



THOUGHT STARTER

Remember back-to-school shopping? It's back.

After an exceptionally difficult 2020–21 school year, there is more optimism among returning students and parents, who are hoping for a more conventional routine.

As September approaches, Ipsos eNation Omnibus is focusing on back-to-school spending trends and families' expectations for the academic year ahead.

By midsummer, 42% of households with children heading to school this year had already started their back-to-school purchases. According to the National Retail Federation, parents with children heading to elementary through high school plan to spend an average of \$850 on back-to-school items this year, up 7.5% from last year. Parents of college students expect to spend 13% more.

With the anticipation of in-class learning during the 2020–21 school year, few families expect to spend less this year on back-to-school items; most are expecting to spend the same or exceed last year's expenditures. Younger parents, in particular, will be spending more getting ready for the school year. Clothing and shoes are high-priority purchases for kids, while technology-based products and school supplies remain must-have items.

How back-to-school spending will compare to last year

	Spend More	Same	Spend Less
Overall spending	43%	48%	9%
Clothing	44%	50%	6%
School Supplies	40%	53%	7%
Shoes	38%	55%	7%
Technology based	30%	61%	9%

The National Retail Federation indicates half (49%) of parents with school-aged children say their kids are most excited to shop for apparel this year, up from 42% last year. After 18 months of living in pajama pants, Ipsos was curious how students will dress this year, and found that comfort will still rule most purchase decisions.

Statements that reflect child(ren)'s feelings about back-to-school apparel this school year:

35%	Doesn't plan to dress any different than last year
32%	Comfort is more important than looks
23%	Actually look forward to dressing for school
19%	School wardrobe will be especially important
16%	Back-to-school wardrobe needs a major update
11%	Not interested in new clothes for school
10%	Sweats, yoga, pajama attire will be normal school wear





According to Seventeen magazine, spending for teenage girls rose 9%, while spending on boys fell 16% from a year ago. For both genders, apparel and shoes are a significant portion of what parents will buy. On this year's must-have list: high-end sport apparel and shoes (i.e., Adidas, Under Armour); leggings; skorts; and cool secondhand finds. Even comfortable "Mom jeans" have made a comeback.

Back-to-school trends, of course, could be affected by the rise of the Delta variant. Although many studies suggest schools can open without worry, the debate continues among parents and school officials about how in-class learning can be safely accomplished. Ipsos looked at parents' preferences for this school year amid the uncertainty, and found that in-person learning was the clear preference, with women even more likely (70%) to prefer all in-class education.

If could choose, would most prefer for child(ren) 2021/22 school year:

All in-class learning	61%
Hybrid: online and in-class	22%
All online	11%
Doesn't make a difference	6%

Few parents want a repeat of the last year-and-a-half, when so many school events were canceled or restricted. So, what are this year's expectations? It's encouraging to see most parents are very hopeful for a year without major interruptions due to the coronavirus.

How likely do you think it is that the 2021–22 school year will go smoothly, without major COVID interruptions?

Likely (net)	75%
Extremely likely	27%
Somewhat likely	48%
Unlikely (net)	25%
Somewhat unlikely	19%
Extremely unlikely	6%

Why Ipsos eNation Omnibus?

Want to learn more about how Americans feel? Try Ipsos eNation Omnibus. One of the most important aspects of marketing is knowing your audience. The Ipsos eNation Omnibus is the ideal marketing tool because it can quickly measure public opinion and consumer attitudes about any topic, any time. Our rapid-response research is affordable, efficient, accurate, flexible and includes overnight and custom study options. These actionable Ipsos insights can be incorporated into your marketing strategy immediately.

Our **Back-To-School Spending study** provides details on how American parents expect to spend getting their families ready for a new school year. This valuable information allows you to optimize messaging on an infinite number of products and categories or identify growth with potential product extensions.

If you would like complimentary access to this **Back-To-School Spending study**, a copy of a past Thought Starter omnibus study, or to learn more about eNation Omnibus, please contact us today.

Ipsos eNation Omnibus Thought Starters still available:

- Summer Vacations
- Our Homes During COVID Times
- 2020 Year-In-Review
- End of Summer
- Recycling

Ipsos U.S. eNation Omnibus completes five national surveys each week. Ipsos Omnibus offers a variety of services, including overnight and custom studies. Data for this study was generated by an Ipsos eNation online omnibus study of 390 American adults with children attending school (from pre-K to college) this school year, conducted July 19–21, 2021. If you would like complimentary access to this Back-To-School Spending Study, or to learn more about eNation omnibus, please contact:

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