

Halloween Costume Spending Slumps — for People and Pets

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Americans have developed a penchant for spending ever more to dress up their pets at Halloween, but the budget line for Fido and friends is taking a hit this year amid a projected drop in overall spending for the holiday.

Even as a declining percentage of us say the economy is weighing on our Halloween-spending decisions, fewer people are planning to get involved in the upcoming scarefest. That means a smaller number of critters are getting decked out on Oct. 31.

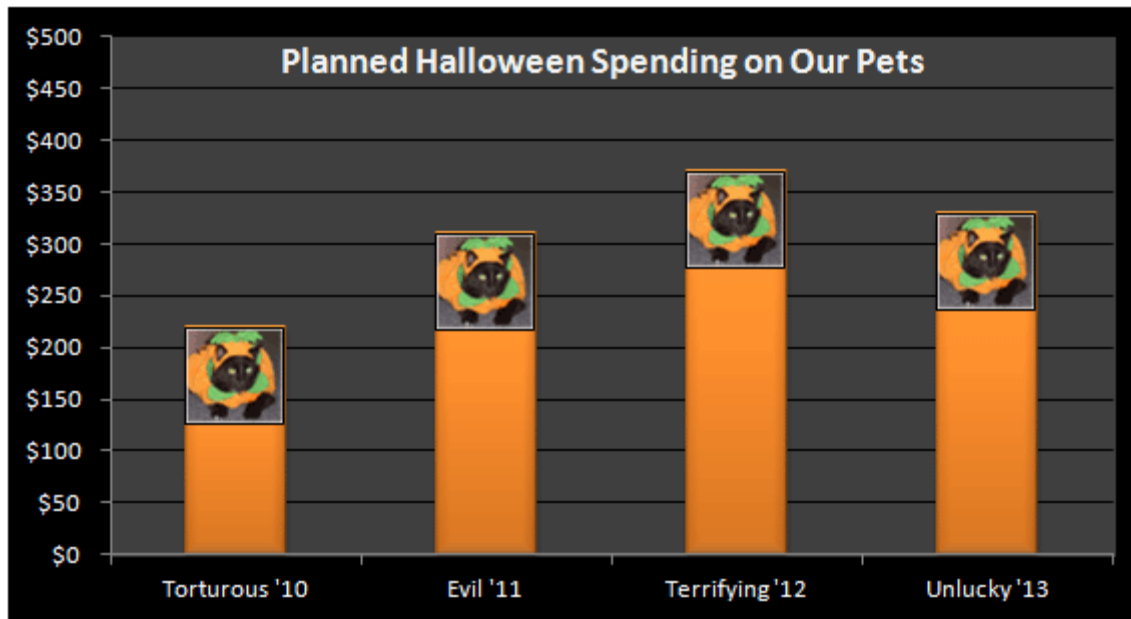


Image of cat in skunk costume, courtesy of Elizabeth Trotta.

Spending on pets this Halloween is being estimated at \$330 million, the [National Retail Federation](#) reported in survey findings released this week. While that's not an insignificant sum considering we're measuring animal apparel for a one-day party, it does represent a 10.8% drop from the \$370 million forecast the same polling found a year ago.

It tracks a broader pullback in the Halloween economy in 2013. Whereas last year some 71.5% of people across the nation said they would take part in the festivities, that's falling to 65.8% this year — although the latest reading does still exceed the 63.2% annual participation average from 2005 through 2012. Per-person outlays are set to decrease to \$75.03 from \$79.82 last year.

All told, the NRF figures Halloween spending by American adults will register \$6.9 billion this fall, a marked drop-off from the \$8 billion prediction issued ahead of the previous holiday 12 months ago. About \$1.04 billion probably will be spent on children's costumes, while adult gear should settle around \$1.22 billion, amounting to year-over-year decreases of 5.5% and 12.9%, respectively.



Pet spending at Halloween: Image of cat in pumpkin costume courtesy of Elizabeth Trotta. Source: National Retail Federation. \$ amounts in millions.

For the animals, who might or might not actually enjoy getting clothed for the night, the slide in spending comes as the percentage of people who'll briefly present their pet as an [inmate, the Pope or another animal](#) next month is also lower. Of those surveyed this year, 13.8% say Rover will get an outfit for Halloween, compared with 15.1% a year ago and 14.7% in 2011. According to the NRF, 25-34 year-olds are the most likely age group to put a costume on the house pet, as 22.6% of those in the survey anticipate doing so. Pumpkin costumes tend to be the most popular attire for pets, the trade association's data reveal.

The surveys are conducted each year ahead of Halloween to estimate proposed spending, rather than completed after the holiday concludes. The latest poll involved 5,290 adults and was overseen by Prosper Insights & Analytics.

Spending for Halloween had been trending upward going [back to 2009](#) (the first year the pet investment tally is available is 2010), but that's changed for this installment. It makes sense to pin that on lingering or renewed worries about the health of the nation's financial system and our own households, especially considering middle-income Americans have been [showing a reluctance to spend](#) on discretionary items and displaying a [downturn in sentiment](#). When you're fretting about bills, a vampire cape for the cat can wait.

However, to the survey question: "Will the state of the U.S. economy impact your Halloween plans?," only 25.2% of respondents said yes, slightly below the 25.9% who said the same last year. Perhaps most interestingly, that was the smallest portion answering affirmatively since the question was added to the Halloween survey five years ago. In both 2010 and 2011, more than 30% of respondents said the economy would be a factor in their Halloween spending.

So this year, consumers have either lost a bit of interest in celebrating the holiday, they're reverting to the mean, or they've in fact gotten more cautious about spending than they might even be consciously aware. And that's affecting both humans and non-humans alike.

All that said, even if Halloween is a bit less festive for the animals out there, we don't appear to be reining in broader spending on our little companions — the [American Pet Products Association](#) estimates pet industry expenditures will reach \$55.5 billion this year.

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