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Survey Details Back-to-School Spending for 2019

The National Retail Federation (NRF) and Prosper Insights & Analytics recently released a survey detailing back-to-school spending for the 2019 school year. The survey looks at how American families plan to shop for clothing, supplies, and other items for the school year.

Record spending expected for 2019

As students prepare to go back to school and college, families are spending more than ever on school supplies. "Consumers are in a strong position given the nation's growing economy, and we see this reflected in what they say they will spend on back-to-class items this year," NRF president and CEO Matthew Shay said.

According to the NRF, families with children in elementary school through high school plan to spend an average of \$696.70, up from \$684.79 last year and topping the previous record of \$688.62 set in 2012. Families with college students are expected to spend even more — an average of \$976.78, which is up from \$942.17 last year and exceeds the previous record of \$969.88 set in 2017.

The survey also revealed that total combined spending for K-12 and college is projected to reach \$80.7 billion. This figure is down from last year's \$82.8 billion, but is attributed to the decreased number of households surveyed with children in K-12 or attending college.

Spending trends

Clothing and accessories are expected to top K-12 families' expenses at an average of \$239.82, followed by electronics such as computers, calculators, and phones (\$203.44); and shoes (\$135.96) and supplies such as notebooks, pencils, backpacks, and lunch boxes (\$117.49). K-12 families plan to do most of their shopping at department stores (53%), discount stores (50%), online (49%), clothing stores (45%), and office supply stores (31%).

College shoppers plan to spend the most on electronics (\$234.69), followed by clothing and accessories (\$148.54), dorm and apartment furnishings (\$120.19), and food items (\$98.72). They plan to do most of their shopping online (45%), followed by department stores (39%), discount stores (36%), college bookstores (32%), and office supply stores (29%).

The survey shows that among K-12 shoppers, teens are expected to spend an average of \$36.71 of their own money, up from \$30.88 ten years ago. Pre-teens plan on spending \$26.40, up from \$11.94 ten years ago. According to Shay, "Members of Generation Z are clearly becoming more involved with back-to-school purchasing decisions rather than leaving the choices up to mom and dad."



Roughly half of consumers plan their back-to-school shopping around major sales events.

Source: 2019 NRF Back-to-School/College Spending Survey conducted by Prosper Insights & Analytics



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