Trick, or Treat? The 2012 Halloween Index

Every year as the leaves start to fall off the trees, and just before the ever expanding holiday season begins, a day entrenched in the minds of kids, and kids at heart, takes place. We are talking about Halloween, the day in which kids are celebrated for being kids as they dress up, have fun, spook each other - and are rewarded for doing so with candy. Parents leave work early on October 31st to take part in this important day that rewards and encourages the creativity of our children. As the trick or treating experience varies from city to city and neighborhood to neighborhood, place is an essential variable to Halloween. Last year, we here at MPI along with the Atlantic Cities looked at the best places to trick or treat within America. As millions of families get ready for Halloween tonight, at the Martin Prosperity Institute, we decided to do an update and take a look at the best places to trick or treat in 2012.

We evaluated the best places to trick or treat, by applying our Halloween Index to the metros within the United States. The Halloween Index encompasses these following metrics: candy stores (per 100 thousand), costume rental stores (per 100 thousand), children aged 5-14 (share of metro population), population density and median income. In looking at these variables individually, those with a sweet tooth might want to consider moving to Ocean City, NJ as it was found to have the most candy stores per capita in the U.S. When trying to find the right costume for Halloween, Alexandria, LA would provide the best opportunity as the most costume rental stores per capita reside in this metro, while Laredo, TX has the highest share of its population being kids aged 5-14. New York was found to be the densest metro (meaning more places to trick or treat in a smaller area), while San Jose has the highest median income (hopefully translating into more candy!). Together, these attributes provide a sense of an ideal environment for kids to trick or treat this Halloween.
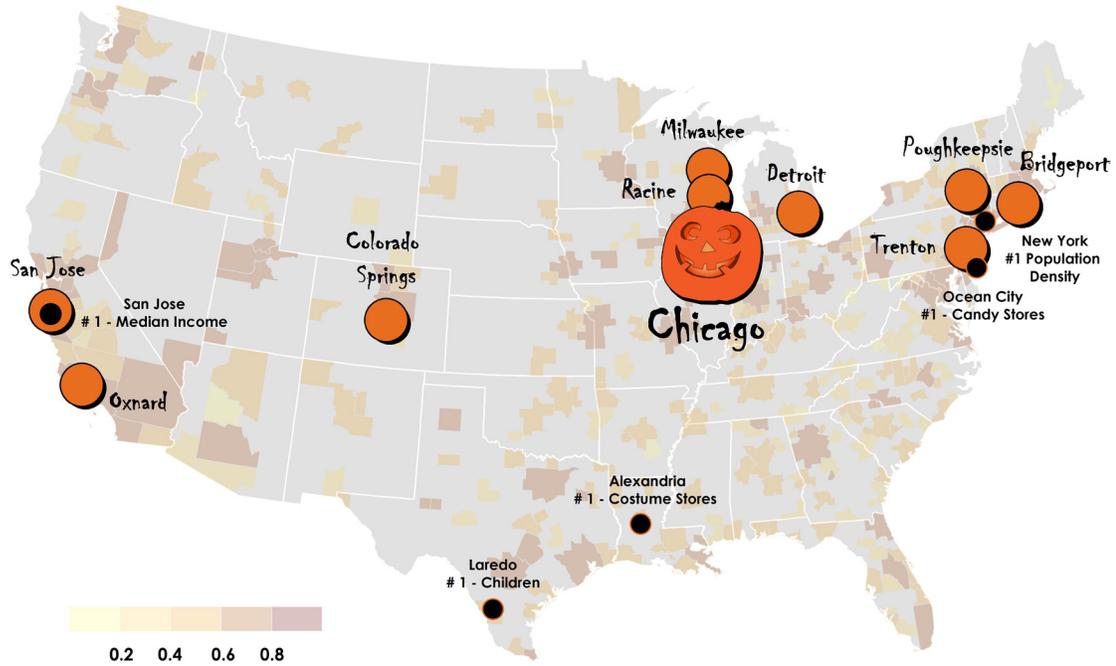
On the Halloween Index, we determined that the windy city, Chicago, is the best place to trick or treat in the United States this year. Chicago ranked high on most of our metrics, having one of the densest populations, highest amount of candy stores per capita and a high candy "purchasing capacity" with a high median income. Chicago was followed on the Halloween Index by Poughkeepsie, NY; Trenton, NJ; Colorado Springs, CO; Racine, WI; Bridgeport, CT; San Jose, CA; Detroit, MI; Milwaukee, WI and Oxnard, CA. The figure below displays the top 25 metros for children to trick or treat. Of the top 25 best places to trick or treat according to our Halloween Index, cities in the north-east United States accounts for 10 of them. California is the state with the most metros within the top 25 best places to trick or treat, followed by Wisconsin. Within the top 25 there is a large amount of highly populated metros, but as the figure below displays, there is also a mix of medium to smaller size metros such as Ogden, Utah. These smaller metros were generally found to be dense tight knit metros in which a close proximity to business and other families provides an ideal location for trick or treating. While often large dense cities are viewed amongst the best places for Halloween, some smaller metros join them in the top 25.

Rank	Metro	Halloween Index
1	Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI	0.85
2	Poughkeepsie-Newburgh-Middletown, NY	0.80
3	Trenton-Ewing, NJ	0.78
4	Colorado Springs, CO	0.77
5	Racine, WI	0.76
6	Bridgeport-Stamford-Norwalk, CT	0.76
7	Detroit-Warren-Livonia, MI	0.75
7	San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA	0.75
9	Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, WI	0.75
10	Oxnard-Thousand Oaks-Ventura, CA	0.74
11	Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA	0.74
12	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI	0.73
13	Las Vegas-Paradise, NV	0.73
14	Baltimore-Towson, MD	0.73
14	Denver-Aurora, CO	0.73
16	Springfield, IL	0.73
17	Des Moines, IA	0.72
18	San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA	0.72
19	Manchester-Nashua, NH	0.72
19	Ogden-Clearfield, UT	0.72
21	Barnstable Town, MA	0.71
22	Vallejo-Fairfield, CA	0.71
23	Honolulu, HI	0.71
24	Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton, PA-NJ	0.71
25	Dallas -Fort Worth-Arlington, TX	0.71

The map below displays every U.S. metro according to our Halloween index. The lighter the shade of yellow a metro is, the lower the Halloween index and the darker the orange, the higher the Halloween index is. The orange circles show our top 10 Halloween Index metros, highlighted by the number one metro Chicago with the pumpkin. Lastly, the small black circles present the metros that were found to have the highest score on each of our Halloween Index variables.

Of course however, when out trick or treating there is always that one house or two that provides a disappointment for children, when they look down into their trick or treat bags, only to find a tooth brush, tooth paste and dental floss. So we here at the Martin Prosperity Institute have provided a great service to children everywhere by looking at a final attribute: dentist offices per capita. This might help kids consider what area they want to go; depending on whether or not they want a toothbrush. Boulder, CO was found to have the most dentists per 100,000 people; therefore, children might want have to avoid a large number of houses within this metro, while

Exhibit 2

Halloween Index

Map by Zara Matheson, Martin Prosperity Institute

parents within Boulder should be pleased to know that the impending cavities from candy over-loads will be easily serviced. The rest of top 10 metros with the most dentists per capita are as follows: San Jose, CA; San Francisco, CA; St George, UT; Santa Rosa, CA; Fort Collins, CO; Logan, UT; Idaho Falls, ID; Los Angeles, CA and Bridgeport, CT.

This Insight has worked to display which areas are the best for children on Halloween, but no matter where you chose to trick of treat tonight, please be safe and have fun!!

For further analysis on Halloween and to see if your neighbourhood passes the "trick or treat" test, follow this link. Also for a neighbourhood breakdown check out the following.

The Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management is the world's leading think-tank on the role of sub-national factors—location, place and city-regions—in global economic prosperity. We take an integrated view of prosperity, looking beyond economic measures to include the importance of quality of place and the development of people's creative potential.