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Vaccines, Supply Chain Issues and Shipping Delays Fuel Return to In-Store Holiday Shopping

66% of PNW shoppers say in-store shopping is safe, but residents are split over vaccine and mask mandates

PULLMAN, Wash., Nov. 16, 2021 – Many Pacific Northwest (PNW) residents plan to shop in-store this holiday season, but mask mandates, vaccine requirements and supply chain issues will strongly influence their decision, according to a new [report](#) from Washington State University’s Carson College of Business (CCB).

The college’s fifth annual Holiday Retail Report finds 44% of PNW shoppers say in-store shopping is easier because of supply chain issues and shipping delays, but 53% say the ongoing labor shortage makes it difficult for them to have a good experience. The survey also found many shoppers in Washington (49%) and Oregon (47%) would only feel comfortable shopping in-store at places that require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test for employees, compared to 29% in Idaho.

“As we enter our second holiday season in a pandemic, many PNW residents are excited to return to in-store shopping and some sense of normalcy,” said Joan Giese, CCB associate professor of marketing (career track). “While there is more optimism when compared to last year, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a tremendous impact on consumer behavior, and perceptions towards safety protocols differ greatly across the region.”

This year’s report surveyed more than 1,700 PNW consumers and sought to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic continues to change shopping behaviors, as well as how attitudes and perceptions toward the holiday shopping season have shifted.

Key findings include:

- **The PNW is reclaiming the holidays: More have a positive outlook this holiday season compared to last year.**
 - 67% of PNW residents said they are excited to have a reason to celebrate. Last year, 52% expressed feelings of anxiety and loneliness around the 2020 holidays.
 - Travel plans are still on hold. Just over half (51%) of respondents said they are avoiding all travel this holiday season due to COVID.
 - Younger generations continue to show more enthusiasm around the holiday shopping season. 81% of Gen Z and 75% of millennials said they are looking forward to having something to celebrate compared to 68% of Gen X and 59% of boomers.

- **PNW residents are split over whether vaccine and COVID test requirements for in-store shopping are hindering or helping this holiday season.**
 - 65% of PNW residents said they feel safer shopping in person because more people are getting vaccinated. In 2020, only 54% said they felt safe in-store.
 - There is still support for masks and social distancing, but the story is different across the region. 26% of shoppers in Seattle and 29% in Portland/Vancouver said they would feel comfortable shopping in person if people were *not* wearing masks, compared to 44% in Spokane/Coeur d’Alene.
 - Overall, there is less support for stricter policies. 42% of respondents said they would not want to shop anywhere that required customers or employees to provide proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test.
- **While PNW residents are shopping more this year, supply chain issues and shipping delays are also influencing behavior.**
 - 61% said they are likely to shop in-store if stores are open.
 - 44% said in-store shopping is easier because of supply chain issues and shipping delays.
 - Over half (53%) said the ongoing labor shortage makes it difficult for them to have a good experience.
 - The majority, especially millennials, missed being able to shop in-store. 84% of millennials said they love being able to shop in-store again, followed by 76% of Gen Z and 75% of Gen X and boomers.
- **Not all COVID changes are bad: Small and local businesses remain top of mind for PNW shoppers this season.**
 - 72% said it’s important to support local businesses.
 - PNW shoppers are also eager to support businesses that are environmentally friendly. 69% of respondents in Seattle, 62% in Portland/Vancouver and 60% in Spokane/Coeur d’Alene said that impacts their decision to buy.
 - Support for Black Friday continues to wane. 63% said they are “over” Black Friday and would rather do something else because they can get those deals any time.

View the full report at: <https://business.wsu.edu/holidayretailstudy/>

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The WSU Carson College of Business is accredited across all business disciplines at the baccalaureate, masters and doctoral levels by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Faculty across disciplines produce scholarly and applied research at the main campus in Pullman as well as at urban campuses in Vancouver, Everett and the Tri-Cities. International activities include academic centers in China and Switzerland as well as thriving partnerships with several schools around the globe. Innovative online programs supplement face-to-face offerings.