Capital One survey: Over 80 per cent of parents engaging in cost-saving behaviours to navigate back-to-school shopping

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Eighty-one per cent of Canadian parents say they're deploying cost-savings strategies as they look to navigate back-to-school purchases this year, such as hunting for deals and buying second-hand items, according to Capital One Canada's third annual back-to-school survey.

The survey – which polled over 1,000 parents – found that Canadians are spending over $8,800 on average to support a child throughout the year while they're at school – a jump from the average in 2024 ($7,709) and 2023 ($6,848). Food ($3,565), as well as school, daycare and extracurriculars ($2,247) and transportation ($1,043) represent the highest average costs per child for parents. On average, parents are spending $523 on devices, such as laptops, tablets, phones and headphones each school year.

When asked about how parents are planning to approach this year's purchases, the survey found that:

- Over two-thirds (68 per cent) will look for deals, sales, or coupons
- 41 per cent have dedicated savings they've built up for this shopping occasion
- Approximately four out of five parents (79 per cent) will avoid buying non-essential "nice-to-have" items
- Nearly three-quarters (74 per cent) will consistently shop around for the best price

As parents navigate back-to-school purchases, nearly half (48 per cent) found they were able to improve their financial situation compared to past years due to improved budgeting.

"Our survey shows Canadian parents are more strategic than ever when it comes to managing school expenses," says Becca Mintz, Vice President at Capital One Canada. "They're focused on smart savings strategies, and are even bringing their kids into the conversation. At Capital One Canada, we're committed to providing simple, transparent tools that help families start the school year with confidence."

Capital One Canada customers have spent 56 per cent more on children's clothing and uniforms over the past two years. Meanwhile, food for packed lunches has seen an eight per cent increase in cost over the past 12 months, and a 28 per cent increase over the last 24 months. Similarly, the cost of children's sports and activities has seen an increase of 17 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively.

The Capital One Canada survey also found that parents are using back-to-school shopping as an opportunity to educate their children about finances and spending. More than half (56 per cent) believe it's important to include their children in budgeting conversations and, for those with very young children, 45 per cent plan to have these conversations once they're old enough.

For more information about Capital One Canada's survey, or to learn how Capital One Canada can support you in your credit journey, please visit: capitalone.ca/lifeandcredit.

Methodology

Capital One conducted this survey among 1,003 Canadians, aged 18 years or older and parents with children under 18 between July 2, 2025 and July 10, 2025, inclusive. No margin of error can be associated with a non-probability sample (i.e., a web panel in this case). For comparison purposes, a probability sample of 1,003 respondents yields a margin of error no greater than ±3.1%, (19 times out of 20).

About Capital One Canada

With corporate offices in Toronto, Capital One Canada has been offering Canadian consumers a range of competitive Mastercard credit cards since 1996. Capital One Canada challenges themselves to see the world through the eyes of their customers, to deliver the market-leading credit products and exceptional service they're looking for. Capital One Canada is a division of Capital One Bank, a subsidiary of Capital One Financial Corporation of McLean, Virginia (NYSE:COF). Visit capitalone.ca to learn more.