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THE BLUE PLAY SURVEY from AMERICAN EXPRESS
Key Survey Findings

American Express recently re-launched Blue PLAY – a real-time online auction that allows Blue from American Express® Cardmembers to bid for once-in-a-lifetime experiences – many of which money literally can't buy. To start bidding, simply visit www.americanexpress.com/blueplay. In conjunction with the re-launch of Blue PLAY, American Express released the results of the *Blue PLAY Survey,* which sheds light on how important "play" time is to adults and how they spend their valuable leisure time. Among the findings: Respondents ranked time, work and money as the top three barriers to personally enjoying playful activities.

Survey Highlights Consumers' "Playing" Habits

Nearly all consumers (92%) love to play -- but time, work and money cut into adult "play" time.

- How do respondents define "playing"? Twenty-one percent of adults surveyed say spending time with their kids best describes their idea of playing. Others say "playing" means socializing with friends or family (18%), relaxing or doing nothing (12%), participating in a sport (12%), traveling (11%), going to dinner and a movie (7%), attending entertainment events (6%), staying home (5%), working on a home improvement project (4%), shopping until they drop (3%) or treating themselves to a luxurious day at the spa (2%).

- In order from greatest hurdle to least, consumers rank the following obstacles to being able to enjoy playful activities: time; work; money; family obligations; social obligations; guilt.

- Despite these obstacles, half of the 92% of adults who love to play say they do it as often as possible (50%) – but another 36% of them just don't have the time or the energy.

- More men than women love to play and do so as often as they can (54% vs. 45%), while more women than men say they are too time- and energy-deprived to play (41% vs. 32%).

- With time at a premium, male and female consumers together average 16 hours of "play" time in a typical month – only four hours per week. More than a quarter of adults (26%) squeeze in up to seven hours of play a month, if any time at all.

- Women are more likely to "play" by spending time with their kids (24% vs. 17% of men) and socializing with friends or family (20% vs. 16%). But the roles reverse where sports are concerned -- three times as many men play by participating in a sport (18% vs. 6% of women).

Men and consumers in the West spend the most money to play.

- In a typical month, consumers spend about $135 a month playing. But men outspend women nearly two to one on fun activities -- $178 each month vs. $96 spent by women.

- Men shell out more money to play than do women -- 25% of men estimate spending $101 to $250 a month playing, while only 18% of women do the same.

- On average, Westerners are the “big spenders” when it comes to playing -- $179 per month, followed by respondents in the South ($127), North East ($124) and the North Central region ($115).

- When they have disposable income, consumers are more likely to spend the money on themselves or others (68%), rather than save or invest it (33%). Another 31% say they ordinarily don’t have disposable income to play with.

“Playing” takes on a different meaning when time and money aren’t a factor.

- If time and money were no object, 49% of respondents say they’d fly away for a romantic weekend. Others would get VIP treatment at an entertainment event (17%), shop ‘til they drop (16%), spend a relaxing day at a spa (11%) or learn how to cook a gourmet meal (4%).

- Interestingly, a romantic getaway appeals more to men than women (55% compared with 44%).

- But women are much more likely to embark on a shopping spree when time and money aren’t an issue (22% compared with 9% of men).

Separating work from play is challenging, but not impossible.

- An impressive 47% of adults say they are able to completely forget about work when they play, though 26% admit to occasionally thinking about the office while trying to enjoy leisure time. Another 11% check into the office frequently to make sure things are running smoothly in their absence, and 7% of consumers are just too busy to play without being connected to the office via phone or other electronic device at all times.

- Of the 11% of consumers who say they check in with the office frequently while playing, twice as many are men (15% vs. 8%).

- Consumers in the North Central region (50%) and the South (50%) are better able to put work out of their minds when they play than their counterparts in the North East (42%) and the West (43%).

More men than women like to spend their playtime with their spouse or partner, and only a handful of consumers say they care to spend playtime with their co-workers or boss.

- Forty-three percent of consumers prefer enjoying “play” time with their spouse or partner, followed by their kids (31%) and a friend (18%).

- More men than women say their preference is to spend playtime with a spouse or partner (51% vs. 35%). On the other hand, more women than men would most like to spend their playtime with their kids (36% vs. 26%) or a friend (21% vs. 16%).

- Fewer than 1% of the 1000+ respondents care to spend playtime with co-workers or with their boss.

Ninety-three percent of grown-ups say they deserve to “play” as much as kids.

- More than a quarter of adults (26%) sometimes wish they could revert to their childhood years, saying life is too serious.

- Older consumers tend to be more satisfied with adulthood and are less likely to want to re-live their childhood than do their younger counterparts: Age 65+ (76%); ages 55-64 (77%); 45-54 (66%); 35-44 (63%) and 18-34 (58%).

- Survey respondents were asked to rank these activities from most enjoyable to least enjoyable during their childhood and adult years:

During Childhood

1. Playing sports - 29%
2. Family trips - 25%
3. Playground - 11%
4. Playing board or video games - 10%
5. Going to a show, concert or movie - 10%
6. Summer camp - 7%
7. Playing a musical instrument - 6%

As an Adult

1. Family trips 29%
2. Summer getaways - 20%
3. Going to a show, concert, movie - 17%
4. Playing board or video game - 14%
5. Playing sports - 11%
6. Playing a musical instrument - 5%
7. Playing in the playground - 2%

- When they were kids, nearly three times as many men preferred playing sports (44% compared with 15% of women), but nearly twice as many women favored trips with the family during childhood years (32% vs. 18%).

Survey Highlights On Consumers' Experiences With Auctions

Auctions are catching on, and men are more likely to bid than women.

- Forty percent of consumers have bid at least once for merchandise or experiences through an auction – of this group, 74% have won an auction, and 63% say that bidding is fun.
- Of those consumers who have participated in an auction, more than a third (35%) are apt to place bids via the Internet, with another third (32%) bidding at auction houses. Others prefer bidding at charity events (19%) or somewhere else (12%).
- More male consumers have bid through an auction (46%, compared with 35% of females).
- Most consumers who have bid in an auction consider themselves infrequent bidders (71%). Another 19% say they are somewhat frequent bidders, while 10% bid for merchandise or experiences often.
- Among those who have bid in the past, 89% did so to win merchandise or memorabilia. Ten percent say they bid on an event, 9% bid on a trip, and 4% bid on an experience, such as meeting a celebrity.
- More adults from the North Central region (48%) have bid for merchandise or experiences through an auction than their counterparts in the South (41%), North East (35%) or the West (35%).
- Westerners (45%) are more likely to bid via the Internet than respondents in the North East (41%), the North Central region (30%) and the South (29%).

Survey Methodology

The Blue PLAY Survey, is based on a nationally representative sample of more than 1,000 adults, 18 years of age and older. The survey was conducted via telephone by International Communications Research (ICR) from January 14 – 18, 2005. The poll has a margin of error of +/-3.1%.

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