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Retailers Breathe a Sigh of Relief as Customer Satisfaction Is More or Less Steady in 2021, ACSI Data Show

ANN ARBOR, Mich., (March 1, 2022) – Customer satisfaction with retail is relatively stable.

Overall, the Retail Trade sector dips just 0.5% to a score of 75.1 (out of 100), according to the [American Customer Satisfaction Index's \(ACSI®\) Retail and Consumer Shipping Study 2021-2022](#).

“Cool stability. That’s the best way to describe the retail sector right now,” says David VanAmburg, Managing Director at the ACSI. “Gas stations have taken a hit for obvious reasons with inflation, but as we progress toward year three of the pandemic, online retail is the only industry that undergoes a satisfaction decline. Drugstores actually see a slight bump, while the other retailers are steady across the board. If I had to guess, I’d say that although customers are likely frustrated with more frequent product delays and limited inventory, they’ve also adjusted their expectations at the same time. This patience bodes well for retailers.”

This study includes six retail industries – online retailers, general merchandise retailers, specialty retailers, drugstores, supermarkets, and gas stations – as well as consumer shipping and the U.S. Postal Service.

Of the six retail categories, only online retailers and gas stations (down 4.2% to 68) experience satisfaction slides in 2021.

Etsy takes online retailer lead while Macy’s races up the leaderboard

Customer satisfaction with online retailers slips 1.3% to an ACSI score of 77.

Etsy moves into first place, climbing 3% to 82. Last year’s leader Nordstrom is second, unchanged at 81. Macy’s surges 4% into third place at 80, just ahead of Costco, down 1% to 79.

Five online retailers and the group of smaller sites (up 4%) tie at 78: Amazon (down 1%), Dell

(up 1%), Kohl's (down 1%), Nike (down 1%), and Target (unchanged). Once the ACSI leader among online retailers, Amazon now fades to a record low for satisfaction.

Newegg (down 4%) and Staples (up 1%) move in opposite directions yet meet at the industry average of 77. Best Buy (down 1%), eBay (down 1%), Gap (unchanged), Walgreens (up 3%), and Wayfair (down 1%) all score 76.

With a score of 75, Apple (unchanged), Home Depot (down 1%), HP Store (down 5%), and Lowe's (down 1%) finish just ahead of Overstock, which sinks 3% to 74.

At the bottom of the industry, GameStop sputters 3% to 73, while Groupon and Walmart falter 3% and 1%, respectively, to 72.

Stable Costco maintains grip over general merchandise retailers, while Target moves into third

After sliding last year, customer satisfaction with general merchandise retailers holds steady with an ACSI score of 75.

Costco remains in first place – for the sixth consecutive year – with a stable mark of 81.

Nordstrom (including Nordstrom Rack) stays in second, despite inching back 1% to 79. There's a three-way tie for third place, with Kohl's (unchanged), Sam's Club (down 1%), and Target (up 3%) all scoring 78.

Four retailers tie at 77: BJ's Wholesale Club (unchanged), Dillard's (down 3%), JCPenney (up 1%), and TJX's Marshalls and TJ Maxx (down 1%).

Among the low-end performers, Big Lots fizzles 1% to 72, tying Dollar General, which increases 1%. Fred Meyer (down 1%) and Walmart (unchanged) share the bottom of the category with ACSI scores of 71.

Nike sprints into first place among specialty retailers

Customer satisfaction with specialty retailers holds steady with an ACSI score of 77.

Nike takes the top spot after gaining 1% to 81. Hobby Lobby (unchanged) and TJX's HomeGoods (up 1%) share second at 80 apiece, just ahead of Bass Pro Shops (unchanged), PVH (up 1%), and L Brands (down 2%), each at 79. L Brands' score represents both Bath & Body Works and Victoria's Secret, which are now separate companies. This marks the first time in seven years that L Brands doesn't lead the industry.

The group of smaller specialty retailers (down 1%) and three other retailers tie at 78: Famous Footwear (unchanged), Sephora (down 3%), and Ulta Beauty (down 1%). Discount Tire and O'Reilly Auto Parts are unchanged at the industry average of 77.

Eight retailers are locked at 76: Apple (down 1%), Bed Bath & Beyond (down 3%), Best Buy (unchanged), Foot Locker (down 1%), Gap (down 1%), Home Depot (up 1%), Menards (down 1%), Michaels (unchanged), and PetSmart (down 1%).

Premium Apparel enters the Index with an ACSI score of 75 after acquiring former Ascena-owned brands. The retailer is matched by Abercrombie & Fitch (down 3%), Ace Hardware (up 1%), Advance Auto Parts (up 1%), Dick's Sporting Goods (down 1%), H&M (down 1%), Lowe's (unchanged), Petco (down 1%), and Staples (unchanged).

American Eagle Outfitters tumbles 3% to 74, tying Williams-Sonoma, up 1%. AutoZone (down 4%), J.Crew (down 3%), Signet Jewelers (down 4%) all tumble to a score of 73. They're joined by GameStop, up 1%. ODP, which includes Office Depot and OfficeMax, sits alone at the bottom of the category after falling 3% to 72.

Drugstores see slight uptick in customer satisfaction

After three years of worsening customer satisfaction, the drugstore industry improves 1.3% to an ACSI score of 76.

The group of smaller drugstores tops the leaderboard again, inching up 1% to 80. Next is CVS, down 1% to 76, followed by Kroger, which slips 1% to a score of 75.

Walgreens is unchanged at 74, just ahead of Albertsons Companies and Rite Aid, both up 1% to 73. Walmart sits alone in last place after sinking 3% to 71.

Trader Joe's maintains lead over supermarkets and tops the Index

The supermarket industry stops its one-year slide with a steady ACSI score of 76.

Trader Joe's leads all supermarkets – and the entire Index – rising 1% to 85. H-E-B is next, unchanged at 82, followed by a three-way tie for third between Aldi (up 1%), Costco (down 1%), and Wegmans (down 1%).

Publix backtracks 2% to 80, just ahead of Sam's Club, down 1% to 79, and BJ's Wholesale Club, unchanged at 78.

Southeastern Grocers stays near the bottom of the industry despite rising 3% to 75. The grocer just outpaces a stable Save A Lot at 74. Albertsons Companies (unchanged at 71) ekes out last-place Walmart, which slips 1% to 70.

Satisfaction with consumer shipping is worse than ever

Customer satisfaction with consumer shipping stumbles again, dropping 2.6% to an ACSI score of 74. This marks a new historical low for the industry.

FedEx stays in front despite plummeting 4% to 75. Customer satisfaction with UPS slides for a fourth straight year, slipping 1% to 74. The U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) Express and Priority Mail tumbles 4% to 70.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index Retail and Consumer Shipping Report 2021-2022 is based on interviews with 36,517 customers, chosen at random and contacted via email between January 11, 2021, and December 20, 2021. Download the [full report](#), and follow the ACSI on [LinkedIn](#) and Twitter at [@theACSI](#).

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About the ACSI

The [American Customer Satisfaction Index](#) (ACSI®) has been a national economic indicator for 25 years. It measures and analyzes customer satisfaction with more than 400 companies in 47 industries and 10 economic sectors, including various services of federal and local government agencies. Reported on a scale of 0 to 100, scores are based on data from interviews with roughly 500,000 customers annually. For more information, visit www.theacsi.org.

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