

EBOOK

FIELD AGENT®

BACK TO SCHOOL SHOPPING REPORT:

# Parents Unveil Insights and Emerging Trends for 2023-24

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



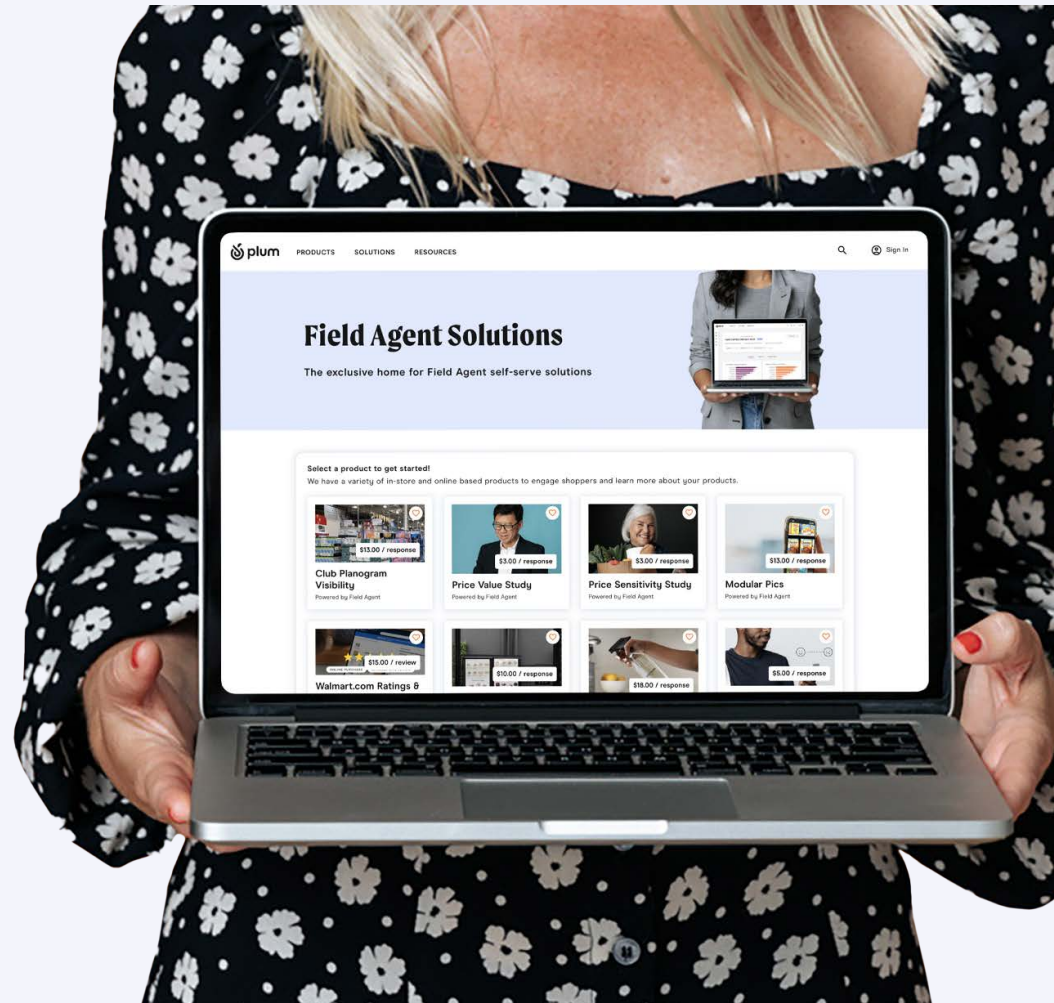
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# About Field Agent Inc.

Field Agent is a retail solutions provider that lets you audit stores, drive trial, generate reviews, and connect with shoppers.

Field Agent's on-demand platform allows companies of all sizes to get visibility, gather data, and send real shoppers in stores and online.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT FIELD AGENT →](#)

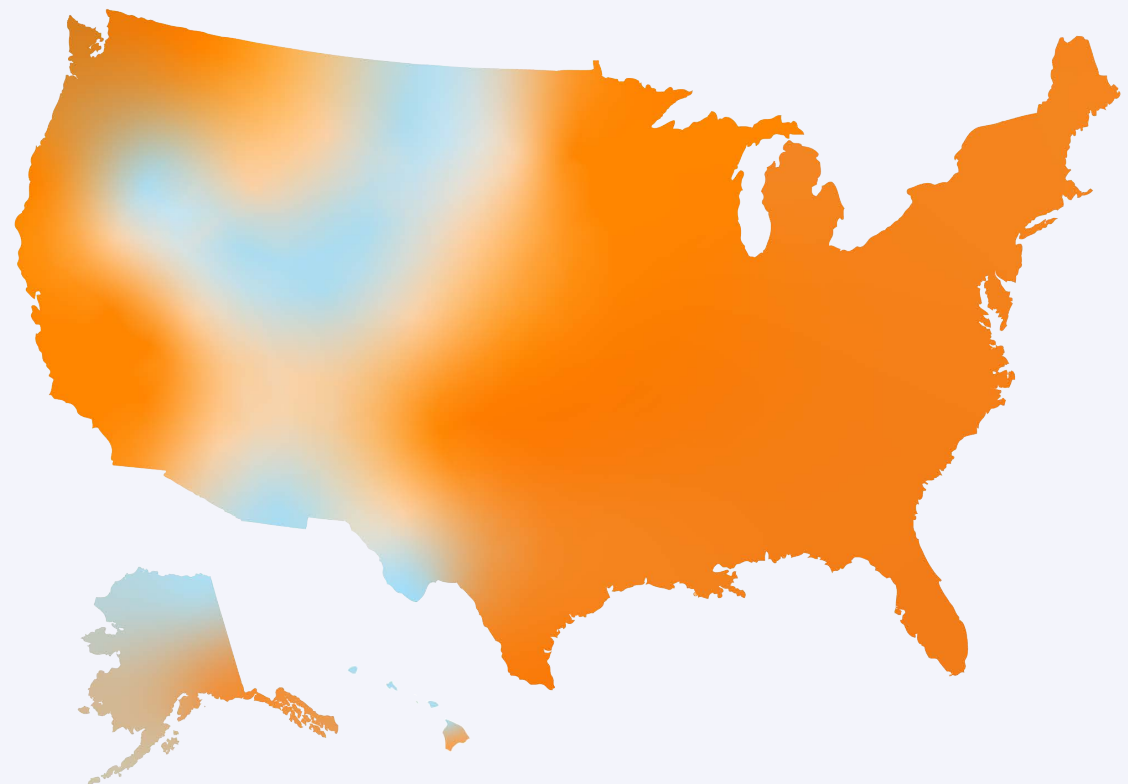


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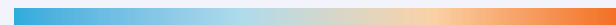
# Survey Demographics for Raw Back-to-School Data

Field Agent surveyed 1,250 parents of students entering kindergarten through grade 12 in the fall of 2023. All respondents were smartphone users at least 18 years old. The survey was completed entirely through the Field Agent mobile app from June 26 through June 29, 2023.

Full details about the survey demographics can be found on page 32.



LEAST SURVEYED



MOST SURVEYED

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# School's in Session: Introducing the 2023 Back to School Report

Back to School is not just the time when summer comes to a close and parents quietly rejoice. For the retail industry, Back to School refers to the second-largest shopping season of the year. Brands and retailers know it requires months of planning, organized workflows, and a solid go to market strategy.

Between basic school supplies, clothing, food for packed lunches and everything in-between—the sheer volume of data needed to succeed in various categories is overwhelming. This is why, each year, Field Agent surveys the true experts of the Back to School season: the parents.

In a three day span (June 26-29, 2023), Field Agent surveyed 1,250 parents of students K-12 for the 2023-2024 school year about their purchase intentions. They gave the scoop on Back to School brands, retailers, trends, and timelines — and Field Agent aggregated and analyzed the results to help you make data-informed decisions.

Pencils up. Let's begin.



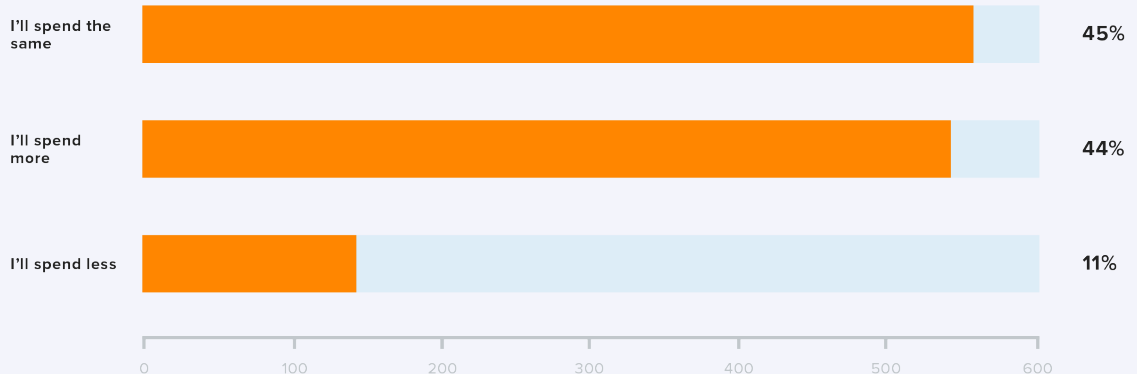
# 1 Investing in Success: Back to School Spending

If this isn't your first rodeo with us, you know that we ask parents the same question every single year: how much are you planning to dish out for Back to School?

With the state of the economy in 2022 that's trickled into 2023, it's no surprise that parents share that they're setting aside extra dollars to spend for their students' Back to School supplies. 89% said that they'd spend the same amount or more, with the remaining 11% expecting to pay a bit less.

Compared to last year, will your household likely spend more or less on Back-to-School shopping?

N = 1,249

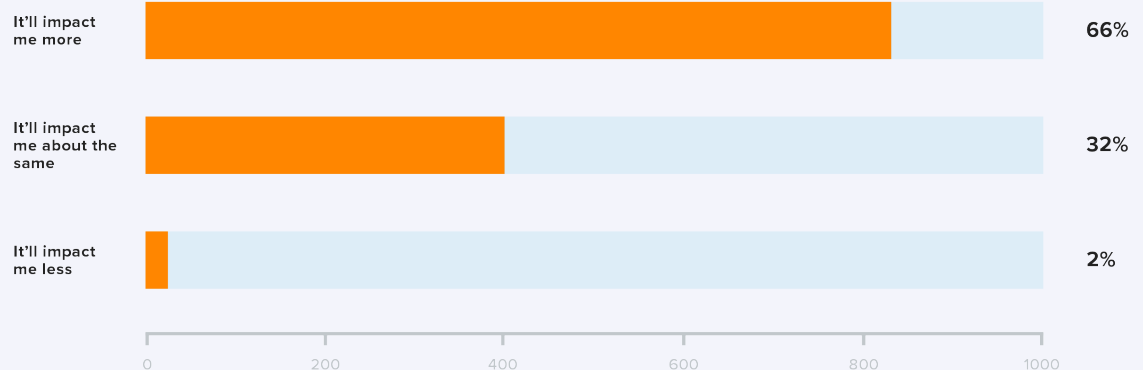


## 2 The Blame Game: Inflation

As many pandemic-related issues have subsided, inflation in the American economy seems to just be getting worse. As it's impacted industry after industry, it's settled into the supply chain—causing disruption in sticker prices. And, well, sticker shock.

Compared to last year, how much impact do you think inflation will have on your Back-to-School shopping?

N = 1,249



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**2 OUT OF 3 PARENTS EXPECT  
TO SPEND MORE BASED  
ON THE PERCEPTION OF  
INFLATION. EVERY ITEM,  
EVERY PURCHASE, IS UNDER  
MORE INTENSE SCRUTINY.  
*IS THIS REALLY NEEDED?***



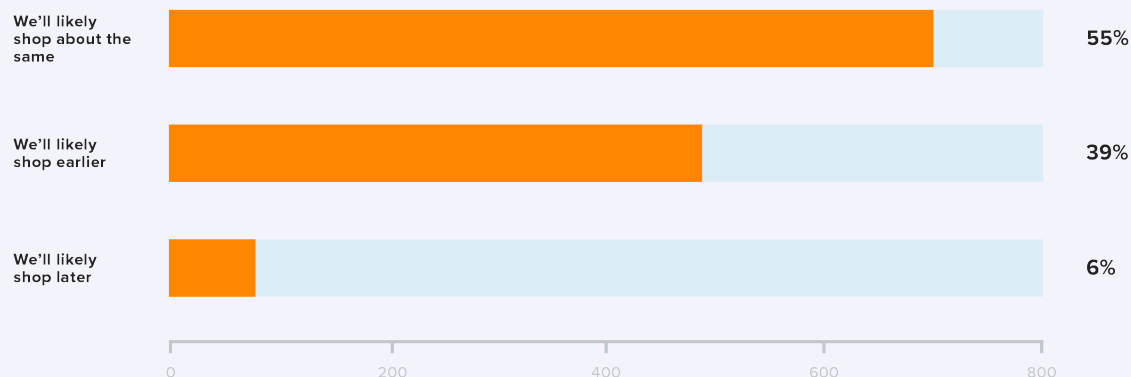
# 3 Time for You to Get a Watch

Dads tend to have a rep for their timing, right? “Early is on time, on time is late.” Don’t even get us started on what happens when they’re late.

Same goes for the 1,250 dads and moms of these K-12 students. When asked about how soon they anticipated shopping for their child’s Back to School items, only 77 said they’d be purchasing later than years previous.

## Compared to last year, when do you expect to shop for the 2023-24 Back-to-School season?

N = 1,249





## 4 What's Making the Cut Cart

Even before parents get in the car on their way to the store, they have a mental list forming. *I have my child's Back to School supply checklist from their school, but what else do I need?*

Pencils and notebooks are a given. Parents take the opportunity during their big shopping haul to stock up on other Back to School supplies that fit the season.

Survey says? Basic school supplies are at the top of the list, and other items fall steadily behind.

But what wasn't predictable was the shift in hand sanitizer and electronics. In last year's survey, 68% of parents said they would purchase hand sanitizer and, as shown, only 46% said they would pick some up this year.

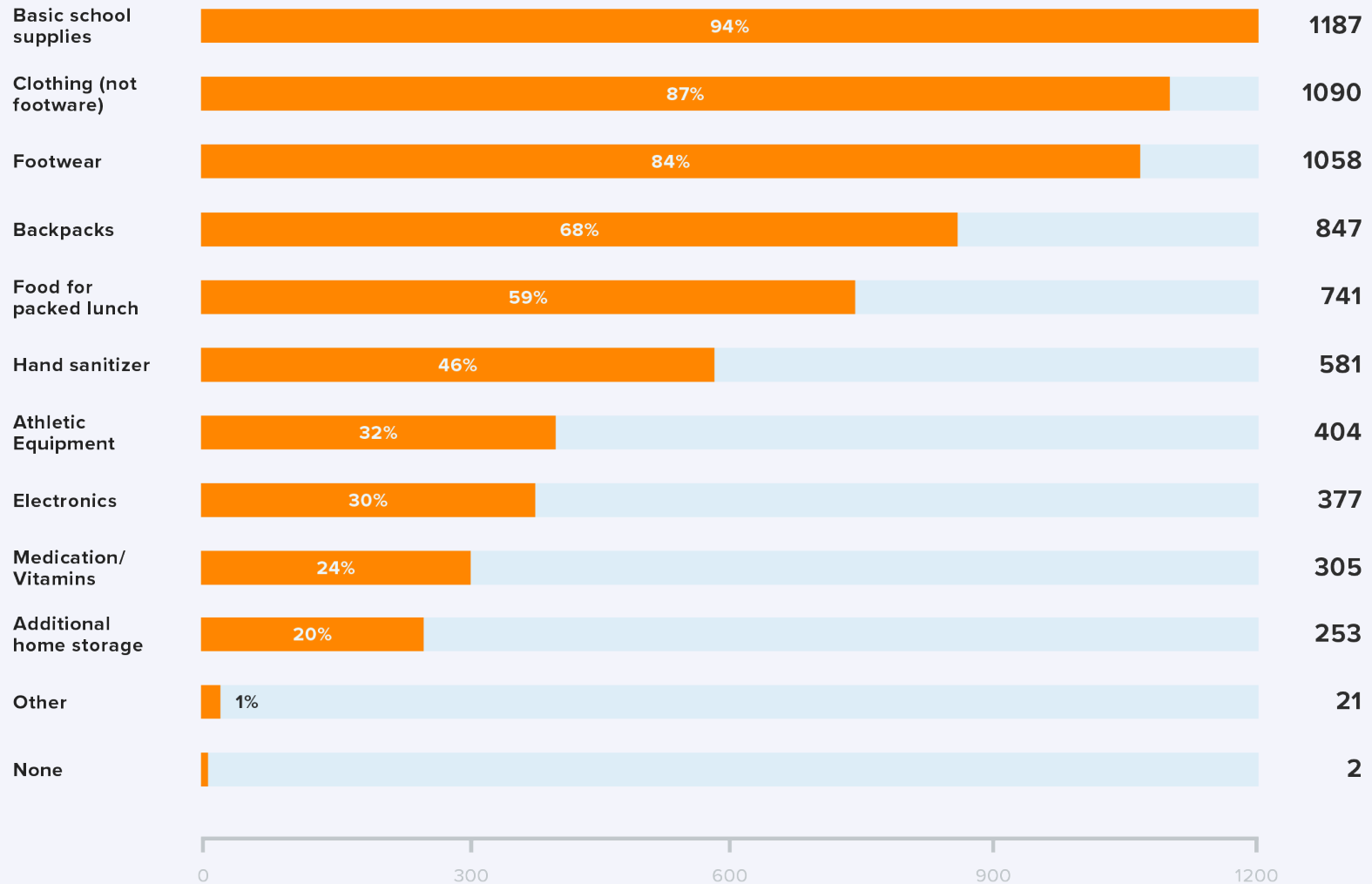
That figure was at a whopping 85% at the height of the pandemic.

Electronics also took a dip too: more than half of parents last year said they'd purchase electronics (51%), and this year it was only 30%.



## Which of the following items do you plan to purchase for the upcoming school year? (Select all that apply)

N = 1,249



## 5 The Right Retailers

The car is loaded, and parents are headed across town to pick up Back to School supplies. The real question is: where are they shopping?

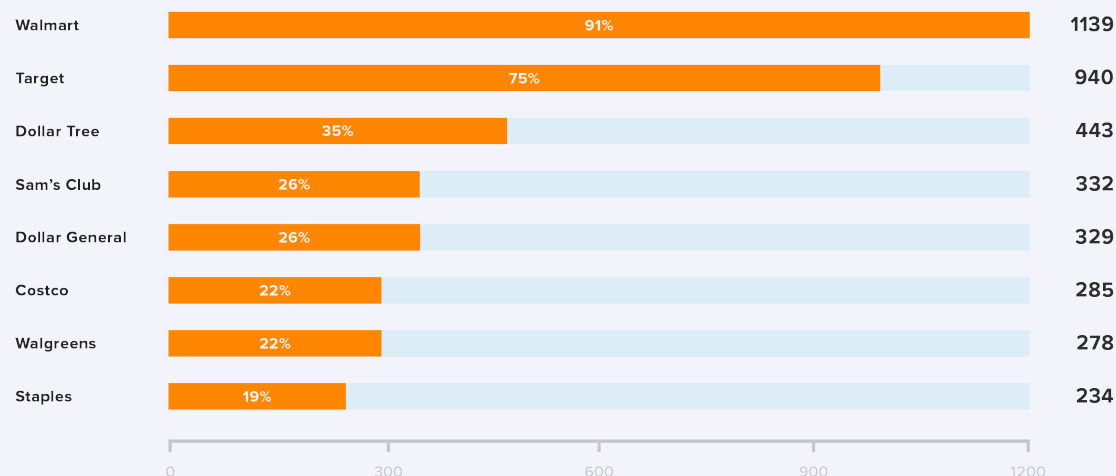
We asked parents to pick which stores they'd likely visit during their outings for school supplies, and here's what they said:

Compared to 2022, these statistics are nearly identical. As per usual when it comes to Back to School in-store shopping, Walmart takes the lead. Target comes in second place at 75%, then Dollar Tree, Sam's Club, Dollar General, Costco, and Walgreens all nearly tie for third.

Out of 1,250 survey respondents, **only 3 people** said they wouldn't shop in-store at a retailer. Trust us, in-store shopping is far from obsolete.

### Which store(s) will you likely visit to purchase school supplies from? (Select all that apply)

N = 1,249



*Kroger 15% (187 mentions), Family Dollar 14% (181 mentions), Office Max 14% (170 mentions), Meijer 10% (121 mentions), CVS 9% (116 mentions), Other 6% (71 mentions), None in-store (3 mentions)*

## 6 The Digital Dig: Online School Supplies

“Hey siri, how do I find the best deals on school supplies?”

“Alexa, can you order one 12-pack of Crayola colored pencils to my house?”

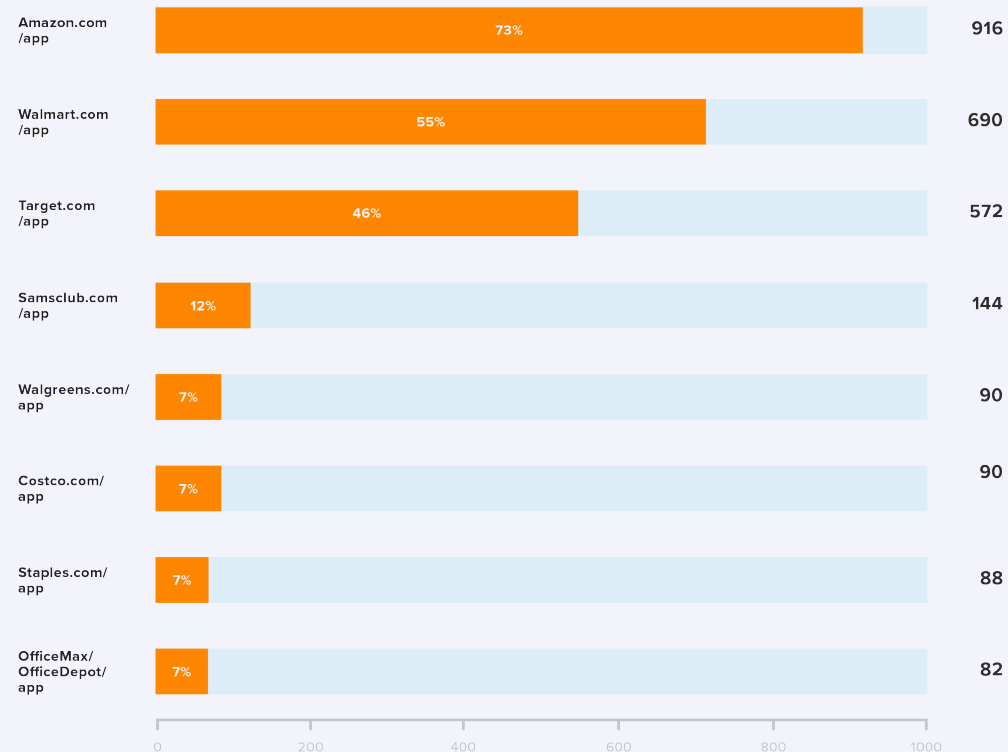
“Hey google, I’m in a time crunch. Where can I buy spiral notebooks online?”

Parents always have an alternative option to dragging their kids to the store for Back to School shopping: Amazon. (And, other online retailers)

Whether they’re forced because of out-of-stock items (OOS) that they need for their child’s supply list or out of pure convenience, 86% of parents say they are planning to shop online for Back to School 2023. Equal parts (43/43) are planning on doing pickup, the other half plan on doing delivery.

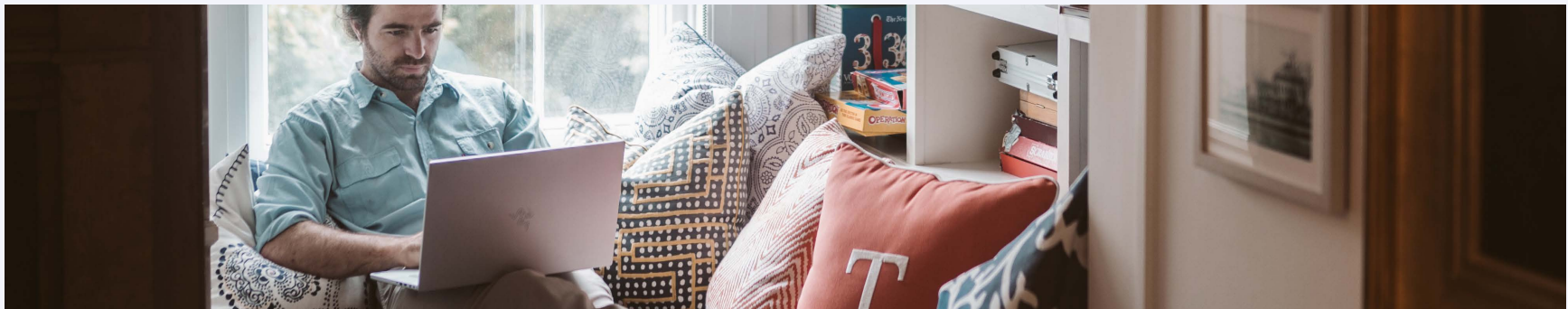
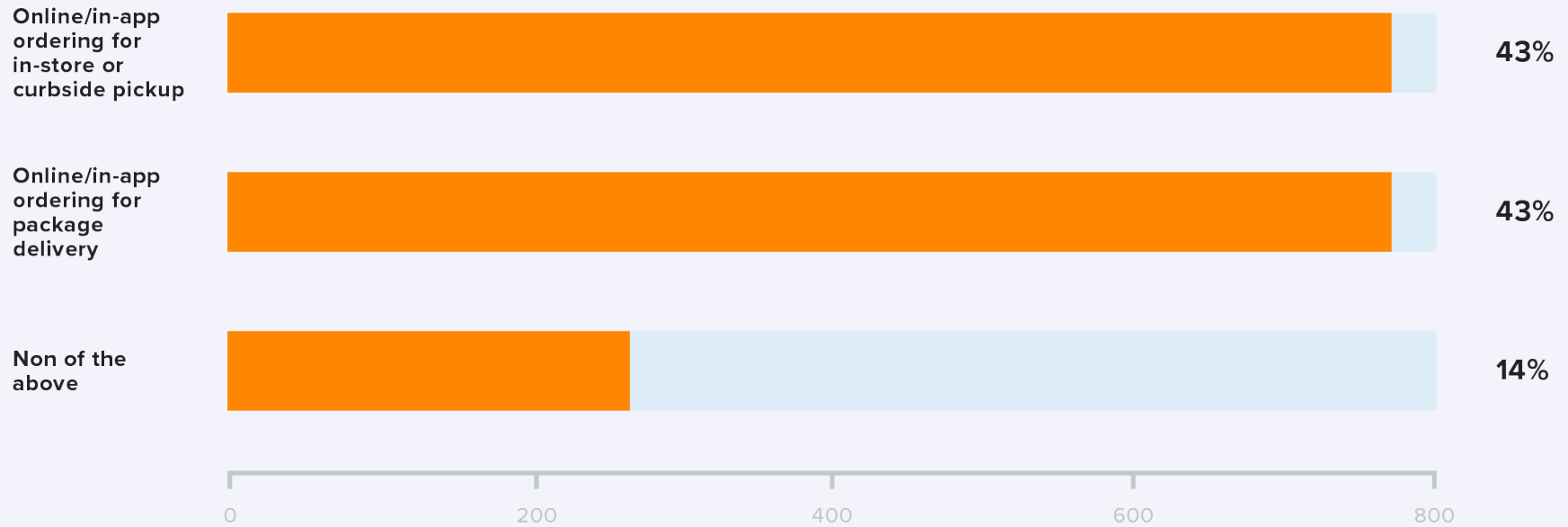
Which online store(s) will you likely purchase school supplies from? (Select all that apply)

N = 1,249



# Which of the following methods are you likely to use to obtain school supplies? (Select all that apply)

N = 1,249



## 7 Bring the Buzz around Your Back-to-School SKUs

As many parents (and kids!) are adding items to their online shopping carts, one of the main factors that they consider is Ratings and Reviews.

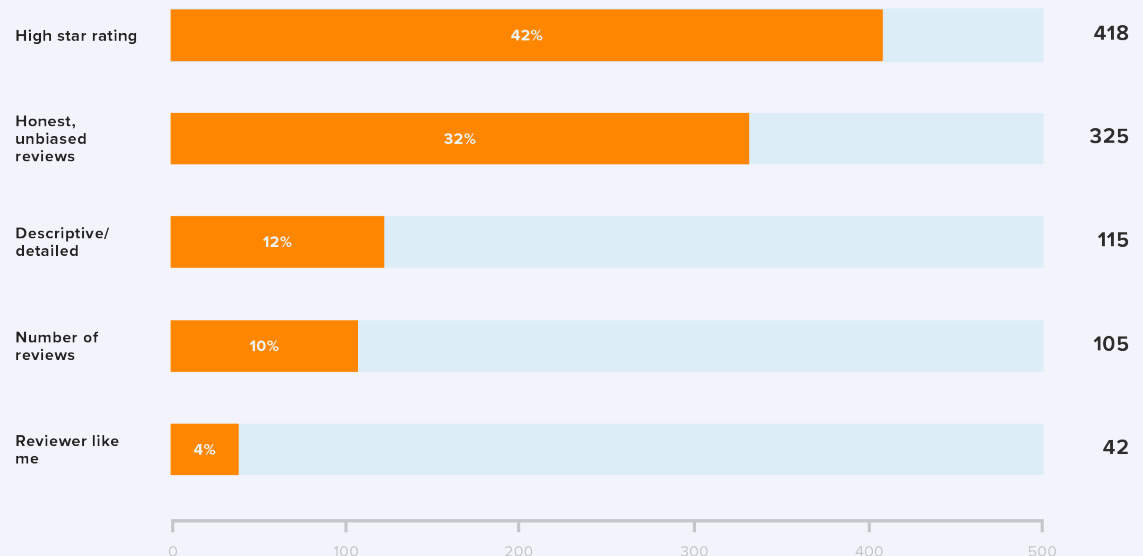
If there aren't any reviews about the value, size, and durability of your product — your online customer will likely drop your product for one that does have testimony of these features.

Especially for Back to School items, shoppers are searching for quality items that will last through the wear and tear of the year.

We asked 1,000 parents who shop online to rate what was the most important factor to them when reading ratings and reviews. Most importantly was star rating level, then the presence of honest, unbiased reviews.

Rank the following by their importance to your purchasing decision.

N = 1,005





If you're looking to learn more about the weight of Ratings & Reviews, visit our post on the Plum Blog about the importance of having verified ratings.

LEARN MORE ON PLUMBLOG →



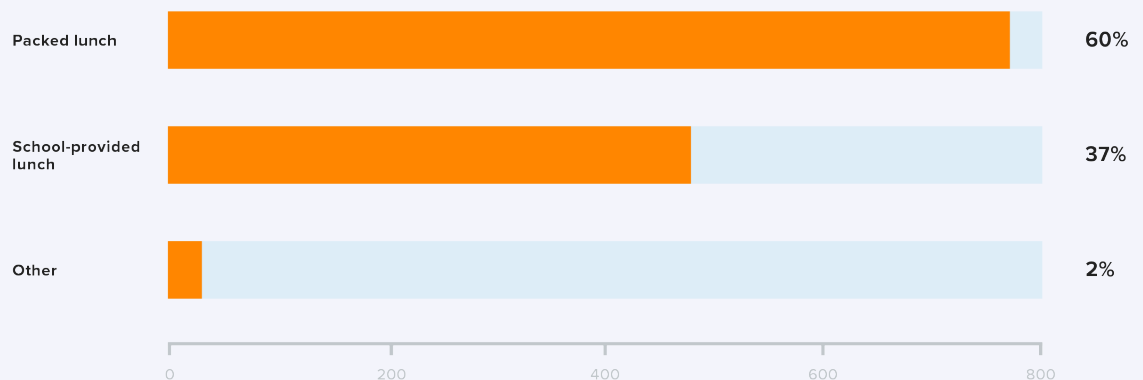
## 8 Bagged Lunch for Back-to-School

Shopping habits transition when students return to school in the fall, and one of the biggest budget line items that shift? Groceries.

Whether children are bringing a packed lunch from home or eating a meal provided from the school, brands need to prepare for this change in season. According to our survey, more than half (60%) of parents are planning to send their kids to school with a lunch from home.

How are you planning for your children to eat lunch for most of the 2023-2024 school year?

N = 1,249

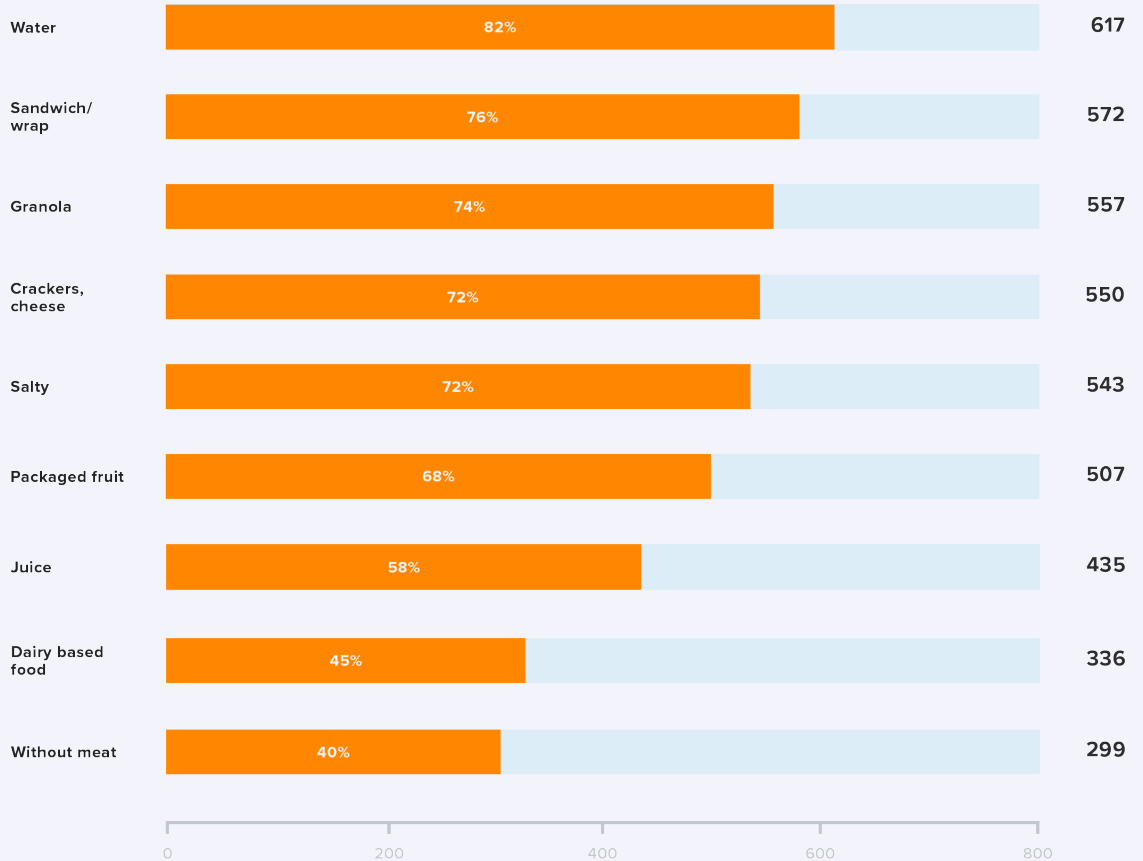


We asked parents what they'll prep to have in their pantries and refrigerators for the Monday through Friday school grind, and they said lots of water, deli meat, granola bars, and cracker/cheese/meat meal kits.



## What will your child's packed lunches likely contain? (Select all that apply)

N = 751

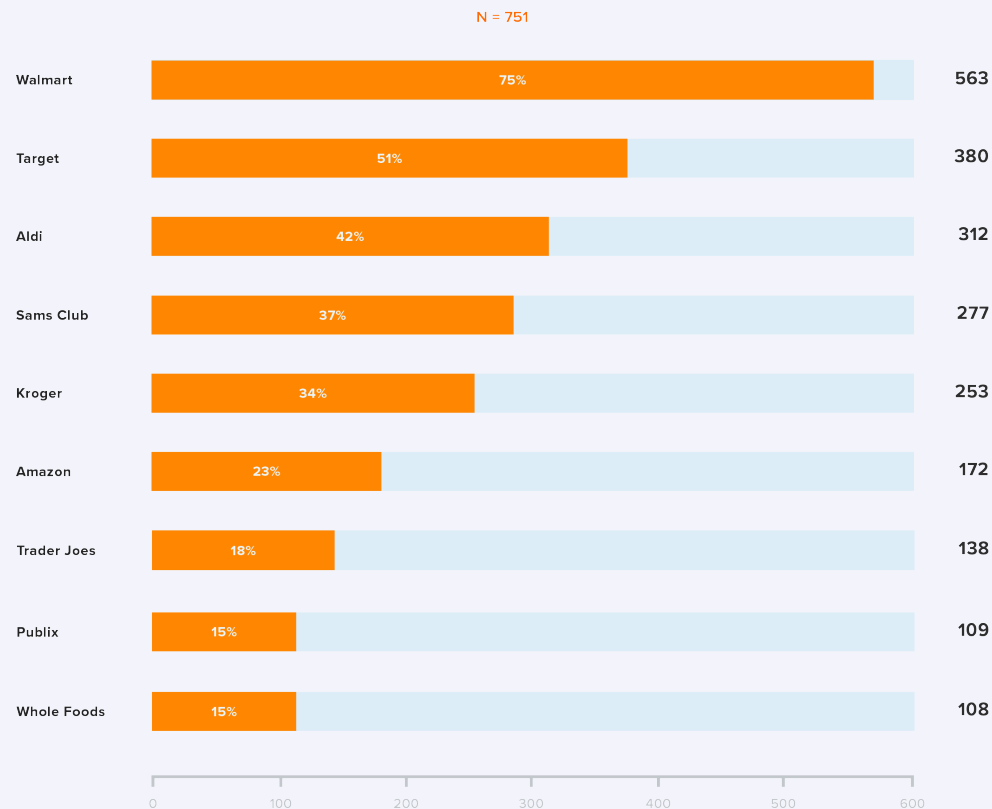


## 9 Retailers Revealed: Top Lunch-Time Choices

Do parents choose to grab groceries for packed lunches while they're out and about for school supplies? Or do they make a separate trip to their favorite grocery store?

We surveyed which retailers parents preferred when shopping for food for their child's sack lunch for the 2023-2024 school year. Interestingly, compared to the retailers for Back to School supplies only (on page 7), we see new and emerging grocery stores instead of the supply-only retailers.

What retailers will you shop at the most this year when packing your child's school lunch? (Select all that apply)



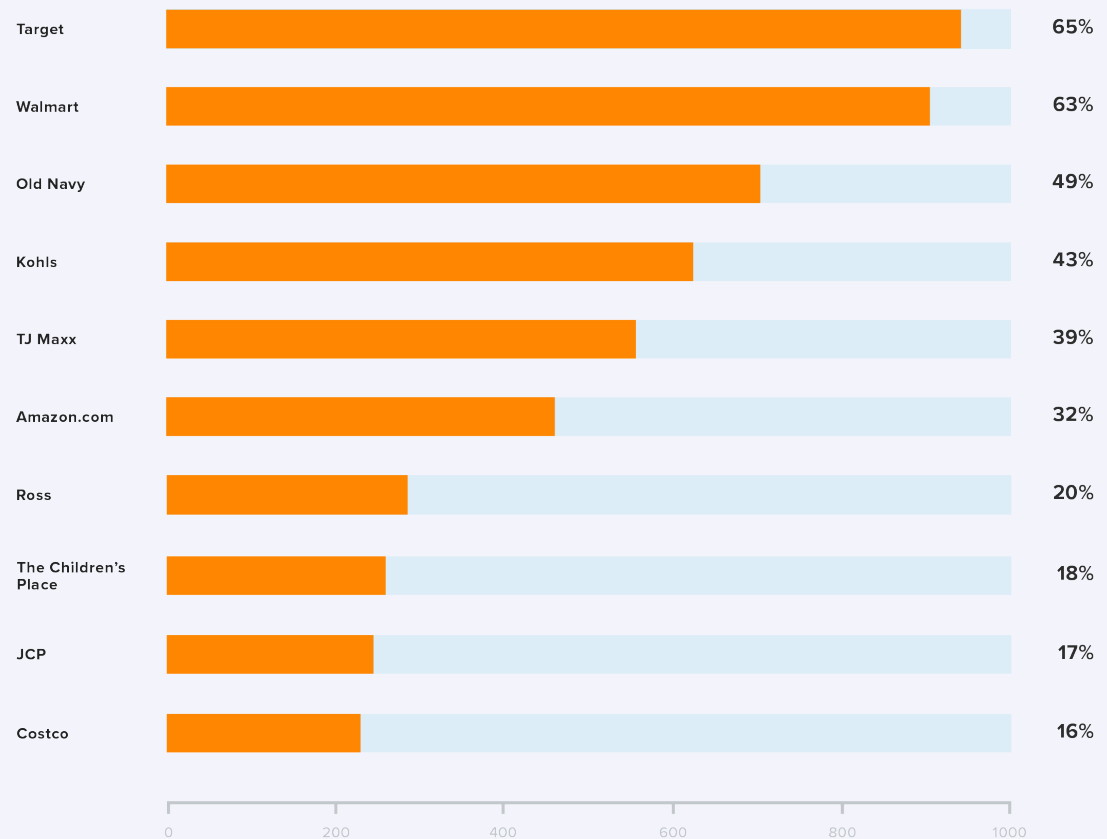
## 10 Back to School 'Fits

Rachel is starting kindergarten and wants a new skirt. Charlie outgrew her shoes, she needs new ones for middle school volleyball. Jack saw an ad on Instagram for new joggers, Back to School seems like the right time to ask his parents.

With 87% of parents saying they'll be purchasing some sort of clothing or footwear for their children for the 2023 school year, clothing brands are ramping up for stacked sales. We got the inside scoop of where and what parents will be shopping for.

### What clothing retailers will you visit to purchase clothes for your children for Back-to-School? (Select all that apply)

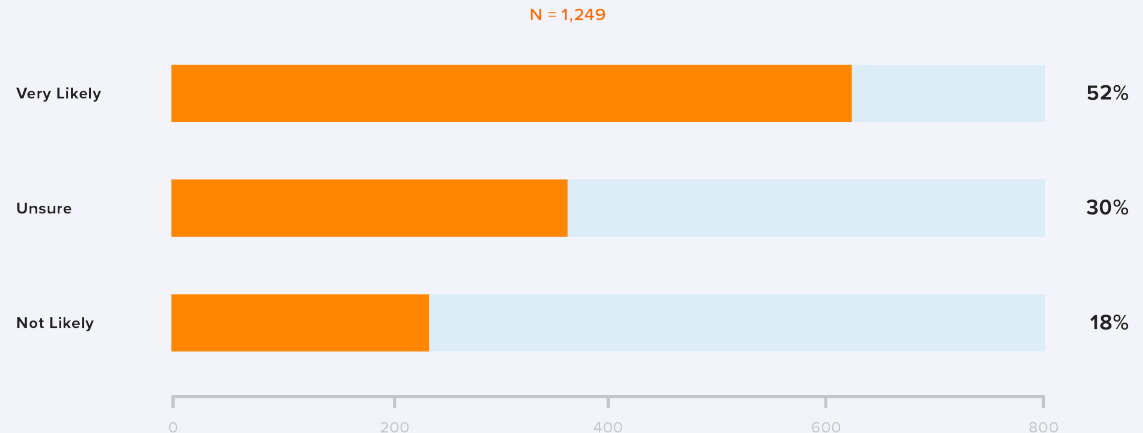
N = 1,249



And, half (52%) are confident they'll purchase these clothing items online.

6-10 parents are likely to pick up new clothes for their students at the retailers they'll be shopping at already, instead of making a separate trip. Convenience and cost are king, and what better way to double dip than picking up clothes just a few aisles over?

## What is the likelihood you will purchase clothing/footwear online/in-app for Back-to-School 2023-2024?



# 11 English Lit, Engineering, Eye Shadow

Parents are also going down the cosmetic aisles for their children (and themselves!) for Back to School beauty products.

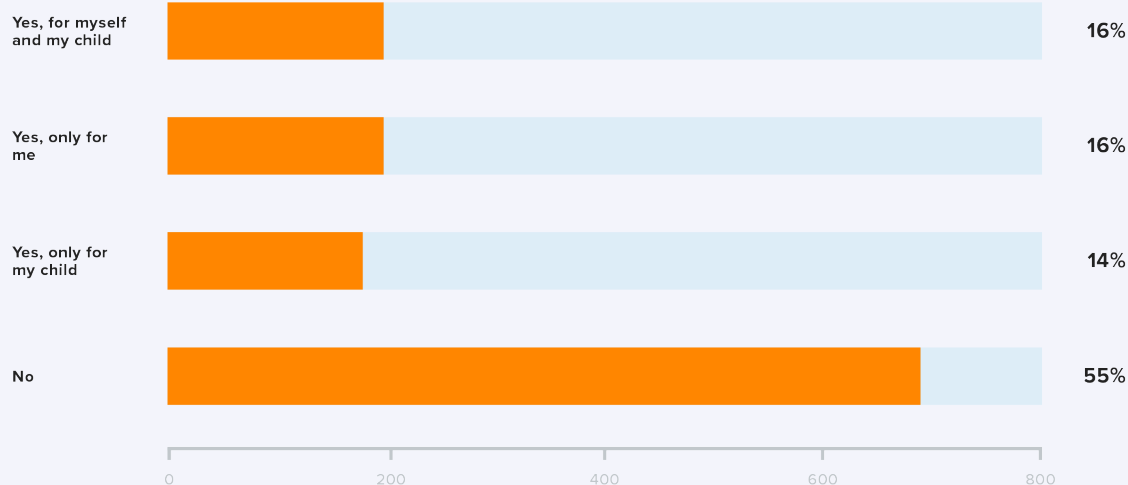
Almost half of our survey respondents shared that they would be purchasing new makeup products for themselves (16%), their children (14%), or both (16%).

Like the clothing, packed lunches, and school supplies — we wondered, would these parents be purchasing beauty products at the same retailers or make a separate stop? We see that Target and Walmart are still top of the list, but Ulta and Sephora will be another trip.

Brands fighting for a space in the cart are household names like L'Oreal and e.l.f, with a few luxury beauty brands in the mix.

## Will you purchase makeup for your children for the 2023-2024 Back-to-School season?

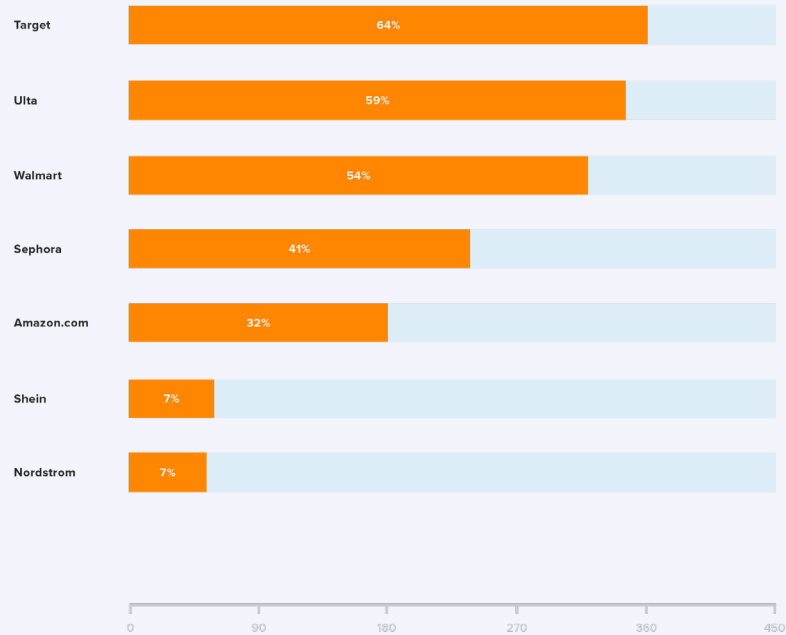
N = 1,249





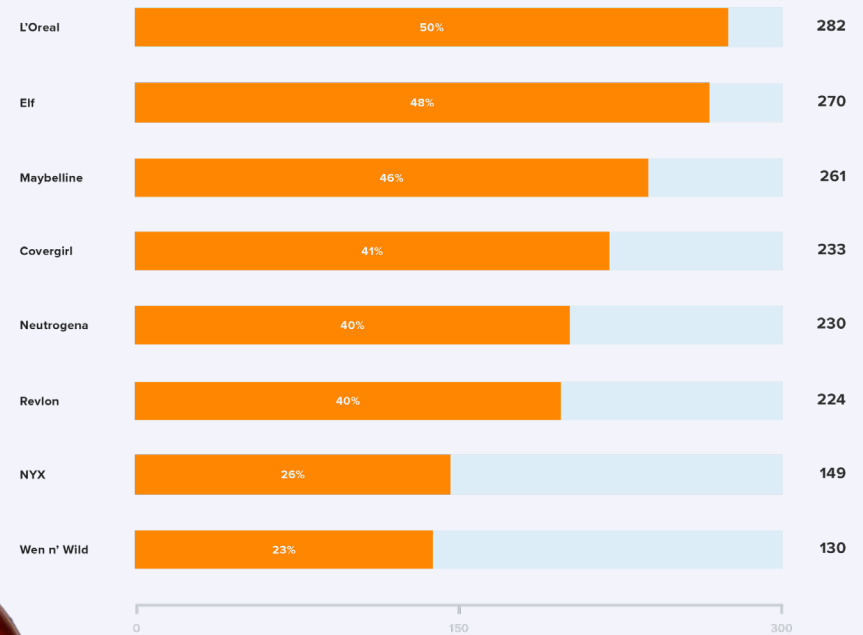
## Where will you be purchasing makeup in-person and online? (Select all that apply)

N = 567



## What brands will you be purchasing for makeup in-person and online? (Select all that apply)

N = 567



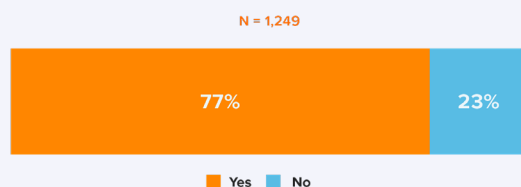


## 12 Squeaky Clean for Back to School

The final category we did a deep dive into was hygiene and soap products — a necessity for Back to School, if you ask us. (We're sure the teachers would agree.)

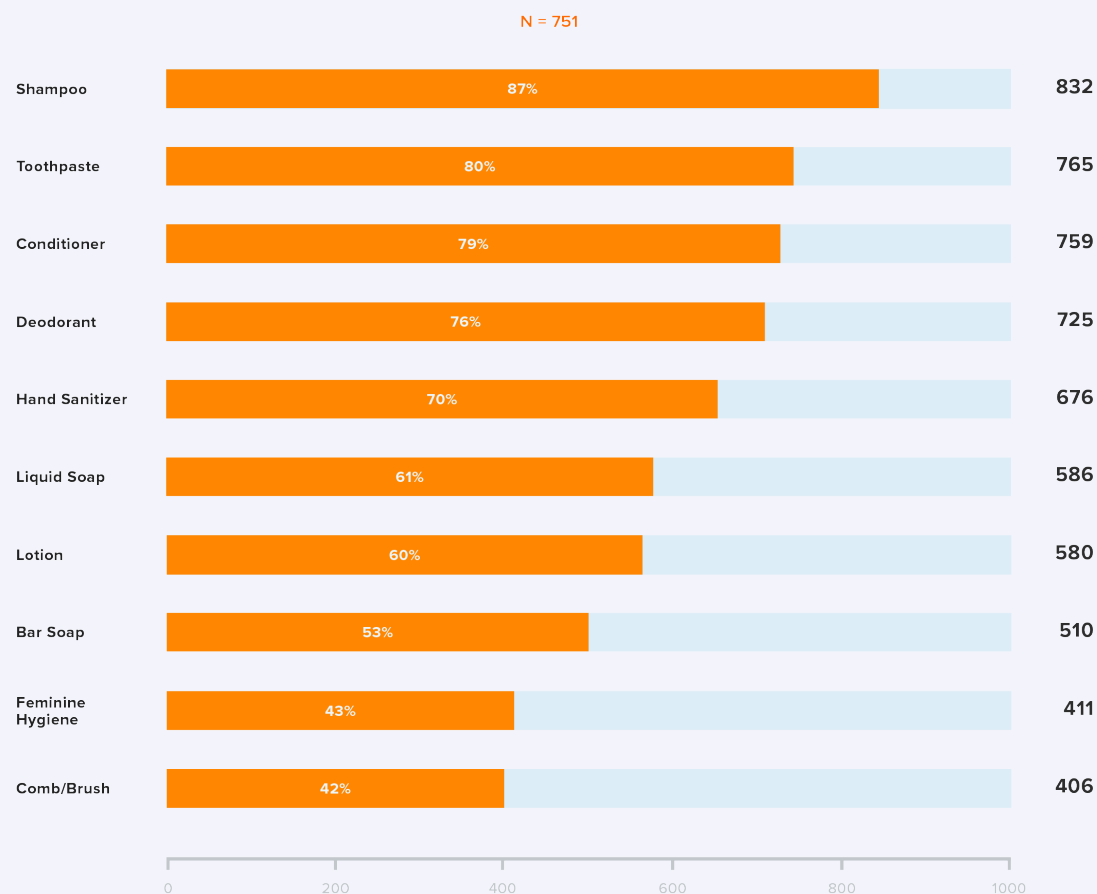
Many parents are planning to utilize the Back to School shopping spree to stock up on needed hygiene items—nearly 7 in 10 parents said so.

Will you purchase hygiene products for your children for the 2023-2024 Back-to-School season?



The most popular items on the list? Shampoo, toothpaste, conditioner, and deodorant.

What hygiene products will you be purchasing?  
(Select all that apply)



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**MANY PARENTS ARE  
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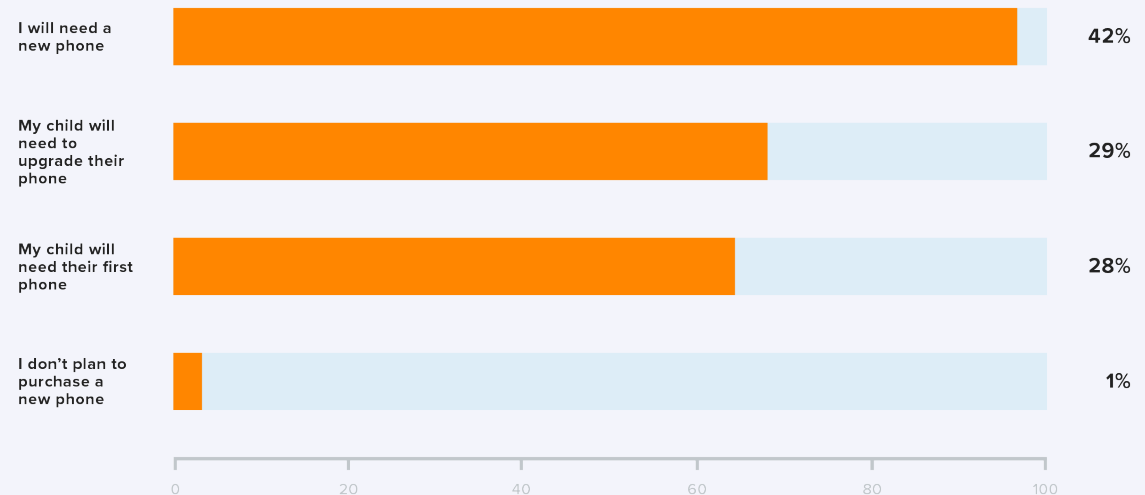
## 13 Staying Connected: Phones for School

Technology is growing every consecutive year, and phones are leading the way. Some students and their parents are utilizing the Back to School 2023 shopping season to purchase or upgrade their phone plans.

One out of three parents plan to upgrade their existing phone plans at the same retailers that they'll be Back to School shopping at.

Which of the following best explains why you plan to purchase a new phone? (Select all that apply)

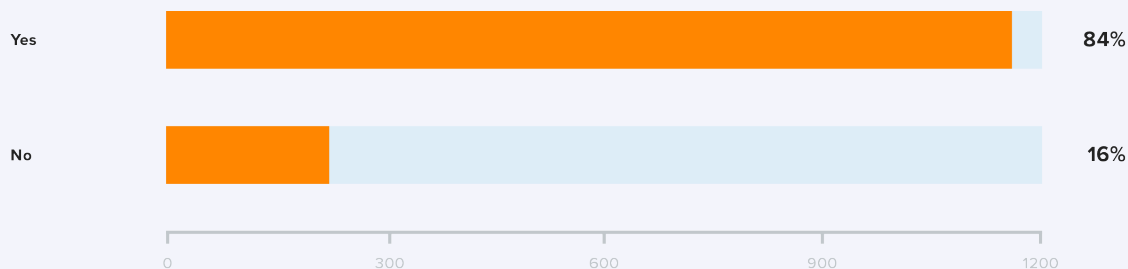
N = 206





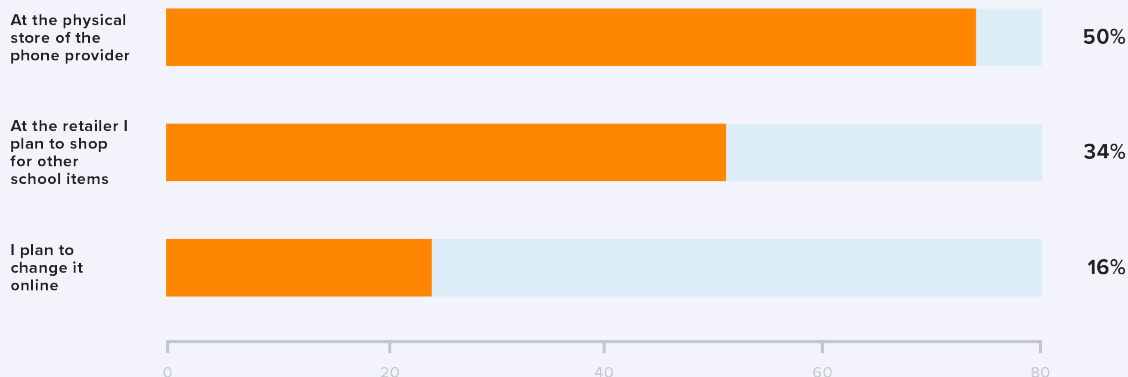
## Do you plan to purchase a new phone or upgrade your existing phone plan while back to school shopping?

N = 1,249



## When looking to upgrade your existing phone plan or change your existing phone plan, where do you plan to make those changes?

N = 132



## 14 Back to School Tax Free Holiday

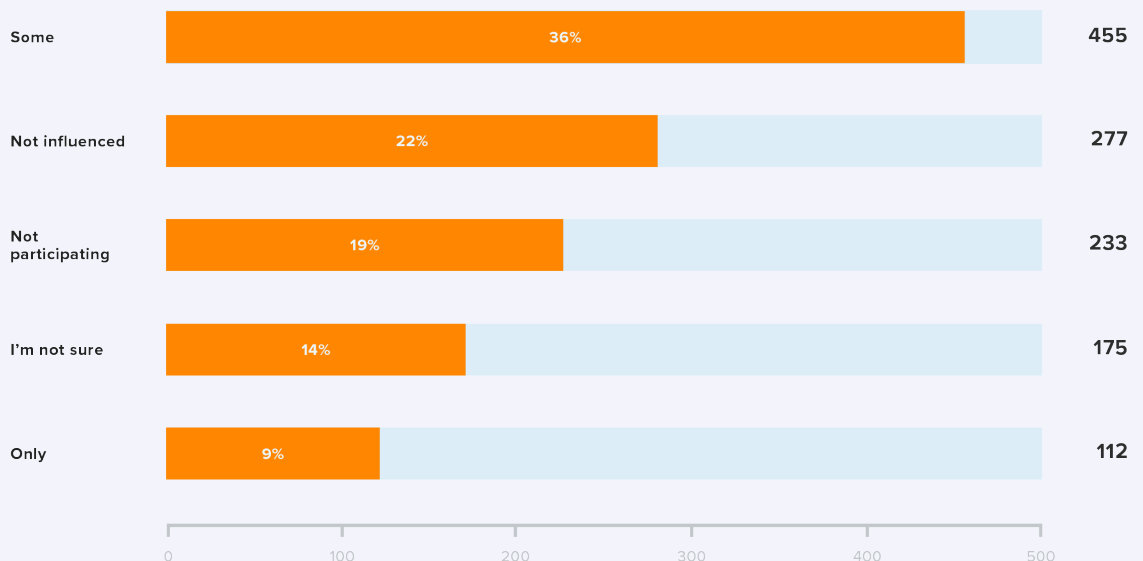
On select days of the year, many states offer tax breaks for parents doing Back to School shopping.

A third of parents share that at least some of their Back to School shopping will be during one of the select tax-free days, while some parents will only shop on these days.

With over 40 tax-free holidays in 2023, the majority of them are focused on the Back to School shoppers. Each state has its own legislation for the sales tax holidays.

How much of your 2023-2024 Back-to-School shopping do you currently expect will be during the sales tax holiday (if applicable)?

N = 1,249



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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### 1: More spending is expected.

With 44% of parents planning to spend more, there will be more cash flow around Back-to-School items.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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**2: Back to School is impacting more than just basic school supplies.**

Clothing, makeup, lunchbox foods, and hygiene products will also make it into parents' carts.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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### 3: Walmart, Target, Amazon wins the golden trio.

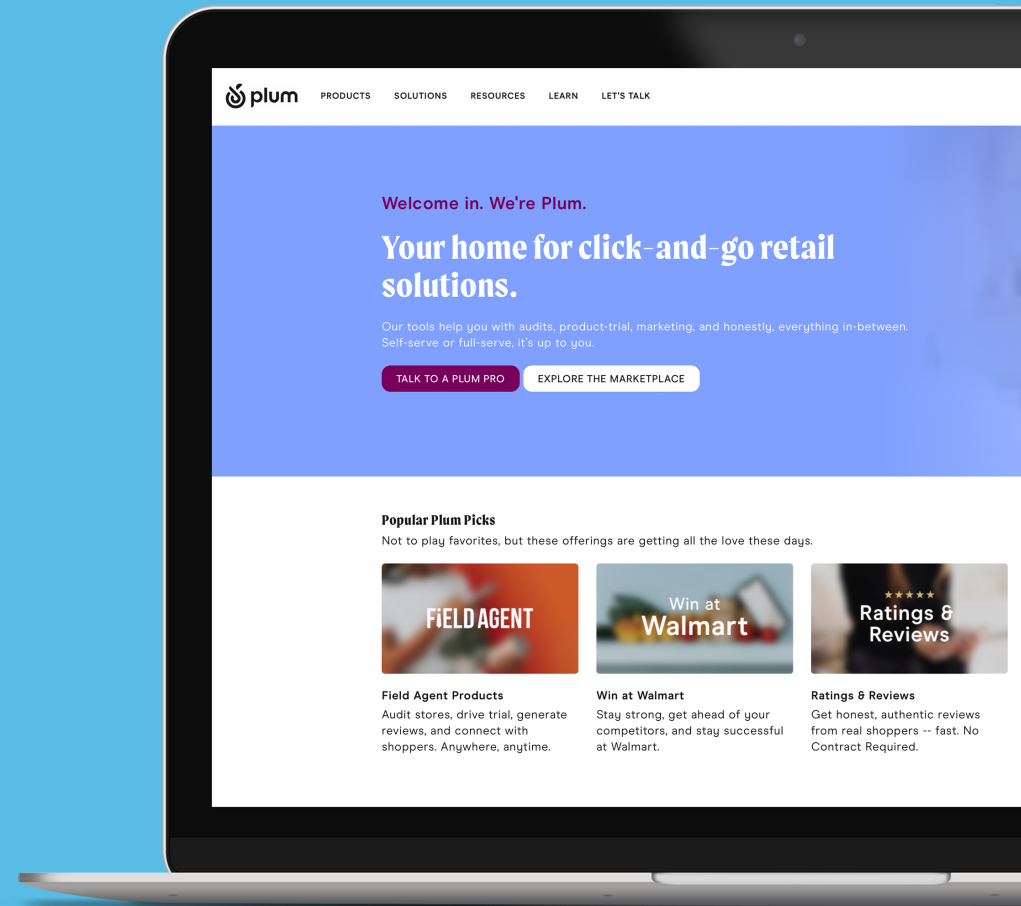
As low cost, convenient options for American shoppers – these retailers will take the lions share of Back-to-School dollars.

Don't lose Back to School dollars. Make the most of the season with Field Agent's retail solutions. At Field Agent, we understand the frustrations your brand faces during this crucial season.

Our comprehensive retail solutions are designed to help you make the most of this bustling time. Meet the demands of retailers, brand managers, parents and kids during Back to School season.

Stay ahead of the competition with Field Agent's trusted data-driven strategies and solutions.

SHOP FOR CLICK-AND-GO FIELD AGENT SOLUTIONS ON THE PLUM MARKETPLACE.



# Field Agent's Back to School Survey Demographics

## 1250 Respondents

### Household Income

Less than \$35,000	<b>16%</b>
\$35,000 to \$49,000	<b>14%</b>
\$50,000 to \$74,999	<b>18%</b>
\$75,000 to \$99,999	<b>18%</b>
\$100,000 to \$124,999	<b>11%</b>
\$125,000 to \$149,999	<b>6%</b>
\$150,000 and above	<b>9%</b>
Prefer not to say	<b>8%</b>

### Gender

Male	<b>20.1%</b>
Female	<b>79.9%</b>

### Age Range

18-20	<b>0%</b>
21-29	<b>8%</b>
30-39	<b>42%</b>
40-49	<b>38%</b>
50-59	<b>10%</b>
60+	<b>1%</b>

### Number of Children

1-2	<b>70%</b>
3-5	<b>29%</b>
6-10	<b>1%</b>
10+	<b>0</b>

### Ethnic Background

African American or Black	<b>9%</b>
Asian American	<b>6%</b>
Caucasian or White	<b>70%</b>
Lation or Hispanic	<b>11%</b>
Native American	<b>1%</b>
Other	<b>4%</b>

