

5 key stats on back-to-school 2024 for retailers: Location, timing, and pricing

Article



Although price is crucial in back-to-school shopping this year, consumers are ready to spend. Discounting will be essential for [retailers](#) to secure their share of back-to-school sales, as will

employing omnichannel strategies to connect the physical and digital experience.

Here are five key stats to help navigate this year's back-to-school season.

1. Back-to-school sales will grow slower than last year

Key stat: Total US back-to-school sales will reach \$81.16 billion this year, a 3.2% increase YoY, down from 7.2% growth in 2023, per our forecast.

- Over half (57%) of US consumers will conduct their back-to-school shopping online, per the National Retail Federation's (NRF) annual survey. Other shopping destinations include department stores (50%), discount stores (47%), clothing stores (42%), and electronics stores (23%).
- Families with children in elementary through high school plan to spend an average of \$874.68 on clothing, shoes, school supplies, and electronics, per NRF. This is about \$15 less than last year's \$890.07 but is the second-highest amount in the survey's history.

What it means: Consumers will spend on back-to-school supplies this year, but some shoppers' budgets may be limited by the tough economy.

- Over half (55.3%) of parents plan to spend less, per JLL's 2024 Back-to-School Shopping Report.
- Of that number, 34.9% say they're spending less because of inflation.
- Low-income parents (those with less than \$50,000 in household income) planning to curb their spending because of inflation will cut their budgets by 18.3%, on average.

2. Retailers can sell more than just back-to-school supplies

Key stat: 50% of parents plan to purchase something for themselves during back-to-school shopping, according to Deloitte's 2024 back-to-school survey.

- Parents who shop for themselves while shopping for their children are likely to spend 1.4 times more than those who don't, per Deloitte.
- 61% of parents say their children influence them to spend more on shopping trips.

What it means: Retailers can encourage consumers to buy more by promoting additional items (like adult apparel or electronics) alongside school supplies or making the shopping experience more engaging for children.

3. Consumers have started—but not finished—their shopping

Key stat: As of early July, more than half (55%) of K-12 and college shoppers began back-to-school shopping, per NRF.

- However, the majority (86%) of consumers still have at least half of their purchases left to complete.
- The top reasons consumers still have shopping to do are because they are waiting for the best deals (45%) or they don't know what is needed yet (45%).

What it means: There's still time for retailers to grow their share of back-to-school sales.

- Retailers should strategically employ discounts throughout the rest of July and August to attract deal-seeking consumers.
- Consider placing “must-have” hubs (stocked with essentials like pencils, notebooks, and folders) or supply lists across the store to help parents stock up for the upcoming year.

4. Price matters most to shoppers

Key stat: Price (84%) is the No. 1 factor in influencing shoppers where to buy back-to-school items, according to [Ankura's 2024 Back-to-School Shopping Survey](#).

- To help cover costs, 44% of parents plan to use rewards or [loyalty](#) points for back-to-school shopping.
- In fact, 82% of back-to-school shoppers find loyalty and rewards programs at least somewhat influential when deciding where to purchase items.

What it means: Retailers should lean on deep discounts and loyalty programs to get consumers in-store (or online).

- The more personalized the program, the better—61% of US adults say they value loyalty programs tailored to their shopping preferences, while 57% say they value special

offers/discounts based on their shopping habits, according to a March 2024 survey from Bizrate Insights.

- Back-to-school sales can also boost app adoption. Half of US shoppers use retail apps to get the best prices, while 46% use them to get loyalty rewards, per a May 2024 survey from SPAR Group.

5. Most consumers prefer to shop in-store

Key stat: 74% of consumers will do their back-to-school shopping in-store this year, per Sensormatic Solutions' 2024 U.S. Back-to-School Consumer Sentiment Survey.

- 43% of shoppers say they'll use buy online, pick up in store (BOPIS) services for back-to-school purchases (up from 34% in 2023) and 25% will use curbside pickup (compared with 19% in 2023).
- Despite the fact that we expect the majority (65.1%) of US back-to-school sales will take place in-store this year, ecommerce continues to grow its share of sales, increasing from 31.5% of total back-to-school sales in 2021 to 34.9% in 2024.

What it means: Retailers should ensure back-to-school shopping is as convenient as possible. Brick-and-mortar retailers need seamless BOPIS and curbside pickup services, while ecommerce retailers should provide an easy search and checkout experience.

Retailers with both physical and digital presence must connect these experiences through mobile apps and loyalty programs, allowing consumers to browse and buy however they like.

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