

Back to School Shopping - US - 2022

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on the school year and back to school shopping for both parents and college students
- Changing approach to back to school shopping
- How economic uncertainty drives consumer value-seeking behaviors
- Attitudes and influences toward back to school shopping
- Desired improvements to the back to school shopping process

After a tumultuous 2020-21 school year, when COVID-19 caused disruptions to students' learning situations, students and parents looked forward to a return to in-person learning and a sense of normalcy going into the 2021-22 school year. Heading into June 2021, the excitement to get back to a sense of normalcy, along with a seemingly improving pandemic situation, led to a boost in consumer confidence, which contributed to a rise in back to school shopping. Early summer sale events, like Amazon Prime Day, coupled with the news of supply chain disruptions, led consumers to shop early and take advantage of savings while inventory levels were at their peak.

However, as the summer progressed, a resurgence of COVID-19 cases caused by the new Delta variant of the virus created new uncertainty for schools, parents and students. Consumers once again navigated fluctuating school plans and policies, and they reverted to some of their shopping behaviors from earlier in the pandemic, such as limiting time spent in stores and shopping more online.

Ultimately, in-person learning returned for most families, but back to school preparations and shopping looked different than it did in prior years, including prepandemic periods, and the 2020-21 school year when the pandemic completely disrupted learning plans. This evolution into the next normal leaves consumers increasingly seeking flexibility in their back to school shopping needs, as they find new approaches to where, when and how they shop, and what items they buy.



“Back to school shopping saw a new boom in 2021, as students were excited to head back to the classroom and parents fulfilled purchases put off in the prior year. The ongoing pandemic continues to impact how consumers shop for school and what they buy, reemphasizing a need for value, flexibility and convenience.”

- Brittany Steiger, Senior Analyst – Retail and eCommerce

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