apparel.

Black Friday is a long day, with many retailers opening up the afternoon of Thanksgiving to hordes of people waiting anxiously outside the windows. There are numerous doorbuster deals and loss leaders – prices so low the store may not make a profit – to entice shoppers. Most large retailers post their Black Friday ad scans, coupons and offers online beforehand to give consumers time to find out about sales and plan their purchases. Other companies take a different approach, waiting until the last possible moment to release their Black Friday ads, hoping to create a buzz and keep customers eagerly checking back for an announcement.

More and more, consumers are choosing to shop online, not wanting to wait outside in the early morning chill with a crush of other shoppers or battle over the last most-wanted item. Often, many people show up for a small number of limited-time "door-buster" deals, such as large flat-screen televisions or

laptops for a few hundred dollars. Since these coveted items sell out quickly, quite a few shoppers leave the store empty handed. The benefit of online shopping is that you will know right away if the gaming system or pressure cooker you want is out of stock, and can easily find another one without having to travel from store to store. Also, many online retailers have pre-Black Friday or special Thanksgiving sales, so you may not even have to wait until the big day to save.

Black Friday statistics

Check out these numbers to see just how big of a sales day Black Friday is.

Black Friday shopping and spending

- Despite Cyber Monday and other major shopping holidays around the Thanksgiving weekend, Black Friday reigns as the most popular day to shop: 61% of Thanksgiving Week shoppers said they planned to shop on **Black Friday 2019**(Source: [BlackFriday.com](#)).
- In 2019, Thanksgiving weekend (Turkey Day through Cyber Monday) drew 189.6 million U.S. shoppers. That was up 14%, from 165.8 million shoppers in 2018. It's also up from 174.6 million in 2017. (Source: [NRF](#))
- In 2019, from Thanksgiving to Cyber Monday, shoppers spent an average of \$361.90 on holiday items. That was up from 16% from \$313.29 in 2018, up from \$335.47 in 2017 and up from \$289.19 in 2016. (Source: [NRF](#))
- Black Friday **2019** (Thanksgiving plus Black Friday) raked in \$11.9 billion in online sales. That's \$7.5 billion spent on Black Friday and \$4.4 billion spent on Thanksgiving. That's a 20.2% increase over 2018. (Source: [Adobe Analytics](#))
- Black Friday **2018** (Thanksgiving Day plus Black Friday) raked in \$9.9 billion in online sales. That's \$6.2 billion spent on Black Friday and \$3.7 billion spent on Thanksgiving. That's a 19.7% increase over 2017 (Source: [Adobe Analytics](#))
- Black Friday **2017** (Thanksgiving Day plus Black Friday) raked in \$7.9 billion in online sales. That's \$5.03 billion spent on Black Friday and \$2.87 billion spent on Thanksgiving. This spending level is up 17.9% from 2016. (Source: [Adobe Analytics](#))

Black Friday online vs. in stores

- Black Friday 2019, more shopped online than in stores: 142.2 million shopped online, while 124 million hit the stores. (Source: [NRF](#))
- In 2019, Black Friday beat Cyber Monday as the busiest online shopping day:

93.2 million shopped online on Black Friday vs. 83.3 million on Cyber Monday. (Source: [NRF](#))

- Black Friday was also the busiest in-store shopping holiday, with 84.2 million shoppers (followed by 59.9 million shoppers on Small Business Saturday and 37.8 million on Thanksgiving). (Source: [NRF](#)).
- During Black Friday Weekend 2019, 75.7 million shoppers shopped both online *and* in stores. That's down from 89 million in 2018. Multichannel shoppers outspent single-channel shoppers by about 25% (Source: [NRF](#))
- During Black Friday weekend 2018, 89 million people shopped both online and in stores. That was up more than 40% from 2017, when 64 million shopped both online and in stores. The multi-channel shopper outspent the single-channel shopper by an average of \$93 in 2018 (Source: [NRF](#)).
- More consumers shop online than in stores on Black Friday: **61%** of shoppers said they planned to shop online on Black Friday 2019. In 2018, **68%** said they'd do most of their Black Friday Shopping online (Source: [BlackFriday.com](#)).
- Heading into Thanksgiving weekend 2018, 68% of shoppers said they'd be shopping online on Black Friday; 17% said they'd hit stores later in the day to avoid crowds; and 15% said they'd line up early to wait for stores to open (Source: [BlackFriday.com](#)).
- Heading into the 2017 holiday shopping season, slightly more (44%) consumers said they planned to shop online on Black Friday 2017 than in store (42%). (Source: [Offers.com](#))
- In 2019, Buy Online Pick Up In Store saw a 43% increase year-over-year increase during Thanksgiving Weekend (Source: [Adobe Analytics](#)).
- In 2018, Buy Online Pick Up In Store saw a 50% year-over-year increase during Thanksgiving weekend (Source: [Adobe Analytics](#)).

Top Black Friday products

- In 2019, the top-selling toys were "Frozen 2" toys, L.O.L. Surprise toys and Paw Patrol toys (source: [Adobe Analytics](#))
- The top products bought on Amazon on Black Friday 2019 were the Fire TV Stick 4K, Echo Dot (3rd Gen.), Apple AirPods and the Echo Show 5. (Source: [BlackFriday.com](#) and [Hitwise](#))
- Heading into Black Friday 2019, consumers said they were looking for deals on the following: Clothing (41%); home goods/small appliances (38%); tablets/laptops/PCs/TVs (32%); smart home gadgets & tech (30%); toys (25%); travel or experiences (12%).
- Heading into Black Friday 2018, consumers said they were looking for deals on

the following: Clothing (23%); tech (22%); toys (18%); smart-home gadgets (16%); gift cards (12%); and travel (9%). (Source: [BlackFriday.com](#))

Top Black Friday retailers

- Amazon was the top retailer (in terms of online visits) for Black Friday 2019. It got more than twice as many visits as the next-highest retailer, Walmart. (Source: [Hitwise](#))
- Amazon took 47.8% of all online transactions on Thanksgiving 2018 and 56.8% on Black Friday 2018 (Source: [Hitwise](#))
- Amazon took 45.1% of all online transactions on Thanksgiving 2017 and 54.9% of all online transactions on Black Friday. (Source: [Hitwise](#))
- Walmart took 12% of all online transactions on Thanksgiving 2018 and 8.4% on Black Friday (Source: [Hitwise](#))
- Walmart took 13.9% off all online transactions on Thanksgiving 2017 and 8.8% of all online transactions on Black Friday (Source: [Hitwise](#))

Are you a member of the media with questions about Amazon Prime Day or Black Friday in July? Contact media@blackfriday.com.

Created May 2, 2018, last updated December 19, 2019

About the Author



The BlackFriday.com team tracks thousands of deals and narrows them down to the ones that are worth your time and money.

Editorial Note: Any opinions, analysis, reviews or recommendations expressed in this article are those of the author's alone, and have not been reviewed, approved or otherwise endorsed by any of our partners.

BlackFriday.com may earn affiliate commissions from our partners on this page. These commissions do not affect how we select, rate or review products. To find out more, read our complete terms of use.