

# ***Sacred Heart University Poll***

December 2007

## **Statement of Confidentiality**

---

All of the analyses, findings, data and recommendations contained within this report are presented by the Sacred Heart University Polling Institute.

The Sacred Heart University Polling Institute maintains the anonymity of respondents to surveys the organization conducts. No information will be released that might, in any way, reveal the identity of the respondents.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Introduction.....	<b>SECTION 1</b>	Page 3
Methodology.....	<b>SECTION 2</b>	Page 4
Highlights.....	<b>SECTION 3</b>	Page 5
Summary of Findings.....	<b>SECTION 4</b>	Page 8
	<i>Media and Politics.....</i>	<i>8</i>
	<i>Media and Entertainment.....</i>	<i>14</i>
	<i>Holidays 2007.....</i>	<i>17</i>
Appendix.....	<b>SECTION 5</b>	Page 19
	<i>Survey Instrument</i>	
	<i>Crosstabulation Table</i>	

# 1 INTRODUCTION

---

The Sacred Heart University Polling Institute is pleased to present the results of a nationwide survey of Americans.

The research was designed to provide input on the U.S. media, the media and entertainment, and the holidays.

Interviews were conducted among 800 residents nationwide approximately proportional to population contribution of all 50 states.

This report summarizes statistics collected from telephone surveys conducted November 26-December 6, 2007.

Areas for investigation within the telephone survey included:

- Perceptions of the believability of the U.S. media;
- Views on media fairness and influence;
- Perception of philosophical persuasions held by various media outlets;
- Media preferences;
- Trust in various national TV news organizations;
- Preferences for various national TV news organizations;
- Rating the performance of news media;
- Perceptions of media impact
- Holiday 2007 spending plans and favorite holidays;
- Support/opposition to public religious displays.

Section two of this report discusses the methodology used in the poll while section three includes highlights derived from a review of the quantitative research. Section four is a summary of findings from the national poll.

Section five is an appendix containing the survey instrument and a crosstabulation table.

## METHODOLOGY

The Sacred Heart University Polling Institute completed 800 interviews, in a quantitative research design, with residents nationwide.

All telephone interviews were conducted between November 26-December 6, 2007. Sample was generated proportional to population contribution in each state. One survey instrument was used to elicit information from all respondents.

All respondents were residents of the contiguous states along with Alaska and Hawaii. Each respondent was one of the heads of their household and at least 18 years of age or older.

Training of telephone researchers and a pre-test of the survey instrument occurred on November 26, 2007.

All facets of the Sacred Heart University Poll were completed by Institute researchers and senior staff. These aspects included survey design, sample design, pre-test, computer programming, fielding, coding, data entry, validation and logic checks, computer analysis, analysis, report writing and presentations.

Statistically, a sample of 800 completed telephone interviews represents a margin for error of +/-3.5% at a 95% confidence level.

In theory, a sample of U.S. residents would differ no more than +/-3.5% than if all the residents in the designated geographic area were contacted and included in the survey. That is, if random probability sampling procedures were reiterated over and over again, sample results would be expected to approximate the population values within +/-3.5% -- 95 out of 100 times.

Readers of this report should note that any survey is analogous to a snapshot in time and results are only reflective of the time period in which the survey was undertaken. Should concerted public information or public relations campaigns be undertaken during or shortly after the fielding of the survey, the results contained herein could be expected to change and should be, therefore, carefully interpreted and extrapolated.

Furthermore, it is important to note that all surveys contain some component of "sampling error." Error that is attributable to systematic bias has been significantly reduced by utilizing strict random probability procedures. This sample was strictly random in that selection of each potential respondent was an independent event, based on known probabilities.

Each qualified household within the United States had an equal chance of participating in the study. Statistical random error, however, can never be eliminated, but may be significantly reduced by increasing sample size.

# HIGHLIGHTS

---

## On Media and Politics...

- **Declining percentages of Americans are suggesting they believe all or most media news reporting today. Just under one-fifth of Americans surveyed, 19.6%, said they believe all or most of reporting. This is down from 27.4% in 2003.**
- **Growing numbers of Americans are agreeing (strongly or somewhat) with the statement: “The news media has its own political and public policy positions and attempt to influence public opinion.” Those agreeing moved from 79.2% in 2003 to 87.6% in 2007.**
- **And, increasingly, Americans are more likely to strongly or somewhat agree with the statement: “The news media has its own political positions and attempt to influence public policies.” Those in agreement moved from 76.6% in 2003 to 86.0% in 2007.**
- **By approximately a three-to-one margin, Americans see news media journalists as mostly or somewhat liberal over those that see them as mostly or somewhat conservative – 45.4% to 15.7% respectively. Another quarter, 22.5%, see the journalists as neutral.**
- **Those suggesting news media journalists are mostly or somewhat liberal moved to 45.4% in 2007 from 38.7% in 2003.**
- **Both the New York Times and National Public Radio, by nearly four-to-one margins, were seen as more liberal than conservative. And, Fox News, by a two-to-one margin is viewed as more conservative than liberal.**
- **Respondents were asked which news sources they regularly use. Nearly two-thirds of respondents, 61.7%, indicated TV news followed by newspapers (42.2%), radio news (30.5%), the internet (27.7%), news magazines (9.5%), podcasts (3.3%), and blogs (1.8%).**

## On Trust and Ratings...

- **The most trusted national TV news organizations are Fox News (27.0%), CNN (14.6%), NBC News (10.9%), ABC News (7.0%), local news (6.9%), CBS News (6.8%). In 2003, CNN led Fox News 23.8% to 19.5%.**

- **In declining order, the most trustworthy types of news outlets were state, local or regional newspapers (31.8%), TV news organizations (23.2%), national newspapers (21.9%) and radio news (11.4%). In 2003, TV news organizations lead state, local and regional newspapers 27.9% to 21.4% respectively.**
- **Americans surveyed provided poor ratings for the national news media on six different characteristics measured. The average overall positive rating across all six characteristics measured was 33.4%. Most service organizations strive to attain satisfaction ratings in the high eighties. The highest positive rating, 40.7%, was recorded for quality of reporting followed by accuracy of reporting at 36.9% and keeping any personal bias out of stories (33.3%).**
- **Others included: fairness (31.3%), presenting an even balance of views (30.4%) and presenting negative and positive news equally (27.5%).**

### **On the Iraq Conflict...**

- **Military officials, according to survey respondents, were more likely than the U.S. news media to provide trustworthy and balanced reports on the Iraq conflict – 30.8% to 28.3%.**
- **On the Iraq conflict, nearly three-quarters of Americans surveyed (70.7%) believe negative coverage damages troop morale while 59.8% agreed that negative coverage damages our prospects of success because it encourages terrorists.**
- **Fewer than one-third of respondents, 31.2%, agree that coverage of the Iraq conflict is fair and balanced overall. Another 38.3% agreed that coverage was accurate and nearly half, 49.1%, agreed that things are likely going better for the U.S. than the U.S. media portrays.**

### **On the Media...**

- **Large majorities agreed that advertising during children's view hours should be regulated for content (88.0% agreeing, with 9.9% disagreeing), that there is too much sex on TV (80.4% agreeing, with 15.7% disagreeing), the internet is a positive educational supplement today (75.0% agreeing with 18.1% disagreeing) and the media has more influence on children today than parents (70.3% agreeing with 25.6% disagreeing).**
- **Just over half, 58.6%, agreed (with 34.7% disagreeing), that there should be legal limits on the number of media outlets a single individual or corporation can own.**

- **Fewer than half of respondents agreed with the following: On balance, the internet has more of a positive impact on kids today than a negative impact (44.3% agreeing, with 44.5% disagreeing), I closely follow who owns my local radio and TV stations (40.8% agreeing, with 49.5% disagreeing); repeated illegal downloading of music or movies should result in jail time (35.4% agreeing, with 54.5% disagreeing); and I am pleased Don Imus has returned to radio (30.3% agreeing with 32.2% disagreeing).**

#### **On Media and Entertainment...**

- **A large majority, 80.7%, suggested they pay little attention when celebrities make political or public policy statements. In 2003, the percent was similar at 81.9%.**
- **By a two-to-one margin (59.1%), respondents noted that celebrities should leave public policy-making to experts and the voters. Another 31.7% suggested celebrities should publicly voice their political views.**
- **A large majority of Americans surveyed, 88.1%, said there was too much coverage of celebrities today.**

#### **On the Holidays...**

- **The average estimated spending on holiday gifts, among those surveyed, in 2007 was \$1085.03. This is an increase from \$970.28 in 2003.**
- **And, a large majority of Americans surveyed, 83.9%, indicated that they support temporarily placing religious symbols such as mangers or menorahs on public greens this holiday season. This is up somewhat from 80.8% in 2003.**
- **In the national survey of Americans, 48.5% said that Christmas was their favorite holiday followed by Thanksgiving (15.9%), July 4<sup>th</sup>/Independence Day (7.1%), Easter (6.5%), and Halloween (5.8%).**
- **Others trailed further behind Christmas – Memorial Day (1.8%), New Year's (1.8%), Valentine's Day (1.5%), Veterans Day (1.4%), Hanukah (0.5%), and Columbus Day (0.1%).**

# 4 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

---

Readers are reminded that the following summarizes statistics collected from telephone interviews with 800 residents of the United States.

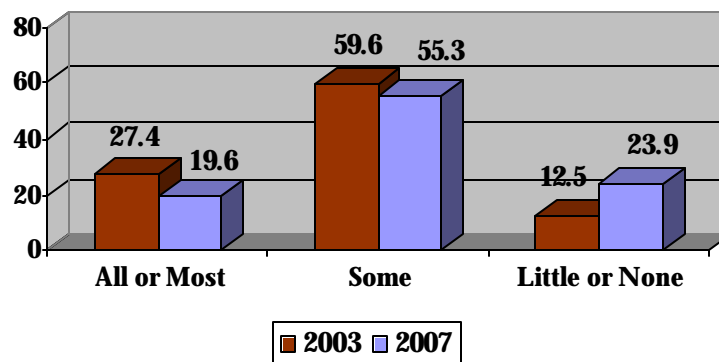
The text throughout this section refers to and presents results from the composite aggregate data.

Significant portions of this survey were also fielded in March 2003. Where like or similar questions were presented to respondents, results for both 2003 and 2007 are presented.

## MEDIA AND POLITICS

Researchers asked all respondents, in general, if they believed all, most, some, little or none of media news reporting. Just under two-fifths, 19.6% (27.4% in 2003), reported believing all or most of media news reporting. Over half, 55.3% (59.6% in 2003), suggest they believe some news reporting, while 23.9% (12.5% in 2003) indicated they believe little or none of media news reporting.

**Believe Media News Reporting...**



Further, researchers presented respondents with two different statements regarding news media's political positions, and asked if they strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree.

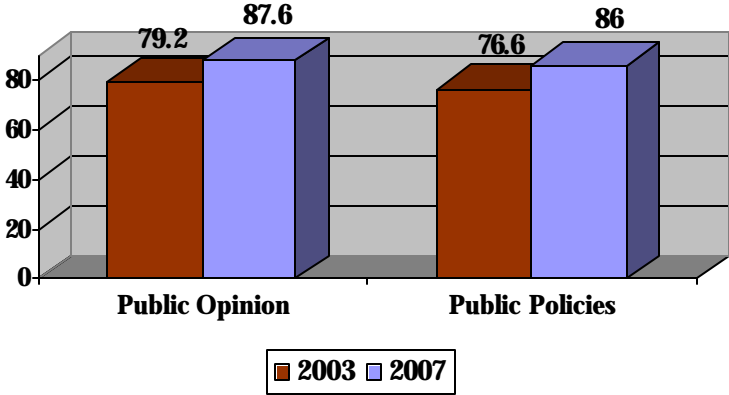
In 2007, 87.6% (79.3% in 2003) strongly and somewhat agreed that the news media has its own political and public policy positions and attempt to influence public opinion.

In 2007, 86.0% (76.7% in 2003) strongly and somewhat agreed that the news media has its own political positions and attempt to influence public policies.

The following table presents the results as collected.

Statement	Agree: 2003		Agree: 2007	
	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree
The news media has its own political and public policy positions and attempt to influence public opinion	35.8%	43.5%	53.3%	34.3%
The news media has its own political positions and attempt to influence public policies	32.0	44.7	52.7	33.3

**Agree: The news media attempts to influence...**



All respondents were asked if they would say a number of individuals or news sources were mostly liberal, somewhat liberal, somewhat conservative, mostly conservative or mostly neutral.

The following table presents the results as collected.

Overall, would you say the following individuals or news sources are mostly liberal, somewhat liberal, somewhat conservative, mostly conservative or mostly neutral?

<b>News</b>	<b>Mostly and Somewhat Liberal</b>	<b>Mostly and Somewhat Conservative</b>	<b>Neutral</b>
News media journalists and broadcasters	45.4	15.7	22.5
CNN	44.9	18.4	19.1
The New York Times	41.9	11.8	10.8
National Public Radio (NPR)	40.3	11.2	15.9
MSNBC	38.8	15.8	19.1
Fox News	22.3	48.7	13.8

In 2007, 45.4% indicated they believed news media journalists and broadcasters were mostly or somewhat liberal. This is an increase from 38.7% in 2003.

All respondents, in 2007, were asked how regularly they use each of a number of news sources. The following table presents the cumulative totals for those suggesting always and most of the time.

<b>News</b>	<b>Always and Most of the Time</b>
TV news	61.7
Newspapers	42.2
Radio news	30.5
The internet	27.7
News magazines	9.5
Podcasts	3.3
Blogs	1.8

All respondents were asked, in both 2003 and 2007, which national TV news organizations they trust most for accurate reporting. The following table presents the results as collected.

<b>Trust Most?</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2007</b>
Fox News	19.5	27.0
CNN	23.8	14.6
NBC News	12.1	10.9
ABC News	6.2	7.0
Local News	4.0	6.9
CBS News	9.5	6.8
Other	0.7	5.5
MSNBC	1.5	4.0
PBS News	8.4	3.0
CNBC	1.3	0.6
CBN (Christian Broadcasting Network)	2.4	0.5

Researchers asked respondents, in 2007, which television news organization they turn to most frequently. The following table presents the results as collected.

<b>Watch Most?</b>	<b>2007</b>
Fox News	26.5
CNN	16.0
NBC News	11.8
ABC News	11.0
Local News	8.5
CBS News	7.0
Other	4.3
MSNBC	4.0
PBS News	2.3
CBN (Christian Broadcasting Network)	0.4
CNBC	0.4

In both 2003 and 2007, respondents were asked which of four different news sources they considered most trustworthy. The following table presents the results.

<b>News Source</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2007</b>
State, local or regional newspapers	21.4	31.8
TV news organizations	27.9	23.2
National newspapers such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, or USA Today	26.5	21.9
Radio news	13.4	11.4

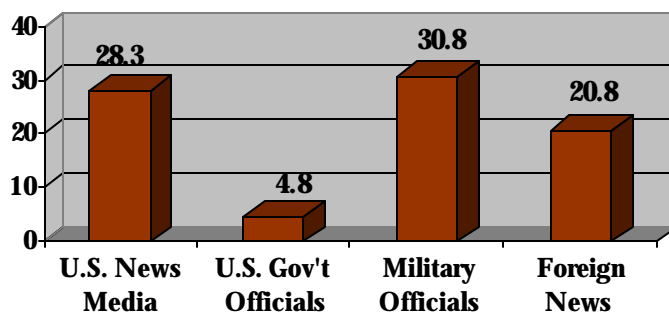
All respondents were asked to rate different characteristics of the national news media. Each was asked to use a scale of one to ten where one was very good and ten was very poor. The following table presents the cumulative positive ratings of one through four as well as the cumulative poor ratings of seven through ten.

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Good Ratings 1-4</b>	<b>Poor Ratings 7-10</b>
Quality of reporting	40.7	27.5
Accuracy of reporting	36.9	29.7
Keeping any personal bias out of stories	33.3	36.8
Fairness	31.3	30.2
Presenting an even balance of views	30.4	35.0
Presenting negative and positive news equally	27.5	44.5

Researchers read the following question to respondents: “In the conflict in Iraq, which of the following would you consider **most** likely to provide trustworthy and balanced reports? Would you say...”

Just over one-half of all respondents, 28.3%, suggested U.S. news media while 4.8% indicated U.S. Government officials. Others, 30.8%, suggested Military officials and 20.8% indicated foreign news organizations.

### Trustworthy and balanced reports...



Respondents were asked to think about national news coverage of the Iraq war in general. Each was read a number of statements regarding media coverage of the war. Researchers asked each respondent if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements.

The following table presents the cumulative totals for those strongly or somewhat agreeing with each statement as well as those strongly and somewhat disagreeing with each statement.

Statements	Strongly and Somewhat Agree	Somewhat and Strongly Disagree
Negative coverage damages troop morale	70.7	24.2
Negative coverage damages our prospects for success because it encourages terrorists	59.8	34.0
Things are likely going better for the U.S. than the U.S. media portray	49.1	44.8
The coverage is accurate	38.3	56.2
The coverage is fair and balanced	31.2	63.7

And similarly, researchers read a number of statements about the media in general. Respondents were asked if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, somewhat disagreed or strongly disagreed with each statement.

The following table presents the cumulative totals for those strongly and somewhat agreeing as well as the cumulative totals for those strongly and somewhat disagreeing.

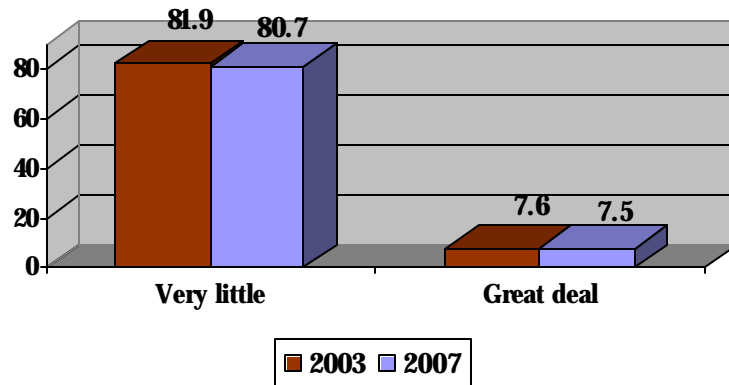
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly and Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>Strongly and Somewhat Disagree</b>
Advertising, during children's viewing hours should be regulated for content	88.0	9.9
There's too much sex on TV	80.4	15.7
The internet is a positive educational supplement today	75.0	18.1
Media has more influence on children today than parents	70.3	25.6
There should be legal limits on the number of media outlets such as radio, TV stations and newspapers a single individual or corporation can own	58.6	34.7
On balance, the internet has more of a positive impact on kids today than a negative impact	44.3	44.5
I closely follow who owns my local radio and TV stations	40.8	49.5
Repeated illegal downloading of music or movies should result in jail time	35.4	54.5
I am pleased Don Imus has returned to radio broadcasting	30.0	32.2

## **MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT**

Researchers asked respondents how much attention they pay to celebrities when they make political or public policy statements? Each was asked to use a scale of one to ten, where one means very little attention and ten means a great deal of attention.

A large majority of respondents, 80.7% (81.9% in 2003), provided ratings of 1-4 – suggesting they pay little attention when celebrities make political or public policy statements. Another 7.5% (7.6% in 2003) provided ratings of 7-10 – suggesting they pay a great deal of attention.

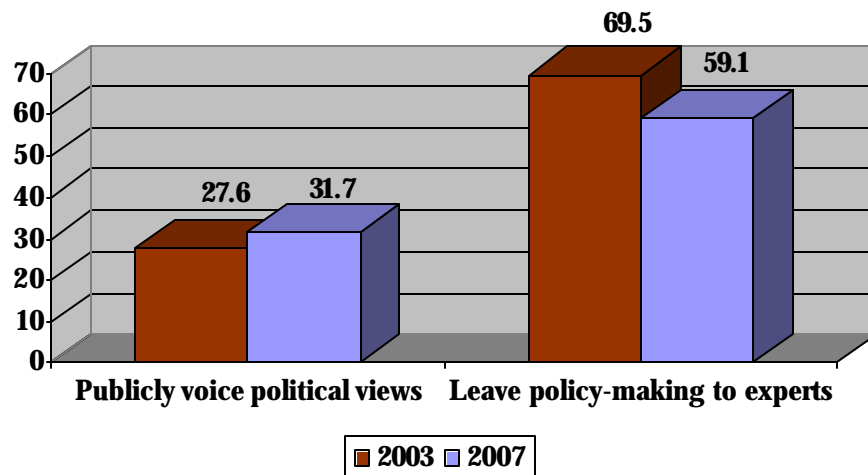
### How much attention paid to celebrities' statements...



Researchers presented respondents with the following question: “Some say Hollywood celebrities should regularly use their fame to express their political views while others say they should leave public policy to experts and voters through their elected officials. Would you say celebrities should publicly voice political views, or leave policy-making to experts/voters?”

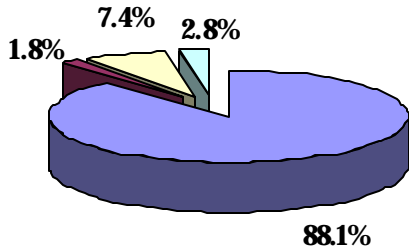
Under two-thirds of respondents, 59.1% (69.5% in 2003), noted that celebrities should leave public policy-making to experts and voters, while 31.7% (27.6% in 2003) of respondents suggest celebrities should publicly voice their political views.

### Would you say celebrities should...



A large majority said there was too much (88.1%) coverage of celebrities while 1.8% indicated there was too little and 7.4% said there is about the right amount of celebrity coverage. Some, 2.8%, were unsure.

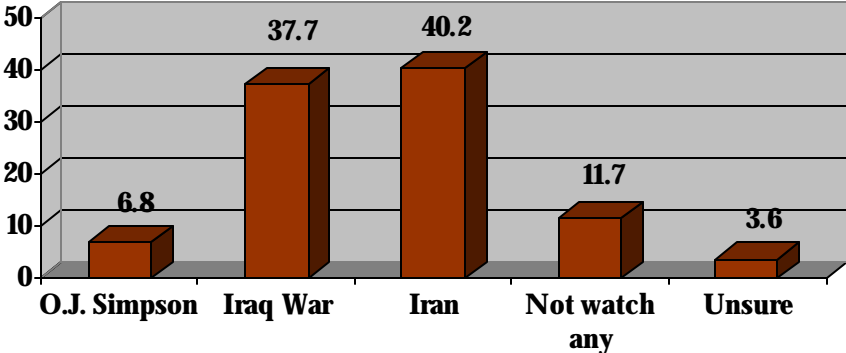
**Coverage of Celebrities...**



■ Too much ■ Too little □ About right □ Unsure

And, if respondents had a choice, 6.8% would watch the upcoming O. J. Simpson trial while 37.7% would tune into news on the Iraq war and 40.2% said they would choose watching coverage of a new diplomatic effort within Iran. Some suggested they would not watch any of the three choices and 3.6% were unsure.

**Watching on Television...**



One-third of all respondents, 31.7%, said they had children or teens under the age of 18 living at home. These respondents were asked if they monitor and limit TV program selections, video game selections and Reality TV viewing.

The following table presents the results as collected.

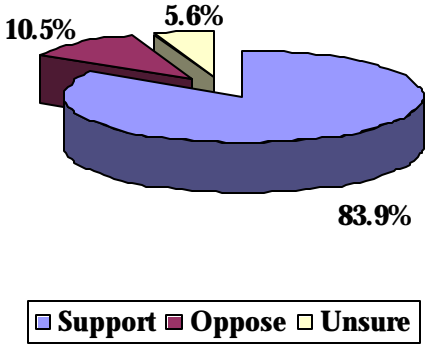
<b>Limits to:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Television program selections	85.4
Viewing of Reality TV shows	81.0
Video game selections	77.5

**The Holidays**

Americans surveyed plan to spend an average of \$1,085.03 on holiday gifts in 2007 (\$970.28 in 2003).

And, a large majority of Americans surveyed (83.9%) indicated that they support temporarily placing religious symbols such as mangers or menorahs on public greens this holiday season. This is up somewhat from 80.8% in 2003. Just 10.5% oppose such placement and 5.6% were unsure.

**Public Religious Displays**



Christmas, for half of all respondents (48.6%) is, by far, their most favorite holiday each year. This is followed, distantly, by Thanksgiving (15.9%), July 4<sup>th</sup> (7.1%), and Easter (6.5%).

The following table presents all the holiday favorites collected.

<b>Holidays</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Christmas	48.5
Thanksgiving	15.9
July 4/Independence Day	7.1
Easter	6.5
Halloween	5.8
Other	5.0
Don't know/Unsure	4.1
New Year's	1.8
Memorial Day	1.8
Valentine's Day	1.5
Veterans Day	1.4
Hanukah	0.5
Columbus Day	0.1
Flag Day	---

# APPENDIX 5

---