

COUPON USAGE TRENDS & SHOPPING BEHAVIORS IN 2021



One of the trends to emerge out of the last 12 months marred by the global pandemic is the meteoric rise of e-commerce and online shopping. According to some estimates, Americans spent \$861 billion in online shopping in 2020, which is an astounding 40% more than they did in 2019.

Along with the growth in online shopping spend came the increased use of digital discounts and promotional codes. As America gradually emerges out of the pandemic, are the shopping patterns of the last 12 months here to stay? We surveyed more than 1,300 adults in the U.S. to identify key shopping trends and drivers, explore the use of coupons, and understand the role of digital discounts in how Americans shop online in 2021.

Our own research suggests that digital coupons are more important than ever with as many as 96% stating they search for a promo code before making a purchase online.

<https://couponfollow.com/research/coupon-usage-trends>

KEY FINDINGS



1 ONLINE SHOPPING IS INCREASINGLY MOBILE

When it comes to shopping online, 62% of Americans stated they make the majority

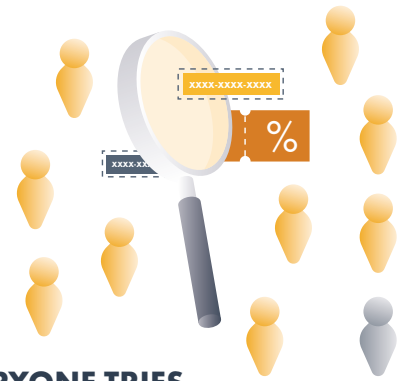
of online purchases on their phone.

This includes 70% of women and 70% of those aged 18 to 29. Only 38% of Americans stated using a laptop or desktop computer to make online purchases.

2

ALMOST EVERYONE TRIES TO FIND A DISCOUNT

Nine in ten (96%) Americans stated they search for a promo code or a digital coupon before making an online purchase, with only 4% stating they never do. Furthermore, 83% have used a digital promo code at least once when shopping online and about three in four (73%) reported they love receiving digital coupons.



3

DISCOUNTS CAN BOOST BRAND LOYALTY

Around 73% admit that receiving discounts from brands makes them more loyal customers, two-thirds (66%) discover brands through promo codes, and equally as many (66%) state they'd be more likely to visit a store in-person if they had a coupon to redeem there.



4



THE PRICE HAS TO BE RIGHT

Price is the most significant purchasing factor, with 84% reporting it's part of their consideration and 61% saying it's the single most important factor for them. Two-thirds (66%) of Americans became more price-conscious in the last 12 months.

5

AMERICANS LOVE DISCOUNTS ON FASHION AND FOOD DELIVERY

Clothing (59%), takeout (42%), and beauty/self-care (37%) were the top shopping categories for Americans that shop with coupons and promo codes. Meal delivery and pet supplies were tied for the fifth most common purchase type for promo code users (32%).



ON MOBILE, BUT NOT WITHOUT STRUGGLES: HOW AMERICANS SHOP ONLINE IN 2021



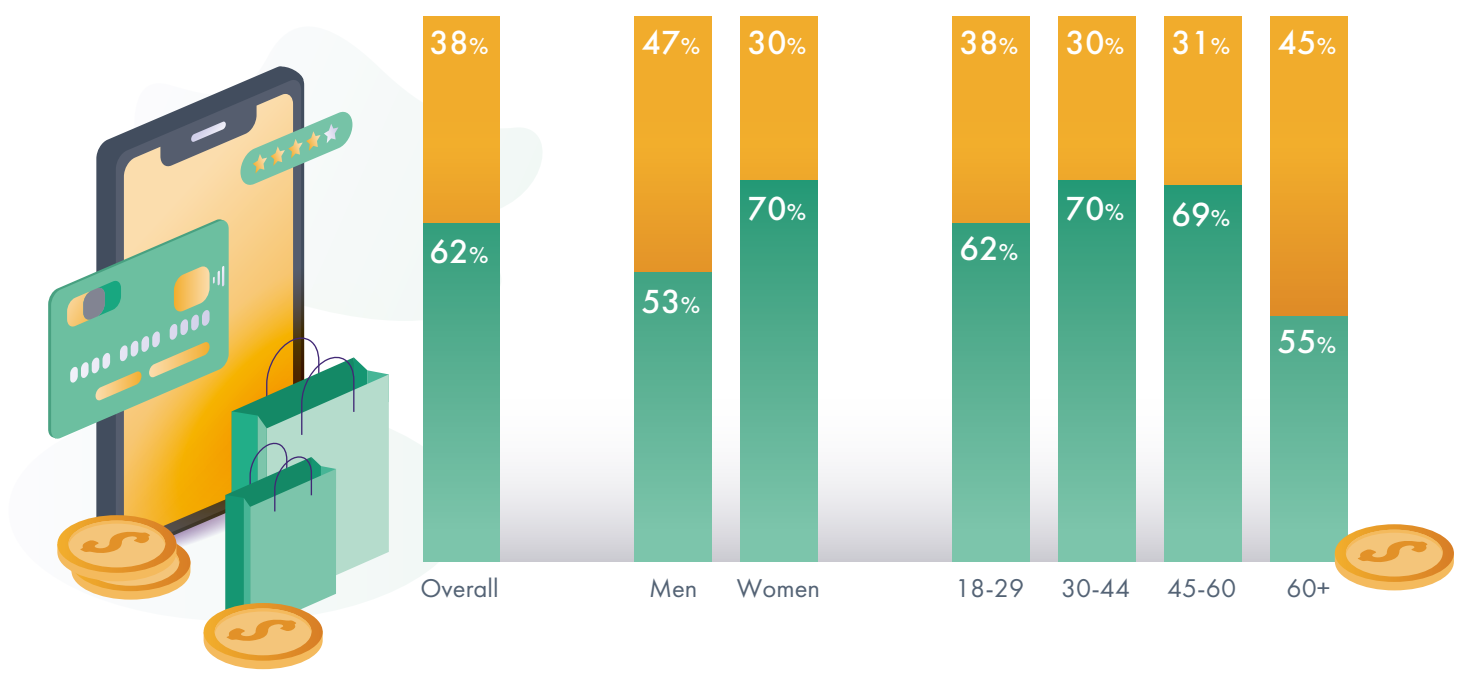
Almost two-thirds (62%) of Americans we surveyed report making the majority of their online purchases using a mobile device rather than a desktop or laptop computer.

Women were more likely to use their phones to shop than men (70% vs. 53%), as those aged 30-44 were more actively shopping on their mobile devices (70%) than those over 60 years old (45%).



Most Online Shopping Is Now Done via Mobile

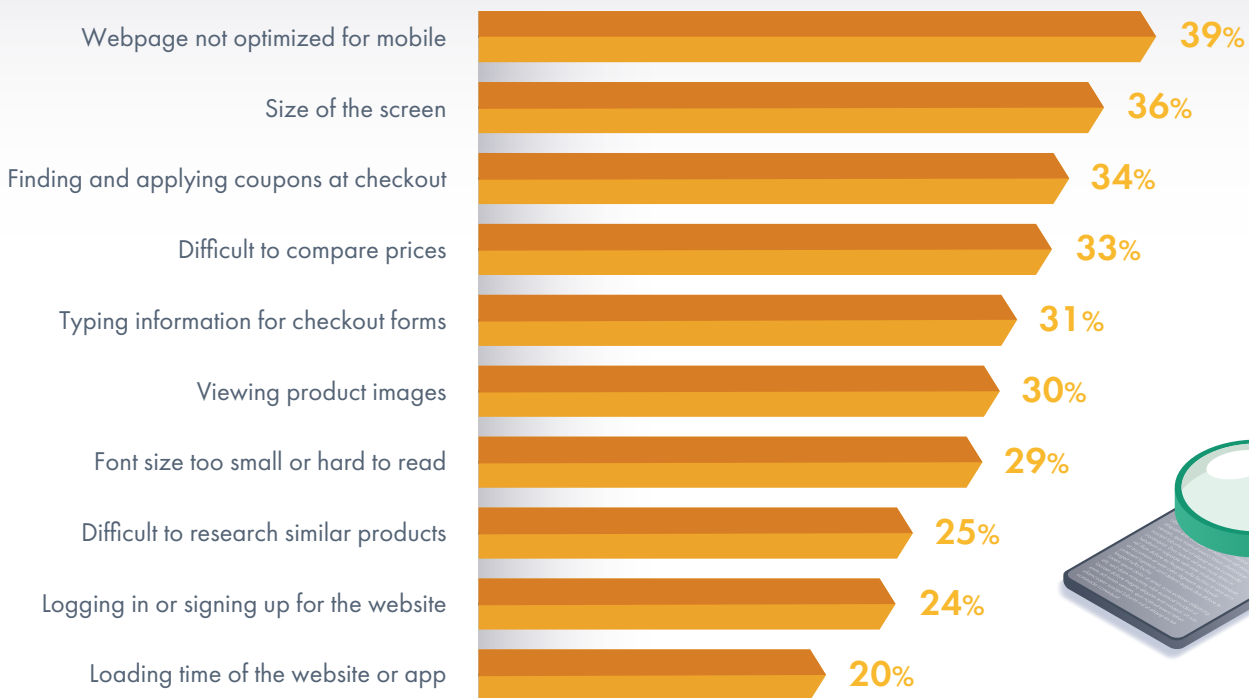
■ Mobile device ■ Desktop device





Pain Points When Shopping on Mobile

Shopping on mobile, while convenient, has its pitfalls and consumers struggle in certain areas when browsing on e-commerce websites. Below we've captured some of the significant issues reported when shopping online.



Websites not being optimized for a mobile device was the most common pain point for American consumers shopping on their mobile devices (**39%**).

Accessibility can be a big issue for e-commerce, and about 1 in 3 (**38%**) of older Americans (over age 60) shopping on their phones and tablets found font sizes too small or hard to read. This was also reported by about 1 in 5 (**20%**) of young Americans aged 18-29.

Checkout-related pain points such as finding and applying coupons at checkout (**34%**) and typing information for checkout forms (**31%**) were among the most common issues reported. Younger people (aged 18-29) had the most trouble applying coupons at checkout (**38%**). More than a third (**37%**) of older Americans (aged over 60) struggle with typing information for checkout forms on mobile.

Around **30%** of shoppers had issues viewing product images and having to zoom in to click the right thing – both of which are areas for improvement for brand and retailer websites likely looking to capitalize on their e-commerce boom of the last 12 months.

ALL ABOUT THAT PRICE: THE KEY PURCHASING FACTOR IN ONLINE SHOPPING



According to our research, product price is by far the most important factor in shopping. As many as 84% admitted it impacted their purchasing decisions, while 61% acknowledged that it's the single most important factor driving their purchasing decisions.

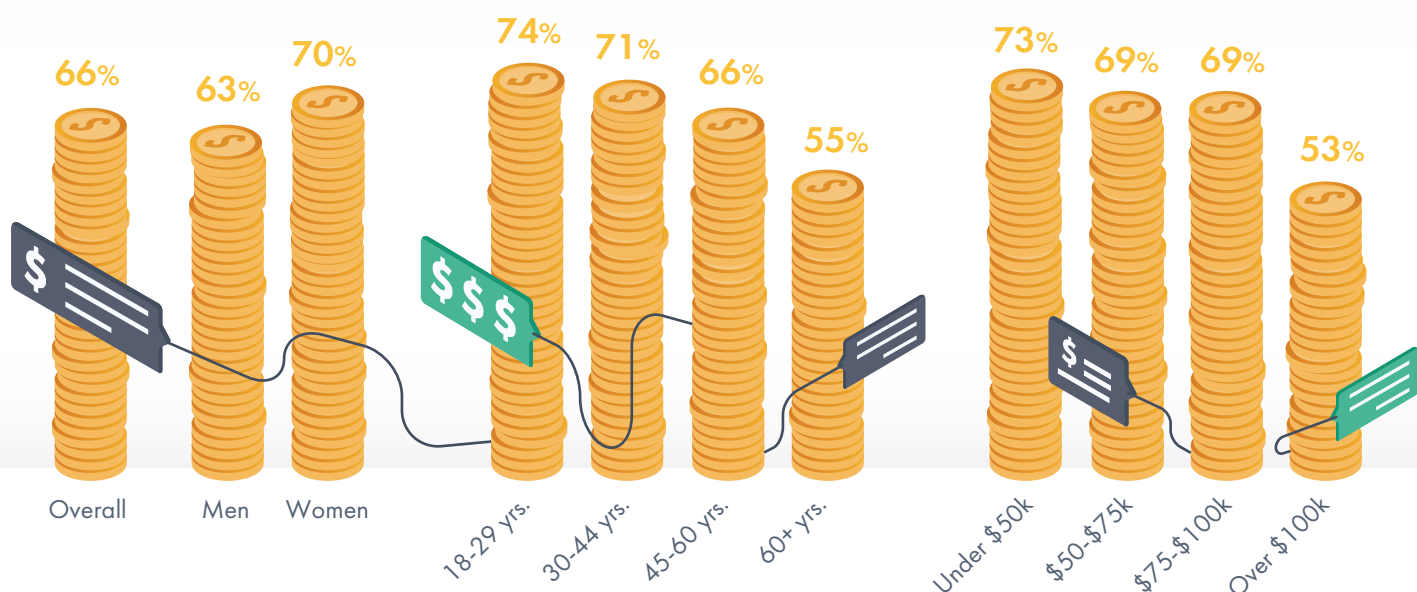
Price is the most influential shopping factor across demographics, being most commonly mentioned by those aged 45-60 (87%) and least by those over 60 years old (81%).

Curiously enough, price had a stronger influence among the most high-earning respondents in our research, as 85% of those earning \$100k a year or more reported their behavior is mostly influenced by price – more than any other income bracket.

One of the side effects of living in a global pandemic for the past 12 months may be that Americans have become increasingly price-conscious.

Women and Young People Are Much More Price-Conscious Than One Year Ago

% influenced by price



Two-thirds (66%) of Americans admitted to being more price-conscious than they were a year ago. Nearly three-in-four (74%) young Americans (aged 18-29) became more price-sensitive in the past 12 months, compared to 55% of those over 60 years old.

Furthermore, women (70%) were more likely than men (63%) to adopt a price-sensitive approach to their shopping. Three quarters (73%) of those with incomes under \$50k a year became more price-conscious in the 12 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, in contrast with those earning over \$100k, of whom only half became more aware of price when shopping online.

SHIPPING, RATINGS, AND BRAND: IMPORTANT DRIVERS BEHIND PURCHASING DECISIONS



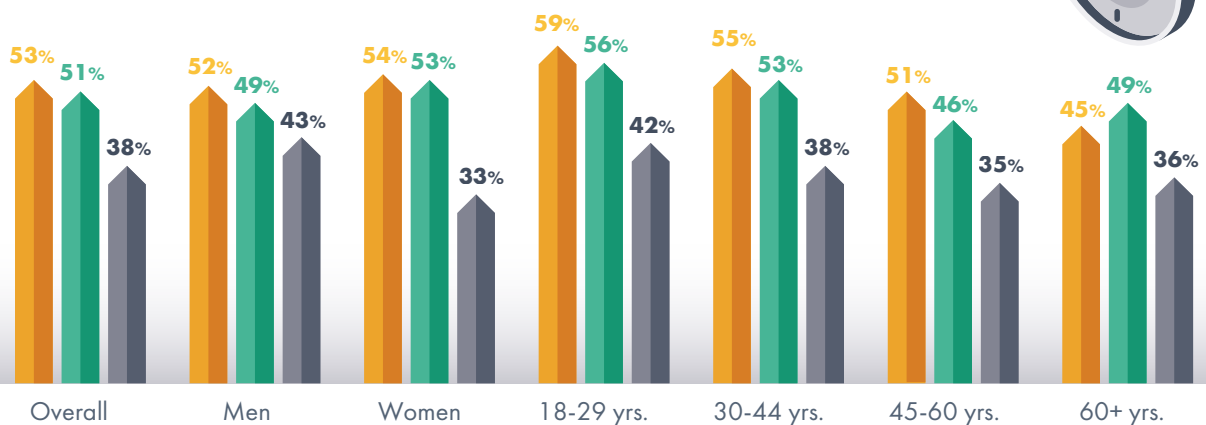
Second only to price in its influence, shipping time was the next most important factor in online shopping, as noted by more than half (53%) of respondents in our research. Shipping time was of greater importance to young people, as 59% of those aged 18-29 mentioned it, compared to only 45% of those over 60 years old.

Vital as it may be as one of the factors, only 11% of Americans said shipping time was the most important driver of their purchasing decisions when shopping online.

Ratings came out third in our ranking of factors affecting online shopping, with a slight majority of 51% of respondents in our survey mentioning it. Much like with shipping time, it was marginally more important to the younger age group aged 18-29 (56%) than their older counterparts aged over 60 (49%).

Shipping Time Matters More Than Product Ratings or Brand

■ Shipping time ■ Ratings ■ Brand of the product



As much as Americans like certain brands and have their favorites across categories, brand as a factor doesn't have much pull among our study participants. Only 38% of respondents said it affects their shopping decisions, and just 8% noted it was the key factor for them.

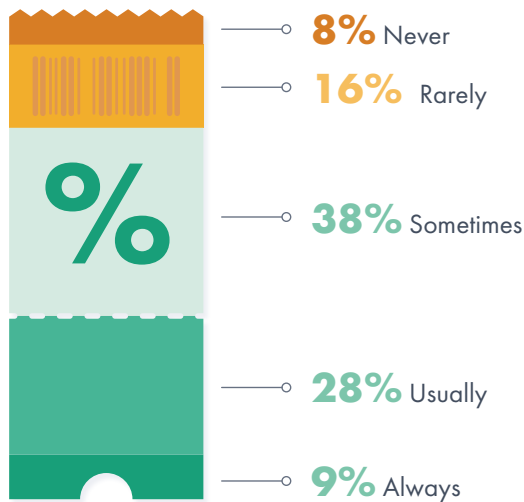
Perhaps predictably, brand as a factor had a stronger effect on those aged 18 to 29 (42%) than those over 60 (36%). However, what is rather surprising is that those on higher incomes were up to 60% more likely to factor the brand into their shopping decisions (61% for those earning \$75k-\$100k vs. 38% among the general population).

SAVINGS SAVVY: AMERICANS' ENDURING PASSION FOR DISCOUNTS



Who doesn't love a discount, especially if you can get it as easily as entering a promo code at checkout?

An overwhelming majority of Americans certainly do, as according to our study a whopping **96%** search for a promo code or a coupon before making an online purchase with only **4%** stating they never do. **Over half (51%)** stated they frequently (always or usually) search for a promo code before making a purchase



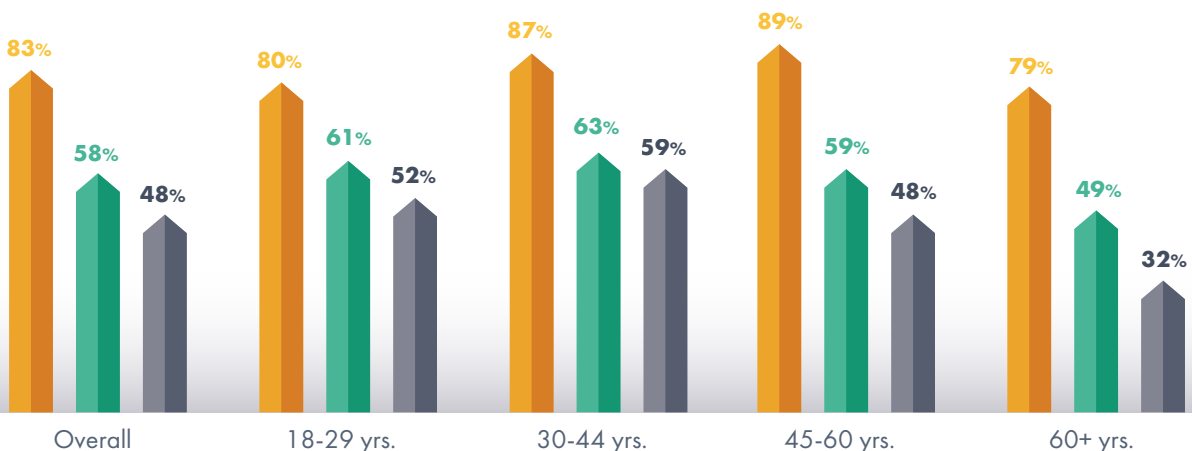
Women were more likely to have searched than men (**87% vs. 78%**), and over two-thirds (**69%**) of people over age 60 search for promo codes online.

And it's not just the digital coupons Americans are after. More than half (**58%**) used a physical coupon at least once when shopping. People aged 30-44 were most likely to use a physical coupon (**63%**) than any other age group, and those over 60 years old were least likely (**49%**).



Types of Coupons Used by American Consumers

■ Digital online coupon
 ■ Physical in-store coupon
 ■ Mobile in-store coupon



Almost every other American (**49%**) has used a mobile in-store coupon, e.g., on their phone or via a QR code, with 30-44 year-olds using mobile coupons (**59%**) almost at the same rate as physical ones (**63%**).

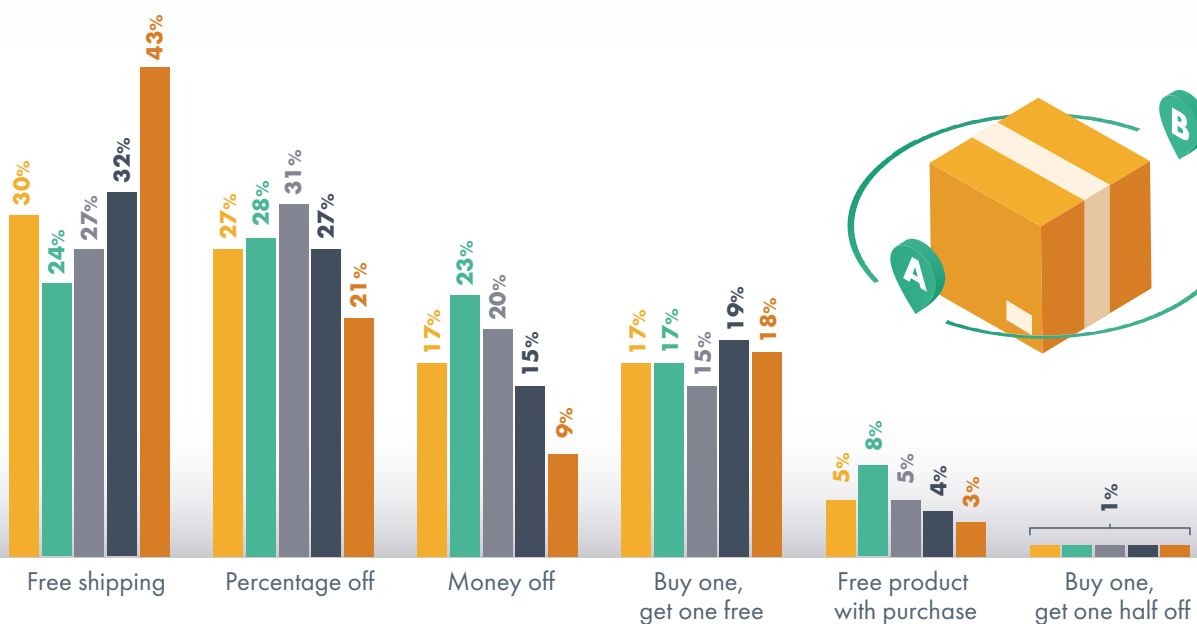


Discount Preferences

Discounts in the form of dollars off or percent off were of the most interest (**44%**) while Free Shipping was the most preferred form of a discount to about one in three (**30%**). However, in the 60+ age group, Free Shipping was the most preferred at **42%** compared to **32%** stating dollar or percent off discounts were preferred. Younger Americans (18-29 year-olds) were the least interested age group in Free Shipping as a discount.

Discount Types Preferences by Age Group

Overall 18-29 yrs. 30-44 yrs. 45-60 yrs. 60+ yrs.



While seeing a dollar off amount may be easier to understand, Americans were reporting that a percentage off their purchase is what they prefer. Percentage-based discounts had their peak appeal among 30-44 year-olds with **31%** of that age group preferring them compared to **20%** stating dollar off coupons were preferred.

Are Coupons Worth the Effort?

We all know that finding a discount code can take some time, but how much? In our study, we found that, on average, Americans spend 4 minutes looking for a promo code when making a purchase, with **59%** spending between 1 and 5 minutes looking for coupons before checkout.

And why not spend just a little time, especially when the average savings found according to CouponFollow's Cently browser extension data is around \$20. Additionally, for **90%** of Americans, digital coupons they apply at checkout were valid at least some of the time. More than half of shoppers (**53%**) cited the coupons or promo codes they have attempted to use always or usually were successfully redeemed.

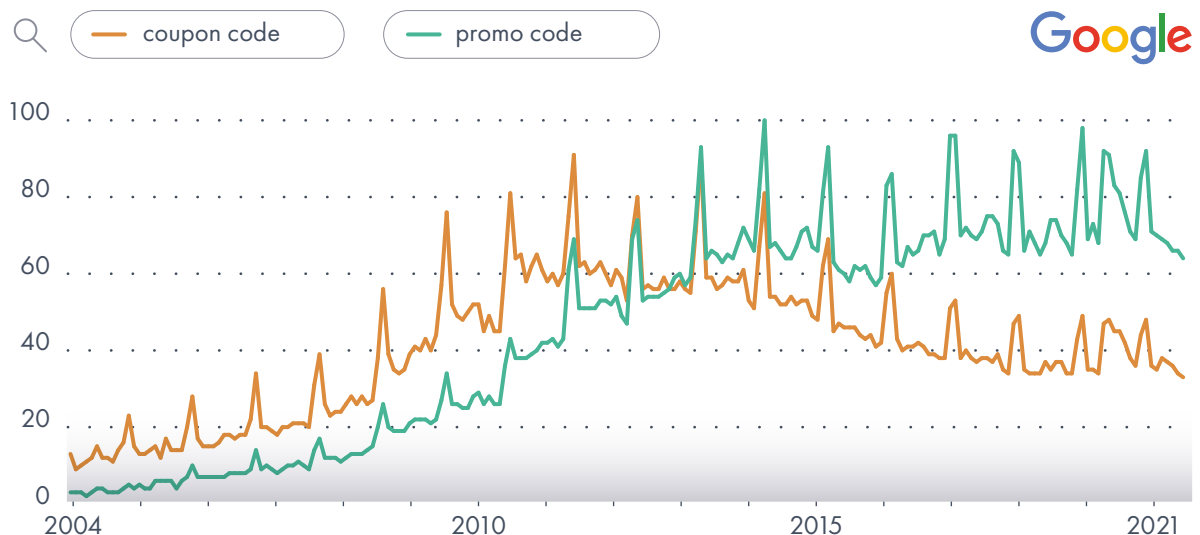


What Are They Called Anyway?

When you enter a code at checkout, what do you call it? While major e-commerce platform Shopify refers to them as discount codes, most Americans over the last two decades have shifted from calling them coupon codes to promo codes. In our study **44%** referred to them as promo codes, followed by **28%** calling them discount codes and **17%** calling them coupon codes.



Fun fact: According to Google Trends the term **coupon code** was more popular in the early days of e-commerce until about 2013 when the term **promo code** overtook it.



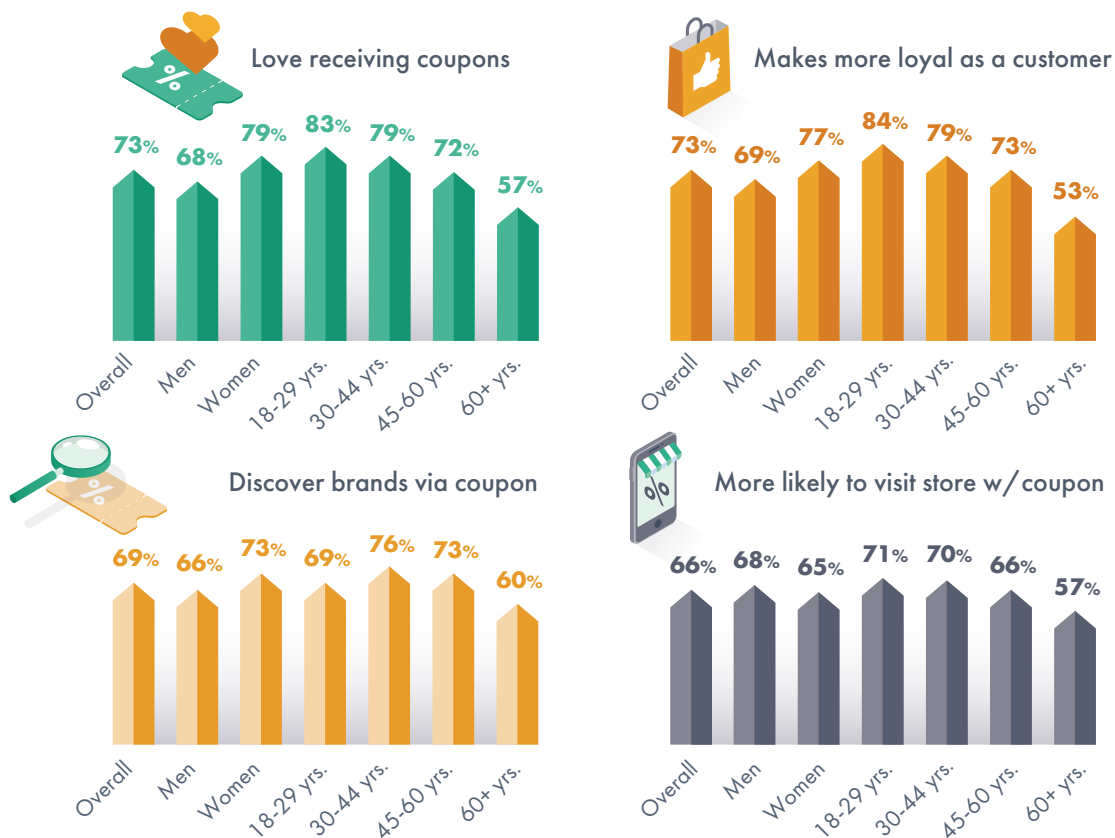
MORE THAN A DISCOUNT: THE HIDDEN POWER OF A PROMO CODE



Discounts and promo codes can have a powerful influence on the modern consumer from brand perception to purchase decision making.

Three-quarters of Americans love receiving coupons (74%), which includes 79% of women and 68% of men. Those aged 18-29 have the highest appreciation of promo codes (83%), compared to 57% of those over 60 years old.

Moreover, coupons offered by brands make almost every three in four (73%) Americans feel more loyal as customers. This is more the case with women (77%) than with men (69%), and more the case with young people (84% of 18-29) than older Americans (53% of those over age 60).



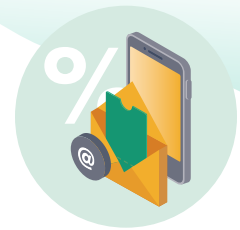
In addition, as many as two-thirds (66%) of our study participants claim to discover new brands through coupons. This has been reported by 76% of those aged 30-44, more than in any other age group.

As many as 82% of our study participants said they'd be more likely to try a new product/brand with a coupon, which includes 87% of women and 78% of men. Higher earners, those earning \$75k a year or more, were more likely to discover new brands with the help of a promo code than those on lower incomes.

Discount consideration is an important part of the purchase decision process. More than half (58%) of respondents in our survey say discounts or promotional offers are very important when deciding whether or not to purchase from a retailer or brand.

DISCOUNT DELIVERY TRENDS IN 2021:

EMAIL VS. TEXTS VS. SNAIL MAIL



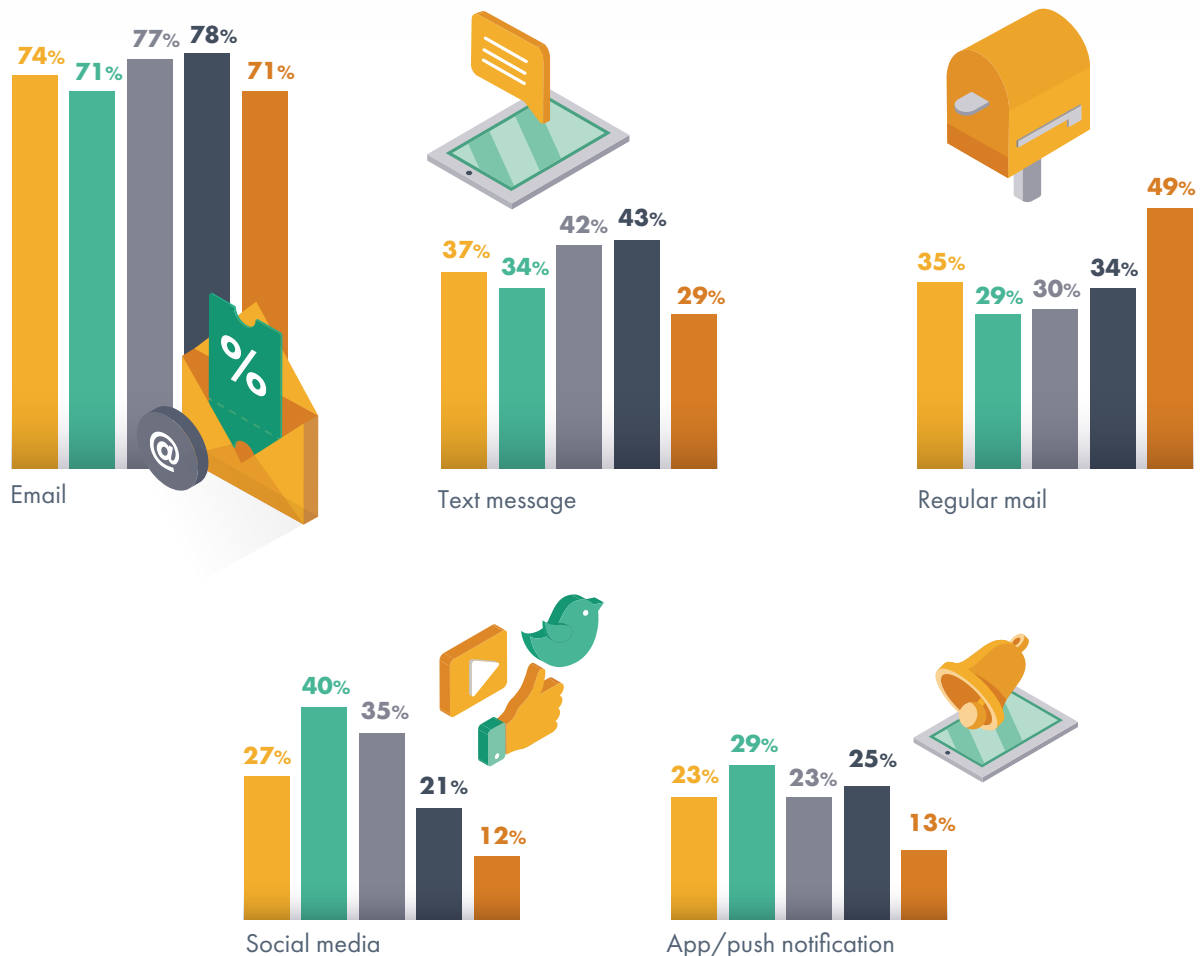
Americans tend to get their coupons mainly via email (74%) and, as befits a nation that prefers to shop on their mobile device, via text message (37%).

People aged 45-60 were most likely to get coupons via text (43%) compared to 42% of 30-44 year-olds and 34% of 18-29 year-olds.

Surprisingly enough, the good old snail mail is the third most common way of getting coupons (35%) in 2021, ahead of social media (27%) and apps/notifications (23%). Somewhat expectedly, almost half (49%) of those over 60 years of age receive their coupons by regular mail, more than any other age group.

How Americans Get Their Coupons, by Broad Channel

■ Overall
 ■ 18-29 yrs.
 ■ 30-44 yrs.
 ■ 45-60 yrs.
 ■ 60+ yrs.



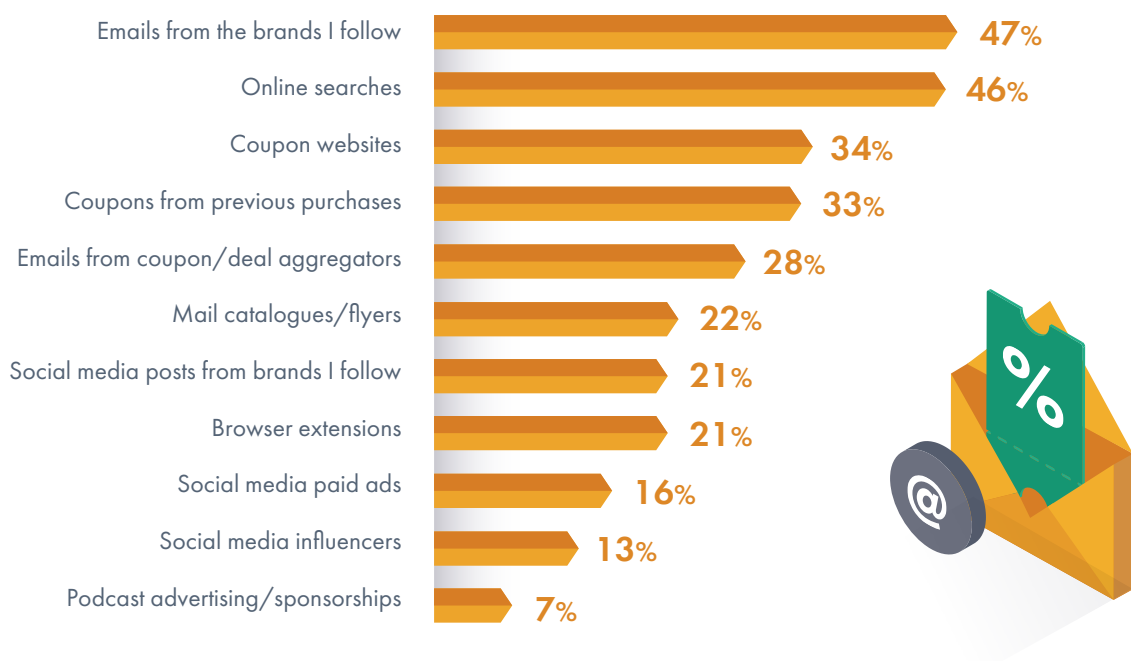


Those aged 18 to 29, on the other hand, were more likely to get their digital discounts from dedicated coupon sites (**33%**), while nearly a third (**29%**) get their promo codes from apps and push notifications.

About one-third (**34%**) get coupons that are included in packages from previous purchases (**33%**).

It's the members of the older age group (over age 60) who were more likely to get coupons from previous purchases (**38%**), compared to people between 18 and 29 years old (**26%**).

How Americans Discover Coupons



Just over one in five Americans discover coupons in mail catalogs/flyers (**22%**), social media posts from the brands they follow (**21%**), or browser extensions such as Cently (**21%**). Much like with snail mail, those over 60 were 2.5 times as likely to discover coupons in their mail catalogs (**35%**) than people between 18 and 29 years of age (**14%**).

The least common ways of discovering promo codes were social media paid ads (**16%**), social media influencers (**13%**), and podcast advertising/sponsorships (**7%**). That said, about one in ten (**10%**) men said they find promo codes on podcasts they listen to.

SHOPPING FOR DEALS ON SOCIAL: FACEBOOK DOMINATES LANDSCAPE



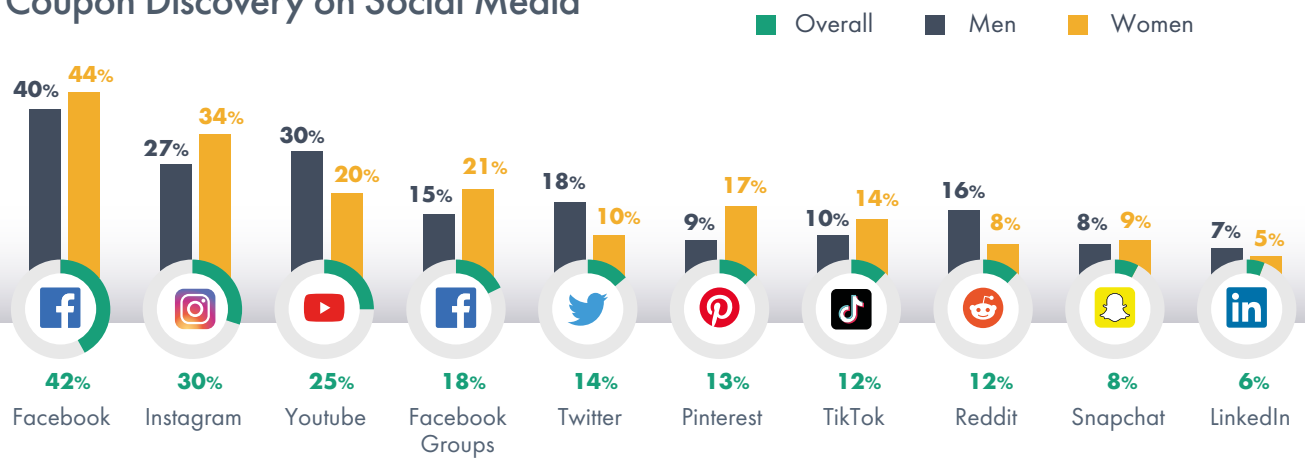
In recent years influencers on social media have begun working closer with brands, and brands themselves have utilized social platforms directly, to offer special promotions.

Favored by close to half (42%), our research shows Facebook is the most common social media for Americans looking for discounts and deals online. The tech giant's other property - Instagram - is also a preferred social media for 30% of bargain hunters.

Most notably, it was those over age 60 taking to Facebook in pursuit of discounts (38%), while nearly half (47%) those aged 18 to 29 preferred Instagram. The younger age group prefers Instagram (47%) compared to older age groups which prefer Facebook primarily for finding discounts.

For a quarter of shoppers (25%), YouTube was where they found their deals. The world's biggest video streaming site was most popular with the young people aged 18-29 (36%) for finding discounts.

Coupon Discovery on Social Media



The breakout star of social media in 2020 was of course TikTok, in which our research suggests it was used by one in five (22%) of 18-29-year-olds to discover discounts for their purchases. Only 13% of 30-44-year-olds reported using the service to find discounts, and only 1% of those over 60.

Sites like Reddit and Pinterest garnered 12% and 13%, respectively, as destinations for digital discounts. Snapchat and LinkedIn were only mentioned by 8% and 6% of our study participants as sites they use to discover coupons and deals.

There were a few notable differences between men and women when it comes to finding digital discounts on social media. Men were more likely than women to find deals on YouTube (30% vs. 20% of women), Reddit (16% vs. 8% of women), and Twitter (18% vs. 10% of women). Conversely, women were more likely to use all other social media, but most notably Instagram (34% vs. 27% of men) and Pinterest (17% vs. 9% of men).

SPENDING PATTERNS OF DISCOUNT SHOPPERS

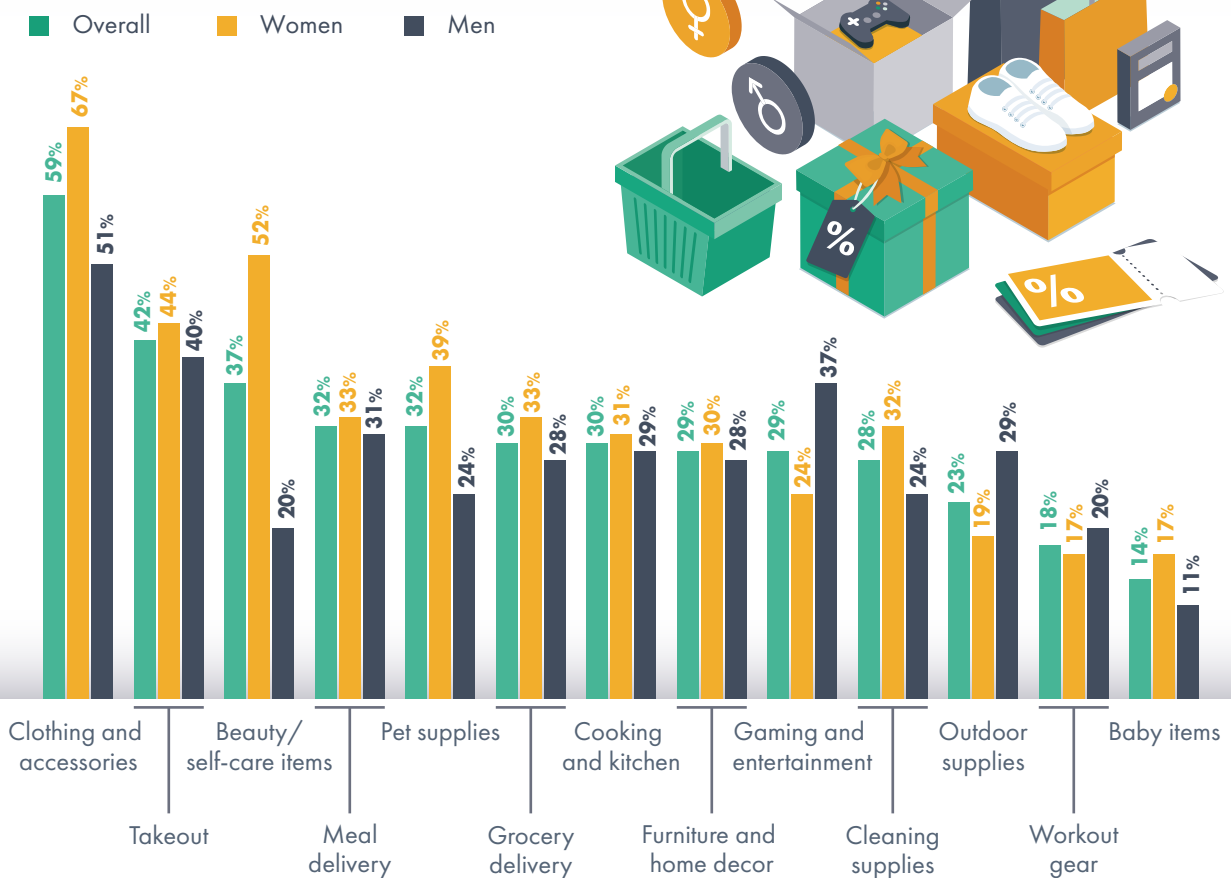


Clothing (59%), takeout meals (42%), and beauty/self-care (37%) were the most commonly purchased items among Americans shopping with coupons and promo codes.

Men were less likely to shop for clothing with a promo code (51%) than women (67%). On the other hand, women were 2.5 times more likely to use a coupon while shopping for beauty products than men (52% vs. 20%).

Pet supplies were the fifth most common purchase for promo code users (32%). Again, female shoppers were more likely to purchase these products than their male counterparts (39% vs. 24%).

Shopping with Coupons by Category



In turn, men were more likely to use a promo code when shopping for gaming/entertainment (37% vs. 24% of women), outdoor supplies (29% vs. 19% for women), and workout gear (20% vs. 17% of women). In our study, baby items were the least most common shopping category for promo code users - just 14% of Americans purchased baby items and used a coupon.

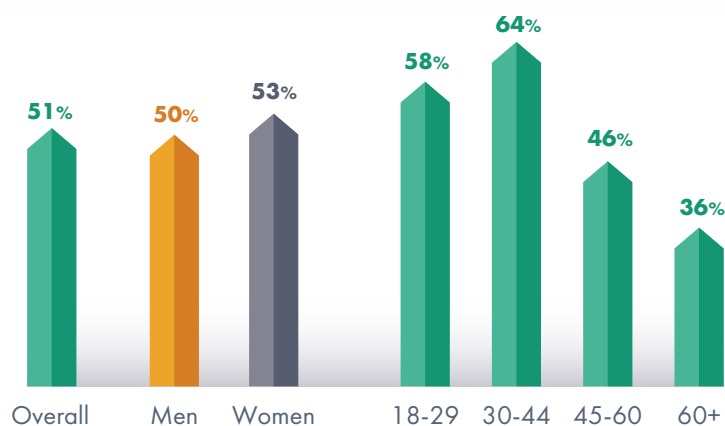


Looking at different age groupings, young people (18-29 year-olds) were significantly more likely than older Americans (aged over 60) to make a purchase with a promo code when shopping for gaming (**24% vs. 7%**) and workout gear (**40% vs. 10%**).

More than half (**51%**) typically end up spending more when shopping with a coupon that requires a minimum spend. Americans over age 60 are most resistant to overspending (**36%**), while 30-44 year-olds are most prone to it (**64%**).

More Likely to Overspend if Shopping with a Coupon

On average, Americans reported they spend **\$23** more when using a coupon, with men tending to spend **\$25** more compared to women's **\$22**. Young people aged 18-29 spend twice as much as those aged over 60 (**\$28 to \$14**)



RESEARCH SUMMARY



In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans remain extremely price-conscious when shopping online. This is likely why digital discount and coupon use is near-ubiquitous in online shopping, as the overwhelming majority of Americans make it a part of their checkout journey and purchase consideration.

Our research has shown that promo codes and coupons are much more than just a means to save. They can aid **brand discovery, boost customer loyalty, encourage visits to online and physical stores, and increase cart value for e-commerce vendors**. As e-commerce became an even more essential part of the American online shopping experience in 2020 and 2021, digital discounts continued to grow in popularity and importance as well.

Study Methodology and Limitations

SURVEY

The survey conducted for this report was carried out to understand how Americans go about online shopping in 2021 with regards to finding, considering, and using digital discounts and promo codes.

A total of 1,319 US adults (18+) were surveyed between April 16th and 17th, 2021.

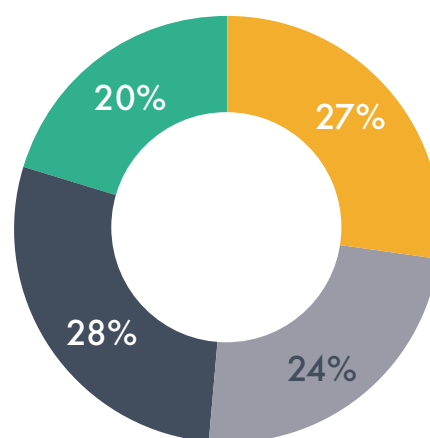
Missing and not applicable responses were excluded from analyses. Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

Survey data have certain limitations related to self-reporting. These limitations include telescoping, exaggeration, and selective memory. We didn't weigh our data or statistically test our hypotheses. This was a purely exploratory project examining online shopping patterns, perceptions, attitudes, and considerations regarding digital discounts and promotional codes.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Of all the study participants, about half (46%) of respondents were female; 54% were male. The age breakdown was as follows: 27% were aged 18 to 29, 24% were aged 30-44, 29% were between 45 and 60 years old, while 21% were over 60.

■ 18-29 yrs. ■ 30-44 yrs. ■ 45-60 yrs. ■ 60+ yrs.



About 20% respondents fell into each of the following annual household income categories: <\$25,000, and \$25,000 - <\$50,000. 19% had the income of \$50,000 - <\$75,000, while 15% of respondents had income between \$75,000 to \$100,000. Roughly 22% of respondents' household incomes were \$100,000 and above, while 8% refused to disclose their income.

FAIR USE STATEMENT

Online shopping and e-commerce have seen a boost in the last year, not in the least due to the COVID-19 pandemic preventing people from shopping in person in the US and around the world. If you feel that our insights into online shopping patterns and digital discounts can be beneficial to someone, feel free to share this research, but be sure your purposes are noncommercial, and please do provide a citation link back to the research on this page so they have access to our complete findings and survey methods.

<https://couponfollow.com/research/coupon-usage-trends>