



Retail

United States | 2017

Back-to-School 2017 Retail Survey: Discount supercenters get an A+ from shoppers

Retail Research Point of View



Back-to-School 2017 Retail Survey

point of view

Shoppers want to get the assignment done

When it comes to shopping for back-to-school, most parents plan to get it out of the way well in advance of the school season. More than half—57.0 percent—plan to start shopping at least two weeks before school begins. Another 30.5 percent will take care of the chore within the two weeks prior to the start of the season. However, 10.5 percent of shoppers will wait until after school starts. The reason is likely to be strategic, since supplies will cost less after school begins, as retailers offer additional discounts and sales to offload inventory.

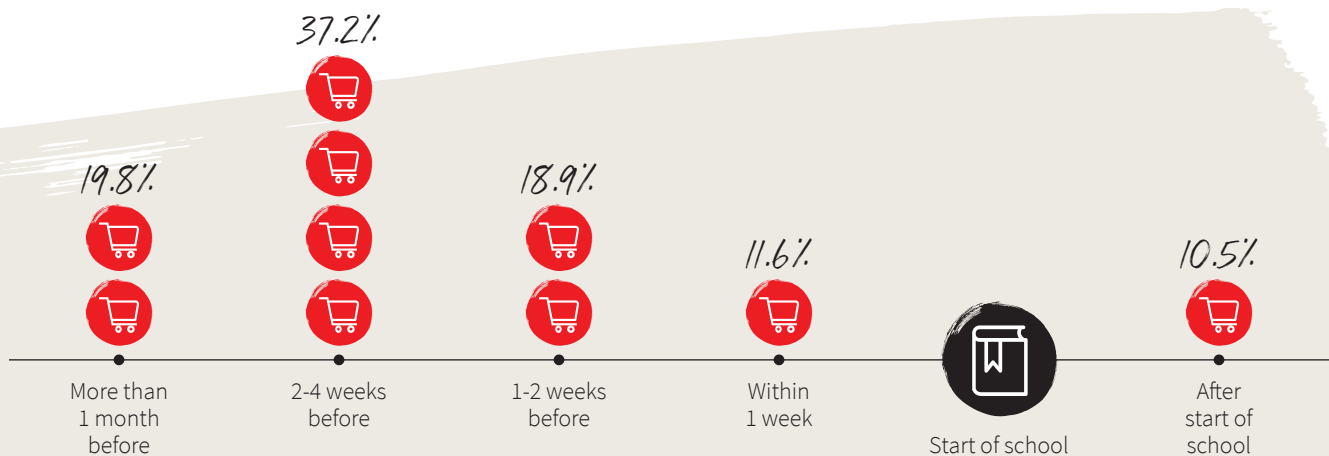


Parents willing to wait in order to save money

In fact, 47.6 percent of parents who shop after school starts prioritize low prices and discounts. Convenience—at 25.7 percent of respondents—is another important factor, as shoppers look to avoid the rush. On the other hand, those who shop more than a month before school begins focus more on quality and selection than the average parent. They are also more likely to be older; 30.0 percent of 65+ year-olds do their shopping more than a month before the school season.



When will parents start back-to-school shopping?





Parents looking for quality are willing to shop around

Not only do parents want to get their back-to-school shopping done early, they want to do it as efficiently as possible. A little more than half—52.7 percent—of shoppers plan to only visit 1-2 retailers. Given that discount stores are overwhelmingly the most popular choice for back-to-school shopping, this makes sense, since these stores offer a wide selection including stationery, electronics and apparel. That being said, some parents – especially those looking for quality—like to shop around. Almost 38 percent of parents will shop at 3-5 retailers. Another 9.8 percent will shop at more than 5 stores.

While women are more likely to shop at 3-5 stores, men are somewhat more likely to shop at 6 or more stores. Quality and the availability of coupons or discounts become more important as the number of stores shopped increases. For instance, 20.4 percent of those shopping at 6 or more stores, prioritize quality while only 11 percent of those shopping at 1-2 stores do. Similarly, shoppers visiting 6 or more retailers are twice as likely to focus on coupons and special discounts as those visiting only a couple of locations.

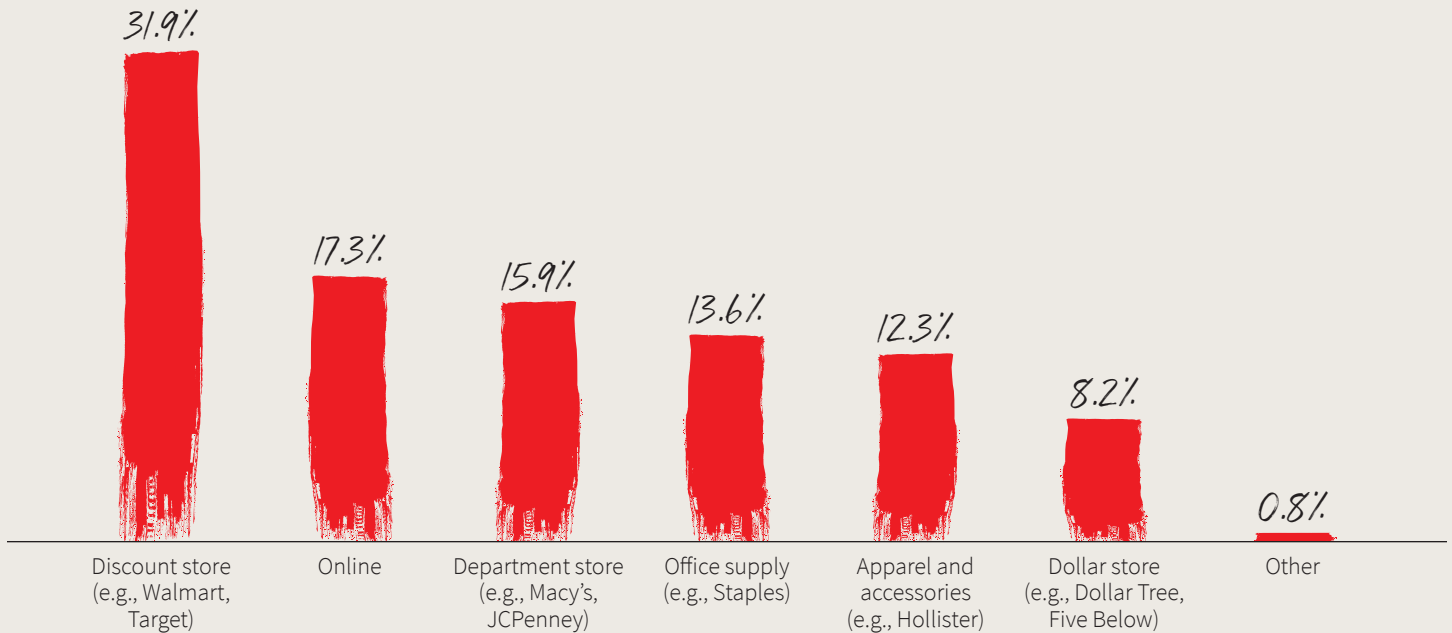


- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-8
- More than 8

Source: JLL Research, BTS Survey 2017

For parents, cost is king and selection is queen

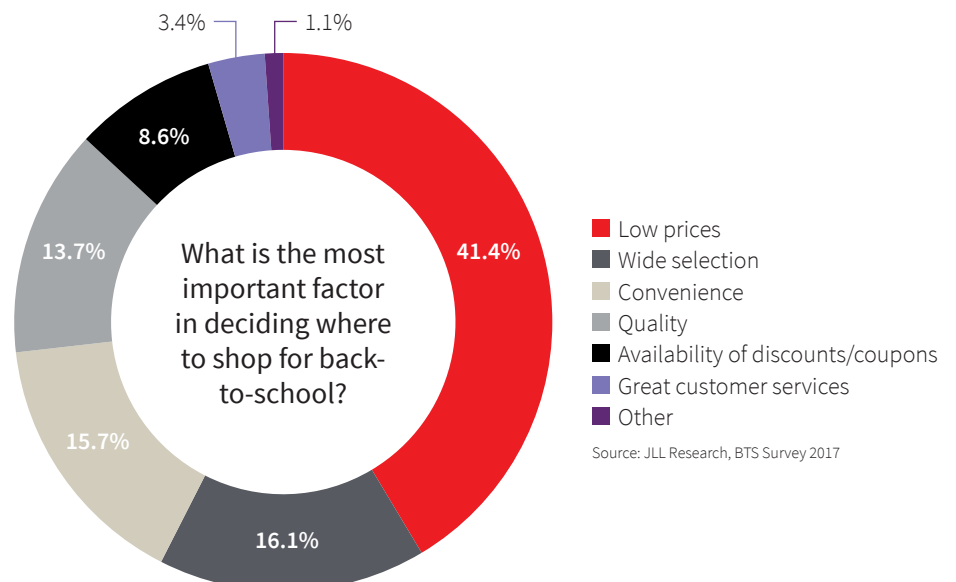
Saving money is the number one focus of parents shopping for back-to-school. This is true regardless of a shopper's income, geography or age. More than 41 percent of parents prioritize low prices above all other factors, while wide selection came in second with 16.1 percent of shoppers. As a result, discount supercenters like Target are the most popular back-to-school shopping destinations; 31.9 percent of parents will primarily shop at a discount store, largely because of their low prices and wide selection.



Source: JLL Research, BTS Survey 2017



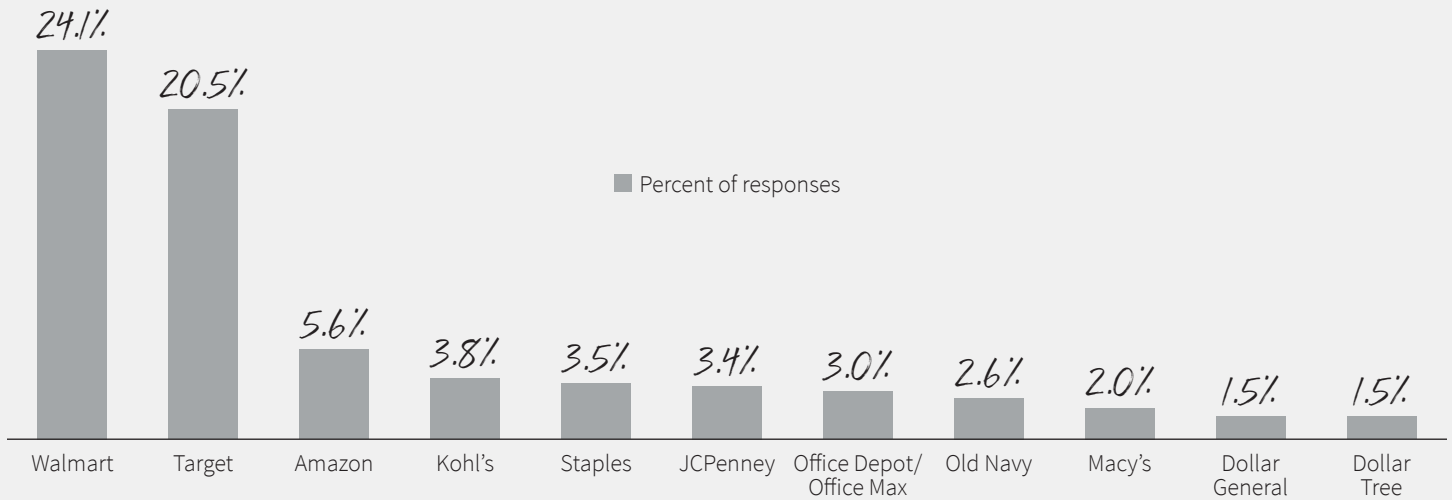
Online retailers were the second most popular destination, with 17.3 percent of shoppers. While price was the number one factor for shopping online, convenience was also key; more than 20 percent of online shoppers prioritized convenience. While only 12.3 percent of parents plan to mainly shop at dollar stores, 53.4 percent of them care mostly about low prices.



Source: JLL Research, BTS Survey 2017

When asked to name their top three back-to-school destinations, shoppers overwhelmingly chose Walmart, Target and Amazon. Other popular retailers include Kohl's, Staples and JCPenney.

Top back-to-school shopping destinations

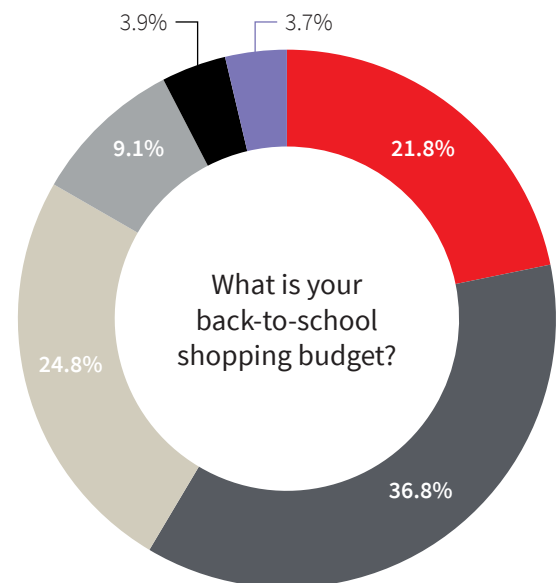


Source: JLL Research, BTS Survey 2017



Parents with lower budgets will stick to 1 or 2 stores

The majority (58.6 percent) of back-to-school shoppers plan to keep their budgets under \$250. Those with lower budgets plan to restrict their shopping to only a couple stores. Roughly one-third of parents plan to spend between \$250 and \$750, and more than half of them will visit between 3 and 5 stores to get what they need. Big spenders (whose budgets exceed \$750) are much more willing to visit more than 6 stores to check off everything on their lists.

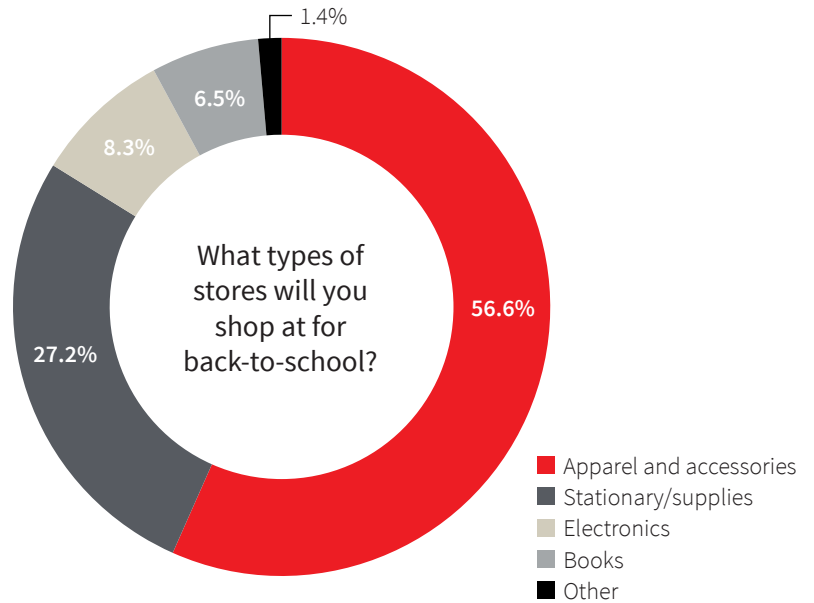


- Less than \$100
- \$100-\$250
- \$251-\$500
- \$501-\$750
- \$751-\$1,000
- More than \$1,000

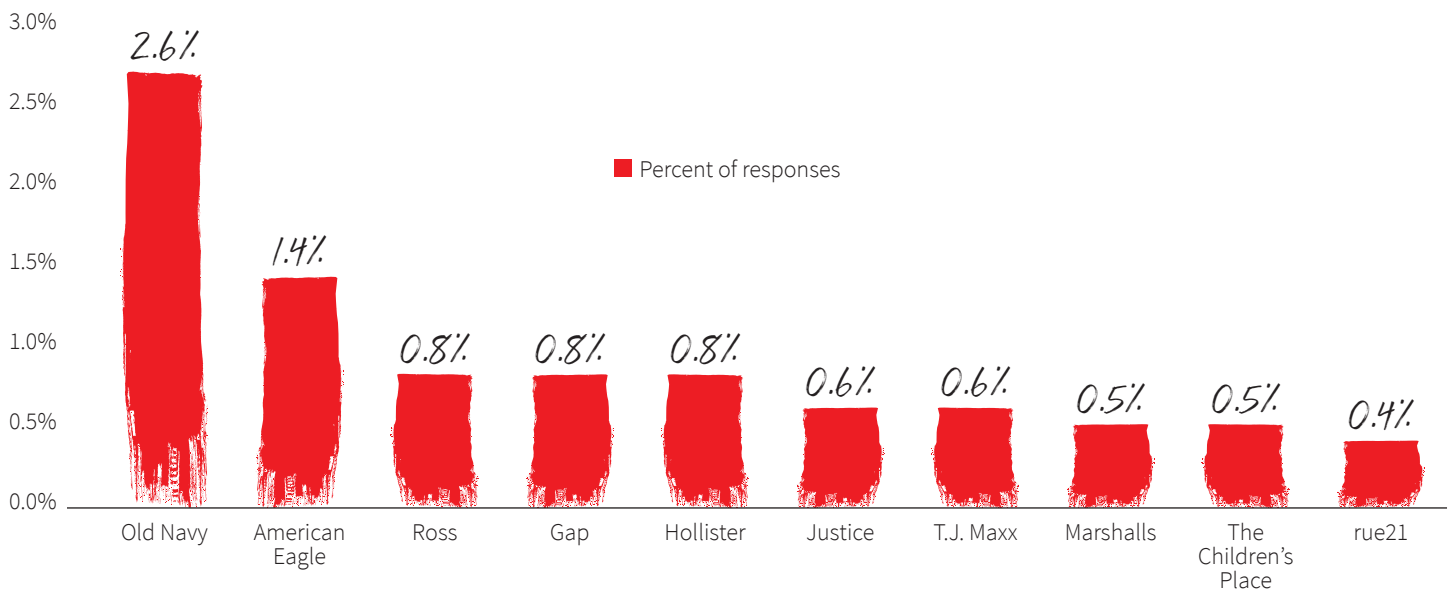
Source: JLL Research, BTS Survey 2017

Back-to-school shoppers will spend big on clothes

More than half of shoppers—56.6 percent—plan to spend the majority of their budgets on clothes and accessories. However, the majority of these shoppers will focus on discounters and department stores for their apparel purchases. Walmart, Target and Kohl's were the top three retailers for those planning to spend most of their budgets on clothes. Parents also named several specialty apparel retailers in their shopping plans. Old Navy, American Eagle and Ross were the top specialty apparel retailers parents plan to visit this school season.



Old Navy tops the lists of specialty apparel retailers for back-to-school



Source: JLL Research, BTS Survey 2017

Online shopping plays second fiddle to bricks-and-mortar

Consumers still prefer to shop in-store to see and touch products in-person and this seems to be particularly true for back-to-school shopping. Approximately 17.3 percent will go online, largely because it's convenient to do so. The other 82.7 percent will shop at bricks-and-mortar stores. Parents with the biggest budgets (i.e. over \$750) were more likely to shop online, as were those with higher incomes. Older parents and urban shoppers were also more likely to browse online retailers for school supplies. Although discounters nabbed the top spot for all product categories, a healthy portion of parents shopping for books (23.9 percent) and electronics (21.1 percent) plan to head online.

Moms focus on cost and quality

Mothers shopping for back-to-school like to take their time. More than half (58.9 percent) plan to shop well before the school season begins, ranging from more than a month to a full 2 weeks before the start of school. While most men and women prefer to shop at only a couple of stores, women are much more likely than men to shop at 3-5 stores. This is because they value low prices and quality above convenience and a wide selection. As a result, not only do they prefer to visit discount stores, they will also spend time and money at department stores and dollar stores. Mothers are more likely to focus on soft goods, like apparel and accessories for their children, versus electronics and books. Some of their favorite stores include Old Navy and Kohl's.



Dads focus on time and tech

Dads want to “git ‘er done” when it comes to back-to-school shopping. While many fathers will get the shopping out of the way at least 2 weeks before school, a disproportionate number of Dads will wait until the week before, or even after, school starts. Perhaps this is because slightly more men than women will focus on 1-2 retailers to get their shopping done. Interestingly, there is a subset of Dads who are willing to shop at more than 5 stores for back-to-school—a 4+ percentage-point difference from Moms. While Dads are also shopping for apparel and accessories, they are likely to spend more on electronics, books, and even fidget spinners! While low prices are also a priority for fathers, they are more likely to shop at retailers with a wide selection and that offer convenient locations. As a result, more Dads head online. They're also more likely to pick up school stuff at office supply retailers. Favorite retailers include Staples and Macy's.

Men and women shop back-to-school differently

Women are more likely to shop...	Men are more likely to shop...
...more than 1 month before school starts	...right before school starts
...at 3-5 stores	...at less than 3 and more than 5 stores
...at retailers that offer quality and cost savings	...at retailers that offer convenience and wide selection
...at discount stores and dollar stores	...at office supply and online stores
...for clothes and accessories	...for electronics and books
...at Old Navy and Kohl's	...at Staples and Macy's

The watchwords for 2017 back-to-school are cost, convenience and clothes

While there will be some key differences in how parents shop for back-to-school this year, shoppers have a good deal in common. They want to save as much money as possible, either through low prices or special discounts and coupons; they want to visit as few stores as needed to get the things they need; and they plan to spend most of their budgets on clothing. Discounters, who offer low prices and wide selection, will win with consumers. While some parents will head online for convenience, the majority will visit bricks-and-mortar locations of department stores, office supply stores and dollar stores. Walmart and Target are universally popular with parents planning their back-to-school shopping, but other specialty retailers like Kohl's, Staples, JCPenney and Old Navy are also on shoppers' go-to lists.

Survey questions were asked of 1001 parents of school-age children in the U.S. The survey was conducted in June/July of 2017.



Cost, Convenience, Clothes

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