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Michaels® State of the Holiday Season Report: Consumers Want Less Screen Time and More Meaning

New research from Michaels and Morning Consult finds 80% of parents are seeking screen-free holiday activities, and nearly 8 in 10 consumers who celebrate value a $25 handmade gift as much as or more than a $100 store-bought one

IRVING, Texas, Oct. 21, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- This year, people are looking for ways to unplug and make the holidays more personal. According to the 2026 Michaels State of the Holiday Season Report, released today and conducted by Morning Consult, eight in 10 parents (80%) are seeking screen-free, hands-on holiday activities, and nearly 8 in 10 consumers who celebrate (78%) say a $25 handmade gift means as much as or more than a $100 store-bought one.

The national survey of 2,502 U.S. adults also reveals that nearly two-thirds (65%) want a less commercial holiday season, while 66% say hands-on activities make the season more meaningful. More than half (54%) say their household already has more stuff than it needs, and 61% are looking for screen-free holiday activities.

"Families are heading into December feeling stretched, both on time and on budget," said Heather Bennett, President and Chief Customer Officer at Michaels. "This report shows that many are responding by starting earlier and choosing what feels personal over what's pricey. At Michaels, we're making that easier, with inspiration to get started, affordable gifts and projects they can make or personalize, and in-store events where families and friends can unplug, get together, and create."

Four Trends Shaping the Season

1. **Screen-Free Connection**

   Parents are feeling screen fatigue most: more than half (56%) say they're worn out by the time they spend on screens, and half (50%) plan to do more screen-free activities than last year. Gen Z, the first generation to grow up with smartphones, isn't far behind. Nearly three-quarters (73%) are looking for screen-free, hands-on activities to do at home, and 46% plan to do more than last year. Many are setting boundaries, too: 69% of Gen Z and 72% of Millennials plan to set screen-free rules or try to unplug informally during the holidays.

2. **A Holiday Headstart**

   For many households, December stress is pushing the season earlier. Six in 10 of those who celebrate (60%) expect December to be stressful, and among them, the top

concerns are spending more than they can afford (49%) and finding the right gifts (47%). So they're starting sooner: more than one-third (36%) begin buying gifts before November, including 19% who start in October, while 29% begin crafting and nearly a quarter (24%) begin decorating before November.

Among early starters, 53% say they do it to reduce December stress and 49% to spread spending across multiple paychecks.

3. **Meaning Over Materialism**

   When it comes to what makes the holidays special, presence matters more than presents. Among those who celebrate, spending time with family and friends is the No. 1 source of holiday joy (48%), while receiving gifts ranks near the bottom (18%). More than half of adults (54%) also say their household has more stuff than it needs.

   That mindset carries into gifting. Six in 10 (61%) say they're likely to give a handmade or DIY gift this season, and 60% say personal sentiment matters more than price when choosing a gift.

4. **The Next Gen Décor Divide**

   Younger generations are turning holiday décor into a form of self-expression. Among those who celebrate, Millennials (36%) and Gen Z (34%) are nearly six times as likely as Baby Boomers (6%) to embrace playful, eclectic, and maximalist or moody, dramatic and glamorous holiday styles. Classic and natural looks stay popular across generations, with about half of Gen Z, Millennials and Gen X leaning that way.

   Millennials and Gen Z are also getting into the spirit sooner. About one-third (34% and 32%, respectively) begin decorating before November, compared with 11% of Boomers.

Fueling Creativity and Celebration All Season Long

Michaels is helping families slow down, start early and make the season their own:

- **Unplug and create together:** Thousands of holiday DIYs starting at $2.99 give shoppers easy ways to step away from screens, from DIY ornaments to holiday-themed amigurumi crochet kits and seasonal mini framed paint-by-numbers. In-store events offer more chances to gather and make something by hand, from personalized ornaments to holiday junk journals.
- **Get a head start:** Holiday décor and supplies like artificial trees, party supplies, and decorative accents are available now in-stores and online to help shoppers get ahead of the December rush.
- **Give something personal:** DIY gifting supplies, personalized same-day ornaments starting at $15, and custom-framed photos like 10-Minute Custom Framing starting at $29 help shoppers give something meaningful without overspending.
- **Bring your holiday style to life:** Four exclusive décor collections, with pieces starting at $4.99, offer different ways to make the season feel like your own: the playful maximalism of Merry Kitschmas, the rich tones and glamour of Twilight Tidings, the

classic styling of Bough & Berry, and the natural textures and neutrals of Wrapped in Joy.

Read the full State of the Holiday Season Report here For holiday project ideas and to view upcoming in-store events, visit www.michaels.com.

About the Research
The 2026 Michaels State of the Holiday Season Report was fielded by Morning Consult Oct. 8–11, 2026, among a national sample of 2,502 U.S. adults, including 2,322 who plan to celebrate a holiday this season. Interviews were conducted online, and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of U.S. adults based on age, race/ethnicity, gender, educational attainment, and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of ±2 percentage points.

About The Michaels Companies, Inc.
At The Michaels Companies Inc., our purpose is to fuel the joy of creativity and celebration. As the leading destination for creating and celebrating in North America, we operate over 1,300 stores in 49 states and Canada and online at Michaels.com and Michaels.ca. The Michaels Companies, Inc. also owns Artistree, a manufacturer of custom and specialty framing merchandise. Founded in 1973 and headquartered in Irving, Texas, Michaels is the best place for all things creative. For more information, please visit http://www.michaels.com.

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