

# Social Connection and the Holidays

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**In November 2017, AARP Foundation conducted a survey among adults age 18 and over that explored social connections during the holidays.**

## ***Key Findings***

- Thinking about spending time with family and friends this holiday season commonly evokes positive feelings among adults. Specifically, respondents report feeling happy (67%), loved (47%), joy (46%), and excited (44%).
- However, feelings of loneliness during the holidays are also common. In fact, three-in-ten (31%) adults report having felt lonely during the holiday season sometime in the past five years. Further, two-in-five (41%) say that in the past five years they have worried about a family member or friend feeling lonely during the holiday season.
- While a majority of adults (60%) say that they experience about the same amount of kindness from strangers during the holidays as compared to other times of the year, a third (34%) say they experience more kindness from strangers during the holidays. Relatively few (5%) say they experience less kindness.

## **Methodology**

This online survey of 1,005 adults age 18 and over was fielded from November 10-12, 2017 as part of GfK's US Omnibus survey. The sample was drawn from the GfK KnowledgePanel, a probability-based online survey panel representing the US adult population. The margin of error was +/- 3.4 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Data was weighted by gender, age, education, race/ethnicity, household income, and region to reflect US adults age 18 and over.

<https://doi.org/10.26419/res.00184.001>

## Detailed Findings

### Spending Time with Family and Friends during the Holidays

- Thinking about spending time with family and friends this holiday season commonly evokes positive feelings among adults age 18 and over. Specifically, respondents report feeling happy (67%), loved (47%), joy (46%), and excited (44%).
- The most frequently cited negative feeling associated with spending time with family and friends during the holidays is being stressed out (19%). Adults under age 50 (24%) are more likely than adults age 50 or over (14%) to cite this.

*Q01. When you think about spending time with your family and friends during this holiday season, do you feel...?*

	Total	Under age 50	Age 50 and over
<b>Base Unweighted</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>482</b>
Happy	67%	65%	68%
Loved	47%	46%	48%
Joy	46%	47%	46%
Excited	44%	49%*	39%
Nostalgic	28%	25%	31%*
Included	24%	22%	27%
Stressed out	19%	24%*	14%
Nervous	8%	10%*	5%
Annoyed	8%	9%*	6%
Dread	6%	7%	5%
Sad	6%	6%	6%
Lonely	4%	5%	4%
Other	3%	3%	2%
I will not be spending time with family or friends this holiday season	6%	5%	8%
None/Nothing	<1%	<1%	<1%
Don't know/no response/refused	1%	1%	<1%

\*Statistically significant difference between age groups (*under age 50* and *age 50 and over*) at the 95% confidence level.

## Loneliness during the Holidays

- Feelings of loneliness during the holidays are also common. In fact, three-in-ten (31%) adults age 18 and over report having felt lonely during the holiday season sometime in the past five years.
- Further, two-in-five (41%) adults age 18 and over say that in the past five years they have worried about a family member or friend feeling lonely during the holiday season.

*Q02. At any time in the past 5 years, have you worried about a family member or friend feeling lonely during the holiday season?*

	Total	Under age 50	Age 50 and over
<b>Base Unweighted</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>482</b>
Yes	41%	39%	43%
No	59%	60%	57%
Refused	1%	1%	<1%

*Q03. At any time in the past 5 years, have you felt lonely during the holiday season?*

	Total	Under age 50	Age 50 and over
<b>Base Unweighted</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>482</b>
Yes	31%	33%	28%
No	69%	66%	72%
Refused	1%	1%	<1%

## Kindness during the Holidays

- While a majority of adults (60%) say that they experience about the same amount of kindness from strangers during the holidays as compared to other times of the year, a third (34%) say they experience more kindness from strangers during the holidays. Relatively few (5%) say they experience less kindness.

*Q04. During the holiday season, do you typically...?*

	Total	Under age 50	Age 50 and over
<b>Base Unweighted</b>	<b>1,005</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>482</b>
Experience more kindness from strangers compared to other times of the year	34%	35%	33%
Experience less kindness from strangers compared to other times of the year	5%	6%*	3%
Experience about the same amount of kindness from strangers compared to other times of the year	60%	57%	63%

\*Statistically significant difference between age groups (*under age 50* and *age 50 and over*) at the 95% confidence level.