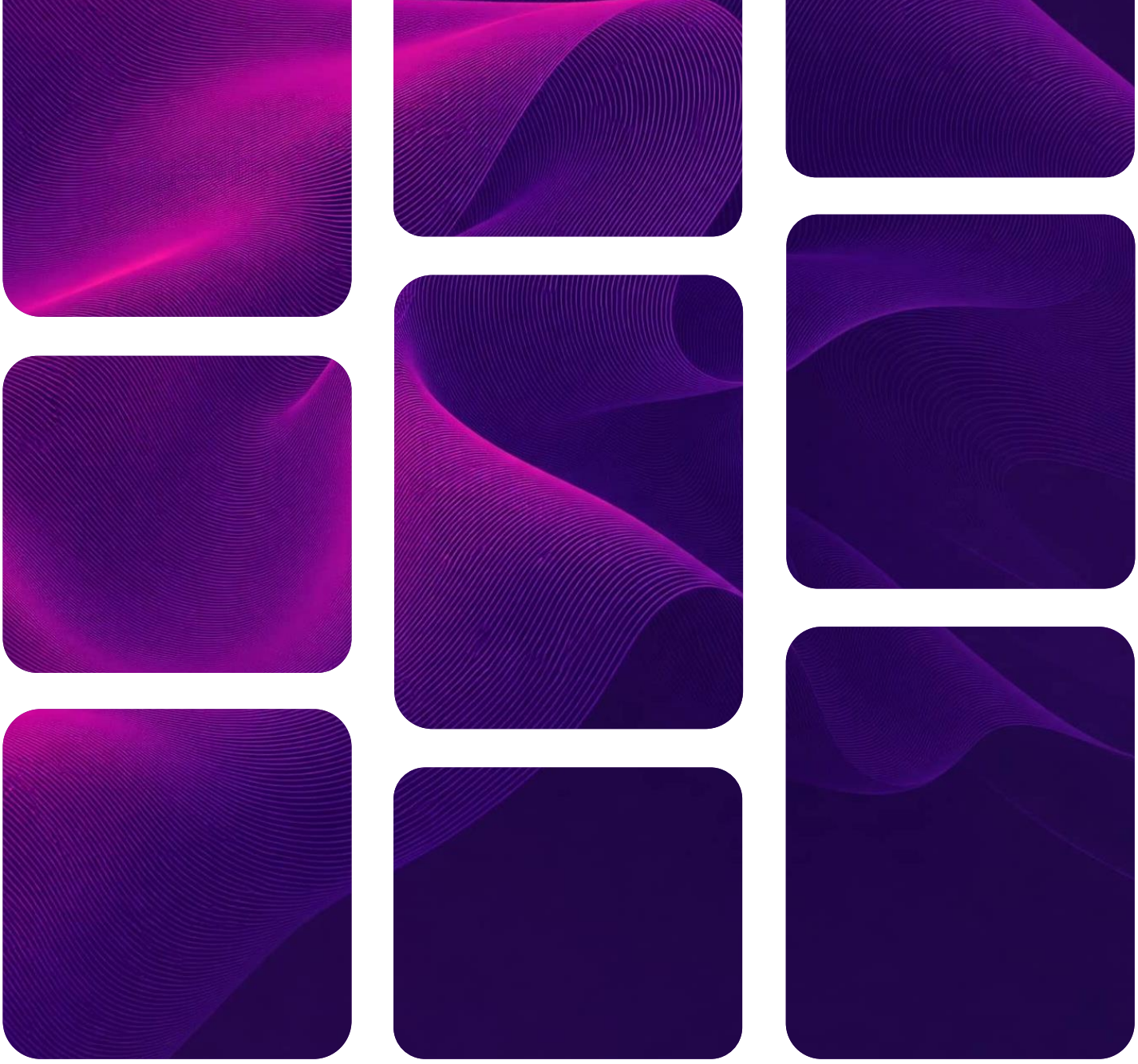


November 10, 2026

# NOW IN RETAIL



Circana.

# Insights at a Glance

## Now in Retail | November 10, 2026


**3** **U.S. Retail Trends**
October Signals a More Selective Holiday Shopper



**Executive Summary:** Consumers remain engaged in the marketplace, but October results suggest holiday spending is becoming increasingly selective, with dollars continuing to outpace units as shoppers prioritize value, essential needs, and purposeful purchases. As mini-holidays and occasion-driven spending outperform broad promotional events, growth will increasingly depend on retailers' ability to connect with consumers through relevant categories, meaningful moments, and targeted solutions.


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**Trendline Chart**: Retail Second-Half (2H) Dollar Sales Trends by Week


**4** **The Opportunity in New Behaviors**
Occasions Are Replacing Manufactured Moments



**Executive Summary:** Consumer spending is increasingly being driven by meaningful occasions rather than retailer-created promotional events, as mini-holidays accounted for 27% of first-half sales and outperformed promotion periods in driving retail growth. As shoppers make more frequent trips with smaller baskets and increasingly purchase with a specific purpose in mind, brands and retailers have an opportunity to build stronger connections by delivering relevant products, experiences, and solutions that align with consumers' evolving priorities and passions.


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**Comparison Chart:** General Merchandise Dollars % Change vs. Last Year


**5** **Behind the Insights**
Resources to Help You Stay Ahead of Evolving Trends


*Circana is a leading advisor on the complexity of consumer behavior, inspiring actions that unlock business growth.*

# U.S. Retail Trends

## October Signals a More Selective Holiday Shopper

Overall retail spending increased 1.1% in October, while unit demand declined 1.4% compared to the same period last year. As consumers moved deeper into the holiday shopping season, spending continued to outpace demand, reflecting ongoing price pressures and a heightened focus on value. The gap between dollar and unit performance suggests shoppers remained willing to spend but were increasingly selective about what made it into their baskets.

In the four weeks ending October 31, 2026, retail food and beverage sales revenue increased 1.5%, while unit demand declined 1.2%. Nonedible consumer packaged goods (CPG), excluding tobacco, posted the strongest dollar gains among major retail sectors at +2.4%, though unit sales fell 2.0%. Positive dollar growth across these essential categories reinforces that consumers continue to prioritize core household needs, even as purchasing volumes soften. Meanwhile, general merchandise remained challenged, with dollar sales decreasing 1.1% and units down 2.4% versus year-ago levels. This continued pressure suggests households are carefully evaluating discretionary purchases as they balance holiday spending intentions against ongoing economic concerns.

Halloween purchases and early holiday preparation supported seasonal spending in October, but consumers remained disciplined, focusing on purchases that met immediate needs or offered clear value rather than broad-based discretionary spending.

October's promotion week reinforced this behavior. While promotional activity drove a meaningful lift versus the prior week, year-over-year gains remained modest, suggesting shoppers are using deals to maximize value rather than increase overall spending. The results provide an early indication that holiday growth will depend less on broader consumer spending increases and more on retailers' ability to capture demand within the categories and occasions consumers prioritize most.

Read on to learn how changing consumer priorities are reshaping spending patterns and creating new opportunities for growth.

**2H YOY % Change**

*22 weeks ending 10/31/26*

**Dollars Units**

**Retail Food & Beverage[1]**

**+1.7% | -0.7%**

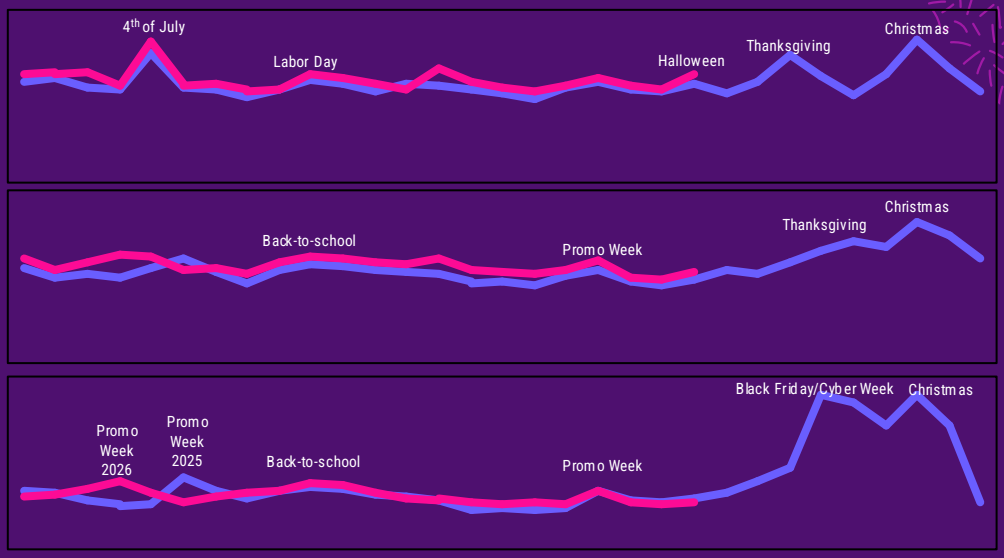
**Nonedible CPG[1]**

**+3.2% | -0.9%**

**General Merchandise[2]**

**+1.5% | -0.4%**

**Retail Second-Half (2H) Dollar Sales Trends by Week**
**through week ending October 31, 2026**




**Week ending:** 06/06 06/13 06/20 06/27 07/04 07/11 07/18 07/25 08/01 08/08 08/15 08/22 08/29 09/05 09/12 09/19 09/26 10/03 10/10 10/17 10/24 10/31 11/07 11/14 11/21 11/28 12/05 12/12 12/19 12/26 01/02

*June is included to smooth comparisons, reflecting the shift of summer retailer promotions into June this year versus July last year.*

Available

*Source: [1]Circana, OmniMarketTotal Market View MULO+ Convenience (F&B/nonedible CPG – excluding tobacco) – week ends on a Sunday.*
*[2]Circana, Point-of-sale first-read data/limited release (general merchandise). Discretionary retail includes the following industries: accessories, apparel, auto parts, beauty, consumer technology, DVD/Blu-ray, footwear, housewares, juvenile products, office supplies, small appliances, sports equipment, toys, video games. Axes on charts are not related; week-end dates based on 2026.*

# The Opportunity in New Behaviors

## Occasions Are Replacing Manufactured Moments

The strongest retail moments of 2026 have not been retailer-created promotion events, but consumer-relevant occasions. From Valentine's Day and Easter to Mother's Day, Father's Day, and the Fourth of July, mini-holidays consistently generated meaningful lifts in spending and traffic as consumers prioritized celebrations, gifting, entertaining, and shared experiences. These events accounted for 27% of first-half dollar and unit sales, underscoring their outsized influence on retail performance despite representing only a fraction of the calendar year.

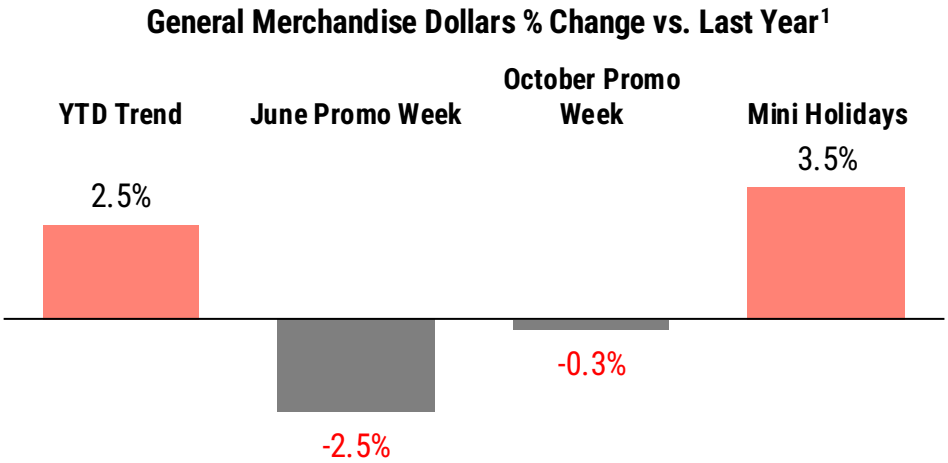
Mini-holiday demand also proved more resilient than non-holiday periods, particularly in general merchandise and nonedible CPG, where unit declines were less severe during mini-holiday weeks. At the same time, consumers continue to reshape their shopping behavior. Households are making nearly 3% more shopping trips than a year ago while purchasing fewer items per visit, reflecting a move away from pantry-loading and broad stock-up shopping. Instead, shoppers are increasingly buying with a specific purpose, occasion, or need in mind, resulting in smaller baskets and more targeted purchase missions.

The same pattern is evident in the 2026 holiday shopping season. Through October, Q4 general merchandise sales performance has been soft, suggesting many consumers are delaying discretionary purchases until they are tied to a specific event, recipient, or need. Promotions continue to influence when consumers purchase, but increasingly they are being used to maximize value on planned purchases rather than create incremental demand.

The good news for this holiday season and retail in 2027, is that consumers are still finding compelling reasons to spend. Gifting categories provide some of the clearest examples, with gift cards, apparel, toys, beauty, wellness, and experiences among the most frequently purchased categories. Many of 2026's strongest growth stories have emerged from categories fueled by emotional relevance, personal passions, self-care, and connection rather than promotional intensity.

These behavioral shifts are not temporary, but they create meaningful opportunities for brands and retailers. More frequent shopping trips provide additional moments to engage consumers with relevant assortments, pricing, and solutions. Beyond the transaction itself, these touchpoints can help build stronger relationships and deliver experiences that align with consumers' evolving needs, priorities, and passions.

> *The story of 2026 is not retail contraction, but retail reallocation. Consumers continue to shop and spend, but changing shopping routines, irregular purchase cycles, and more selective spending decisions reveal a household that is carefully reallocating dollars toward the categories that matter most."* – ***Daniel Joyner***







of consumers agree that "retailer **promotions feel less compelling** to me than they did a year or two ago[2]"

[1]*Source: Circana, Point-of-Sale First-Read Data/Limited Release (general merchandise); Year-to-date: 41 Weeks Ending 10/17/2026 vs. Prior Year*
*June Promo Week: 1 Week Ending 6/27/2026 vs. 1 Week Ending 7/12/2025*
*Oct Promo Week: 1 Week Ending 10/10/2026 vs. 1 Week Ending 10/11/2025*
*Mini Holidays Include: Super Bowl, Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day, and the 4th of July*
[2]*Source: Circana, Omnibus Survey, September 2026; Q: How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Base: 1,002*

# Behind the insights

## Now in Retail | November 10, 2026

*The data, expertise, and resources behind today's insights and tomorrow's strategy.*

## **Powered by Data** | Trusted Sources

**Retail Early Indicator** provides preliminary point-of-sale results from 14 general merchandise industries. Retail Early Indicator provides a leading indicator on consumer spending in the U.S. in advance of the full syndicated dataset's release.

**MULO+** is the largest census-based POS coverage of CPG core channels.

**Retail Tracking Service** is Circana's unmatched ability to capture store-level data feeds directly from retailers, revealing how products sell in the locations where they are carried. That lets us accurately report below a national level so you can monitor sales, distribution, pricing, and velocity by retailer, region, or market.

**Complete Consumer** boasts an omnipanel of 150,000 actively engaged buyers who provide Circana with receipt-based data from their online and in-store general merchandise purchases. Complete Consumer's longitudinal data illuminates trends in behavior, while buyer analytics capabilities deliver insight into your key customers.

## **Guided by Expertise** | Thought Leaders



**Kiara Barrett**
EVP, Global Head of Thought Leadership
Circana



**Daniel Joyner**
Consultant, Consumer & Shopper Insights
Circana

## **Fueled by Discovery** | Explore Further

**AI, Measured.** *Click here to view the first Webinar in our three-part series!*
Circana's data and expertise on how AI is changing the way consumers shop, and how brands and retailers can respond.

**2026 Holiday Purchase Intentions Report.**
Circana's lens into how consumers are approaching holiday shopping this year and the factors most influencing their spending plans. *Visit our Holiday Insights Hub for this report and additional insights throughout the season!*

**Ready to move from insight to impact?**
**Partner with Circana to turn these findings into growth strategies, competitive advantage, and measurable business results.**
Contact your account representative or email contactus@circana.com.