

Black Friday highlights rich-poor divide

By Shan Li, Los Angeles Times

In Northeast Los Angeles, 1,000 people huddled in the evening chill last Thanksgiving as they waited outside a Target store for the chance to snap up Black Friday deals.

Across town at the Grove, the mostly upscale stores such as Barneys and Nordstrom were closed that night. Holiday shoppers didn't start massing until well into the next morning.

This year's annual ritual of conspicuous consumption promises an even greater contrast.

Discounters and mid-priced chains, eager to gain an edge on competitors for limited gift budgets, have again moved their opening times earlier into Turkey Day, with Kmart leading the pack by launching specials at 6am. Higher-end retailers, however, are keeping their doors firmly shut until Friday.

Increasingly, the seasonal shopping surge has become a window into America's class divide, in which high earners have benefited from a booming stock market and rising home prices as many others still grapple with stagnant incomes and lingering financial anxiety.

Consider these opposite scenarios: In 2013, Bloomingdale's went against the grain by offering fewer Black Friday bargains than the year before, according to the advertising experts at bestblackfriday.com. At a Wal-Mart in Duarte, customers elbowed one another to get their hands on Crayola crayon sets, marked down to \$11 from nearly \$20. (A trending Twitter hashtag last Thanksgiving was [#WalmartFights](https://twitter.com/WalmartFights).)

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