



THOUGHT STARTER

## Back-to-school shopping is off to a slower start amid record inflation

Fewer Americans say they've started back-to-school shopping, but almost everyone expects to spend the same—or more than last year

By Chris Deeney

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Back-to-school shopping is off to a slower start this year, compared to last year
- School safety ranks slightly above COVID concerns, with women especially expressing their preference for home learning due to safety concerns compared to men
- 60% of parents say they will not let inflation prevent them from enrolling their kids in extracurricular activities this year





Now that COVID has been a part of our lives for over two years, many expect the return to school will be smooth. Students and adults have learned to adjust and make life work when faced with unexpected disruptions. Ipsos eNation Omnibus checked in with parents to find out how they are preparing for this upcoming school year.

Notably, fewer households with school-aged children have already started their back-to-school purchases—34% this year compared to 42% last year, new Ipsos polling shows. But families are prioritizing back-to-school spending even amidst rising inflation, according to the National Retail Federation: Parents with children heading to elementary through high school plan to spend an average of \$864 on back-to-school items this year, \$15 more than last year and a whopping \$168 more than 2019. Parents of college students expect to spend the same this year, \$1,200, as spent in 2021.

With the continued expectations of in-class learning during the 2022–23 school year and facing inflation challenges, Ipsos polling found that few families expect to spend less this year on back-to-school purchases.

Expected back-to-school spending compared to last year:			
	Spend More	Same	Spend Less
Overall spending	46%	42%	12%
Clothing	46%	44%	10%
School Supplies	42%	47%	11%
Shoes	39%	50%	11%
Technology based	33%	51%	16%

How inflation will affect back-to-school shopping this year:	
Net	71%
A lot	27%
Somewhat	44%
Net	29%
Not Much	22%
Not at all	7%

While most parents (60%) say they will not let inflation prevent them from enrolling their kids in extracurricular activities this year, not everyone is able to make the same decision.

Will inflation prevent enrolling kids in extracurricular activities this year:				
	Total	<\$50K	\$50K–<\$100K	>\$100K
No	60%	50%	59%	69%
Not sure	21%	25%	24%	16%
Yes	19%	25%	17%	15%

So, what are this year’s expectations as children head back to school? Most parents are hopeful for a year without major interruptions due to the coronavirus.

How likely do you think it is that the 2022–23 school year will go smoothly, without major COVID interruptions?	
Likely (net)	74%
Extremely likely	21%
Somewhat likely	53%
Unlikely (net)	26%
Somewhat unlikely	19%
Extremely unlikely	7%

Back-to-school trends could be affected by the recent increase of COVID cases. However, now that vaccines and boosters are available for children, schools are likely to be open this upcoming semester. Ipsos looked at parents’ preferences for this school year amid the newest BA.5 variant, and found that in-person learning was the clear preference. Women were significantly more likely (65%) than men (50%) to prefer all in-class teaching.

If I could choose, I would most prefer for child(ren) 2022–23 school year:	
All in-class learning	58%
Hybrid: online and in-class	21%
All online	14%
Doesn't make a difference	7%



Those answering all online or both online and in-class learning were asked why they would prefer at least some e-learning. We discovered school safety ranked slightly above COVID concerns. Women (63%) especially expressed their preference for home learning due to safety concerns compared to men (52%).

**Why I prefer all or some online learning 2022–23 school year (Multiple responses allowed):**

	Total	Men	Women
School safety concerns	56%	52%	63%
COVID concerns	51%	51%	50%
Just like having kids home	41%	36%	48%
Bully concerns	21%	13%	31%

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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.

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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 416 Americans with children attending school (from pre-K to college) this school year, conducted July 11–13, 2022. 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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