

# Consumers fishing around for better deals

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CONSUMERS are on the lookout for the best bargain even when it comes to Christmas presents, according to a Malta-Today survey on consumption patterns in Christmas.

The survey shows a drift from the major shopping centres like Valletta and Sliema to newer regional hubs like Paola or older ones like Hamrun. It also shows that 56% of pensioners are giving cash gifts to younger children.

The survey also shows that people earning more money are less likely to buy Christmas cards than older and poorer people. Confirming the existence of a digital divide, the survey shows that more affluent people are more likely to send their Christmas greetings by email or SMS. The survey also shows that more affluent categories are more likely to eat turkey, while 11% of less affluent respondents will be eating rabbit.

**Methodology**  
The survey was conducted between 9 and 16 December. 531 respondents were contacted by telephone and 300 accepted to be interviewed. The results were weighed to reflect the age and sex balance of the population as represented in the 2008 demographic review published by the National Statistics Office. The survey has a margin of error of +/-5.7%.

## mt survey



### FOOD

#### Turkey still dominates menu

Nearly 30% will be eating turkey this Christmas while 16% will be eating pork. The choice of meat is still determined by social class. People in lower occupational groups are less likely to eat turkey and fish but more likely to eat pork, rabbit, chicken, capon and beef.

#### What kind of meat will you be eating for Christmas lunch? (%)

Turkey	29.8
Pork	15.8
Chicken	9.8
Beef	9.8
Lamb	4.2
Rabbit	4.2
Fish	2.3
Capon	1.5
Duck	1.1

#### By social class (%)

	AB/C1	C2/DE
Turkey	35.7	20.2
Pork	12.5	17.9
Chicken	10.7	14.3
Beef	8.9	14.3
Lamb	5.4	3.6
Fish	5.4	0
Duck	1.8	0
Rabbit	0	10.7
Capon	0	3.6



### LIGHTS

#### Switching on the lights again?

The streets are darker than what they were two years ago before the introduction of hefty utility bills, but the number of people who have decorated their windows with Christmas lights has increased by over 6% over last year. This could be an indication that a greater number of people are defying the energy crunch this year or have absorbed last year's shock and have returned to their traditional ways.

But the numbers of those decorating their windows with light remains 7% below 2007 levels. The survey shows that most people see rising electricity tariffs as the major reason why they have not switched on their Christmas lights this year. But nearly half did not cite any specific reason or have never put any lights. Only 1% cited environmental reasons for their choice.

#### Have you decorated your windows with external lights? (%)

	2007	2008	2009
Yes	52.9	39.5	46.2
No	47.1	60.6	54.8

#### Reasons for not switching on Christmas lights (%)

Rising bills	47.9
Never installed any lights	17.9
No windows seen from street	2
Climate change	1.1
Personal reasons	1
No specific reason	30.1

### SHOPPING

#### Shopping drifts away from Valletta

Compared to last year, more people are buying their Christmas presents from regional hubs like Paola, Hamrun and Birkirkara, or even directly from the internet and less from Valletta and Sliema.

Respondents also showed a marked tendency to shop from more than one locality than last year. This could be an indication that shoppers are looking for the best bargain by widening their choice.

Overall, Valletta still remains the favourite shopping destination for Christmas presents, but Sliema is more popular as a shopping destination than Valletta among AB respondents.

Lower-end spenders are more

likely to shop from more than one locality and from other localities other than Valletta or Sliema. Hamrun is particularly more popular among low-end spenders and older respondents. On the other hand among younger respondents Sliema is as popular as Valletta.

The number of persons buying their Christmas gifts online has also increased from 1.2% to 4.5%.

A large number of children will be receiving cash gifts from their grandparents. In fact the survey shows 56% of pensioners giving cash gifts to their grandchildren. Educational toys like laptops emerge as the most popular gifts.

A fifth of respondents are more utilitarian and buy clothes as presents. Only 8% give a book as a gift to young children.

#### Top localities for Christmas shopping? (%)

	2008	2009
Valletta	44.5	39.4
Sliema	25	22.2
Hamrun	3.9	10.2
Paola	5.9	10.2
Victoria Gozo	4.7	6.5
B'Kara	2	5.5
Mosta	3.9	4.9
Internet	1.2	4.5
Rabat	2	3.5

#### A question of age (%)

	Under 35	Over 35
Sliema	45.2	22
Valletta	45.2	52.3
Paola	12.9	6.2
Hamrun	4	13.1

#### Where high spenders shop (%)

(AB/C1 category which includes managers, professionals, administrators, clerks, people in vocational jobs and supervisors)

Sliema	44.4
Valletta	33.3
Paola	10
Hamrun	2
Others	18

#### Where low spenders shop (%)

(C2 and DE categories which includes skilled workers, unskilled workers and people on relief)

Sliema	18
Valletta	45
Hamrun	12.9
Paola	10
Others	30.5

#### If you have nephews or children under the age of 10 what gift will you be giving them on Christmas? (%)

	All	Pensioners
Cash	32.2	56.3
Clothes	21.5	21.4
Educational toys	8.4	5.1
Books	7.9	7.1
Dolls	5	5
Computer games	3	1
Other toys/games	23	15
Others	8	2

(Totals do not add to 100 as some respondents mentioned different gifts)



### CHRISTMAS EVE

#### How will people spend Christmas Eve?

More people will be celebrating Christmas Eve at home this year, but a larger number will be attending midnight mass, which is attended by nearly a third of respondents.

Another growing Christmas tradition is that of having a Christmas breakfast at a restaurant after mass. Nearly everyone opting for a Christmas breakfast will be doing so after midnight mass. While the survey shows those having dinner in a restaurant declining for the second consecutive year, the number of those having Christmas breakfast has doubled.

Nearly 2% will be spending Christmas all alone at home.

	2007	2008	2009
Celebrate at home	25	24.7	33.7
Celebrate at friends/ relatives	25	26	20.6
At a restaurant/hotel	9.7	9	7.2
At a paid party	2	1	2.2
Abroad	2	1.7	0.9
Mass	27	24.3	30.9
Christmas breakfast	2.3	2	5.7
At work	2.3	3.3	2.2
All alone at home	1	1.5	2

### Seasons Greetings!

### GREETINGS

#### Happy Christmas by SMS

People in higher occupational groups are less likely to send Christmas cards but are more likely to send their greetings by SMS or email. In fact while 65.3% of all respondents send Christmas cards, only 40% of ABs do the same. On the other hand while only 15.1% of all respondents send their best regards by email, 55% of AB send their greeting by e-cards. Persons under the age of 34 are also more likely to send their regards by SMS.

#### How will you be sending your wishes to friends and relatives?

	Under 34	ABs	All
Cards	66.7	40	65.3
SMS	66.7	45.3	34.7
Email	16.7	55.1	15.1
By word of mouth	3.3	15	11.7
By telephone	13.3	10	20