

Back to School Shopping: K-12 - US - 2023

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of inflation on back to school shopping in the K-12 segment
- Back to school shopping participation and approach
- Back to school shopping time frame and methods
- Attitudes and influences toward back to school shopping

Back to school season is an essential part of the year for families as K-12 students gear up for a new school term. In recent years, pandemic-fueled disruptions shifted students' learning situations and created stress for parents who took on home-based remote learning throughout much of 2020. In 2021, students returned to the classroom with a mix of enthusiasm and uncertainty, and an eagerness for normalcy coupled with an improving economic outlook drove record school spending.

As parents looked forward to a more optimistic situation with the 2022 school season, rising prices and widespread inflation once again brought new uncertainty. It's estimated the average US household spends more than \$850 on back to school purchases – spending was expected to increase as prices for just about everything shot to record highs. In June, inflation had reached a punishing 9.1% – its highest peak in 40 years – leaving parents to navigate significant spending at a time when the cost of everyday living was already a challenge.

Despite economic pressures, parents prioritized back to school purchases, reinforcing the significance of the season and the essential nature of school-related purchases. Ultimately, shopping for the school year is both a practical necessity and an emotional process that the vast majority of parents enjoy as a time to bond with their children and set their children up for success in the coming year. Looking ahead, school purchases will continue to grow as parents recognize it as an essential and meaningful expense.



“Back to school season is an essential shopping occasion for families and one that sets the tone for the rest of the year in retail. In recent years, the shopping cycle has been disrupted as families navigate the stress of the pandemic, supply shortages and now inflation. Rising prices led to an emphasis on value and deal-seeking.”

– **Brittany Steiger, Senior Analyst, Retail and eCommerce**

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