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## RETAIL

# Covid Killed Black Friday Madness

There's no going back to the extreme holiday shopping of pre-pandemic times. Target says being closed on Thanksgiving is now standard policy.

By **Allison Kaplan**  
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One pandemic casualty no one seems to be mourning: extreme shopping hours on Thanksgiving weekend. The backlash to the holiday creep of Black Friday sales had been gaining momentum long before Covid-19 with major players like REI and Mall of America reversing course and remaining closed on Thanksgiving. Last year, the pandemic stopped the madness among those big box retailers that still opened for post-pumpkin pie shopping or before dawn on Black Friday. And this week, Target CEO Brian Cornell told employees the change is permanent: Target will remain closed on Thanksgiving this year, and plans to make that standard policy going forward.

“You don’t have to wonder whether this is the last Thanksgiving you’ll spend with family and friends for a while,” Cornell wrote in an email sent to staff on Monday. “Because Thanksgiving store hours are one thing we won’t ‘get back to’ when the pandemic finally subsides.”

The public pressure to move away from Thanksgiving shopping “was enormous prior to the pandemic, but now I think we might be witnessing a sea change,” said omnichannel retail expert Kim Sovell, an adjunct marketing instructor with the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business. “Many of us were already shopping online prior to the pandemic. But the pandemic taught many individuals that shopping online is safe and convenient. I would like to think we are also seeing a sea change in how we treat those who work in retail, but some retailers will not buckle to this pressure.”



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Indeed, there are a few holdouts: [Cabela's](#), the outdoor super store with locations in Woodbury, Rogers, and Owatonna, will open for Thanksgiving Day shopping. Walgreens is the place to go for post-feast antacids and other emergency purchases. Select dollar stores and grocery stores like Hy-Vee and Whole Foods will also be open limited hours on Thanksgiving Day. Beyond that, the brick and mortar options will be limited.

Like Target, Best Buy will keep its stores closed on Thanksgiving, with some locations opening as early as 5 a.m. on Black Friday. Regional malls will be closed on Thanksgiving as well; Southdale Center re-opens at 6

a.m. Friday; Rosedale Center opens at 8 a.m.; Ridgedale Center at 9 a.m. Mall of America kicks off a day of Black Friday deals and giveaways at 7 a.m. on Friday.

## No more camping out?

There was a time, not too many years ago, when opening even an hour earlier than the competition on Black Friday could be the difference maker in the critical shopping weekend. But the ease of online shopping has steadily eroded the appeal of camping out overnight in store parking lots, and last year, retailers intentionally spread out the deals to cut down the crowds. That pattern continues in 2021—both Target and Walmart have already launched Black Friday specials.

“There’s no need to stand outside in the cold for hours at Best Buy when [Wirecutter](#) and your favorite Reddit thread have already identified the best Black Friday TV deals and provided the links days prior to Thanksgiving,” said retail expert Beth Perro-Jarvis of the Minneapolis consultancy [Ginger](#).

But the phenomenon of shoppers lining up may not be gone for good, she added. “I do think lining up will still happen when scarcity is in play—a new product from a big brand like Playstation, or a sneaker drop that won’t be available online.”

*41% of Twin Cities shoppers polled by Deloitte said they are anxious about shopping in-store this season due to Covid.*

## Holiday Shopping By the Numbers

The [National Retail Federation](#) estimates that 158.3 million Americans will shop this holiday weekend—a slight increase over last year, but still below the 165.3 million in pre-pandemic 2019. Of those holiday weekend shoppers surveyed by NRF, 65% plan to shop in stores this year. Covid remains a factor in consumer decisions—in a holiday survey of Twin Cities shoppers conducted by Deloitte, 41% said they are anxious about shopping in-store this season due to Covid.

Supply chain challenges may be the end of gift buying procrastination; NRF reports that 46% of shoppers surveyed started earlier this year. The early shopping is particularly pronounced in the Twin Cities where two-

thirds of shoppers planned to start their holiday purchasing before Thanksgiving, according to the 2021 Deloitte Holiday Survey. That's good news for retailers since those who shop early spend more—as much as 45 percent more, [Deloitte](#) predicts. Overall holiday spending among Twin Cities shoppers is expected to be up 6% for an average of \$1,054 per household. That's lower than the national average of \$1,463.

Conducted in September, Deloitte surveyed 4,315 people nationally including 521 Twin Cities residents. Additional consumer insights from the survey:

- 65% of Minneapolis-St. Paul area consumers surveyed said they expect the economy to improve or remain the same in 2022.
- One third of Twin Cities shoppers expressed a preference for local, independent stores. Participation in Small Business Saturday is expected to jump 8% to 29% of local consumers this year.
- 59% of holiday spending in the Twin Cities is expected to occur online, which is just slightly lower than the national average of 62%.
- 80% of Twin Cities respondents opt for standard delivery, but interest in same day or next day delivery is up from 37% to 44%