

US HOLIDAY SALES UP 4%, DIAMOND JEWELRY SALES SHOW GOOD TO MIXED RESULTS

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Source: Israeli Diamond Institute

A recent report by the National Retail Federation (NRF) shows that US holiday retail sales during November and December 2016 rose 4% year-on-year to \$658.3 billion. According to a report in Diamond World, this number includes \$122.9 billion in non-store sales, which were up 12.6% year-on-year.

As for sales of jewelry and diamond jewelry, several brands have reported good holiday results, while others showed mixed results. Tiffany & Co. reported sales of \$966 million during the holiday season - up slightly from \$961 year-on-year. In the Americas, both total sales of \$483 million and comparable store sales were 4% below the corresponding period in 2015. The decline in US sales was "exacerbated by a 14% decline at the company's flagship store on Fifth Avenue in New York" located next to Trump Tower, a decline attributed "at least partly to post-election traffic disruptions". In the Asia-Pacific region, total sales increased 7% to \$200 million. In Japan, total sales rose 16% to \$143 million. In Europe, total sales were down 10% to \$119 million.

During the holiday, Amazon sold 10,451 carats of diamonds and 2.5 million watches. The volume of diamonds sold, Amazon said, could fill six and a half of Queen Elizabeth II Russian Kokoshnik tiaras. 2.5 million watches were purchased on Amazon during the holiday, which means a watch was sold every 1.5 seconds. The volume sold, according to the online retailer, represented "a grizzly bear's weight in gold".

The Birks Group also did well during the holiday, reporting 11% increase in sales. In the U.S. sales increased by 16% and in Canada sales grew by 3% compared to the previous holiday season.

It was a good holiday for Forevermark diamond sales in the US as well. The brand's sales jumped 6.4% during the holiday season. Total jewelry sales edged up 0.7% in December. December sales growth at independent jewelers was 1.4%.

However, not all jewelry brands showed growth. During the same period, Signet Jewelers' showed a decrease, mainly because of "underperformance of its Sterling e-commerce division", according to Gem Konnect. Total sales were \$1.94 billion, down 5.1% from \$2.045 billion year-on-year. Signet's e-commerce sales totaled \$142.5 million, down 2.4% from \$146.0 year-on-year.