New report suggests 62% of Canadians buy candy for trick-or-treaters that they would eat themselves, with price the second most important factor

HALIFAX, NS. (October 26, 2022) – Candy is a big part of Halloween, one of the year’s largest celebrations for children. We estimate that the cost of candy for this year’s Halloween is up 13.1% compared to last year.¹ Inflation, of course, is impacting all areas of consumer spending, but Halloween could also be a litmus test for the impending holiday season. It is also estimated that Canadians this year will be spending an average of $22.40 on candy, which equates to $486 million spent on candy for the entire country, during the month of October 2022.² Despite the fact that this year’s Halloween night falls on a weekday, that sum is estimated to be 62% more than in 2020, the first Halloween in the COVID era, according to HelloSafe.

In partnership with Caddle, Dalhousie University’s Agri-Food Analytics Lab investigated how Canadians were handling candy for Halloween this year. We investigated what they were buying for candy, where and how they selected candy for trick-or-treaters, and what they did with leftovers. We also looked at how parents were handling candy collected by their children. A total of 5,530 Canadians were surveyed between October 12 and 17, 2022.

When buying Halloween candy, what are your criteria when selecting what to give?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allergy / nut-free</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low cost</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better / easier packaging</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniqueness</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something you would eat yourself</td>
<td>62.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ https://www.bls.gov/news.release/cpi.t07.htm

AGRI-FOOD ANALYTICS LAB/LABORATOIRE DE SCIENCES ANALYTIQUES EN AGROALIMENTAIRE

https://www.dal.ca/sites/agri-food.html
Buying and giving candy

Results suggest that 53% of Canadians participate in Halloween by giving out candy to trick-or-treaters. We asked what criteria Canadians consider when selecting what to give out for Halloween. A total of 62.0% said they only select candy for trick-or-treaters that they would eat themselves. Cost is also a significant factor. A total of 52.9% of Canadians said price is an important factor.

Interestingly, Canadians who live east of Ontario see the cost/price as the most important criteria when selecting candy for trick-or-treaters. “Candy they would eat themselves” is the most important factor in other provinces, west of Quebec. While a total of 75.2% of people in Newfoundland and Labrador consider price the most important factor when buying candy, 59.0% of people in Nova Scotia see price as the most important factor. Prince Edward Island is third at 58.2%, followed by New Brunswick at 57.8% and Quebec at 52.5%.

“It is interesting to see that most Canadians want to give candy they would eat themselves,” said Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab. “Having leftover candy after Halloween is likely something Canadians have in mind when purchasing for trick-or-treaters, so having leftovers is not necessarily seen as a burden, or an issue,” said Charlebois.

Selecting an allergy-free candy is important for 29.7% of Canadians. While 20.1% said better packaging is an important consideration, 12.6% believe it is important to buy treats that are healthy for children. Interestingly, only 19.0% of Canadians believe Halloween-themed packaging is important when selecting candy for trick-or-treaters.

As for choosing a location to buy candy, Walmart is the number one option for Canadians, at 22.7%, followed by Costco at 21.2%. Discount grocery stores are third at 20.7%, followed by traditional grocery stores at 19.5%. While drug stores/pharmacies are preferred by 6.2% of Canadians, 5.4% prefer dollar stores to get candy for Halloween.

We asked Canadians how many items they typically give out to trick-or-treaters. A total of 58.4% of Canadians will give two candy items per trick-or-treater. A total of 18.1% will give more than three items. A total of 13.2% will give only one. Finally, 10.6% of Canadians say it’s random and they do not itemize candy giving.

Demand management for trick-or-treaters

The survey also looked at what trick-or-treating traffic Canadians are expecting this year. A total of 32.6% of Canadians expect 11 to 30 trick-or-treaters to show up at their door this year. A total of 31.6% are expecting 31 to 75 trick-or-treaters, followed 1 to 10, at 17.1%. While 13.5% of Canadians expect 76 to 150 trick-or-treaters, 5.2% are expecting more than 150 this year.
Compared to last year, 37.0% are expecting more trick-or-treaters, even though Halloween falls on a Monday this year. A total of 57.9% of Canadians are expecting about the same number of trick-or-treaters as last year. In 2021, 38.9% of Canadians said that they saw an increase in the number of trick-or-treaters compared to 2020.

“Expectations are high, despite the fact that Halloween falls on a Monday this year,” said Janet Music, research associate at the Agri-Food Analytics Lab. “This is likely since it is the first Halloween in three years with limited public health restrictions. Most Canadians are expecting a somewhat normal Halloween when anticipating trick-or-treating traffic,” said Music.

Candy leftovers

We asked what Canadians do with leftover candy after Halloween. Overwhelmingly, 67.0% of Canadians will eat Halloween leftovers. Of that group, 59.8% of Canadians will eat about a quarter of the leftover candy they bought for Halloween. While 12.7% of Canadians will eat half of the leftovers, 6.3% of Canadians will eat most of the leftovers. A total of 20.9% of Canadians will give it to their own children. A total of 4.4% will throw their leftover candy away.
Parental candy management

Our investigation asked how long parents let their children trick-or-treat on Halloween. A total of 26.1% of parents will let their children trick-or-treat until their one bag/container is full. While 36.9% of parents will let their children trick-or-treat with an unlimited number of bags/containers, 27.9% of parents will let their children trick-or-treat for two hours with an unlimited number of bags/containers.

After trick-or-treating, 84.1% of parents will go through their children’s candies and remove potentially harmful items. While a total of 59.4% of parents will remove all homemade items, 43.1% of parents will remove any produce. Other items parents intend to remove are soft drinks (19.2%) and products with potential allergens (16.8%).

What parents fear the most when going through their children’s candies are opened packages (74.7%), razor blades (71.1%), needles (70.6%) and drugs (65.5%).

Download the preliminary results of the survey in English and French at https://www.dal.ca/sites/agrifood.html.
Contacts

Dr. Sylvain Charlebois, Director
Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University
sylvain.charlebois@dal.ca

Janet Music, Research Program Coordinator
Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University
janet.music@dal.ca

Methodology for survey: Caddle is one of the most credible active panels in the Canadian market. A representative survey of Canadians was conducted in October 2022, in partnership with Caddle. 5,530 Canadians participated in this survey. Margin of Error: +/- 2.1%, 19 times out of 20. Any discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

Disclosure: Funding for the survey was provided by Caddle and Dalhousie University.