

The pandemic is altering what, how, and where consumers are shopping

Article

The news: The pandemic, along with inflation and supply chain issues, has had a sizable impact on consumer shopping behaviors. For example, **62%** of consumers said their in-store shopping habits have changed over the past year, [per](#) a new survey by Shopkick.

- **80%** of consumers said price increases have made them more likely to wait on making a purchase until there is a sale or coupon.

- **65%** would buy the next-best option if their favorite brand was sold out or low in stock.
- **49%** are buying less overall.

The pandemic has also altered the items that people buy, per Catalina’s Buyer Intelligence Platform reported on by Supermarket News.

- For example, beauty and personal care sales rebounded in 2021 from 2020, but remain depressed over the longer term. Take face cosmetics sales, which rose **21%** last year, but remained down **14%** when looking on a two-year basis.

Coronavirus Impact: Expected Change in Shopping Behavior Among US Adults Due to the Delta Variant, Aug 2021

% of respondents



Source: Pitney Bowes, "BOXpoll" conducted by Morning Consult as cited in company blog, Sep 21, 2021

269797 eMarketer | InsiderIntelligence.com

More on this: The large share of consumers who now work from home at least part of the time has had a pronounced impact on shopping behaviors.

- **60%** of consumers expect to work from home at least 50% of the time, and 40% plan to about 25% of the time, per a 2021 WD Partners survey that was **presented** at NRF 2022. Moreover, no consumers expected to return to the office five days a week. Those results have far-reaching implications as they help explain why there are a number of vacancies in prominent urban shopping districts such as San Francisco's Union Square where **Crate & Barrel**, **The Gap**, **DSW**, and **H&M** have all recently shuttered their stores.

- With all these workers staying at home, ecommerce is now the preferred method of shopping going forward for **68%** of respondents, up from less than 30% before the pandemic in 2019.
- And if these shoppers do visit a physical store in the future, **37%** of respondents said they'd be most likely to choose "local," or within a three-mile radius.
- That puts the onus on retailers to locate stores where their customers are. Some retailers have already taken steps to do so, such as **Target's** local stores, convenience store and delivery service **Foxtrot**, which operates in urban neighborhoods in Chicago, Dallas, Washington, DC, and Virginia, as well as **Ulta Beauty's** locally focused stores.

The big takeaway: Retailers need to recognize and adapt to evolving shopping behaviors. While there are numerous short-term issues that have driven consumers to shop online, shop locally, and shift the items they purchase, once formed, those habits are likely here to stay.