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Families with children in elementary through high school plan to spend an average ...

Isaac M. O'Bannon • Jul. 19, 2022



As inflation continues to rise, one-third of consumers (38%) said they are cutting back in other spending areas to cover the cost of items for the upcoming school year, according to the [annual survey](#) released today by the National Retail Federation and Prosper Insights & Analytics. Families expect to spend more per person on both K-12 and college items this year as a result of higher prices.

“Families consider back-to-school and college items as an essential category, and

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spending has increased dramatically since the onset of the pandemic, as families adjusted to changes from virtual and hybrid learning. Compared to 2019, back-to-school shoppers are expected to spend \$168 more on average, and total spending is up \$11 billion.

Total back-to-college spending is expected to reach nearly \$74 billion, up from last year's record of \$71 billion and the highest in the survey's history. More college students and their families plan to shop this year compared to last and anticipate spending an average of \$1,199 on college or university items, consistent with last year's record of \$1,200. Since 2019, total expected spending on back-to-college has grown by \$19 billion and consumers are spending \$223 more on average than they were prior to the pandemic. Nearly half of this increase comes from spending on electronics and dorm or apartment furnishings.

Like other recent holidays, shoppers are starting early to find the best deals and help spread out their budgets. As of early July, more than half (56%) of shoppers had started shopping for school and college supplies.

Consumers may be even more motivated to get a jump start on their back-to-class shopping this year given the impact of inflation and higher prices. A majority (68%) of survey respondents said they have seen higher prices on school items. Clothing and accessories and school supplies were among the top areas where consumers have noticed higher prices.

There is still plenty of shopping outstanding, with the vast majority (85%) of back-to-school and college families indicating they have at least half of their shopping remaining. The top reasons why consumers have not checked items off their list are because they do not know what is needed yet and they are waiting for the best deals.

Given this year's inflationary pressure, traditional sales events may play an even

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Insights Executive Vice President of Strategy Phil Rist said.

Compared with their pre-pandemic habits, back-to-school and college shoppers plan to concentrate their shopping rather than spreading it out across multiple destinations. The top five back-to-school shopping destinations are online (50%), department stores (45%), discount retailers (40%), clothing stores (37%) and electronics stores (28%). Top back-to-college shopping destinations are online (43%), followed by department stores (36%), discount stores (29%), office supply stores (27%) and college bookstores (26%).

The survey of 7,830 consumers, the most comprehensive back-to-class annual survey, was conducted June 30-July 7 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 1.1 percentage points.

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