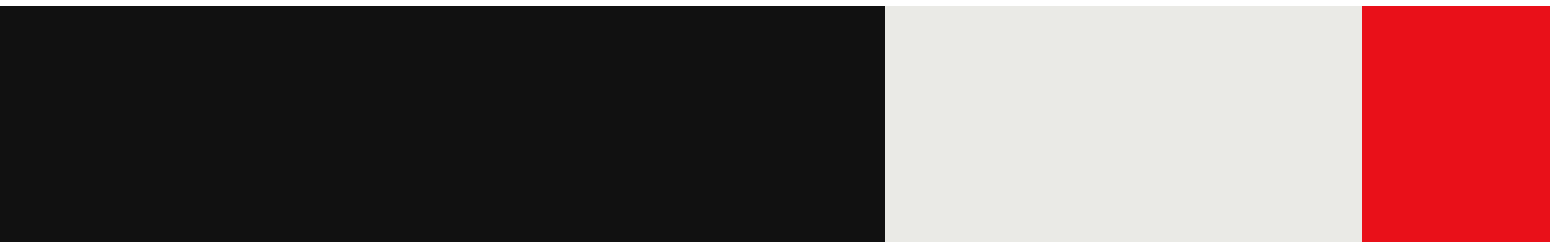



Back-to-school sales will rise 3.2% this year

Article



The forecast: Back-to-school sales will rise 3.2% year over year (YoY) this year to \$81.16 billion, according to [our forecast](#). While that's a slowdown from last year's 7.2% gain, it is in line with historical norms.

Ecommerce's lure: [We expect](#) ecommerce sales will account for 34.9% of those sales, or \$28.34 billion. That's a 1.4-percentage-point gain YoY and a massive 11.6-percentage-point leap from pre-pandemic 2019, with consumers steadily shifting more of their spending on back-to-school items online since 2021.

Our forecast dovetails with a [JLL consumer survey](#) that found roughly two-thirds (66.6%) of back-to-school customers will shop at an online retailer. However, all but 10.1% of consumers shopping for school supplies and other goods will interact with a store in some way.

- Nearly a third (31.6%) of shoppers plan to buy an item online and pick it up curbside, a big jump from 20.0% last year.
- It's a similar story with click and collect, which 31.2% of consumers plan to use, up from 20.4% last year.

Back-to-school season creep: Just as the holiday shopping season has pulled up into October, and the [Halloween buying season crept into June](#), the back-to-school is starting earlier every year.

- One-third (33%) of US adults expected to begin back-to-school shopping by early July, per a March 2024 survey by LTK.
- Another 36% expected to begin shopping in July, which isn't surprising given the broad array of [July sales events](#) hosted by **Amazon, Walmart, Kohl's, and TikTok Shop**.

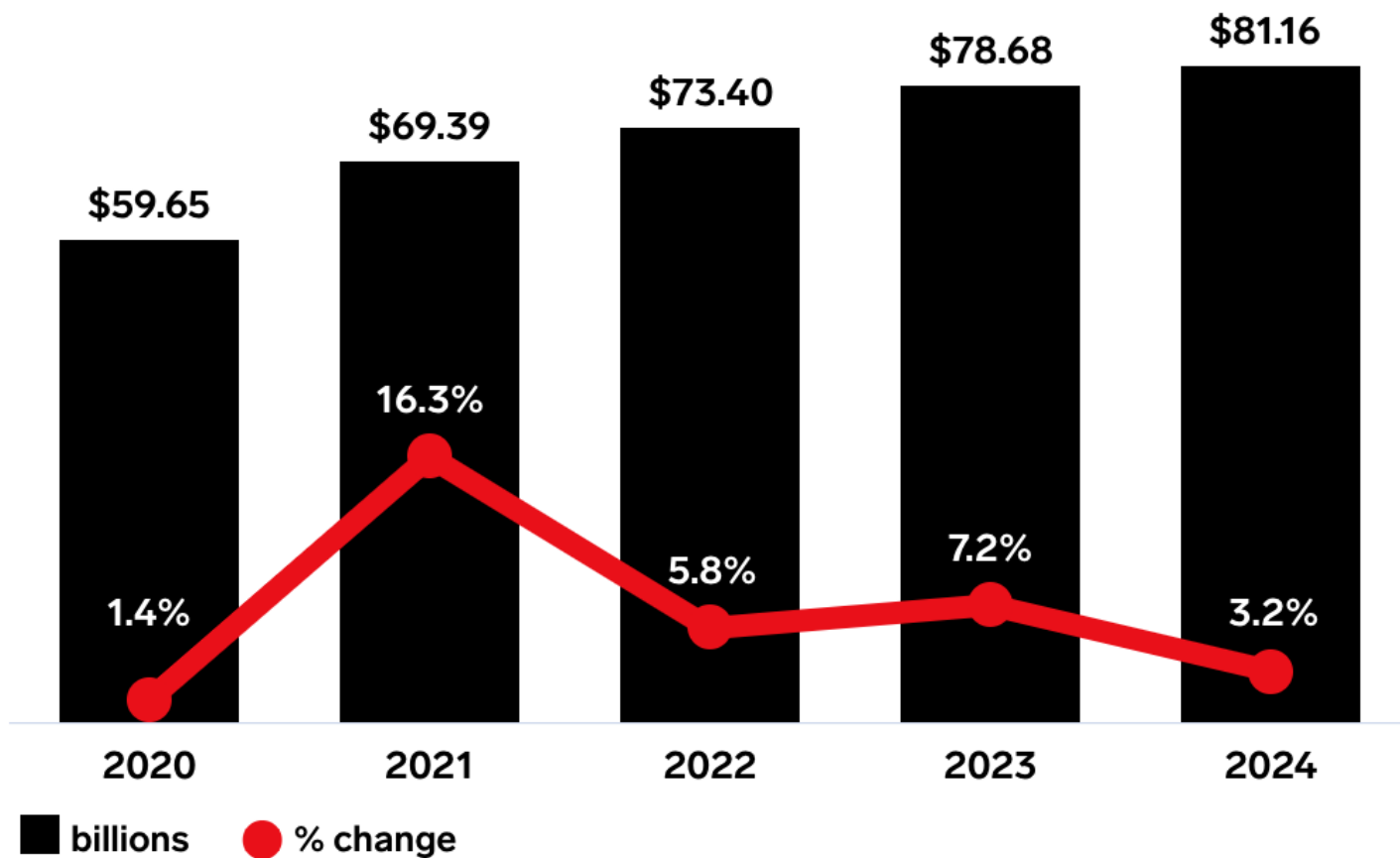
The big takeaway: The average consumer expects to spend \$475 on back-to-school shopping this year—a 21.8% jump over last year, per JLL.

- Even so, they remain focused on value. The majority (57.0%) of shoppers will look for sales, coupons, and deals this year.
- That share ticks up to 61.5% among consumers earning less than \$50,000.

Retailers can't afford to delay launching their back-to-school merchandising and promotions given the majority of shoppers aren't wasting any time looking for deals.

Retail Back-to-School Season Sales

US, 2020-2024



Note: sales are for the period in Q3 before the start of school each year among households with a child under 18 present and/or adults ages 18 to 24 attending postsecondary education

Source: EMARKETER Forecast, February 2024