

# Back to College Shopping - US - 2023

Report Price: £3695 | \$4995 | €4400

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## This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of inflation on back to college shopping
- Back to college shopping participation and approach
- Behaviors and attitudes toward back to college shopping
- Shopping influences and social commerce behaviors among college students

Back to college spending marks a critical time of year for young adults to make purchases for themselves to support higher learning. In total, back to college spending was expected to reach \$73.9 billion in 2022, accounting for roughly two thirds of the broader back to school market. In recent years, the college market has faced significant disruptions, as the pandemic temporarily derailed on-campus learning and accelerated remote and distance learning capabilities. Now, with inflation at a 40-year high, students are navigating college life with the added challenge of higher prices and new economic pressures.

College is already expensive, between rising costs for tuition and housing. Outside of education costs, the average back to college consumer is expected to spend nearly \$1,200 on college purchases (excluding tuition and living expenses). That's a lot for students to budget for, considering more than half of students manage their college expenses on their own, independently from their parents. As a result, today's students have a renewed focus on value and are more closely watching their budgets as they seek savings and opportunities to reuse or shop in the secondhand market.

Despite the focus on savings, college students are active and enthusiastic consumers who are exerting their independence and establishing their identity. This is a critical time for brands and retailers to connect and build affinity with young consumers. Brands that can generate value, foster authentic communications and leverage viral trends or social commerce opportunities will gain the attention of this core demographic.



“College spending comprises two thirds of the total back to school market, driven by extensive needs for school. Overall, students are enthusiastic consumers who are eager to assert their independence, making the season a critical time for brands to build affinity with young consumers.”

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

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