

NIQ Perspective

The Tricks Behind This Halloween's Treats

“For all the discussion about economic pressure, consumers continue to make room for Halloween. What's changing is how they participate. Shopping is starting earlier, spending is being spread across more trips, and every item is being evaluated a little more carefully before it makes its way into the basket. The excitement surrounding Halloween remains intact. Consumers are simply bringing more planning and intention to the celebration.”



Chris Costagli
Vice President,
F&B Thought Leadership

For brands...

Chocolate may anchor Halloween spending, but shoppers are building broader confectionery baskets. Gummies, hard candy, and other treats are claiming a larger share of attention as consumers look to stretch budgets without sacrificing choice. A wider assortment and stronger value architecture may matter more this season than chasing premiumization alone.

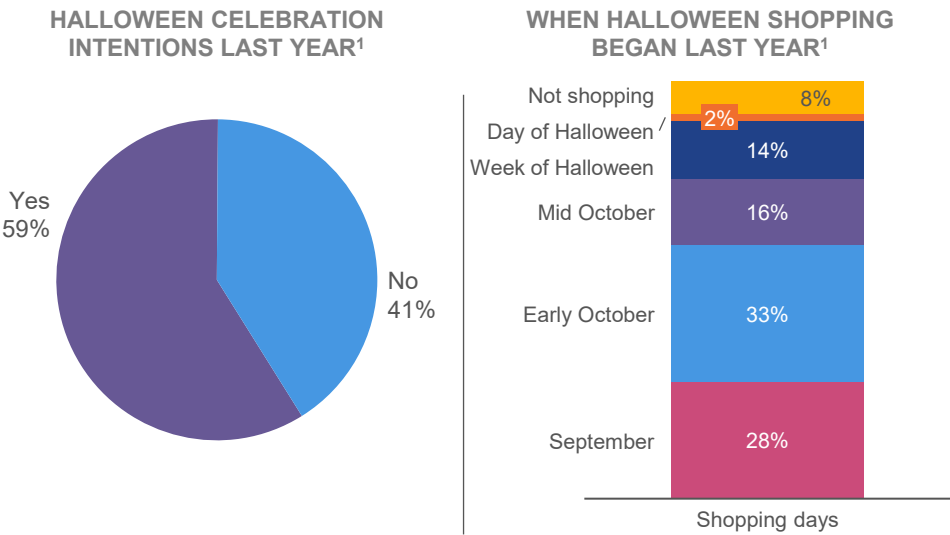
For retailers...

Halloween purchasing now unfolds across several weeks rather than a single shopping trip. September and early October are becoming more important periods for securing seasonal spending. Clear value cues, bundle offers, and easy-to-shop seasonal displays can help maintain momentum as consumers build their baskets over time.

Implications for the Confectionery Industry

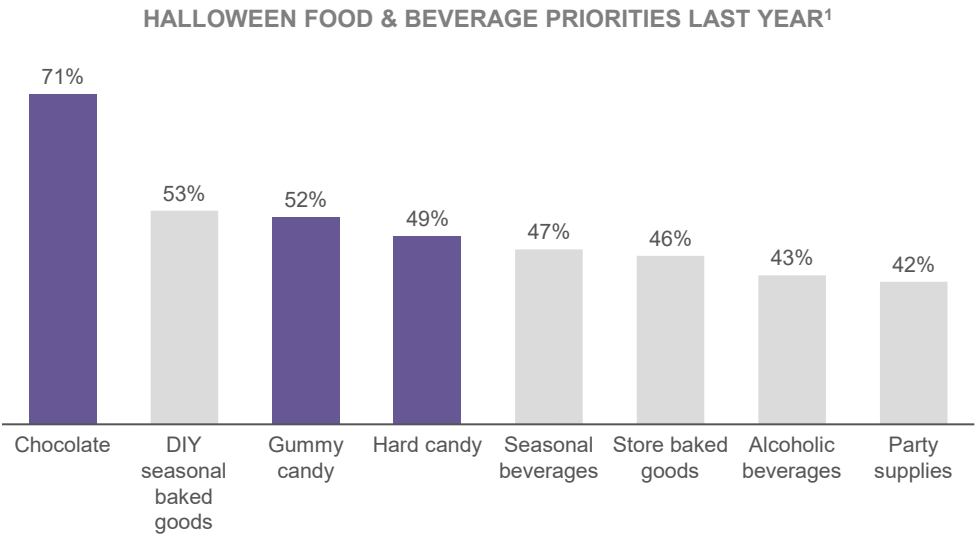
Halloween shopping is creeping up the calendar

Halloween shopping stretches well beyond October. Six in ten shoppers expect to make purchases by early October, and nearly one-third plan to start in September. Rather than loading up in a single trip, many households are spreading spending across trips as they juggle competing budget priorities. That shift is creating more opportunities to influence purchasing decisions, but it is also making early-season visibility increasingly important.



The candy bowl remains a priority

Halloween traditions still revolve around candy. Chocolate remains the top priority for shoppers, but gummies and hard candy are attracting growing attention as consumers look for a mix of variety, value, and crowd-pleasing options. Households may be watching spending more carefully, yet there is little appetite for skipping the treats that define the occasion.



Industry Analysis Sources: ¹NIQ, Bases, Omnibus Quick Survey, June 2025, n=1,005; ²NIQ, Full Retail Measurement Services, Powered By Label Insights, Total Full View, Halloween 2025 4 w/e 11/01/2025, Valentine's Day 2026 4 w/e 02/28/2026

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The takeaway...

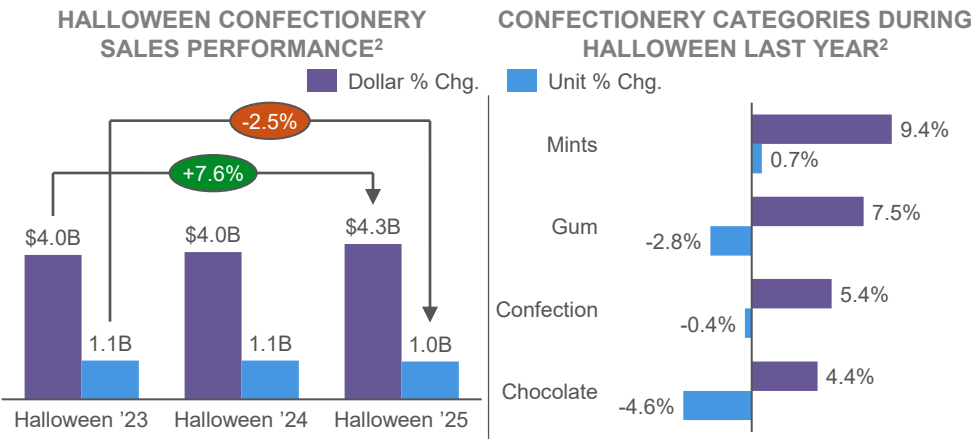
- Starting in September and spreading purchases across multiple trips gives households more time to absorb Halloween costs.
- Widening price gaps are creating opportunities for consumers to explore alternatives across the confectionery aisle.
- Higher prices are lifting sales while units decline, raising the risk that impressive revenue results obscure fewer products reaching candy bowls.
- Halloween participation remains strong, but shoppers are finding new ways to deliver the same celebration at a lower cost.

Your next move...

- Shift Halloween activation earlier and create reasons for shoppers to return throughout the season.
- Expand variety packs, cross-category offerings, and merchandising strategies that capture spending regardless of which confectionery segment consumers ultimately choose.
- Creating compelling reasons for shoppers to add one more item to the basket rather than relying on pricing to drive performance.
- Focus on pack sizes, assortments, promotions, and seasonal solutions that help consumers create a memorable Halloween experience without increasing total spend.

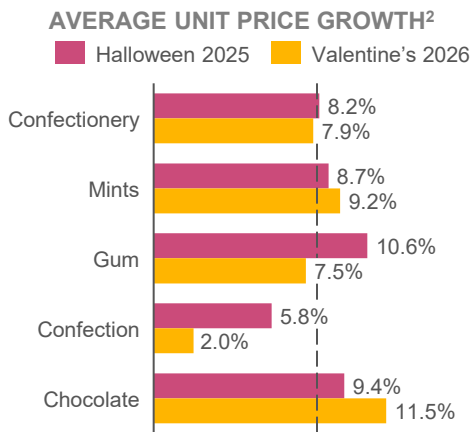
A sweet Halloween, with a sour twist

Halloween confectionery turned in another year of strong dollar growth, but unit sales tell a different story. Consumers spent more overall while taking home fewer items, highlighting the growing influence of pricing on category results. For manufacturers and retailers, volume growth may prove harder to generate than sales growth in the years ahead.



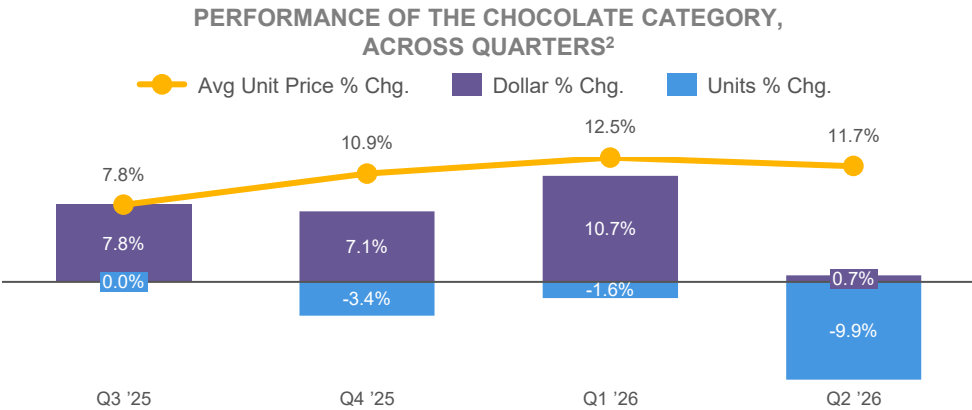
Sticker shock is haunting the candy aisle

Halloween carries some of the highest confectionery prices among major seasonal events, with chocolate absorbing significant increases. As price gaps widen, some consumers may begin exploring alternative treat options that deliver a similar experience at a lower cost. Value is becoming a more important part of the conversation across the entire candy aisle.



Halloween is resilient but wallets are not

Rising costs across housing, transportation, and everyday essentials continue to shape spending decisions. Even so, Halloween remains one of the occasions consumers appear most willing to protect. The challenge is less about maintaining participation and more about helping shoppers celebrate without feeling like they overextended their budgets.



Looking for more?

Consumers continue to make room for the holiday, but they are approaching it with greater discipline than in years past. Shopping starts earlier, spending gets spread across more trips, and value plays a larger role in category decisions. Those shifts may seem subtle today, but they are steadily reshaping how the season unfolds and where growth opportunities emerge.