

I. Executive Summary



Holidays are a time of joy, connection and tradition – but are often excessively wasteful. The way many Americans consume during times of celebration, especially around the winter holidays, harms the planet. For example, the amount of household waste in the United States in the month of December is 23% higher than in other months of the year.¹ But it's not just the extra trash that's a problem. All the fossil fuels, trees and other natural resources that go into producing unnecessary plastic toys, novelty gifts and wrapping paper make the winter holidays dreary for wildlife and the habitat they need to survive.

Holiday consumption also causes emotional and financial stress. A 2022 study conducted by Aflac found that the holidays are a time of increased anxiety for more than 50% of Americans.²

It doesn't have to be this way. Efforts to replace excessive holiday consumption and wasteful traditions with alternative gifts and Earth-friendly traditions are underway and can benefit both people and the planet. The Center for Biological Diversity's free Simplify the Holiday's campaign includes toolkits and tips for environmental professionals and the public to inspire long-term behavior change.

But to create the widespread change needed, it's important to understand the general public's perspectives on holiday waste and alternative gift giving and what inspires or holds them back from celebrating in a less wasteful way.

To gain this insight, in 2022 the Center conducted an online survey of the U.S. public to understand their perceptions about the environmental toll of the winter holiday season. The results of this survey highlight the benefits of giving alternative gifts and challenging cultural norms that influence material gift-giving behaviors. The survey also revealed generational differences in gift-giving trends. The results of this survey will be used to inform future Center campaigns.