

'Tis the Season

Provided by: Tri Pillar Investments, LLC

The holidays provide us with the opportunity to spend more time with family and friends and to celebrate the coming New Year. With the holiday, also comes gift giving and shopping sprees. Holiday spending translates into major gains for the economy, as well as generating new employment opportunities, and providing businesses across a range of industries with a much-needed dose of cheer.

Last week, The National Retail Federation raised its forecast for U.S. holiday retail sales. They now expect holiday sales to rise 3.8 percent to a record \$469.1 billion. That is up from the group's October forecast, which called for growth of 2.8 percent.

The new forecast is still lower than the 5.2 percent growth seen last year, but is above the 10-year average increase of 2.6 percent.

NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz was quoted as saying, "Consumer spending this holiday season has surpassed expectations, though many shoppers continue to stick to their budgets and buy only what they need."

How will this affect the economy and what are the real numbers behind the holiday shopping season? We have provided a few statistics that might surprise you:

STAYING IN TOUCH

97 Million: Average number of customers who visit the post office during the holiday season. *Source: U.S. Postal Service's 2011 Holiday Facts and Information*

16.5 Billion: Number of cards, letters and packages to be delivered between Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve. *Source: Ibid.*

801 Million: Pieces of mail processed by the U.S. Postal Service on December 20, the busiest mailing day of the year. *Source: Ibid.*

HOLIDAY BOUNTY

\$704.18: Average amount consumers are expected to spend on holiday gifts and merchandise this year, down from \$718.98 in 2010. *Source: Ibid.*

19.4%: Percentage of total retail industry sales attributed to holiday spending in 2010. *Source: NRF's Holiday FAQ*

DECK THE HALLS

27 Million: Number of natural Christmas trees purchased in the U.S. in 2010, compared to 8.2 million artificial trees. *Source: National Christmas Tree Association's (NCTA) Consumer Survey Results*

\$46.73: Average amount a consumer will spend this year on holiday decorations, compared to \$96.75 on candy and food, \$26.52 on greeting cards and \$18.23 on flowers.

Source: NRF's 2011 Holiday Intentions and Actions Survey

\$983 Million: Value of U.S. imports of Christmas tree ornaments from China between January and September 2011, including \$79.7 million worth of artificial trees. *Source: U.S. Census Bureau's Foreign Trade*

50%: Proportion of U.S. potatoes, many of which were used for making Hanukkah latkes, grown in Idaho and Washington in 2010. *Source: National Agriculture Statistics Service*

\$1.5 Billion: Total value for shipments of candles in 2009, many of which were lit for Hanukkah and Kwanzaa celebrations. *Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2009 Annual Survey of Manufacturers*

1 Ton

Total weight of confetti dropped in Times Square on New Year's Eve

Source: Times Square Alliance's New Year's Eve FAQ

While the economic numbers are important, the holiday season reminds of us of the true importance in life – family and friends. TPI wishes you a very happy holiday. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.