



# HOLIDAY MARKETING PLAYBOOK 2023

Discover how to reach mobile-first,  
engaged consumers this holiday season

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# INTRODUCTION

It's the most wonderful time of the year – and the most lucrative. Knowing when, where, and how to best run your mobile advertising user acquisition campaigns during the holiday season can generate significant returns. That's why Unity created a playbook for mobile marketers to navigate the holiday landscape, analyzing insights from a survey of 16,000 respondents.

And mobile is more important than ever this holiday season. According to our data, for the first time, **mobile phones have become consumers' preferred way to shop for holiday gifts (51%), finally surpassing in-store shopping.**

The report covers three key areas:

- How consumers shop for holiday gifts
- Why mobile gaming is an excellent advertising channel
- What are the most engaging ad units

Read on for valuable insights, tips, and tricks to get the most out of your mobile marketing strategy this winter.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## → Who purchases holiday gifts?

- Females **(81%)** are more likely to buy holiday gifts than males **(63%)** and nonbinaries **(29%)**

## → Where do consumers shop for holiday gifts?

- Mobile phones are respondents' preferred way to shop for holiday gifts **with 51% preferring it to in-store shopping**
- An even greater majority of respondents plan to purchase at least some gifts through mobile apps **(74%)**
- General merchandise retailers like Amazon, Target, and Walmart **(67%)** are the preferred retailers

## → What are the most popular holiday gifts?

- Clothes and footwear are the most popular gift category **(55%)**
- Physical gifts are the most popular type of gift **(57%)**, followed by gift cards **(48%)**
- Many respondents will buy a new phone this season **(41%)**

## → What are the most engaging ad units?

- Respondents engage most with rewarded video ads **(36%)**

## → How does the holiday season affect mobile gaming habits?

- Most respondents play mobile games daily during the holiday season **(80%)**
- Nearly half of respondents will play mobile games for at least an hour/day during the holiday season **(45%)**

# METHODOLOGY

## MARKET RESEARCH

Survey data was collected and analyzed using custom-built surveys.

## 16,000+ RESPONDENTS

The study's respondents completed a rewarded survey found in various apps.

## OPT-IN PARTICIPATION

Respondents reviewed instructional information and opted to participate in exchange for in-app rewards.

## VIRTUAL REWARDS

In exchange for participation, respondents received virtual rewards or premium content native to each app's economy.

## SURVEY PERIOD

Responses were collected and analyzed from multiple surveys launched in Q3 2023.

## AGE VERIFICATION

All respondents were asked to confirm that they were 18 or older.

# HOW CONSUMERS SHOP FOR HOLIDAY GIFTS

For many companies, the holiday season represents the most profitable time of the year, making it especially critical for advertisers.

## → Who's shopping for holiday gifts?

- **63%** of respondents will buy holiday gifts this year
- **81%** of parents will buy gifts
- **81%** of females will buy gifts, **63%** of males will buy gifts, and **29%** of nonbinaries will buy gifts

Over half of respondents will participate in this year's gift-shopping frenzy. That figure is higher for females, who are more frequent shoppers than males and nonbinaries throughout the whole year – not just during the holiday season – 89% of females and 41% of males claim responsibility for daily household shopping according to [\*\*CapitalOne\*\*](#).

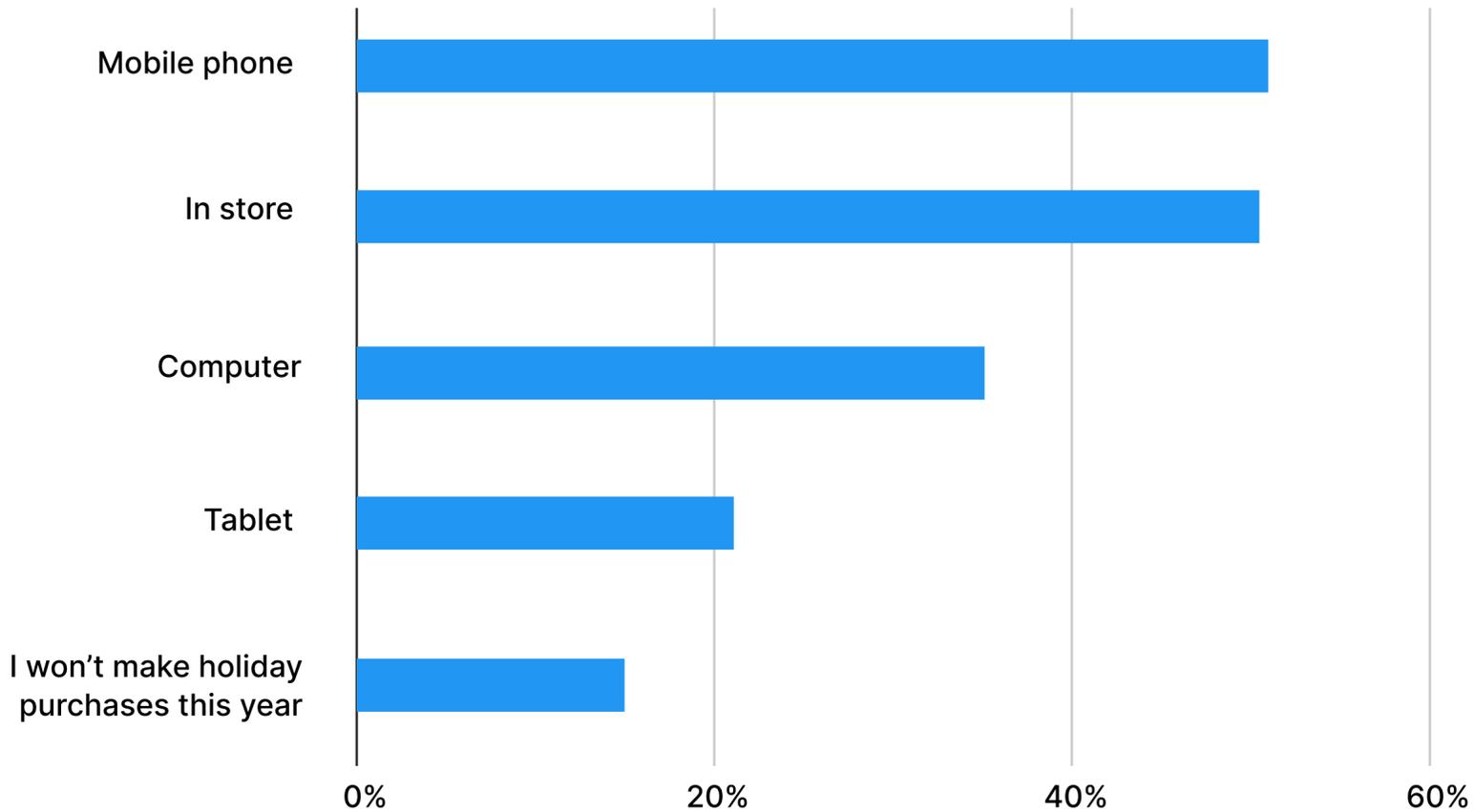
### TAKEAWAY:

Your advertising strategy should include everybody but mainly cater to two core shopping constituents, females and parents.

## → How will respondents purchase holiday gifts?

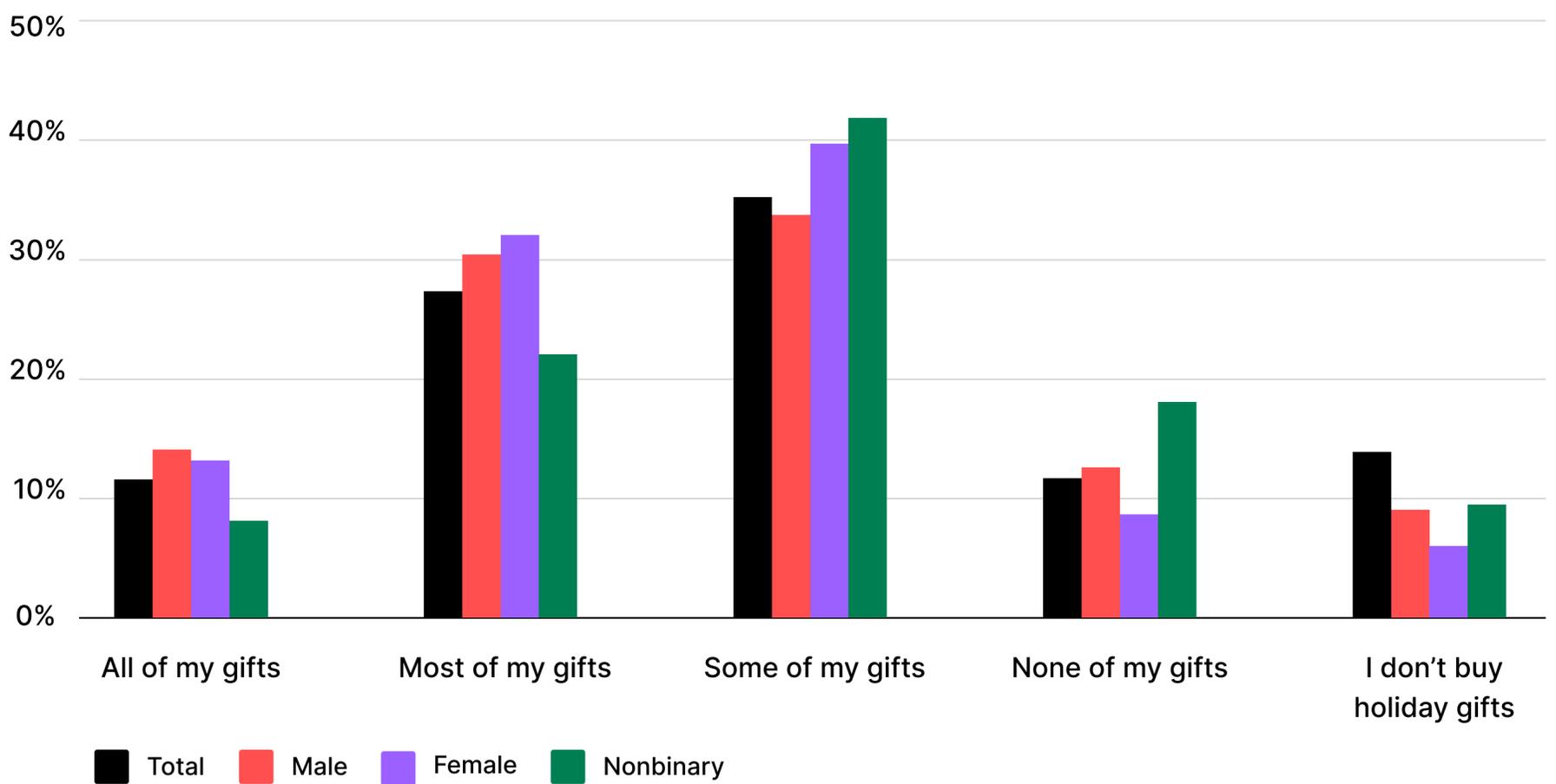
- **51%** of respondents plan on using their mobile phone to buy holiday gifts, becoming the preferred way to shop for holiday gifts and overtaking in-store shopping
- **74%** of respondents and **85%** of females plan to purchase at least some gifts through mobile apps
- **50%** report being likely or very likely to download new apps specifically for the holiday season

## How will you purchase holiday gifts this year?



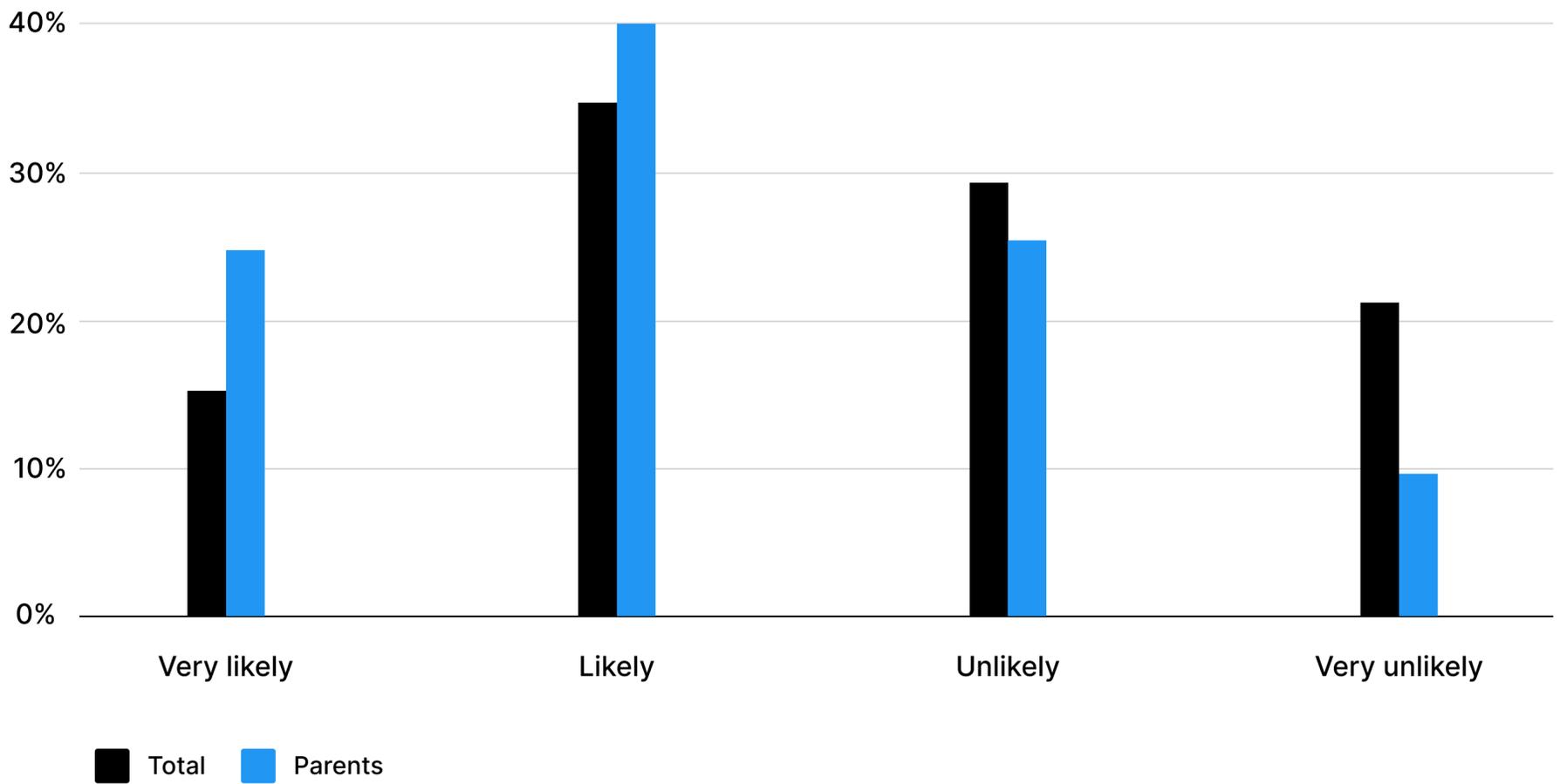
Data is an aggregate of individual preferences (check all that apply) and data will exceed 100%.

## On average, how many of your holiday gifts will you buy through mobile apps?



Diving deeper into in-game or in-app shopping, the offerwall (similar to in-app purchases) is a popular way to shop on mobile, with **19%** of respondents purchasing holiday gifts directly from the offerwall.

## How likely are you to download new apps specifically for the holiday season (November 15th-January 15th)?



The best part - it's not too late to get downloaded before the holiday season kicks off. Respondents remain very open to downloading new apps for holiday shopping, meaning investing in user acquisition is still valuable even after holiday shopping has begun.

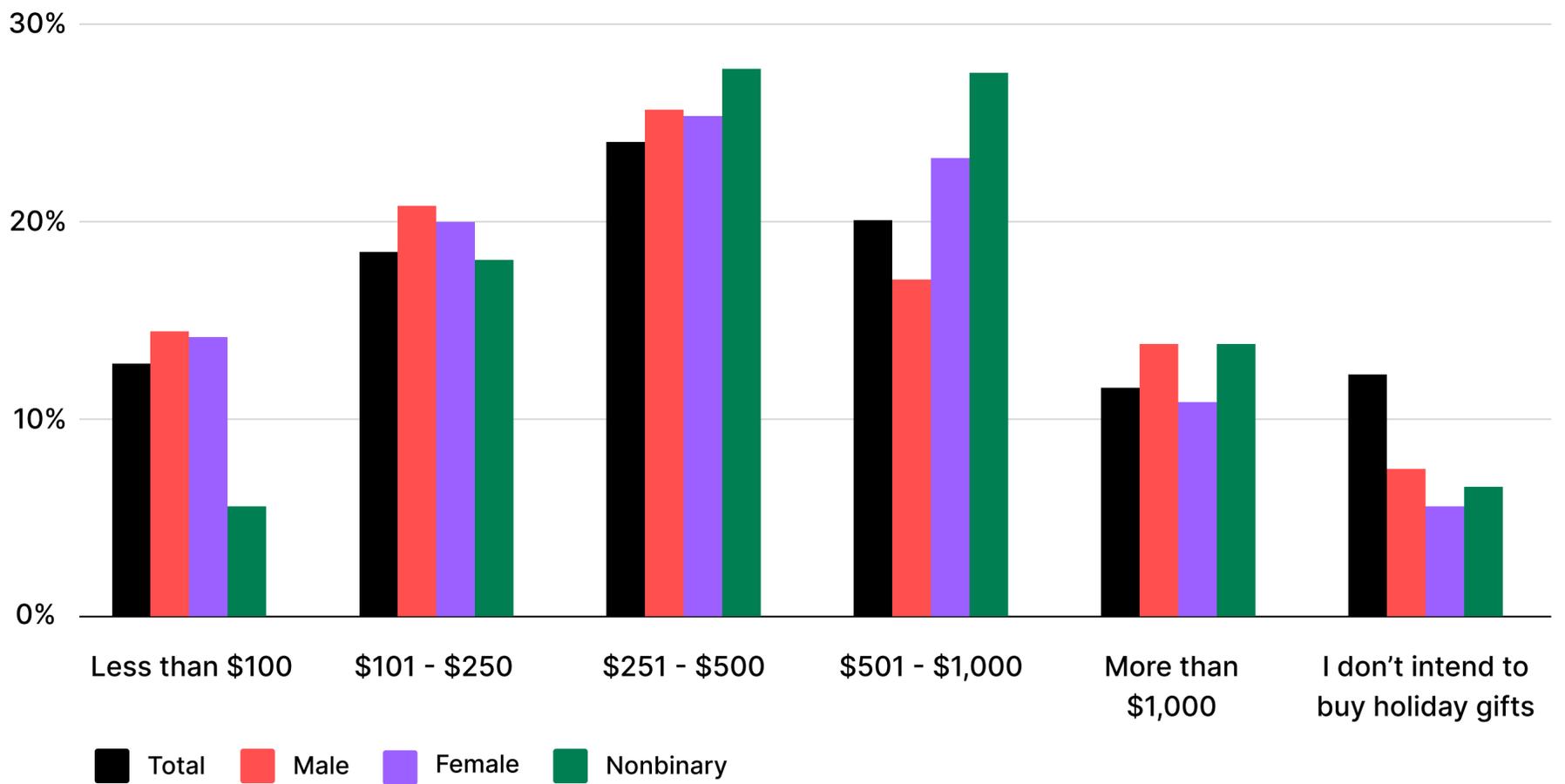
### TAKEAWAY:

Respondents turn to their mobile devices to shop for the holidays – especially mobile apps. Promoting your app and/or advertising in apps is critical so you don't miss out on the large mass of shoppers turning to their phones.

Now's a good time to get installed before respondents have finished their holiday shopping. Work with Unity to get started with in-app advertising or on-device advertising and get your app on devices before the holiday season kicks off.

[Learn more about Unity →](#)

## In total, how much do you plan to spend on holiday gifts this year?

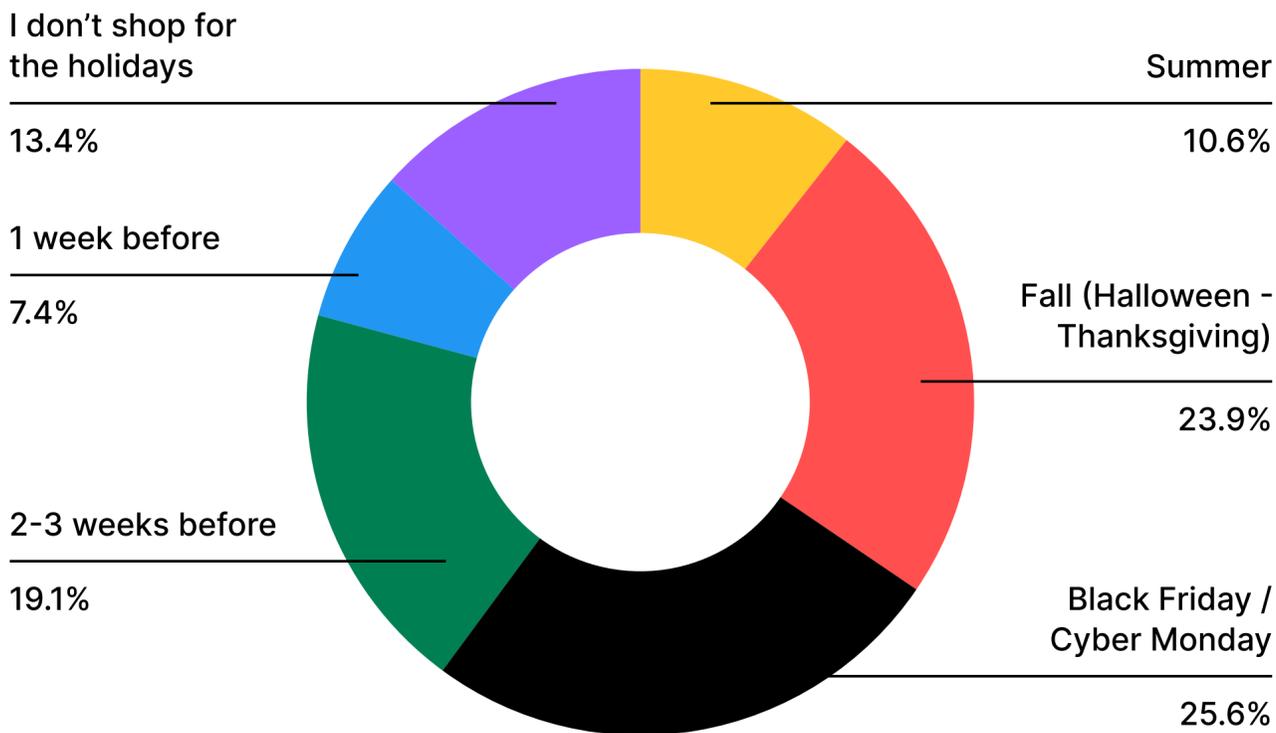


### → What do gift shopping budgets look like?

- **19%** of respondents plan to spend more on holiday gifts this year compared to last year, while **32%** plan to spend the same amount
- **24%**, the majority, plan to spend between \$251-\$500 on holiday gift shopping this year

In fact, according to **Insider Intelligence**, overall retail spending will rise 4.5% to \$1.328 trillion for the 2023 holiday season.

## When do you typically buy holiday gifts?



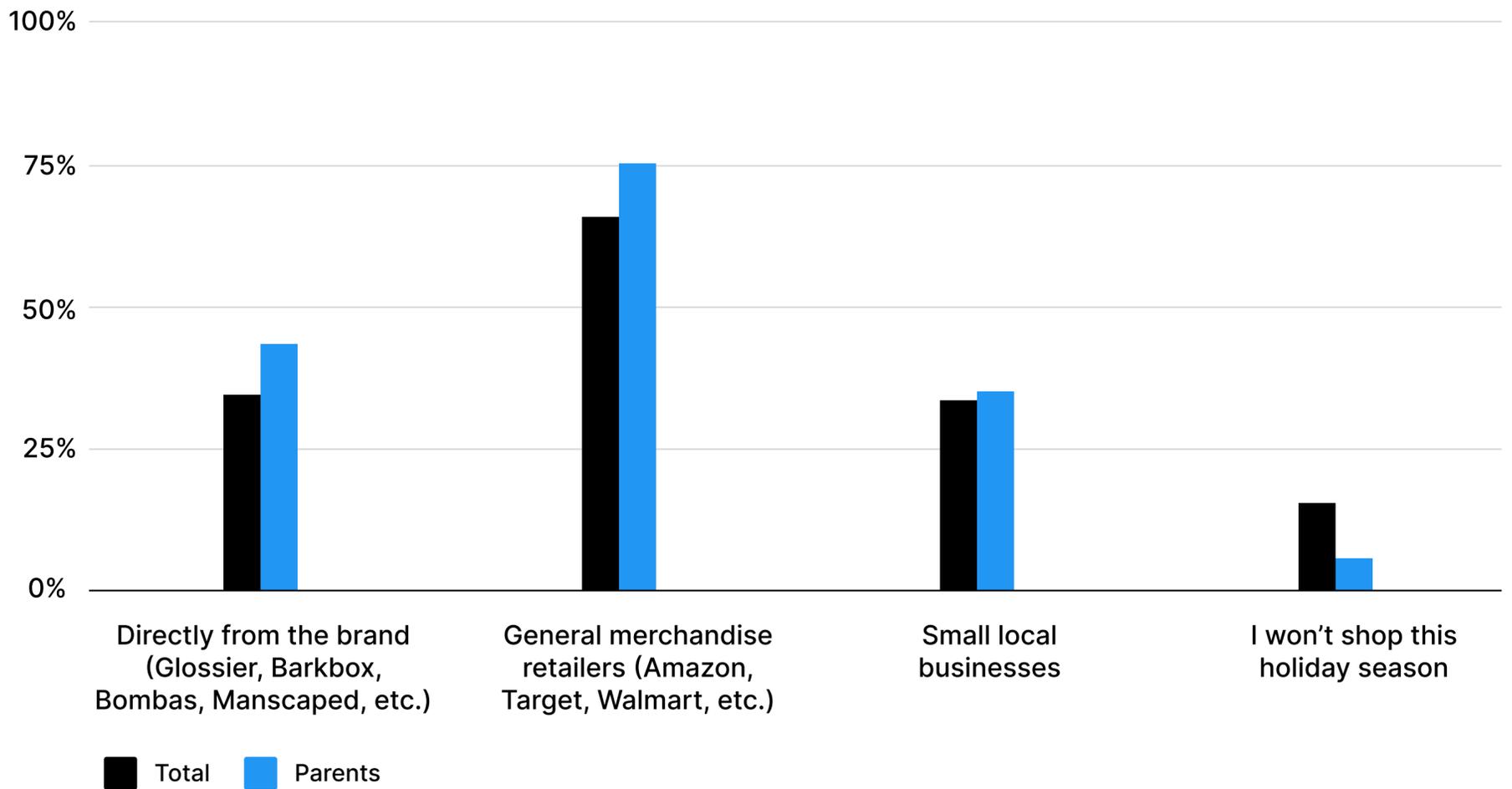
### → When are respondents shopping for holiday gifts?

- **26%** of respondents buy holiday gifts on Black Friday or Cyber Monday
- **24%** buy gifts during the Fall (Halloween – Thanksgiving)
- **19%** buy holiday gifts 2-3 weeks before Christmas

### TAKEAWAY:

Start your holiday advertising campaigns early and keep up with consistent content throughout the season to account for the early birds, deal hunters, and last-minute shoppers.

## What type of retailers will you buy holiday gifts from?



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### → Where are respondents shopping for holiday gifts?

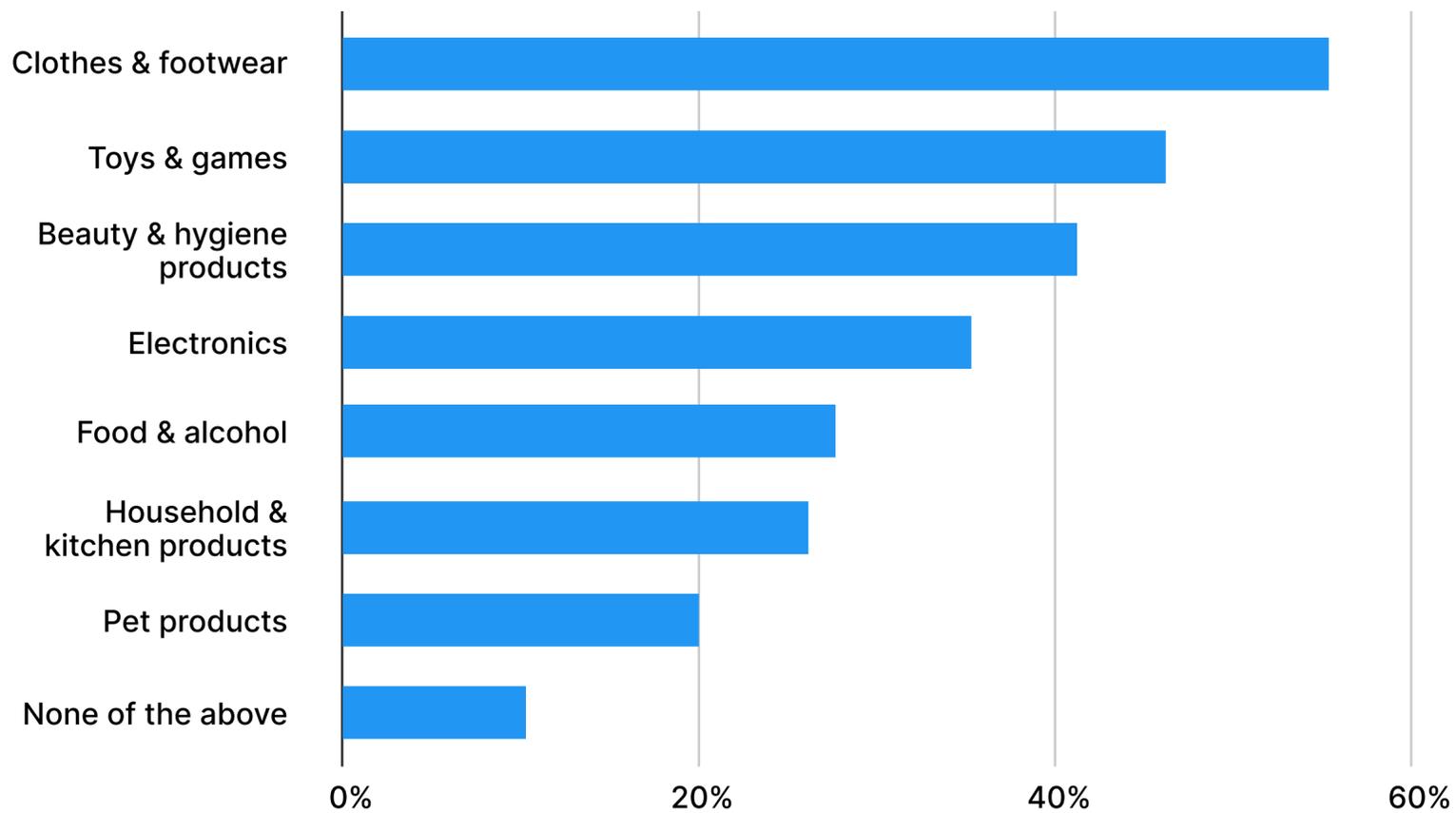
- **67%** of respondents will shop from general merchandise retailers like Amazon, Target, and Walmart
- **35%** will buy holiday gifts directly from specific brands

With the shopping fervor of the holidays, respondents value the convenience of big-box stores and online retailers to get their gift shopping done efficiently. The need for time savings is especially high for parents, with **75%** reporting that they plan to purchase holiday gifts from general merchandise retailers.

#### **TAKEAWAY:**

Shoppers value convenience. Remember to emphasize how respondents can easily purchase your products during the holiday period.

## What do respondents plan to buy as gifts this holiday season?



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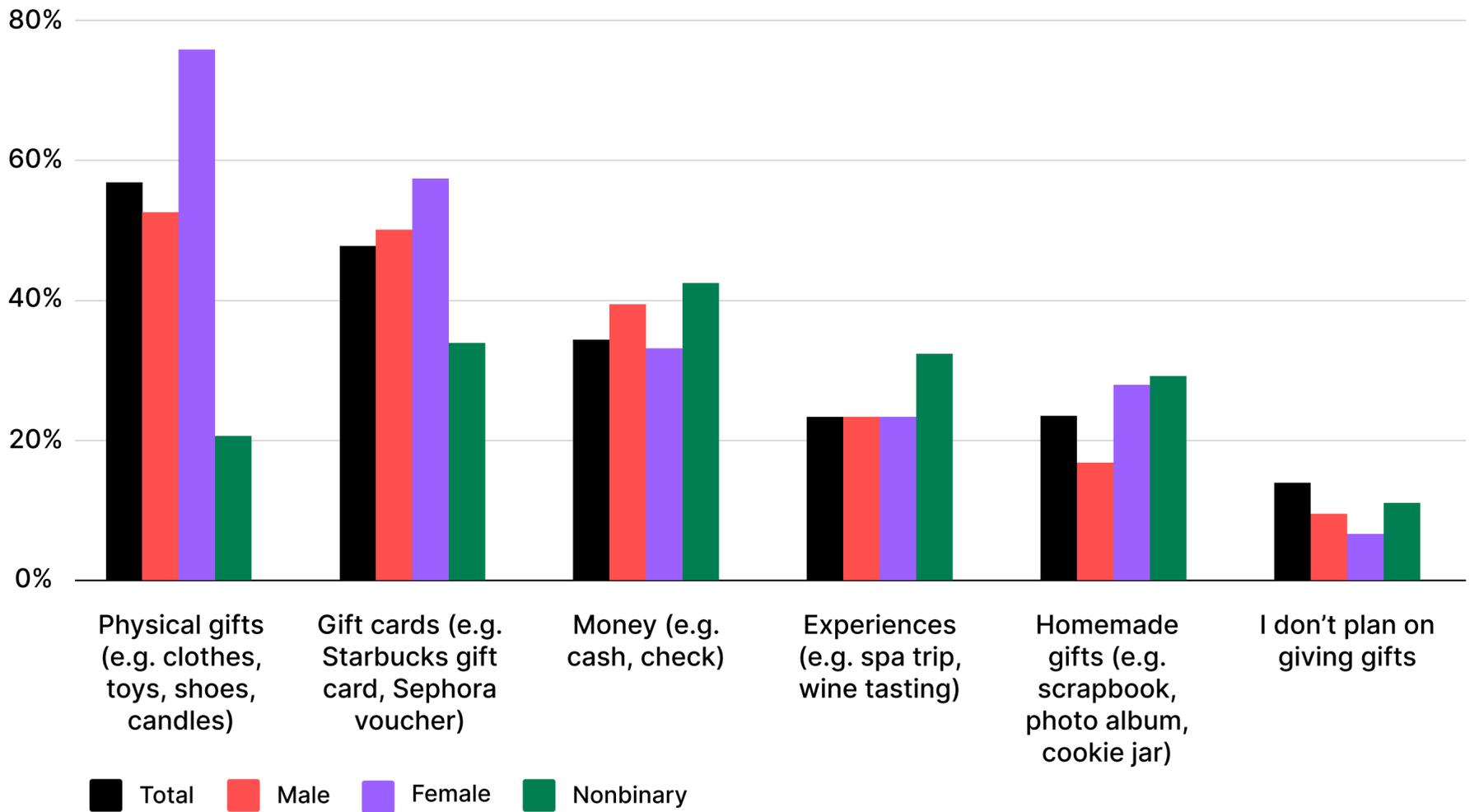
### → What are the most popular holiday gifts?

Gifts are a meaningful part of the holidays. But while we've covered who's buying gifts and how they plan to shop, the question remains: what exactly are respondents purchasing this holiday season?

- **55%** of respondents plan on purchasing clothes and footwear as gifts this year, making it the most popular gift category
- **57%** plan to give physical gifts (e.g. clothes, toys, shoes, candles)
- **48%** plan to give gift cards, and **22%** plan to gift experiences (e.g. spa trip, wine tasting)
- **41%** said they're likely to buy a new phone for themselves this season

Different product categories will also see a fair share of holiday spending. A common demographic to purchase gifts, parents plan to give (1) clothes & footwear, (2) toys & games, (3) beauty & hygiene, and (4) electronics.

## What type of gifts are you most likely to give?



Data is an aggregate of individual preferences (check all that apply) and data will exceed 100%.

New devices are also a popular gift. **38%** of respondents would consider gifting a new phone over the holidays, while **41%** said they're likely to buy a new one for themselves this season. For males, that figure increases to **50%**. Parents are the most likely to upgrade, with **54%** looking to buy a new device this season.

### TAKEAWAY:

Showcase gift card options to reach respondents looking for general, convenient gifts.

With the holidays a critical time for device activations, consider smartphones as an advertising channel. On-device advertising allows you to reach users the moment they unbox their newly gifted smartphones and then again throughout the device lifecycle.

[Learn more about Aura from Unity →](#)

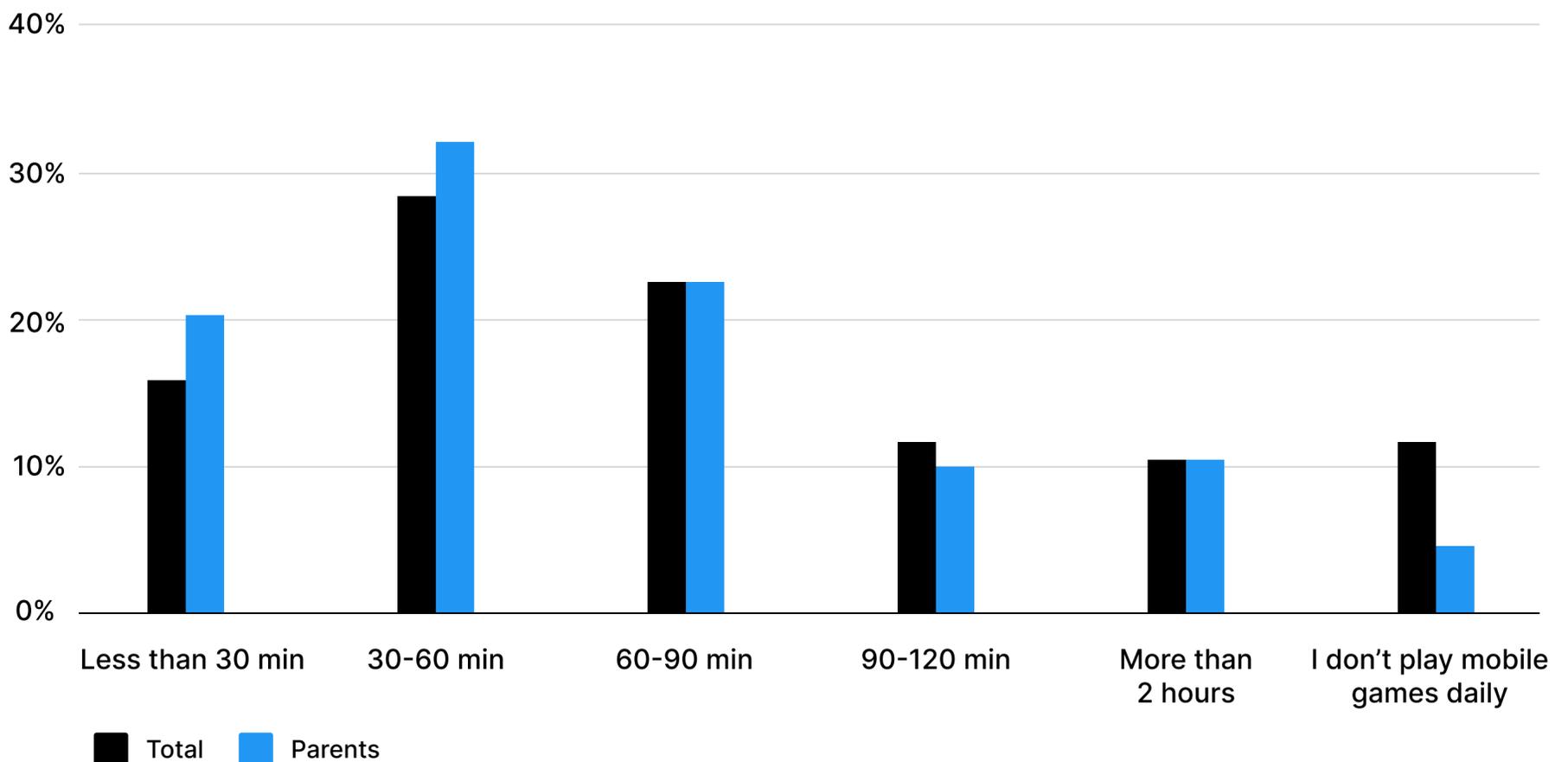
# WHY MOBILE GAMING IS AN EXCELLENT ADVERTISING CHANNEL

During the holiday season, respondents turn to their phones to play mobile games daily, making it an excellent advertising channel for your brand.

## → How much time do users spend on mobile games during the holidays?

- **80%** of respondents play mobile games daily during the holiday season
- **62%** say they'll game multiple times each day
- **45%** play for over an hour every day over the holiday season

## On average, how often do you play mobile games during the holiday season?



### TAKEAWAY:

Every audience is active on mobile games during the holiday season. Advertising on these channels is a guaranteed way to reach your audience, no matter who they are.

[Learn more about running a campaign in mobile games with ironSource from Unity →](#)

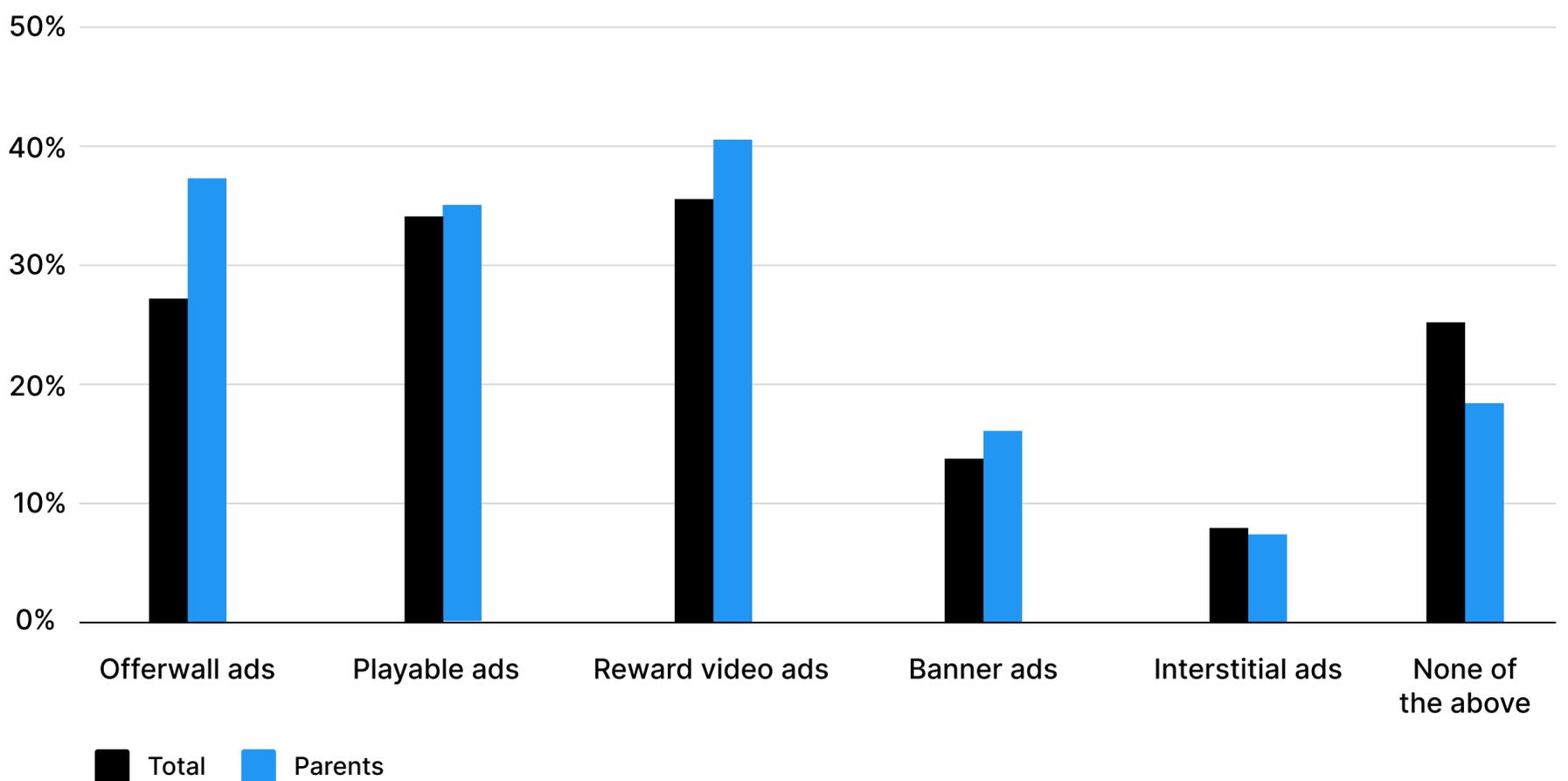
In fact, only **18%** of respondents plan to play once a day, while **33%** of respondents plan to play 2-4 times a day, **18%** plan to play 5-7 times a day, and **11%** plan to play over 7 times a day. And it's not for an insignificant amount of time - most respondents will play for at least 30 mins/day and **45%** will play for over an hour.

# WHAT ARE THE MOST ENGAGING AD UNITS

Mobile ads can have a noticeable impact over respondents' purchase decisions during the holidays, especially rewarded ads that offer a clear value exchange.

- **36%** of respondents say that they are most likely to engage with rewarded video ads, followed by **34%** with playable ads and **27%** with offerwall ads

## On average, how often do you play mobile games during the holiday season?



### TAKEAWAY:

Leverage rewarded or interactive ad units to reach a new audience and ensure respondents are open to seeing your ad.

Looking at engagement, it's no surprise that rewarded video ads drive the most attention overall. That said, males are more likely to engage with playable ads (**39%**) than rewarded video ads (**37%**).

# TAKEAWAYS

- Your advertising strategy should include everybody but mainly cater to two core shopping constituents, female and parents.
- Respondents turn to their mobile devices to shop for the holidays – especially mobile apps. Promoting your app and/or advertising in apps is critical so you don't miss out on the large mass of shoppers turning to their phones.
- Now's a good time to get installed before respondents have finished their holiday shopping. Work with Unity to get started with in-app advertising or on-device advertising and get your app on devices before the holiday season kicks off. [Learn more about Unity.](#)
- Start your holiday advertising campaigns early and keep up with consistent content throughout the season to account for the early birds, deal hunters, and last-minute shoppers.
- Shoppers value convenience. Remember to emphasize how respondents can easily purchase your products during the holiday frenzy.
- Showcase gift card options to reach respondents looking for general, convenient gifts.
- With the holidays a critical time for device activations, consider smartphones as an advertising channel. On-device advertising allows you to reach users the moment they unbox their newly gifted smartphones and then again throughout the device lifecycle. [Learn more about Aura from Unity.](#)
- Every audience is active on mobile games during the holiday season. Advertising on these channels is a guaranteed way to reach your audience, no matter who they are. [Learn more about running a campaign in mobile games with ironSource from Unity.](#)
- Leverage rewarded or interactive ad units to reach a new audience and ensure respondents are open to seeing your ad.

# ABOUT UNITY

Unity is the world's leading platform for creating and growing interactive, real-time 3D ("RT3D") content and experiences. Our comprehensive set of software and AI solutions supports content creators of all sizes through the entire development lifecycle as they build, run, and grow immersive, real-time 2D and 3D content and experiences for mobile phones, tablets, PCs, consoles, and augmented and virtual reality devices. For more information, visit [unity.com](https://unity.com).