

Polling: Christmas presents and waste

December 2019

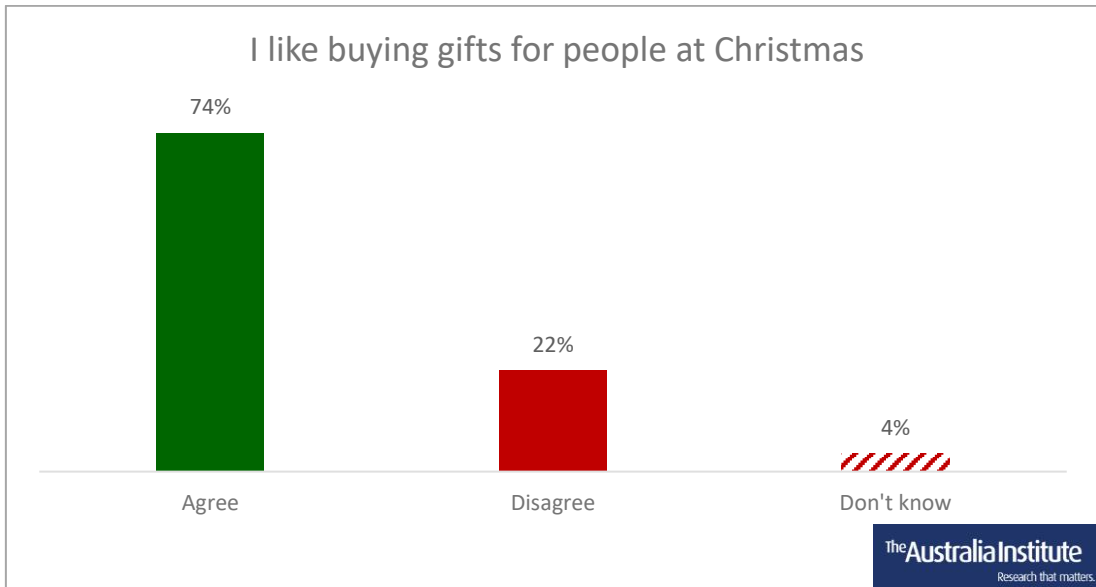
The Australia Institute surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,424 Australians, people between 1 and 15 November 2019, about Christmas presents and waste.

Three in ten (30%), or approximately 7.3 million Australians will receive gifts they expect they will never use or wear this Christmas, representing a total value of \$980 million (see Method section for calculations).

Key results

- Three in four Australians (74%) like buying Christmas gifts, but half of Australians (48%) would prefer that others NOT buy them Christmas gifts.
- Almost nine in ten (87%) of Australians receive Christmas presents (13% do not)
- Of those who do
 - Three in 10 Australians (30%) expect to get Christmas presents that they will never use.
- Two thirds (66%) of Australians disagree with the statement that “Buying things that don’t get used is a good way to create jobs and improve the lives of Australians”
- Half of Australians (50%) agree that it is better for the economy when people buy fewer things that don’t get used (31% disagree)

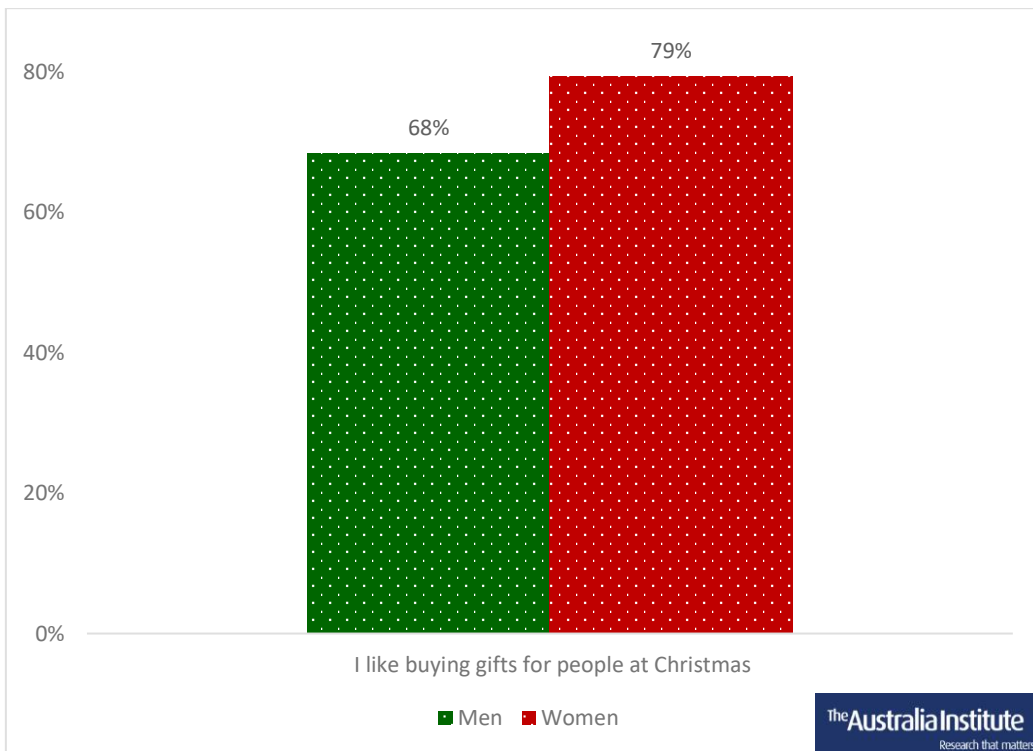
Figure 1: Buying Christmas presents



Respondents were asked whether they liked buying gifts for people at Christmas and whether they would prefer it if people did not buy them gifts at Christmas.

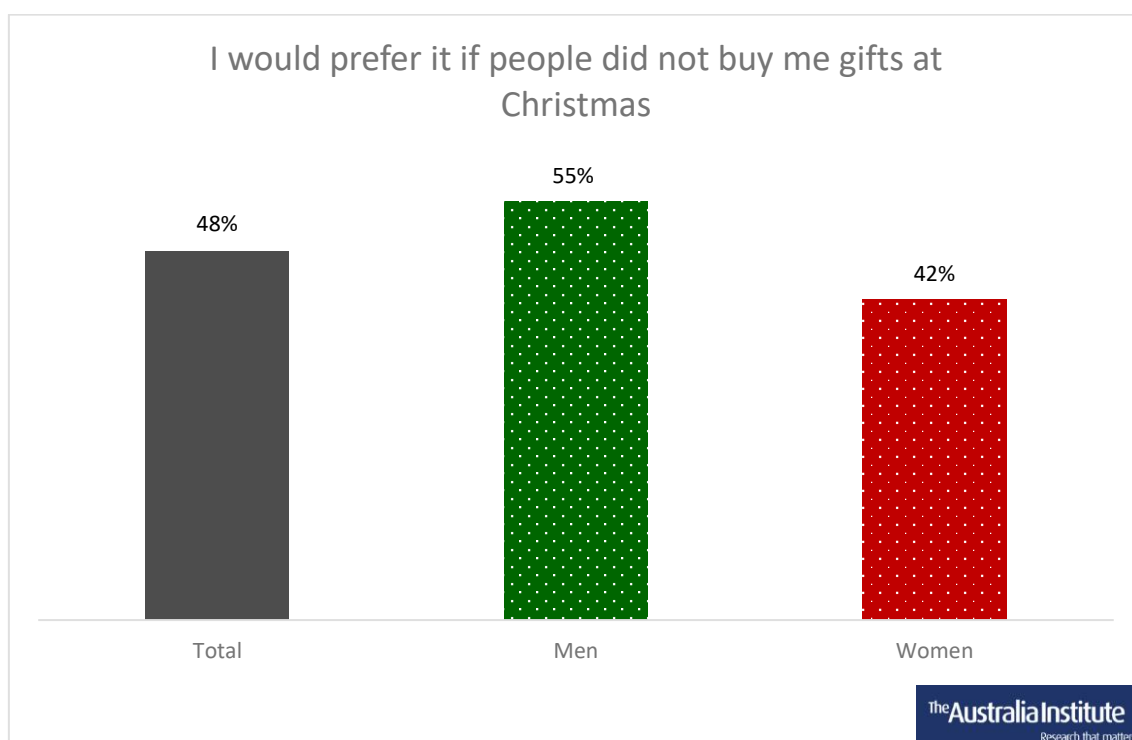
- Three in four Australians (74%) like to buy Christmas gifts.
 - More women like buying Christmas gifts than men (79% vs 68%).

Figure 2: Buying Christmas presents, by gender



- Just under half of Australians (44%) would prefer that others not buy them gifts.
 - More men would prefer others not buy them gifts than women (55% vs 42%).
 - Those aged 65+ were most likely to prefer others not buy them gifts (57%; those aged 18-25 35%, those aged 25-34 47%, those aged 35-44 43%, those aged 45-54 49%, those aged 55-64 52%)
- Older Australians are less likely to want to give or receive presents.
- Household income did not have a large effect on whether people liked to give or receive presents.

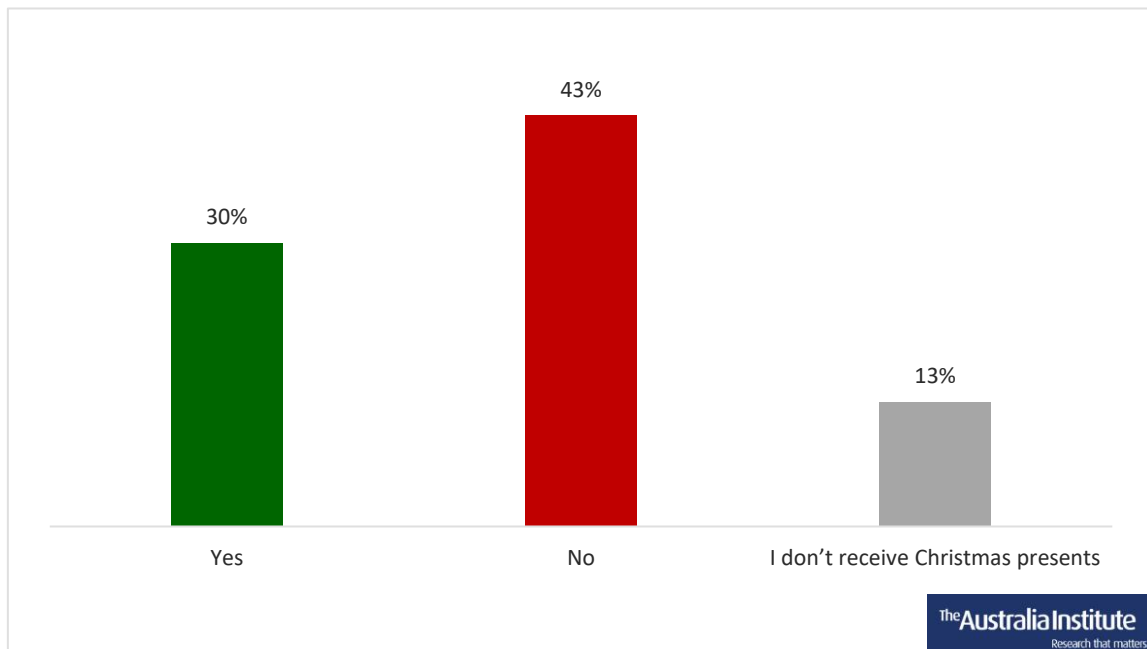
Figure 3: Prefer no gifts bought, by gender



Respondents were asked whether they expected to get Christmas presents this year that they will never use or wear.

- Almost nine in ten (87%) of Australians receive Christmas presents (13% do not)
- Three in 10 Australians (30%) expect to get Christmas presents that they will never use, more people (43%) expect to get presents they will use or wear.

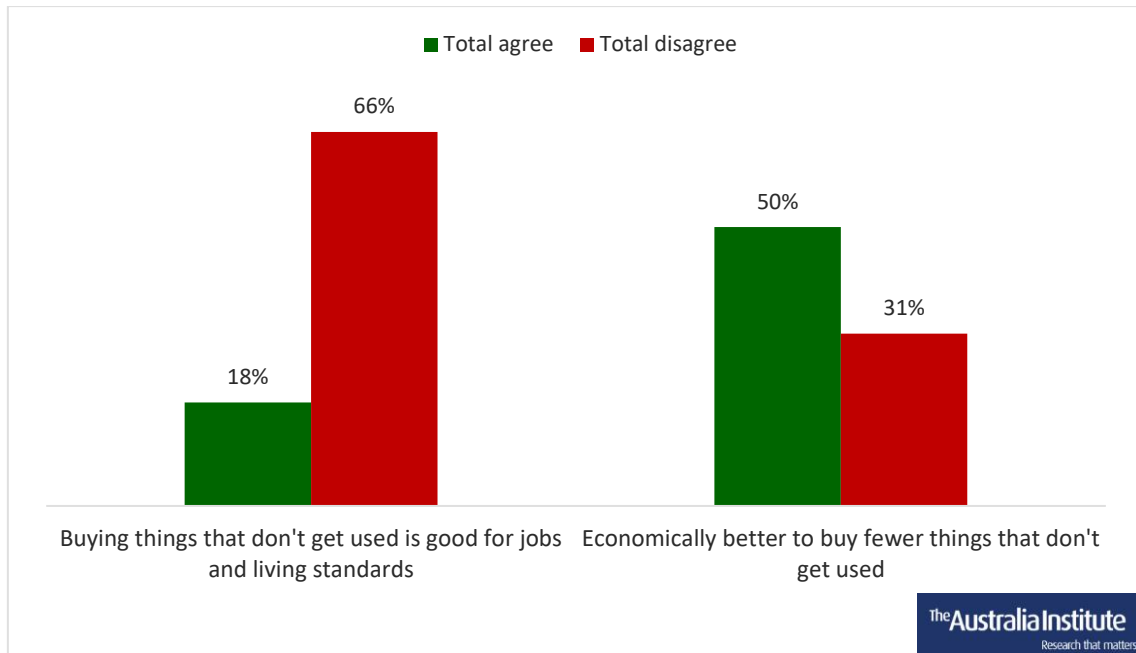
Figure 4: Whether respondents expect to receive presents that they will not use



Respondents were asked about the economic effects of present giving.

- Two thirds (66%) disagree with the statement that “Buying things that don’t get used is a good way to create jobs and improve the lives of Australians” (18% agree).
- Half of Australians (50%) agree that it is better for the economy when people buy fewer things that don’t get used (31% disagree).

Figure 5: Whether respondents expect to receive presents that they will not use



Discussion

Although the polling shows that those who would prefer that others buy them Christmas presents are less than half of all present recipients, it is worth noting that some people may receive many more presents (or more valuable presents) than others. It may be that those who are excited by presents get the majority of presents, while those who would prefer not to get presents get a smaller number.

Since we poll adults only, there is a population that receives presents that isn't captured in the polling on whether people would prefer not to receive presents. For example, a parent who likes buying presents for their kids but doesn't like receiving presents would show up as 100% like buying presents, 0% like receiving presents – but all the presents would still be going to people who want to receive them.

Finally, we have used “receiving presents” as shorthand for “people buy[ing] me gifts at Christmas”. However, it is possible that some of the people who receive Christmas gifts receive handmade or otherwise free gifts.

Method

The Australia Institute conducted a national survey of 1,424 people between 1 and 15 November 2019, online through Dynata with nationally representative samples by gender, age, state and territory, and household income.

The margin of error (95% confidence level) for the national results is 2.6%.

Results are shown only for larger states.

Voting crosstabs show voting intentions for the lower house. Those who were undecided were asked which way they were leaning; these leanings are included in voting intention crosstabs, but results are also shown separately for undecideds. “LNP” includes separate responses for Liberal and National. “Other” includes Centre Alliance, Jacqui Lambie Network and Independent/Other.

Assumptions used to calculate the value of unused gifts:

- Assumes \$573 of spending per adult on presents¹
- Assumes that of the people who have indicated that they expect to get gifts they would not use or would not wear, not all the gifts are unused. 70% (by

¹ <https://www.commbank.com.au/guidance/newsroom/christmas-consumer-budget-and-spending-2018-201812.html>

value) of the gifts they get are used and 30% (by value) are gifts they would not use or would not wear.

- Assumes that half of those who were unsure if they would get gifts they would not use or would not wear will get unused gifts. The other half do not get unused gifts.
- Assumes no children receive gifts they will never use or wear (this is because the survey was only of adults)

Detailed results

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

I like buying gifts for people at Christmas

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	29%	24%	35%	30%	30%	29%	30%
Agree	45%	45%	44%	47%	42%	44%	48%
Disagree	15%	18%	12%	13%	16%	13%	16%
Strongly Disagree	8%	9%	6%	6%	9%	9%	4%
Don't Know / not sure	4%	5%	3%	4%	3%	5%	3%

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Strongly agree	29%	29%	35%	34%	31%	28%	18%
Agree	45%	50%	39%	43%	43%	43%	51%
Disagree	15%	12%	13%	13%	17%	16%	17%
Strongly Disagree	8%	7%	8%	6%	7%	10%	7%
Don't Know / not sure	4%	3%	4%	4%	2%	3%	6%

I would prefer it if people did not buy me gifts at Christmas

	Total	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	15%	19%	11%	15%	17%	14%	9%
Agree	33%	36%	30%	31%	35%	34%	33%
Disagree	33%	30%	36%	33%	32%	34%	30%
Strongly Disagree	11%	9%	12%	10%	10%	11%	17%
Don't Know / not sure	8%	7%	10%	10%	7%	7%	11%

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Strongly agree	15%	13%	19%	11%	16%	13%	17%
Agree	33%	22%	28%	32%	34%	39%	40%
Disagree	33%	42%	31%	33%	31%	35%	30%
Strongly Disagree	11%	16%	12%	13%	13%	6%	5%
Don't Know / not sure	8%	7%	10%	10%	7%	7%	7%

This year do you expect to get Christmas presents that you will never use or wear?

	<i>Total</i>	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Yes	30%	29%	31%	31%	30%	29%	25%
No	43%	42%	44%	43%	42%	40%	45%
I don't receive Christmas presents	13%	14%	12%	12%	13%	15%	17%
Don't know / not sure	14%	15%	13%	14%	15%	16%	13%

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Yes	30%	31%	37%	30%	27%	31%	23%
No	43%	48%	33%	40%	44%	45%	51%
I don't receive Christmas presents	13%	12%	16%	12%	12%	12%	14%
Don't know / not sure	14%	9%	15%	17%	17%	13%	12%

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

Buying things that don't get used is a good way to create jobs and improve the lives of Australians.

	<i>Total</i>	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	5%	5%	5%	5%	7%	4%	3%
Agree	13%	17%	10%	14%	13%	12%	13%
Disagree	41%	41%	42%	41%	40%	44%	40%
Strongly Disagree	25%	25%	25%	25%	26%	27%	26%
Don't Know / not sure	15%	13%	18%	14%	15%	13%	18%

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Strongly agree	5%	7%	12%	4%	3%	3%	2%
Agree	13%	20%	16%	16%	12%	8%	12%
Disagree	41%	37%	36%	38%	40%	48%	48%
Strongly Disagree	25%	17%	21%	21%	30%	31%	28%
Don't Know / not sure	15%	20%	16%	20%	16%	10%	11%

It is better for the economy when people buy fewer things that don't get used.

	<i>Total</i>	Male	Female	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA
Strongly agree	15%	15%	15%	15%	16%	16%	14%
Agree	35%	35%	34%	34%	36%	34%	32%
Disagree	22%	24%	20%	22%	20%	21%	26%
Strongly Disagree	9%	8%	9%	9%	9%	8%	8%
Don't Know / not sure	20%	17%	23%	19%	19%	21%	19%

	Total	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Strongly agree	5%	18%	25%	11%	15%	10%	11%
Agree	13%	38%	31%	35%	30%	38%	37%
Disagree	41%	16%	17%	23%	24%	23%	27%
Strongly Disagree	25%	8%	7%	9%	10%	10%	7%
Don't Know / not sure	15%	20%	19%	23%	20%	20%	17%