

# The Pandemic Has Driven Boomers to Increase Their Digital Shopping

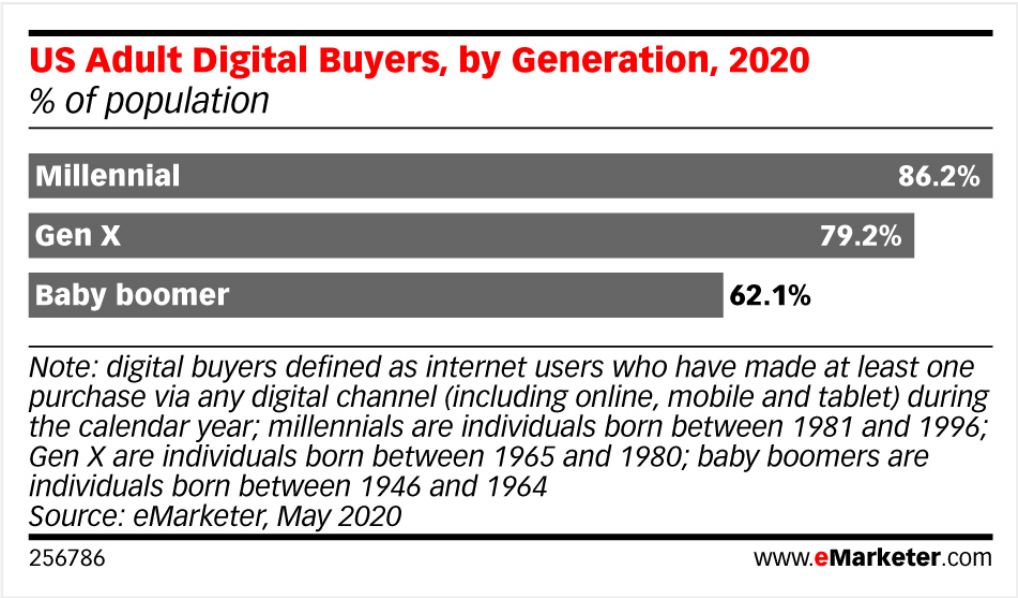
Some of these behaviors are likely to stick post-pandemic

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**eMarketer Editors**

**A**s the pandemic caused widespread shutdowns, consumers who traditionally preferred brick-and-mortar retail shifted at least some of their spending to digital channels.

When transacting purchases, many boomers have adopted ecommerce — though it's yet another area where they lag behind younger adults. We estimate that 62.1% of boomers in the US will be digital buyers this year, well short of the percentages of Gen Xers and millennials.



The pandemic has given impetus to boomers’ usage of digital options for shopping, including for groceries. “Prior to the pandemic, boomers were least likely to give up their familiar grocery shopping habits,” said Jana Davis, director of research at Acosta Sales & Marketing, who was interviewed for our recent report, “[Better Be Nice to the Boomers.](#)”

However, COVID-19 has led to new priorities of social distancing and safety, Davis said. Citing her firm’s research, she noted that in March and April, more than 30% of boomers had tried online grocery shopping or were considering it. “And at least some of them plan to stick with it long term.”

It’s partly a matter of having mastered a new skill. “Boomers have leaned into online grocery shopping at an accelerated rate and appear to be getting the hang of it,” she said. For instance, Acosta’s research found that “83% [of boomers] have been very or extremely satisfied with the ease of building an online cart.”

Though a majority of boomers buy online, it has not been their first choice of retail venue in normal times. [TD Bank](#) polling from September and October 2019 found 87% of boomers saying they preferred to shop in physical stores. Asked in a December 2019 [Shopkick](#) survey to say where they planned to do the majority of their 2020 shopping, 67% of boomers cited physical stores—as did 59% of Gen Xers and 57% of millennials.

But again, the pandemic quickly upended many shopping habits. Polling by **First Insight** found a steep rise between late February and mid-March in the proportion of boomers saying they had shifted buying to online, from 8% in the earlier survey to 34% in the later one.

A June 2020 release of data from the **National Retail Federation (NRF)** showed 45% of boomers shopping more online due to the pandemic. **CouponFollow** polling fielded mid-March through May found nearly half of boomers saying they increased their online spending during that period of quarantines.

Now that more boomers are accustomed to using ecommerce, this new buying behavior is likely to live on, and even expand, post-pandemic. "Once they've gotten through the initial learning curve, many will stick with it," said Marc Mezzacca, founder of CouponFollow. In the meantime, they may temper the unfamiliarity of ecommerce by conducting it through retailers they've long patronized in person. "I don't think boomers have strayed too far from the brands they know in the physical world," he said. "In our research, boomers were the least likely generation to try new online stores, but one in five shopped online for the first time at a well-known discount-buying club or superstore like Walmart, Costco or Sam's Club."

eMarketer PRO subscribers can read more about the financial strengths of boomers vs. other generations in this time of recession.

**Report** by Mark Dolliver Aug 03, 2020

**Better Be Nice to the Boomers**

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**They're the Ones with Money  
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