Holiday Stress Driving Americans to Spend More, Increase Borrowing, and Pick Up Extra Jobs, New MoneyLion Survey Finds

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Most consumers plan to spend the same or more on holiday gifts compared to last year — even if it means taking on debt, gig work, or deferred payment methods

TEMPE, Ariz., Nov. 4, 2025 /PRNewswire/ -- The holidays may be a time of joy, but for many Americans they also bring heightened financial pressure and stress. According to new research from MoneyLion, a leading digital ecosystem for consumer finance and part of Gen (NASDAQ: GEN), one in four Americans feel pressured to spend beyond their means during the holidays, leaving them unable to cover basic expenses.

Despite these pressures, 78% of Americans expect to spend the same or more on gifts this year compared to last year, with average holiday spending now exceeding $2,000. To manage this increased spending pressure, one in four Americans plan to take on extra work this season, with 23% committing to gig work like ride share driving and pet sitting.

Many will also lean on credit to manage costs: 84% plan to use credit cards and 30% will turn to use Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) services. However, the survey also revealed that nearly half (46%) are unaware that BNPL can affect their credit score, furthering impacting their financial well-being.

"For many Americans, the financial hangover starts before the first gift is even wrapped," said Tim Hong, Global Head of Financial Wellness Technology for MoneyLion. "Despite facing increased financial strain, the pressure to spend is leading millions of Americans to take on increased debt and make cutbacks in January to offset their holiday spending. No one should have to choose between celebrating and staying financially secure. MoneyLion is committed to helping consumers spend smarter and safer this season."

Key Findings:

- **Overspending Leads to Regret:** One in three Americans (33%) regret a holiday purchase that made it harder to pay their bills, while 27% say they feel pressured to spend beyond their means. Average American holiday spending last year increased to more than $2,000.
- **Americans Plan on Cutbacks in the New Year:** 54% plan to give up dining out in January to rebalance their finances, and 42% will cut back on online shopping.
- **Anxiety is the Most Common Holiday Spending Emotion:** Nearly all Americans (99%) review their bank statements after the holidays, with anxiety emerging as the most common feeling (36%) after their review — impacting women more than men (42% vs 30%).
- **More Shoppers are Turning to Credit, But Aren't Aware of the Risks:** 84% of Americans plan to use credit cards to manage holiday spending, and 30% plan to use Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL). However, nearly half (46%) don't realize BNPL can affect their credit. With BNPL services reporting to the major

credit bureaus, this service can positively or negatively impact your credit score, depending on repayment rates.
- **Younger Shoppers Are Significantly More Stressed:** 36% of 18–44 year-olds report high levels of holiday spending pressure (8+ on a scale of 1-10), compared to 53% of 55+ shoppers who feel little to no pressure (1-3 on a scale of 1-10).

"This research underscores how pervasive financial stress has become around the holidays," added Hong. "Younger generations, already feeling the greatest financial pressure, are also the most likely to turn to BNPL and other credit-based services — often without understanding the potential risks. This holiday season, we want to ensure consumers have the tools and knowledge to not only stretch their dollars, but also protect themselves while they spend."

MoneyLion's Advice for Holiday Shoppers:

- **Create a Shopping List to Avoid Impulse Buys:** Set a budget early and create a list of gifts you plan to buy during the holidays can help you stay focused and avoid those last minute "add to cart" items.
- **Maximize Your Points and Hunt for Deals:** Utilizing cashback apps and rewards programs can be a way to offset costs. Consider using browser extensions to help you find the best deals while staying cost conscious.
- **Audit Your Budget B*efore* the Holidays, not After:** Using a budgeting tool can help you feel more aware of your expenses in real-time. The MoneyLion app offers free personalized budgeting tools to track, manage, and control your spending. Set aside 10 minutes every week to update and review your budget tracker, rather than waiting until after the holidays to check your balance. If you use credit or BNPL, make sure you have a strategy to pay off debts as soon as possible.
- **Get Creative on Gifting:** The holidays are about connections, not overspending. Consider free or low-cost creative gifts — like a handwritten note, art, a homemade meal, or shared experience — that show care without straining your wallet.

Survey Methodology

The study was conducted online within the United States by Dynata on behalf of Gen from August 26 to September 3, 2025, among 1,000 adults ages 18 and older. Data are weighted where necessary by age, gender, and region, to be nationally representative.

To learn more about how MoneyLion can help support during the holidays, read our blog and visit www.moneylion.com.

About MoneyLion
MoneyLion is a leading financial technology platform and part of Gen (NASDAQ: GEN), a global company dedicated to powering Digital Freedom with a family of trusted consumer brands. MoneyLion powers the next generation of personalized products, content, and marketplace technology through its top-rated consumer finance super app, premier embedded finance platform for enterprise businesses, and world-class media arm. Consumers gain control of their finances with an innovative suite of products to save, borrow, spend, and invest, seamlessly integrating the best offers and content from MoneyLion and its 1,300+ enterprise partners into one unified experience. Its mission is to give everyone the power to make their best financial decisions. Learn more at www.moneylion.com.

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