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# Is the economy too cool for school?

July 27, 2023

## Excluding Boomers, approximately 45% of consumers say they plan on buying back-to-school supplies, and almost the same amount say they will purchase BTS apparel.

### At-A-Glance:

- 84% say they will shop at Walmart for BTS supplies.
- 77% say they will compare school supply prices to get the best deal.
- 46% say they will shop both online and in-store.



### The Outlook:

According to the National Retail Federation, BTS spending is second only to the holiday season for families. Families will spend an estimated \$890 for kids in grades K-12 and \$1,367 for those going off to college. The biggest winners this year will be the brands that are on-trend, in stock, and – most likely – on sale when parents are ready to buy.

**Except for shopping for everyday essentials, two of the most common areas for spending in the coming months are back-to-school supplies (36%) and apparel (33%).**

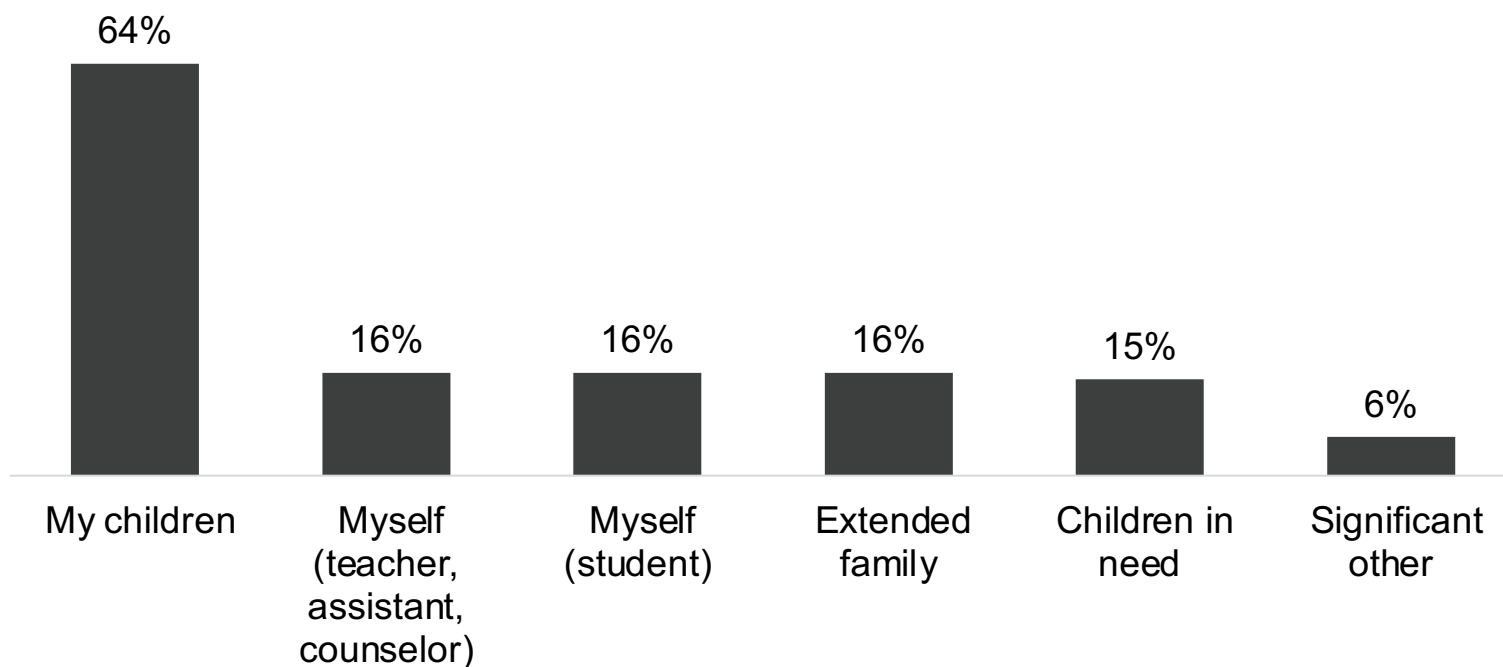
*Not surprisingly, Boomers are much less likely to be participating than other generations.*

Planned spending activities in the next 2-3 months	All	Gen Z	Millennial	Gen X	Boomer
Taking a vacation	39%	45%	45%	34%	36%
Buying items to support a hobby	36%	43%	39%	40%	25%
Buying school supplies	36%	45%	47%	45%	12%
Buying back-to-school apparel	33%	39%	47%	39%	12%
Painting a room or rooms	20%	16%	22%	22%	18%
Buying furniture	20%	29%	31%	20%	4%
Buying new tools	16%	14%	23%	16%	9%
Buying a new or used car	15%	15%	19%	14%	11%
Building or redoing an outdoor living space	15%	14%	19%	15%	11%
Doing a major remodel	11%	11%	15%	9%	8%
Purchasing a new home	6%	6%	13%	3%	1%
None of the above	15%	4%	5%	14%	30%

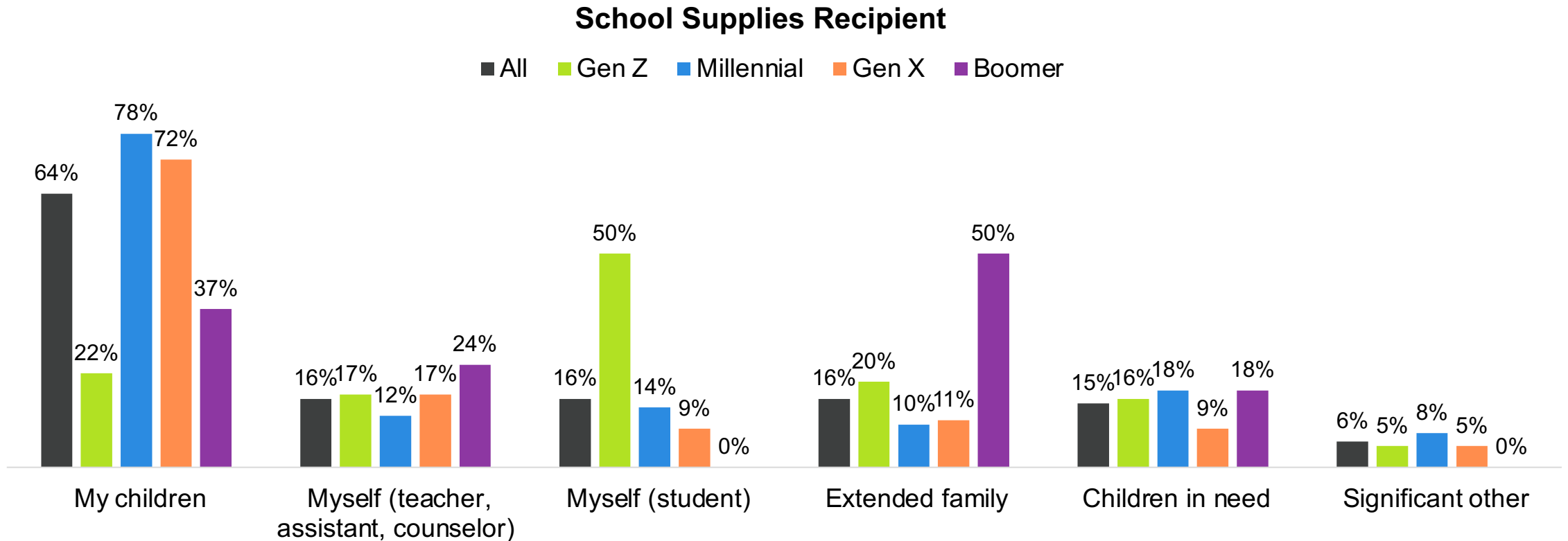


**While nearly two-thirds (64%) of those shopping for school supplies will be doing so for their own children, many will be shopping for themselves, extended family, and children in need.**

School Supplies Recipient



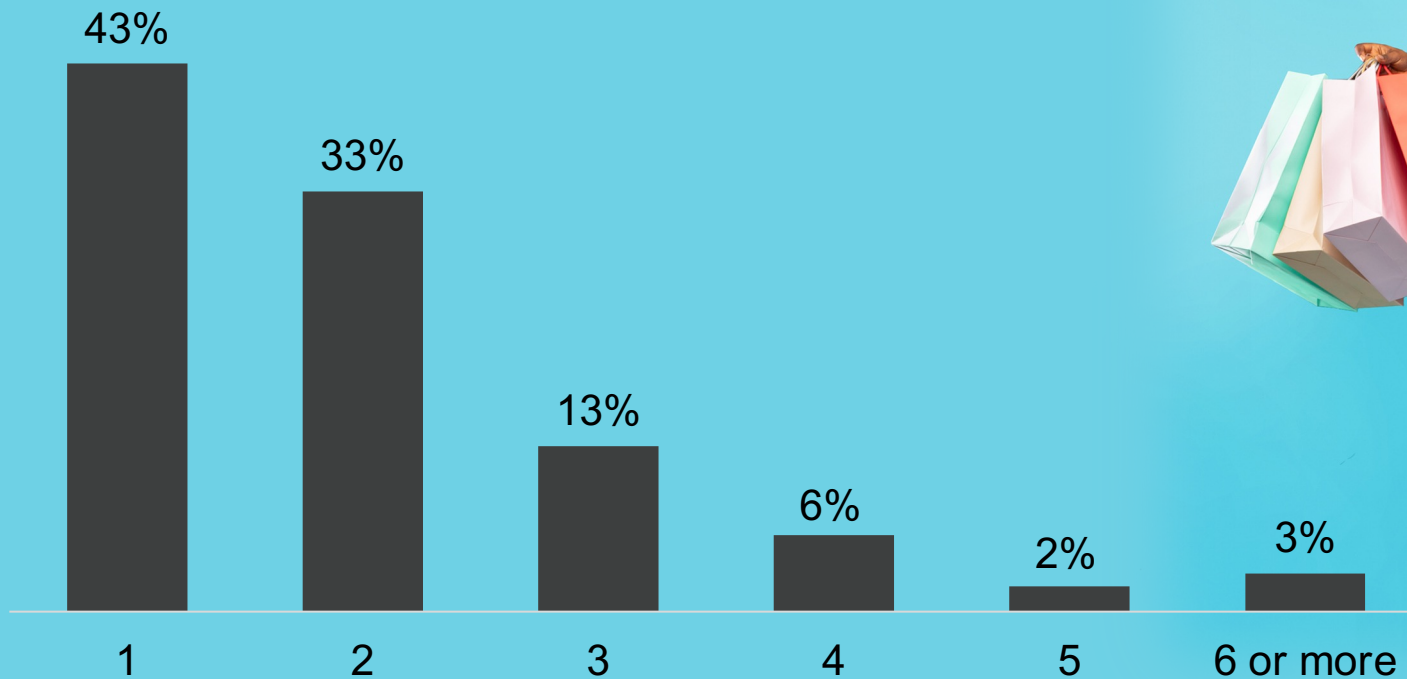
**As to be expected, Gen Z (22%) and Boomers (37%) are the least likely to be buying supplies for their children. On the other hand, Gen Z (50%) are much more likely to be buying for themselves and Boomers (50%) are the most likely to be buying for extended family.**



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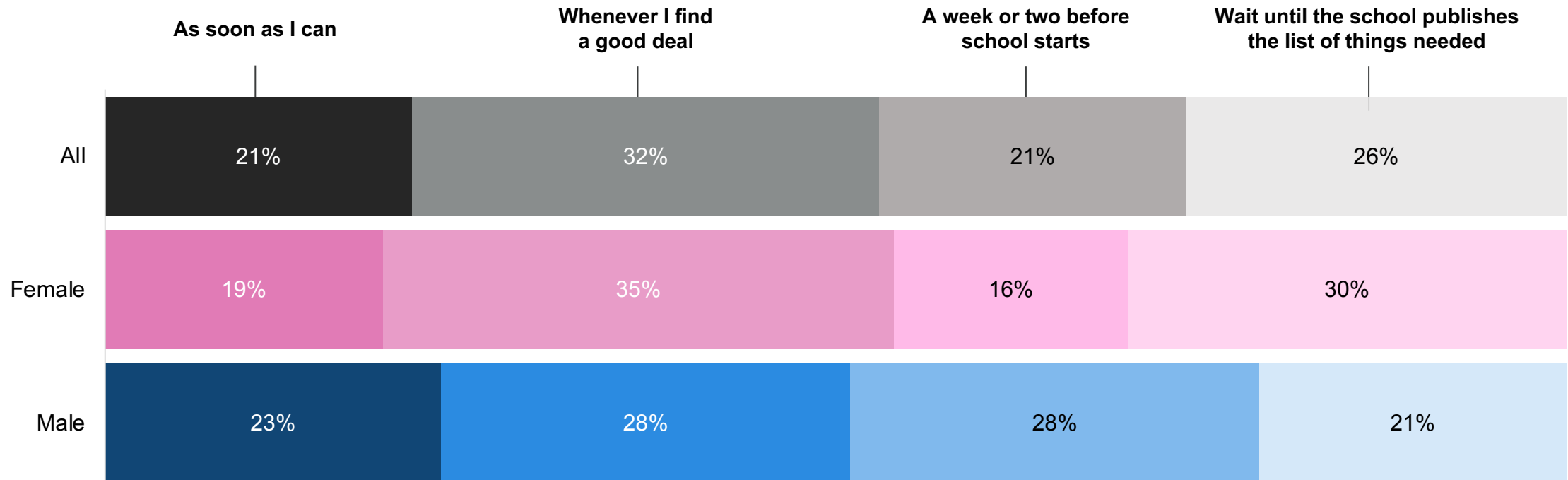
**Slightly more than three-quarters (76%) of those shopping for school supplies will be doing so for one or two people.**

Number of people for which you're buying school supplies



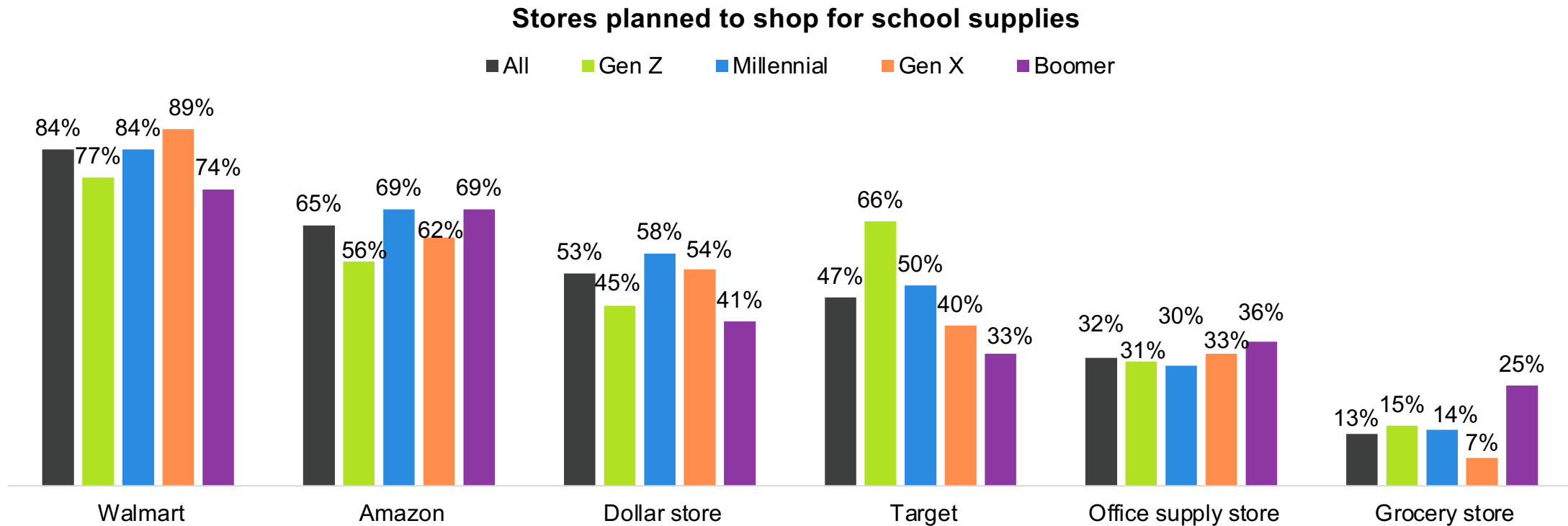
**People's expectations of when they'll shop for school supplies are split fairly evenly. Women (30%) are more likely than men (21%) to plan on purchasing supplies once the school has published the list of needed materials.**

When do you plan to buy school supplies?



**The most popular destinations for school supplies are what most people would expect. The only retailer with a significant generational difference is Target, where the likelihood to shop drops consistently by generation.**

*66% of Gen Z plan to shop at Target compared to 33% of Boomers*

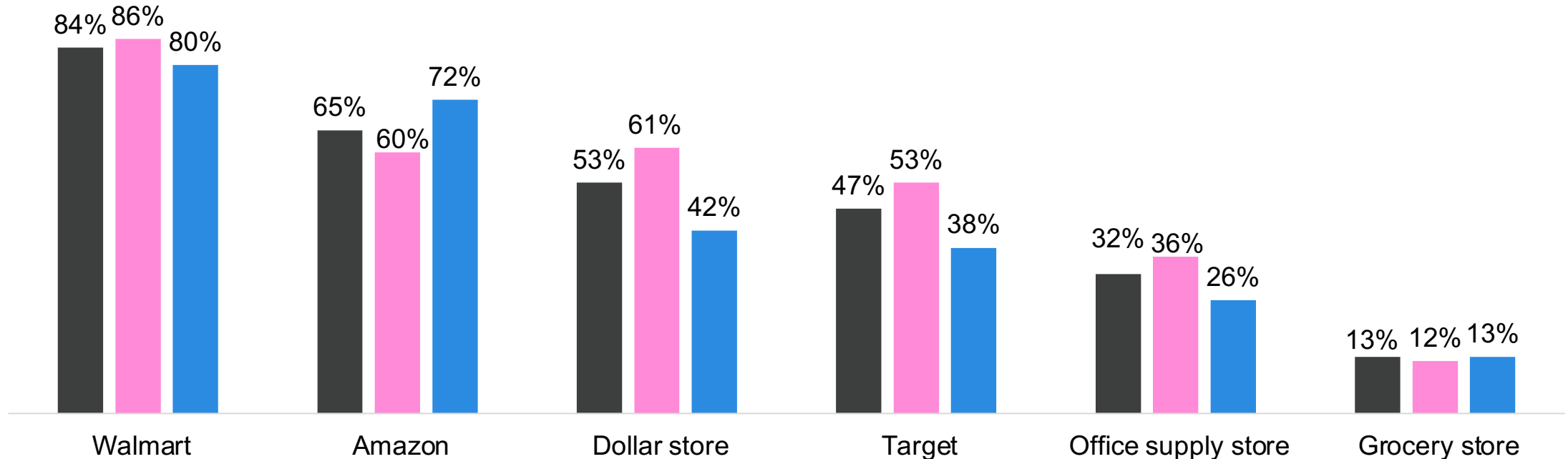




**Retailer destination varies significantly more by gender. Walmart garners nearly universal appeal (Women 86% and Men 80%) but other outlets have substantial differences.**

Stores planned to shop for school supplies

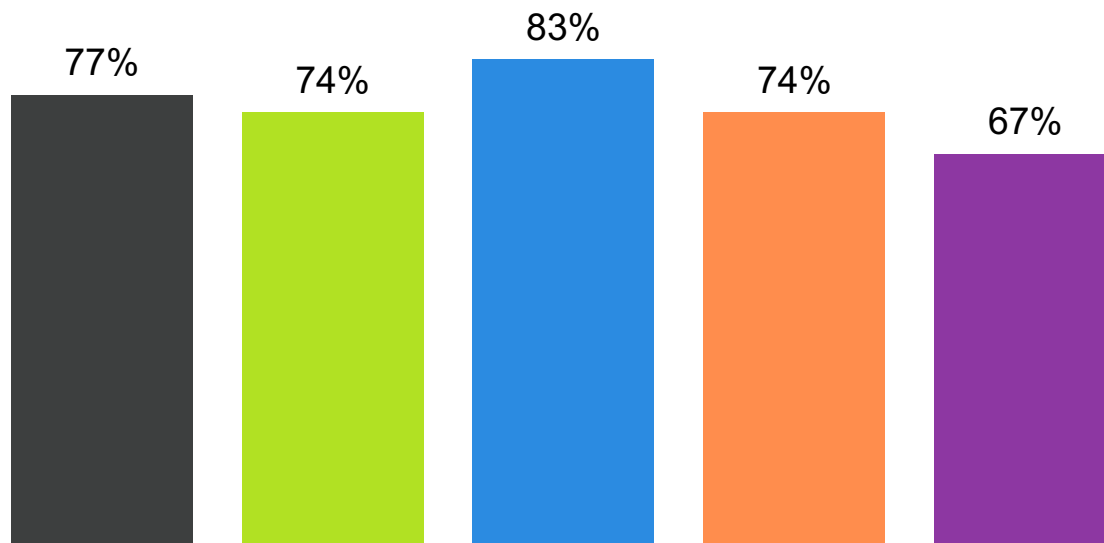
■ All ■ Female ■ Male



**It's not surprising given the recent pressure of inflation that 77% of school supply shoppers will be conducting price comparisons.**

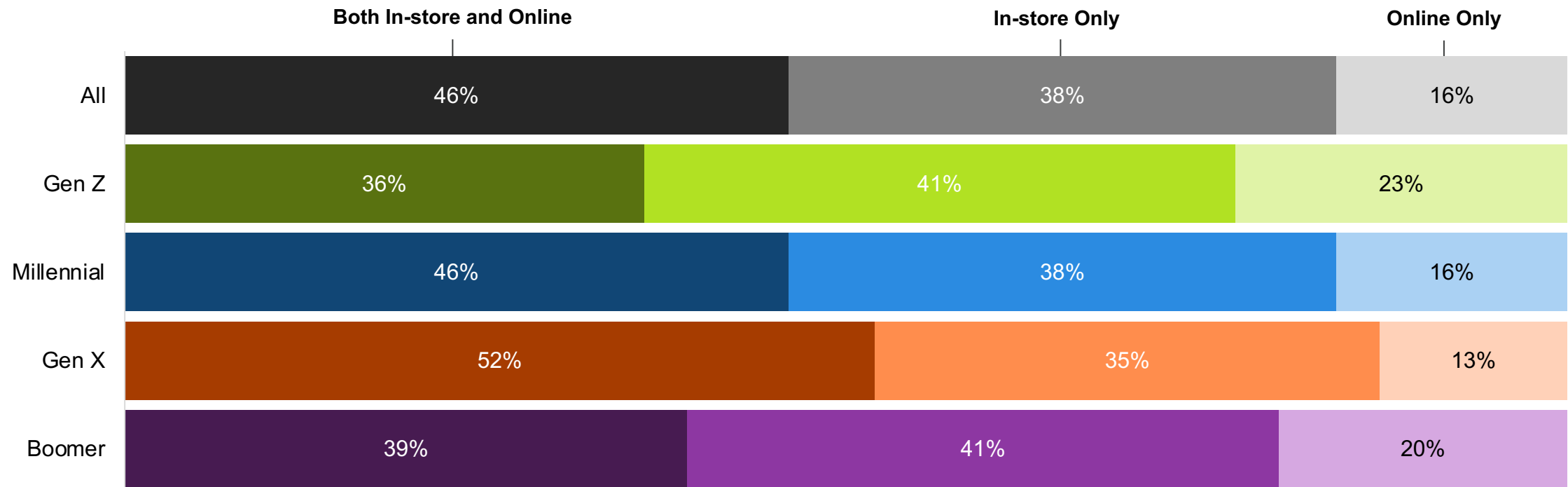
Likelihood to compare school supply prices: "Likely" or "Very likely"

■ All ■ Gen Z ■ Millennial ■ Gen X ■ Boomer



# Nearly half of shoppers (46%) will shop both online and in-store for school supplies.

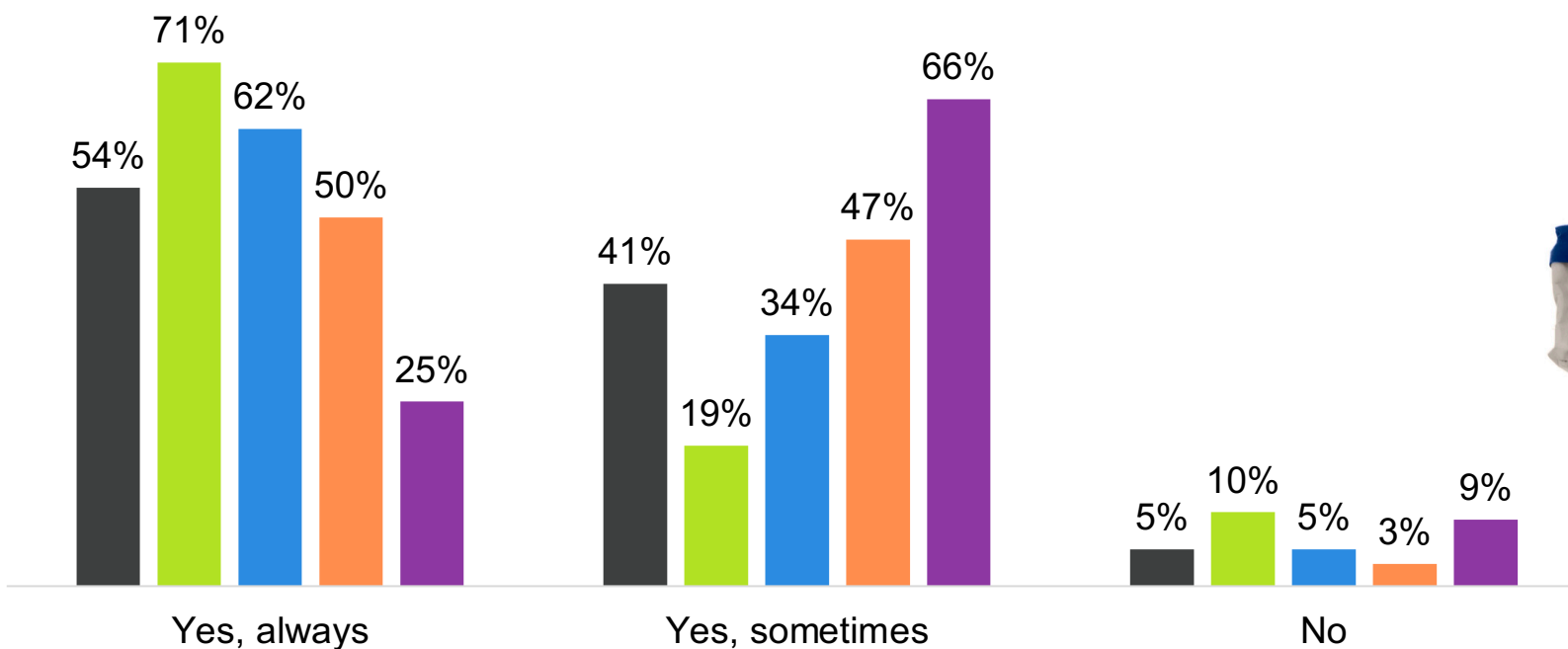
In-store vs Online Shopping



**Virtually no one (5%) plans on leaving their children out of the shopping experience. Not surprisingly, Boomers are much less likely than other generations to plan on having children with them while shopping.**

Allow children to shop with them for school supplies

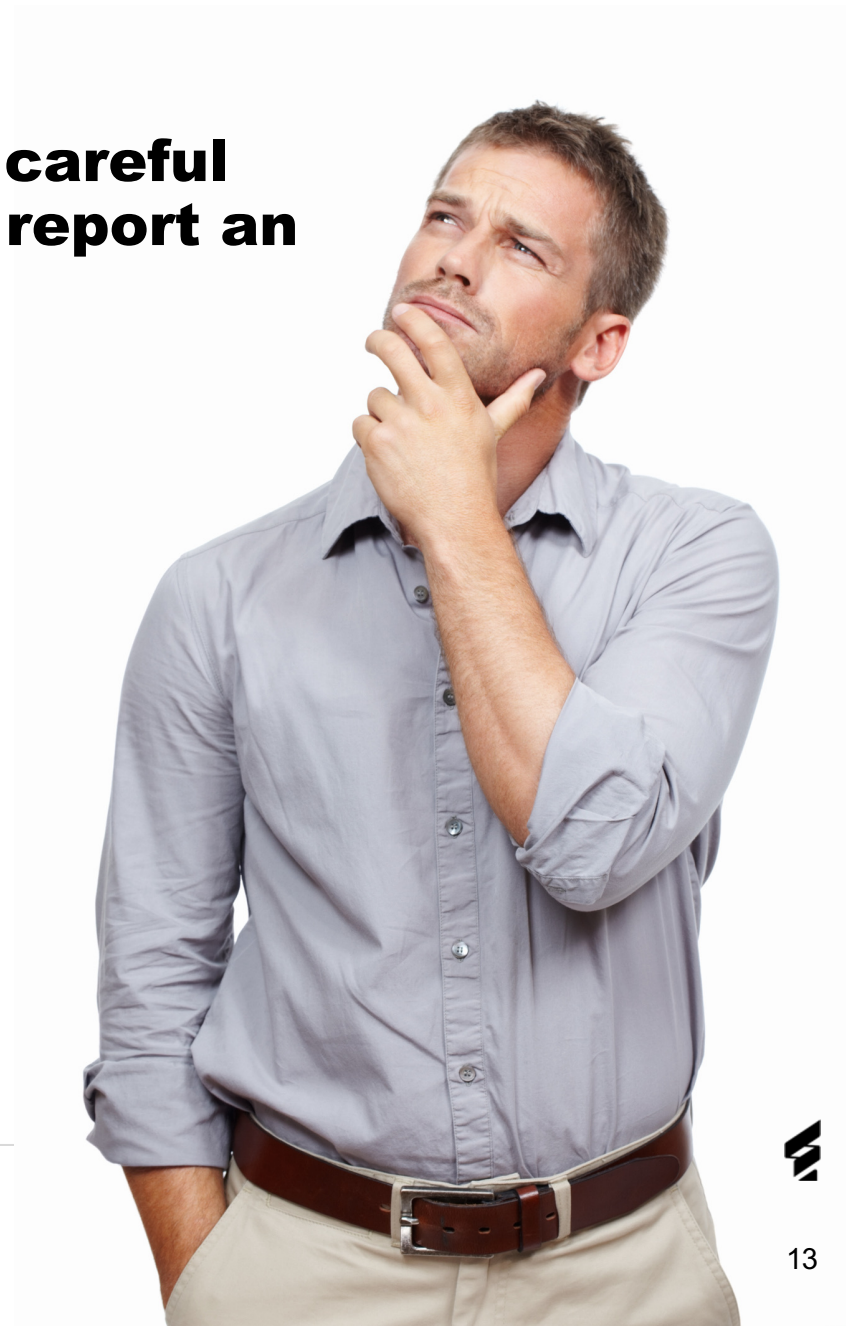
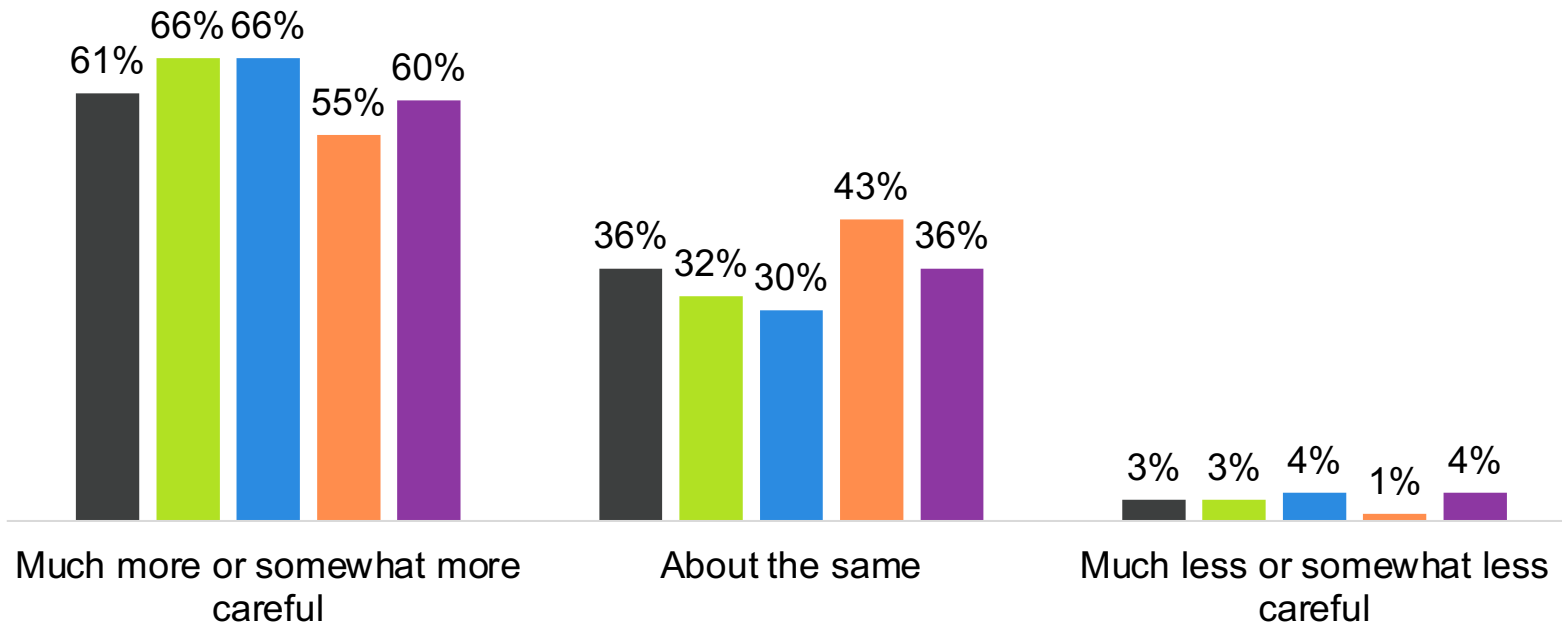
■ All ■ Gen Z ■ Millennial ■ Gen X ■ Boomer



**More than 6 in 10 plan to be more or much more careful with their school supply spending while only 3% report an intention to be less careful.**

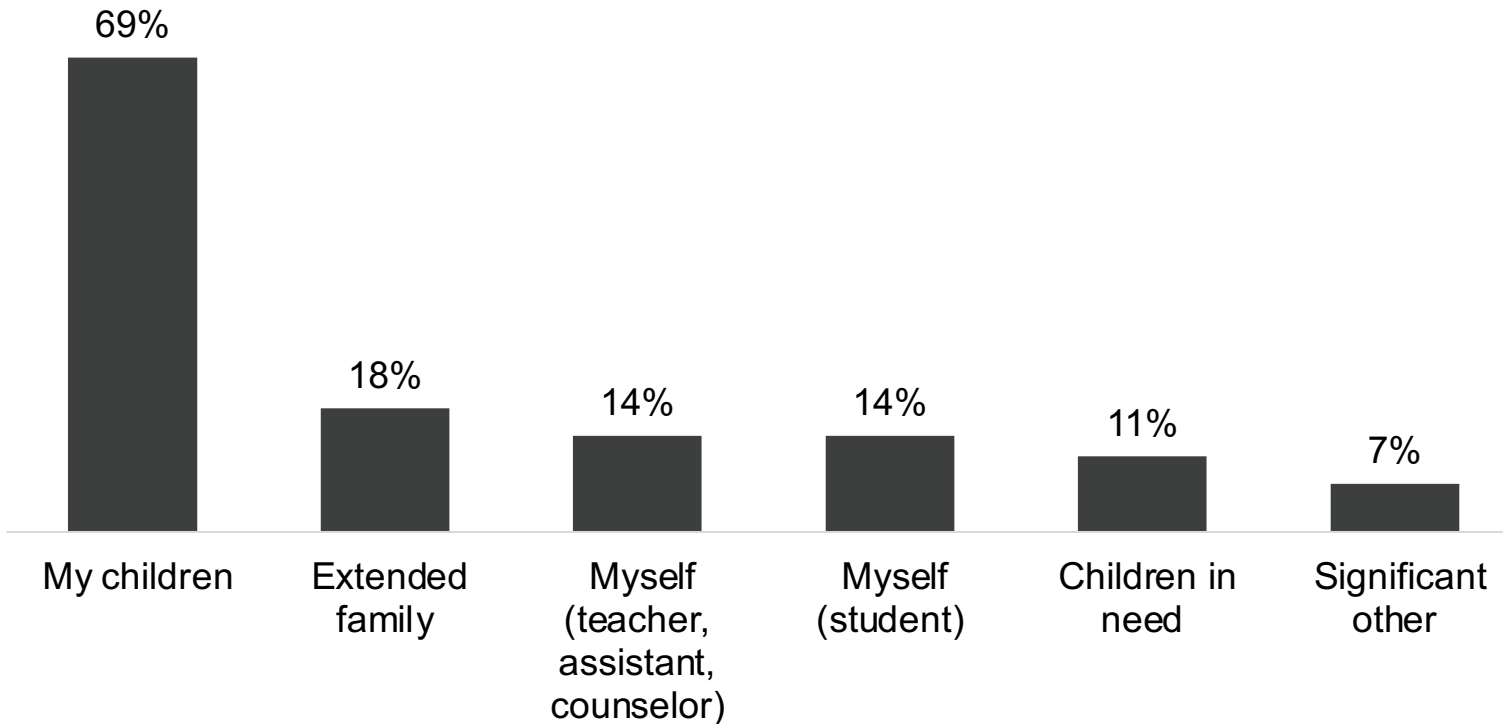
More or less careful on school supply spending this year

■ All ■ Gen Z ■ Millennial ■ Gen X ■ Boomer

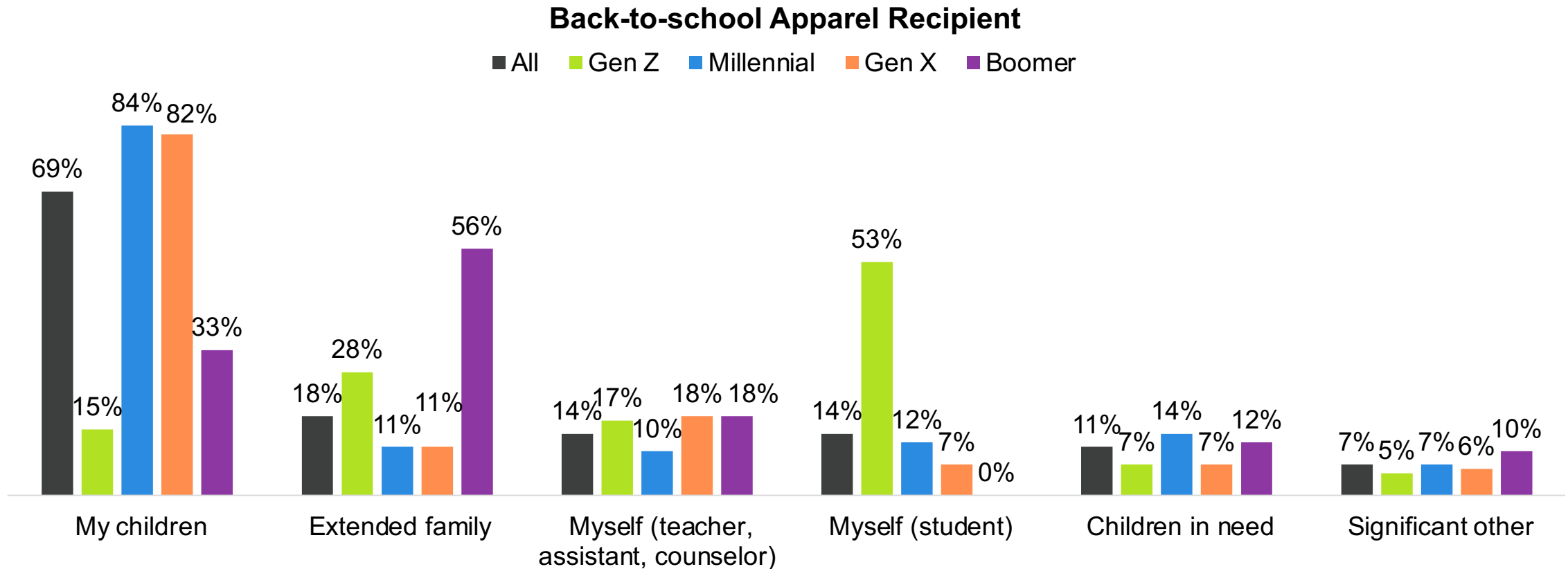


**As was the case with school supplies, the vast majority of people (69%) will be shopping for back-to-school apparel for their children.**

Back-to-school Apparel Recipient

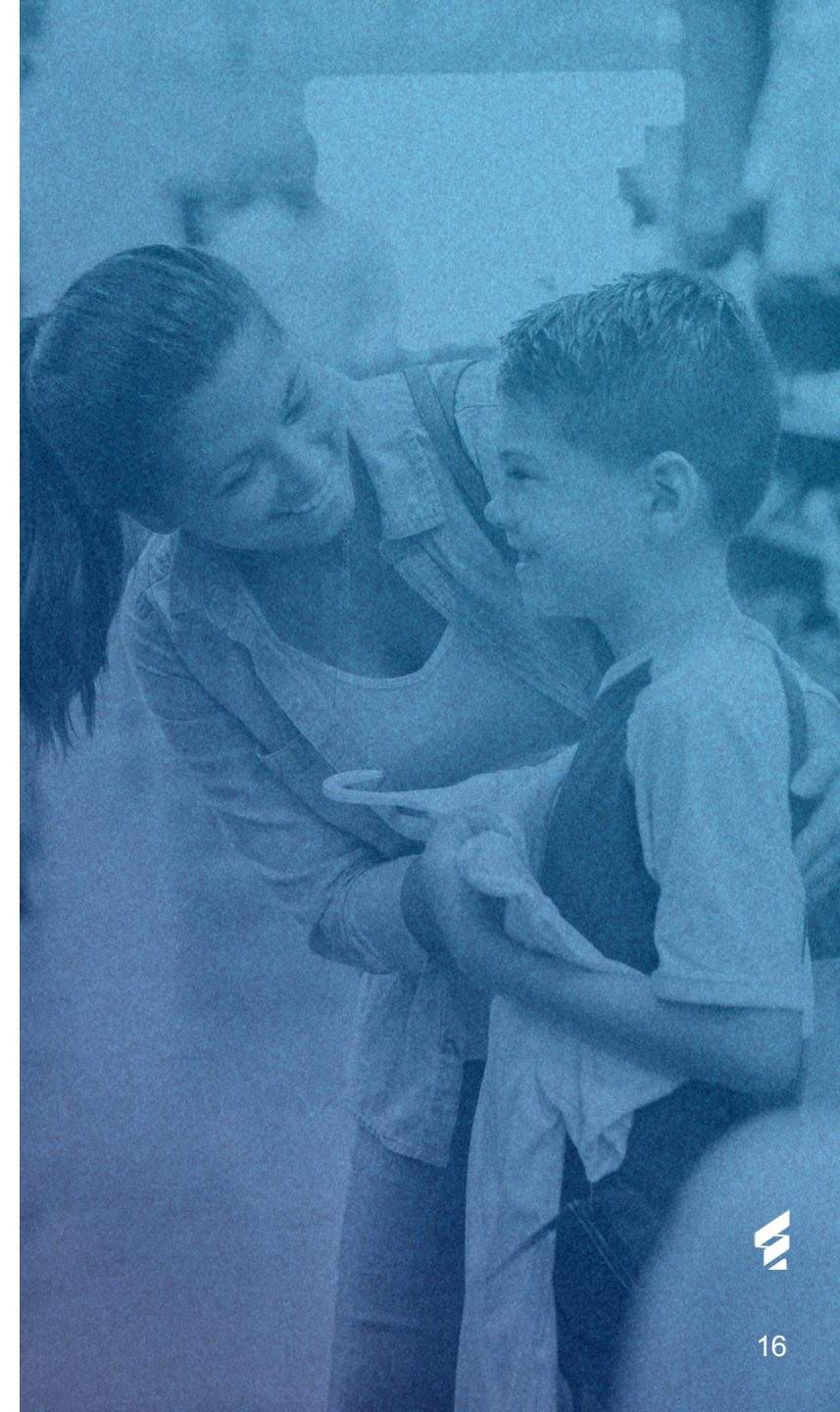
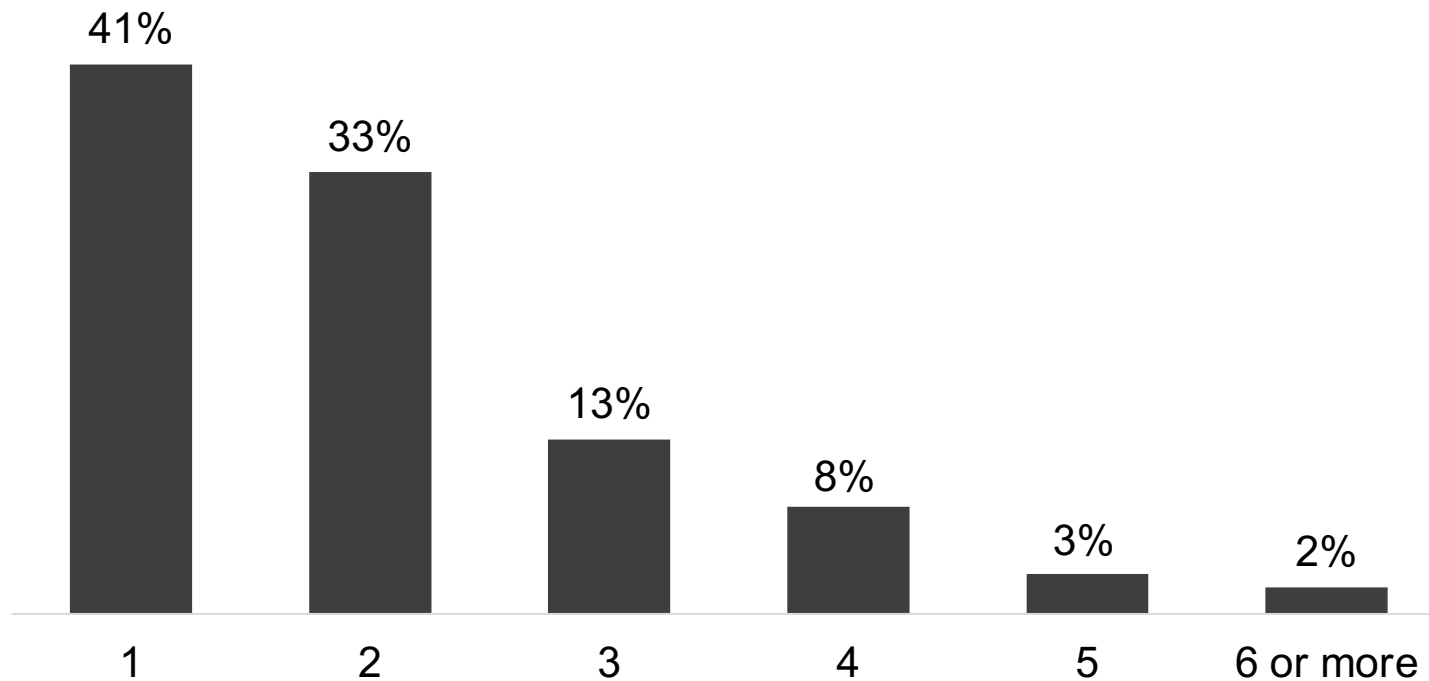


**More than 8 in 10 Millennials and Gen X will be shopping for apparel for their children. Gen Z are most likely to be buying apparel for themselves (53%) and Boomers for extended family (56%).**



**Like school supplies, nearly three-quarters of the sample will only be buying apparel for one or two people.**

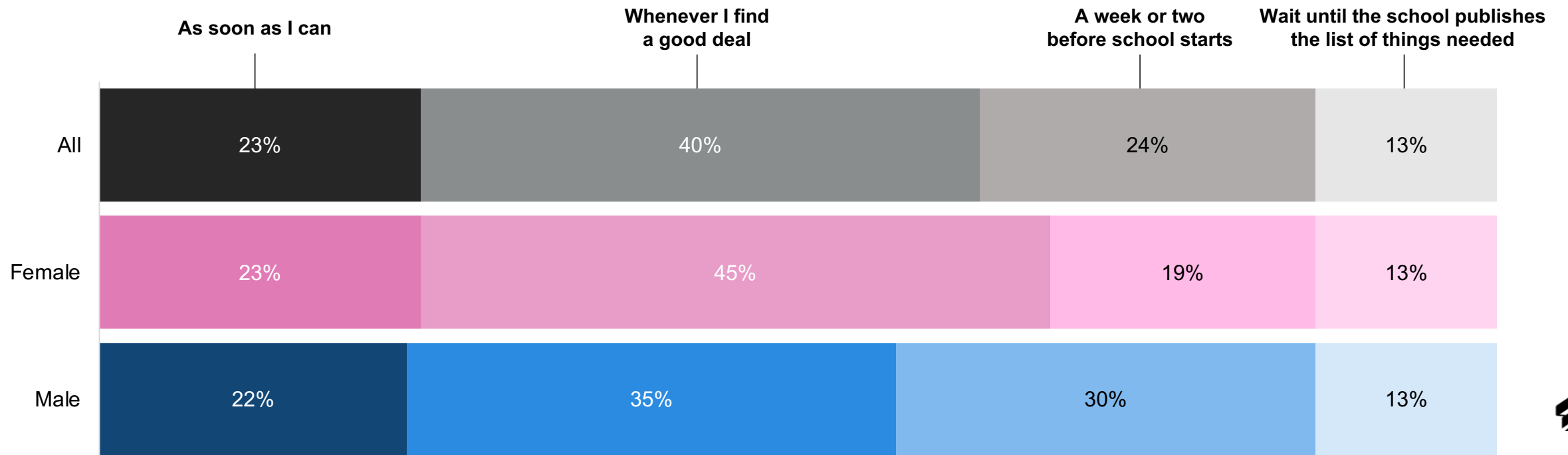
Number of people buying school apparel for





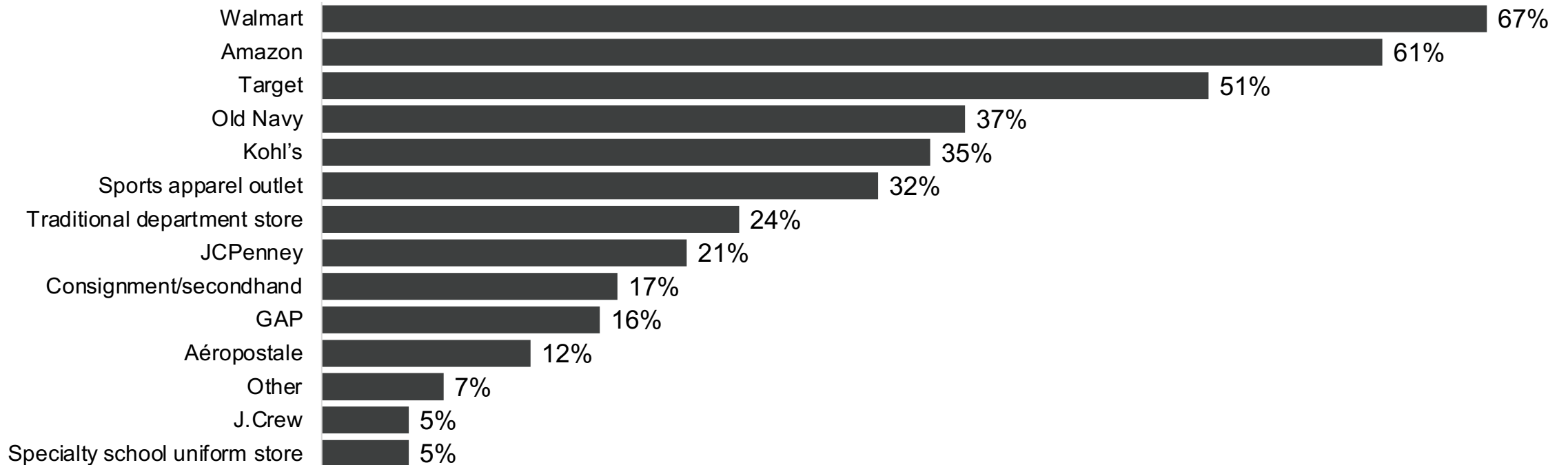
**Men are significantly more likely to procrastinate than women when it comes to buying back-to-school apparel, with 30% planning to wait a week or two before school starts. Women are much more likely to be shopping for a deal (45% vs 35%).**

When do you plan to buy school apparel?



**In all, the average respondent will be shopping at nearly 4 different locations for back-to-school apparel (3.9). The only locations favored by more than half of the shoppers are Walmart (67%), Amazon (61%), and Target (51%).**

**Stores planned to shop for school apparel**

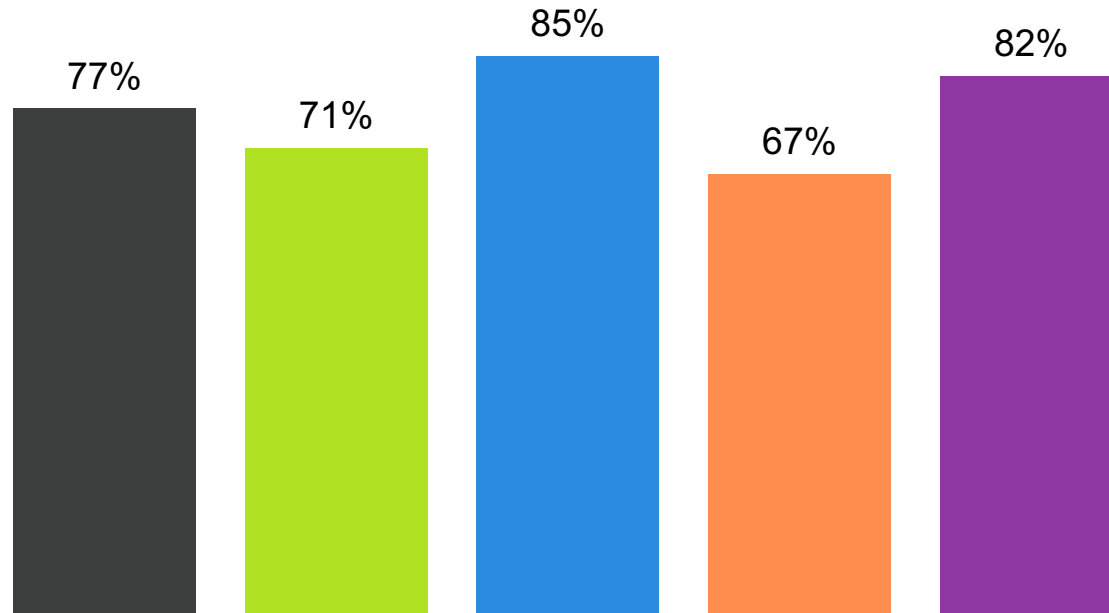


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## Similar to school supplies, more than 3 in 4 people plan to compare prices on back-to-school apparel.

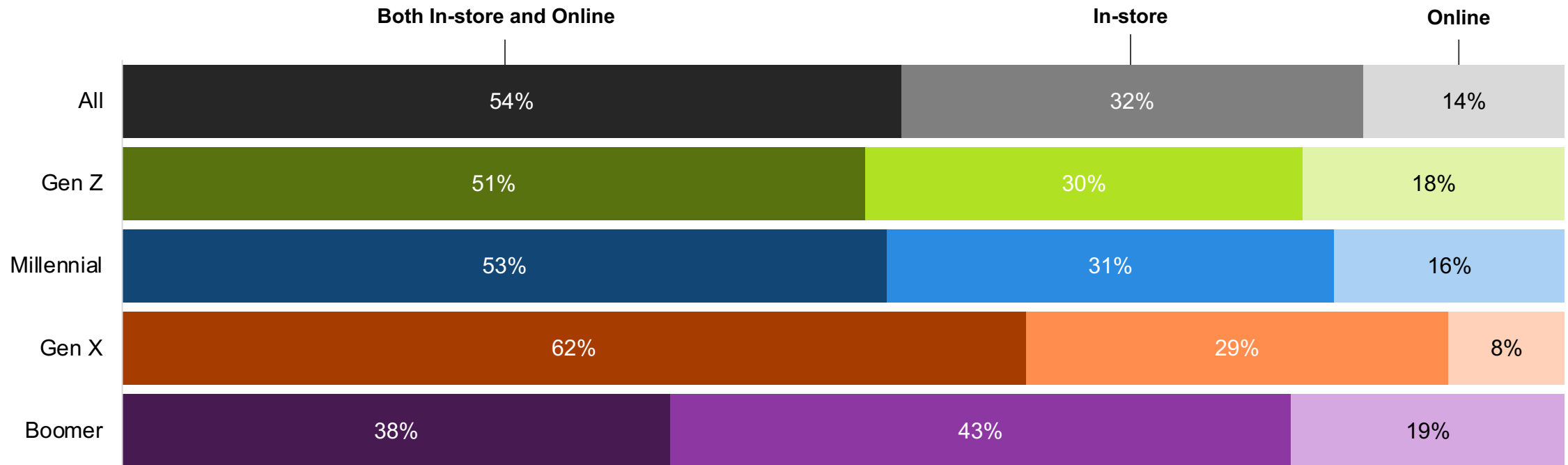
Likelihood to compare school apparel prices: “Likely” or “Very likely”

■ All ■ Gen Z ■ Millennial ■ Gen X ■ Boomer



**More than half (54%) of the respondents will shop both online and in-store for back-to-school apparel. Boomers (43%) are much more likely than other generations to shop mostly in-store.**

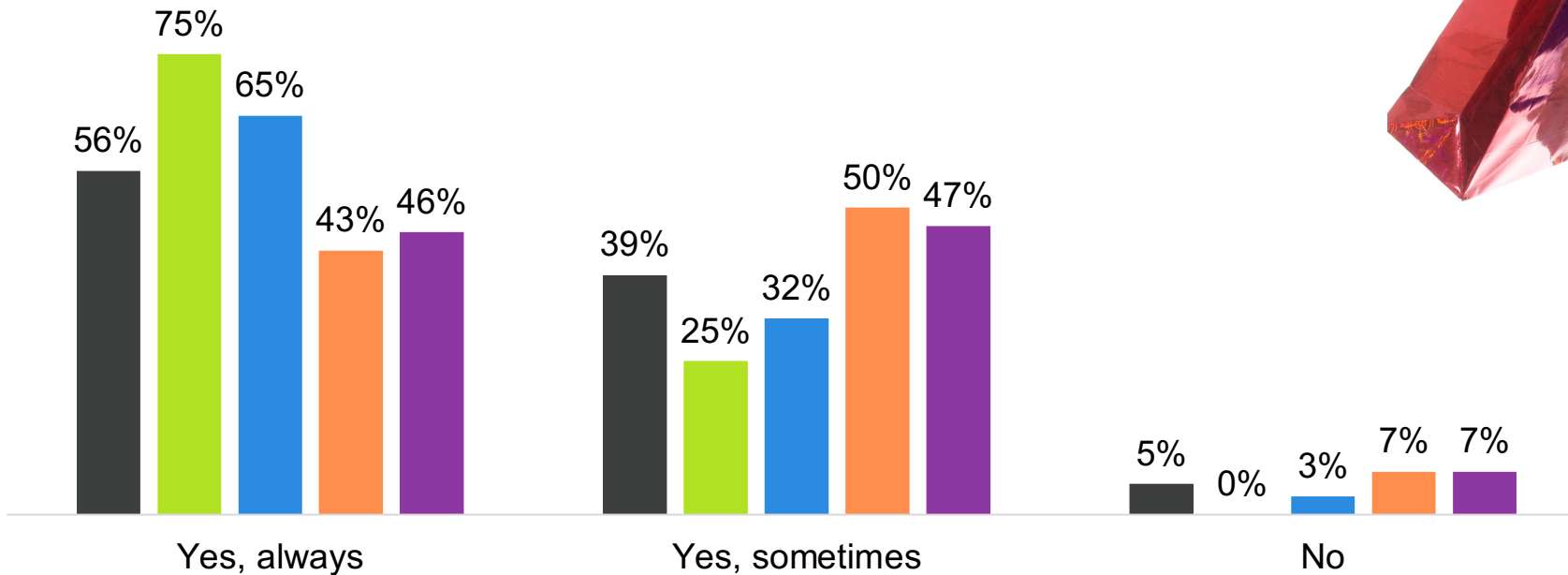
In-store vs Online Shopping



**Given the importance of getting proper sizing, it's not a shock that more than half of the respondents (56%) purchasing for children take the kids along with them while shopping.**

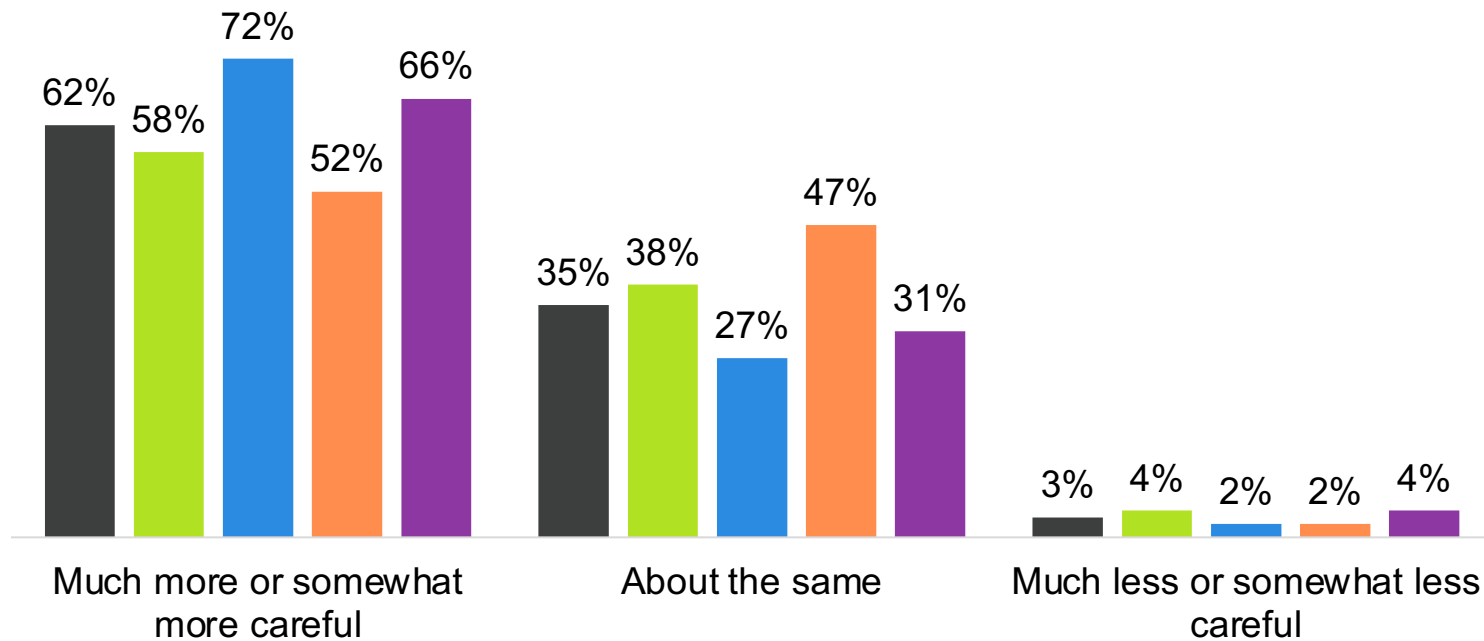
**Allow children to shop with them for school apparel**

■ All ■ Gen Z ■ Millennial ■ Gen X ■ Boomer



## The cautious approach to spending on school supplies this year is also apparent when it comes to apparel.

More or less careful on school apparel spending this year



# Is the economy too cool for school?

N = 880  
MOE ± 3.30%  
Panel: General Population  
Collected: 6/30/23



**Gen Z**  
11%



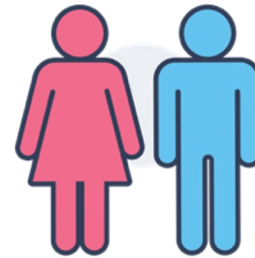
**Millennial**  
32%



**Gen X**  
27%



**Baby Boomer**  
30%



**Female**  
51%

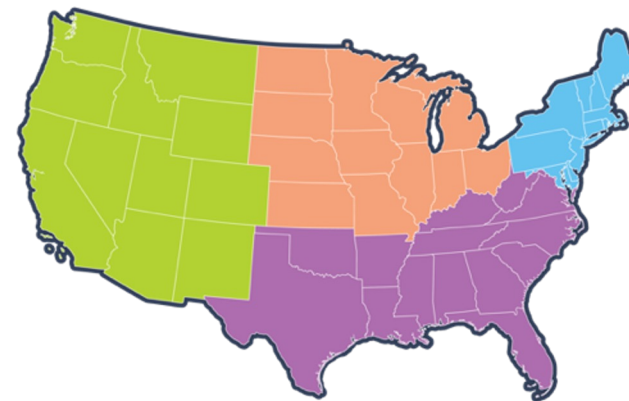
**Male**  
49%



**Urban**  
37%

**Suburban**  
43%

**Rural**  
21%



**Northeast**  
17%

**Midwest**  
21%

**South**  
38%

**West**  
24%



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## Do you want to take the Pulse of *your* consumers?

Our insights team will partner with you to design a study that will help you better understand your customers and their problems, and how your brand can win at retail.

To learn more about what our Four-Part Process and custom research studies can do for you, contact:

Jenni Becker SVP, Business Development  
[jenni.becker@salesfactory.com](mailto:jenni.becker@salesfactory.com)

The logo for Sales Factory Consumer Pulse is centered on the right side of the slide. It features the words "SALES FACTORY" in a small, white, sans-serif font above the word "Consumer" in a larger, white, sans-serif font. To the right of "Consumer" is the word "Pulse" in a bold, white, sans-serif font, with a stylized blue lightning bolt icon integrated into the letter 'e'. The background of the slide is a dark blue with a grid of white plus signs and various data visualization elements like bar charts and line graphs, all in a lighter blue tone.

SALES FACTORY  
Consumer **Pulse**