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Toying Around With Holiday Spending: Half of Americans Will Buy Toys This Holiday Season

But Two In Five Toy Purchasers Will Spend Less than Last Year

New York, N.Y. — November 12, 2009 — Not halfway through November the commercials have started, and every parent has started to hear the strains of “I want that!” when a toy commercial hits the television screen. While most everyone enjoys the holiday season, it is an especially exciting time of year for kids. Unfortunately, the economic turndown has made this year more difficult for parents and those buying toys. Toy buying seems to have felt the impact, but hopefully the joy of children everywhere will not.

Half of Americans (54%) will be buying toys as gifts this year, up from 47% who said they would be buying toys last year. Among those who have children in their household, seven in ten (69%) will be buying toys this year and just under half of those in household without children will be buying toys this year (46%).

These are some of the results of *The Harris Poll* of 2,293 adults surveyed online between October 5 and 12, 2009 by Harris Interactive.

Spending on toys compared to last year

Among those who intend to purchase toys this year, two in five (41%) say the amount they will spend on toys will be no different than last year and 16% of toy buyers say they will be spending more than last year. Two in five (39%) toy buyers, however, say that the amount they spend on toys will be less this year when compared to last year’s amount.

In looking specifically at toy purchasers who have a child in the household, 45% say they will be spending less on toys this year compared to last year, while 37% will be spending about the same and 17% will be spending more.

What toys will be purchased this year

Traditional toys are still important, as just under half of toy purchasers (45%) say they will be buying children’s books this year and almost half of those with children in the household will be purchasing books (48%). Video games are not forgotten; over one-third (36%) say they will be purchasing games for consoles this year, and this number jumps to almost half of those with children in the household (47%).

There are also more traditional toys being purchased, as three in ten toy buyers say they will be buying board games (30%), dolls (29%) and arts and crafts (28%). One in five toy buyers will purchase building blocks and bricks this year (21%), sports equipment (21%) and handheld electronic games (20%). Just one in ten (12%), however, say they will be purchasing game consoles this year.

**TABLE 1
HOLIDAY TOY PURCHASING**

“Thinking now of this holiday season, are you planning on purchasing toys as gifts this year?”

Base: All adults

	Total	Child in household	
		Households with children	Households without children
	%	%	%
WILL PURCHASE (NET)	54	69	46
Definitely will purchase	26	38	20
Probably will purchase	28	31	27
WILL NOT PURCHASE (NET)	36	22	43
Probably will not purchase	18	15	20
Definitely will not purchase	18	7	23
Not sure	10	9	10

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 2
HOLIDAY TOY PURCHASING - TREND**

“Thinking now of this holiday season, are you planning on purchasing toys as gifts this year?”

Base: All adults

	2008	2009
	%	%
WILL PURCHASE (NET)	47	54
Definitely will purchase	19	26
Probably will purchase	28	28
WILL NOT PURCHASE (NET)	41	36
Probably will not purchase	22	18
Definitely will not purchase	19	18
Not sure	12	10

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding

**TABLE 3
HOLIDAY TOY PURCHASING SPEND COMPARED TO LAST YEAR**

“Compared to the amount you spent for toy purchases last year, will the toy purchases you make this year be...?”

Base: Will purchase toys

	Total	Child in household		Household income			
		With children	Without children	\$34,9k Or less	\$35k – \$49.9k	\$50k – \$74.9k	\$75k+
		%	%	%	%	%	%
MORE THAN LAST YEAR (NET)	16	17	16	17	12	14	19
Much more than last year	4	5	3	3	4	3	4
Somewhat more than last year	12	12	13	14	7	11	15
No different than last year	41	37	45	35	42	46	44
LESS THAN LAST YEAR (NET)	39	45	35	44	44	37	35
Somewhat less than last year	25	25	25	28	28	21	23
Much less than last year	14	20	10	17	16	16	12
Did not purchase toys last year	3	1	4	4	3	3	1

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding

TABLE 4
HOLIDAY TOY PURCHASING SPEND COMPARED TO LAST YEAR - TREND

“Compared to the amount you spent for toy purchases last year, will the toy purchases you make this year be...?”

Base: Will purchase toys

	2008	2009
	%	%
MORE THAN LAST YEAR (NET)	16	16
Much more than last year	2	4
Somewhat more than last year	13	12
No different than last year	36	41
LESS THAN LAST YEAR (NET)	44	39
Somewhat less than last year	26	25
Much less than last year	18	14
Did not purchase toys last year	4	3

Note: Percentages may not add up to exactly 100% due to rounding

TABLE 5
TYPES OF TOYS TO BE PURCHASED THIS YEAR
“What types of toys will you purchase this year?”

Base: Will purchase toys

	Total	Child in household		Gender	
		With children	Without children	Men	Women
	%	%	%	%	%
Children’s books	45	48	42	41	48
Games for consoles	36	47	28	40	32
Board games	30	38	23	27	33
Dolls	29	30	28	28	29
Arts and crafts	28	33	24	24	32
Building blocks and bricks	21	26	18	21	22
Sports equipment	21	26	17	28	15
Handheld electronic games	20	26	16	22	19
Game consoles	12	17	9	16	9
Something else	26	29	24	30	23
Not sure	21	15	26	20	22

Note: Multiple Responses Allowed

Methodology

This Harris Poll was conducted online within the United States October 5 and 12, 2009 among 2,293 adults (aged 18 and over). Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents’ propensity to be online.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including sampling error, coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey

weighting and adjustments. Therefore, Harris Interactive avoids the words “margin of error” as they are misleading. All that can be calculated are different possible sampling errors with different probabilities for pure, unweighted, random samples with 100% response rates. These are only theoretical because no published polls come close to this ideal.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in Harris Interactive surveys. The data have been weighted to reflect the composition of the adult population. Because the sample is based on those who agreed to participate in the Harris Interactive panel, no estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

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The Harris Poll® #128, November 12, 2009

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