

Shorter shopping season means a more intense scramble

**NEW YORK (AP) — Black Friday once again kicks off the start of the holiday shopping season. But with six fewer days, it will be the shortest season since 2013 because Thanksgiving fell on the fourth Thursday in November — the latest possible date.**

**That means customers will have less time to shop and retailers will have less time to woo them.**

**The National Retail Federation baked the shorter season into its forecast, but it says the real drivers will be the job market. It forecasts that holiday sales will rise between 3.8% and 4.2%, an increase from the disappointing 2.1% growth seen in the November and December 2018 period.**

**Black Friday is expected to once again be the largest shopping day of the season, followed by the last Saturday before Christmas.**

Associated Press