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Earn the visit, win the basket
Value sets new rules for Dutch Retail

November 2026

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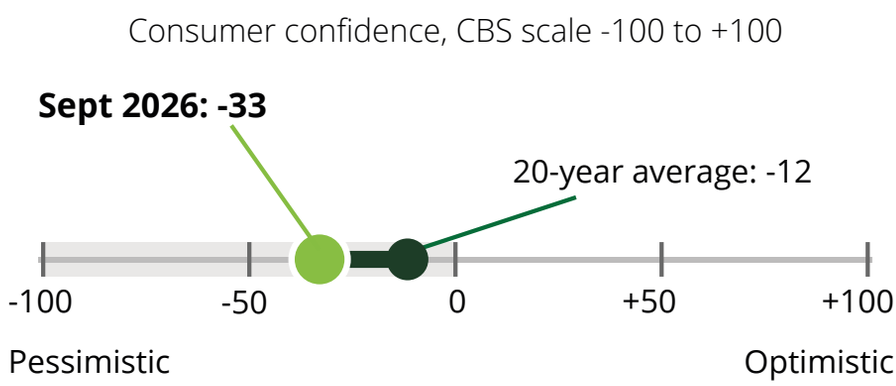
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Value sets new rules for Dutch Retail

Dutch shoppers are willing to give up their preferred brands for a lower price, leave the store when shelves are empty, and increasingly stick with private labels even when their finances improve. What does this mean for retailers and brands?

Dutch consumers are more pessimistic than before, but the pressure on household budgets is not telling the whole story. The CBS consumer confidence indicator stood at −33 in September 2026, well below its twenty-year average of −12 on a scale from −100 to +100.[1] Energy and fuel, rather than food, are the prominent sources of pressure: inflation was 3.4% in September, while food prices were 1.7% lower than a year earlier.[2] Supermarket sales grew by 2.3% to €51.1 billion in 2025, largely on price rather than volume, with volumes flat since 2020.[3] Private label accounts for 58.9% of supermarket sales.[4]



Source: Statistics Netherlands (CBS), September 2026.

These figures describe a market under pressure, but not how consumers are responding. Who are the value-conscious consumers, and is their behaviour driven by income, household or life stage? What drives their decisions: which concerns reach the shelf, what makes them choose a supermarket, and when do they buy less rather than cheaper? And what does the shift to private label mean for A-brands, and will it reverse when budgets recover? To answer these questions, Deloitte surveyed more than 1000 Dutch consumers in September 2026 about their concerns, their shopping behaviour over the previous year and their future intentions, across nine spending categories and supermarket choice.[5]

Three findings stand out:

78%

would give up their preferred brand for a brand whose price is noticeably lower

4 in 10

would not return to A-brands even if their financial circumstances improved, a pattern that holds across income groups

27%

of shoppers go to another shop when a product is out of stock, compared with 18% who switch to the supermarket's private label

The implications go beyond pricing. Retailers need to make value more predictable and substitution easier. A-brand manufacturers need to demonstrate why their products justify a premium. Both need to understand which consumers are changing their behaviour, and where those changes are most likely to endure.

1 How value-conscious shoppers decide

Value-consciousness is widespread among Dutch shoppers, but the way people economize varies. Whether a shopper buys less, trades down, substitutes at the shelf or waits until the next trip depends partly on who manages the household and who lives in the household. Income helps to explain how much private label a household buys; but it is less relevant for predicting whether consumers intend to remain with private label if their financial circumstances improve.

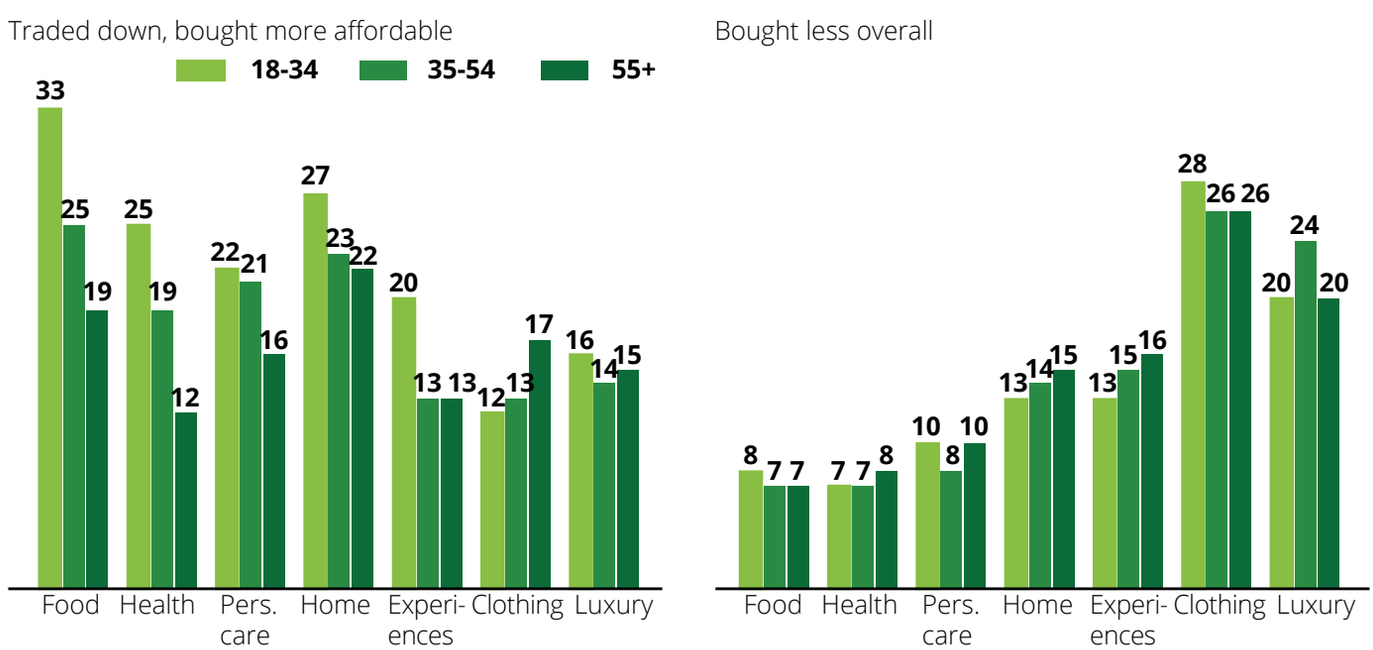
Younger shoppers trade down; older shoppers are more likely to buy less

78% of shoppers would give up their preferred brand for a noticeably lower price. However, how consumers adjust their spending differs by age. In categories they otherwise protect, younger shoppers are more likely to switch to cheaper products: in food & beverages, 33% of consumers under 35 traded down over the past year, compared with 19% of those aged 55 and over (Exhibit 1). Buying less, by contrast, varies little by age. Private-label preferences reinforce the difference: 53% of consumers aged 65 and over say they would not switch back to A-brands even if their finances improved, compared with 23% of 18- to 24-year-olds. Older consumers appear more settled in their private-label choices, while younger consumers are more likely to trade down but remain open to returning to A-brands.

EXHIBIT 1

Younger shoppers are more likely to trade down; buying less spans generations

Change in approach over the past year, by category and age group, % of each age group



Question: *"Over the past year, how did your approach change in this category?" Traded down = bought cheaper or more affordable options; bought less = reduced volume or frequency. Age bands consolidated to three: 18–34 n = 270, 35–54 n = 310, 55+ n = 421. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*

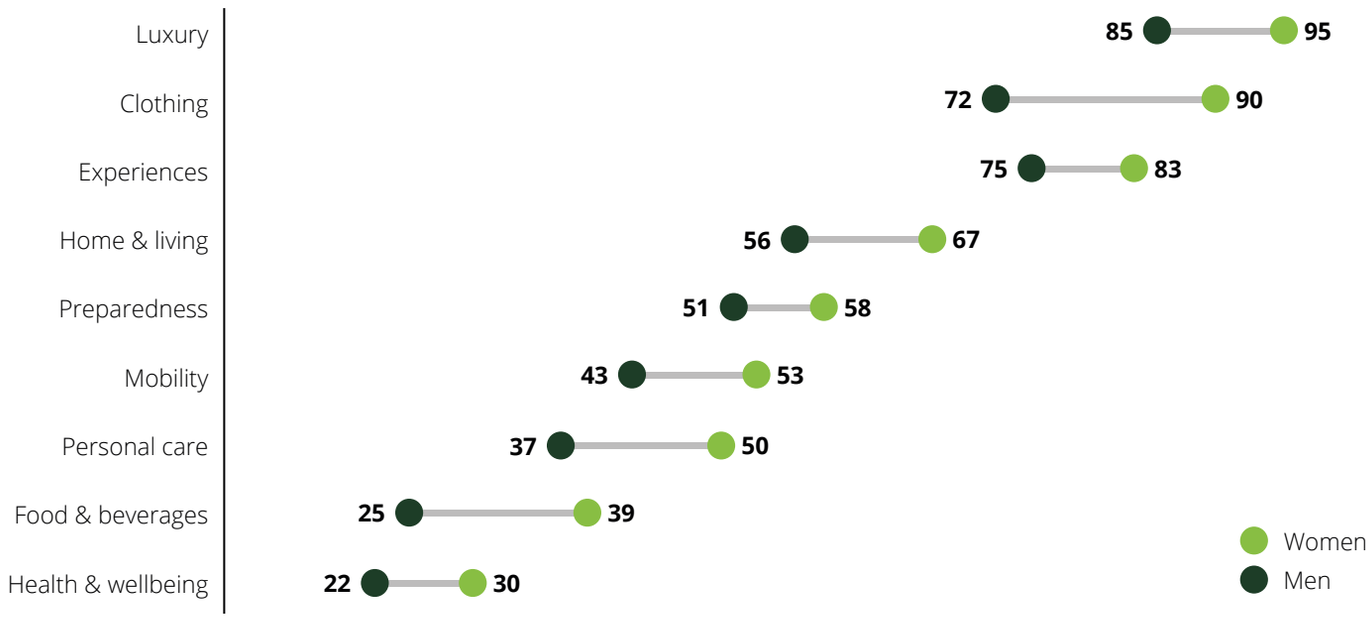
Women are more likely to adjust the basket

When budgets tighten, the cuts fall on discretionary spending: more than 70% of shoppers would cut back on luxury, clothing and experiences, compared with fewer than 40% on food & beverages and around one in four on health & wellbeing. Women are more likely than men to say they would cut or reduce spending if their household budget tightened; across the nine categories, the difference ranges from 8 to 18 percentage points (Exhibit 2). The pattern is also visible in reported behaviour: 33% of women say they bought less clothing over the previous year, compared with 20% of men. Shopping responsibility may be part of the explanation, as 74% of women say they do most of the household shopping. For retailers and brands, the implication is to make value and quality easy to assess at the point of purchase, where these trade-offs are made.

EXHIBIT 2

Women are more likely than men to cut back across every category

Would cut or reduce spending if the budget got tighter, by category and gender, % of women / % of men



Question: *"If your household budget got tighter, how would you treat spending in each category?" Share answering "first to cut" or "would reduce". Women n = 499, men n = 497. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



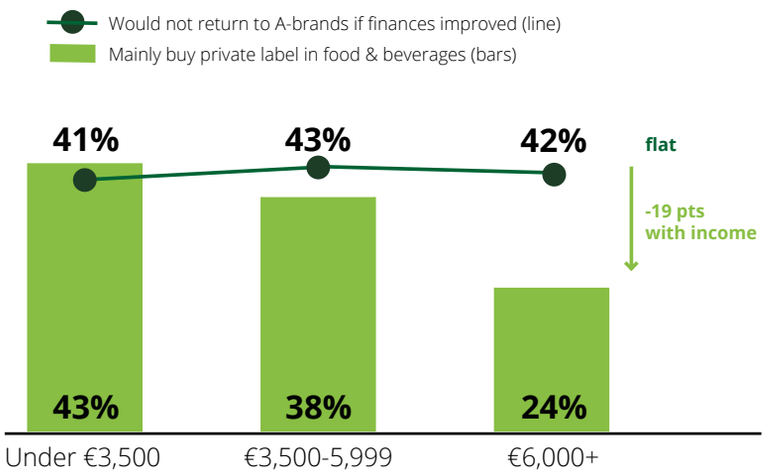
Private-label commitment cuts across income groups

Private-label purchasing declines as income rises, but private-label commitment does not. Among households whose net monthly income is below €3,500, 43% mainly buy private label in food & beverages, falling to 24% among households earning €6,000 or more. Yet the share who say they would not return to A-brands if their finances improved remains between 41% and 43% in every income band (Exhibit 3). For many shoppers, private label is not simply a cheaper substitute to be abandoned when budgets improve; it is an acceptable choice in its own right. The survey does not establish how consumers will behave as conditions change, but it suggests that manufacturers should not rely on a return to previous purchasing patterns.

EXHIBIT 3

Private-label purchasing declines with income; commitment to private label does not

Private-label purchasing and commitment to private label, by monthly household income, % of each income band



Mainly buy private label: *"In food & beverages, what do you mainly buy?" (mostly or exclusively private label).*
Would not return: *"If your finances improved, would you switch back to A-brands?" (no, private label is good enough; no, staying with private label is the smart choice). Income bands n = 345 / 289 / 125; 243 respondents did not disclose income. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



Household composition identifies the response to an empty shelf

An empty shelf is where household differences show most clearly. Across all shoppers, 27% say they usually go to another shop when a product is out of stock, compared with 18% who switch to the supermarket's private label; the rest wait, take the nearest alternative or go without. 50% of families with children resolve their stock-outs within the store, by switching to private label or buying the nearest alternative, and only 4% say they skip purchasing (Exhibit 4). 50% of single parents also resolve stock-outs within the store, but 16% skip purchasing when they cannot find the product they want. A third of singles and couples without children at home resolve stockouts within the store and are more likely to wait until their next trip. Single parents are also the only household type to rank availability above stable prices when choosing a supermarket, and they are more likely to trade down in categories other households protect (the single-parent sample is small, so these results are indicative). An empty shelf can therefore cost the visit, not just the item, and substitution should be designed around different shopping missions: a quick, reliable alternative for families, and a credible fallback for the single parent who cannot afford a wasted trip.

EXHIBIT 4

Families and single parents resolve half of stock-outs in-store; singles and couples are more likely to wait

What shoppers do when a product is out of stock, by household composition, % of each household type (each bar sums to 100)



Question: *"When a product you came to buy is out of stock, what do you usually do?" Resolved in-store = bought the nearest alternative or switched to private label. Single n = 278; couple without children at home n = 356; family with children n = 254; single parent n = 48 (indicative). Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



2 What drives the buying decision

Dutch consumers are more concerned about energy prices and geopolitics than about their own finances or the availability of everyday goods. Yet availability still matters: one in four expresses considerable uncertainty about the supply of everyday products, with concern highest among younger adults. That concern has practical consequences at the shelf, as the household responses to a stock-out show. When choosing a supermarket, they place considerable weight on predictable prices and a strong private-label range; communication about supply disruptions matters less than these tangible factors.

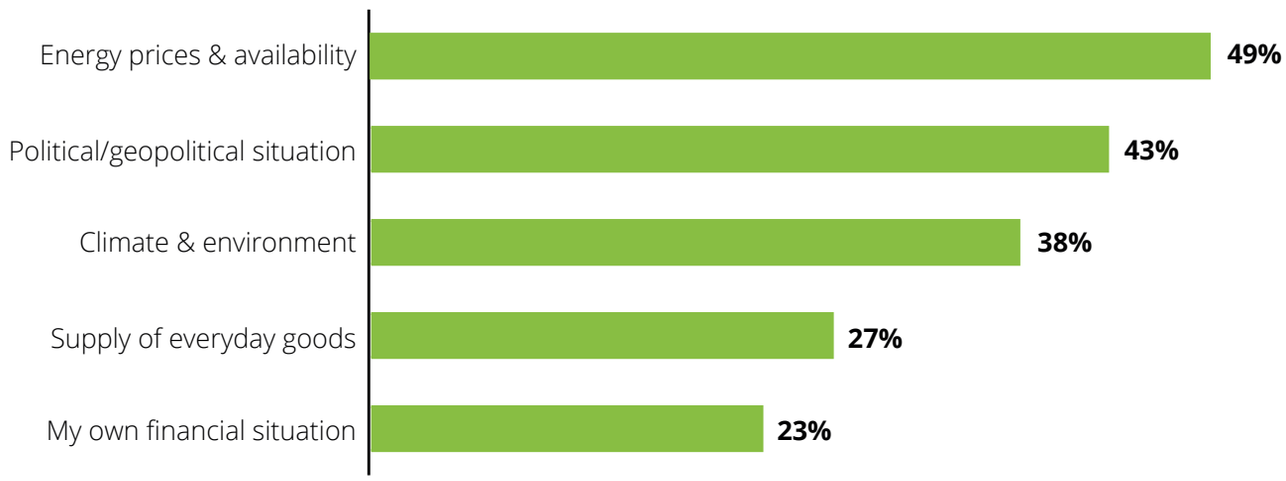
Consumers worry most about what they can influence least

Energy prices and availability are the leading sources of uncertainty: almost half (49%) of consumers report quite a lot or a great deal of uncertainty about them, followed by the geopolitical situation (43%) and climate and the environment (38%). By comparison, 27% report this level of uncertainty about the supply of everyday goods, and 23% about their own financial situation (Exhibit 5). Broad economic anxiety does not necessarily translate into a specific shopping decision. Concern about availability is closer to the point of purchase: it can influence where shoppers go, whether they substitute and whether the retailer retains the customer.

EXHIBIT 5

Consumers worry most about what they can influence least, yet one in four already doubts the shelf

Uncertainty about the future, by item, % of all respondents answering quite a lot / a great deal



Question: *"How much does each of the following make you uncertain about the future?" Share answering "quite a lot" or "a great deal". n = 1,002 Dutch consumers aged 18+. Totals are the base-weighted average of six age bands. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*

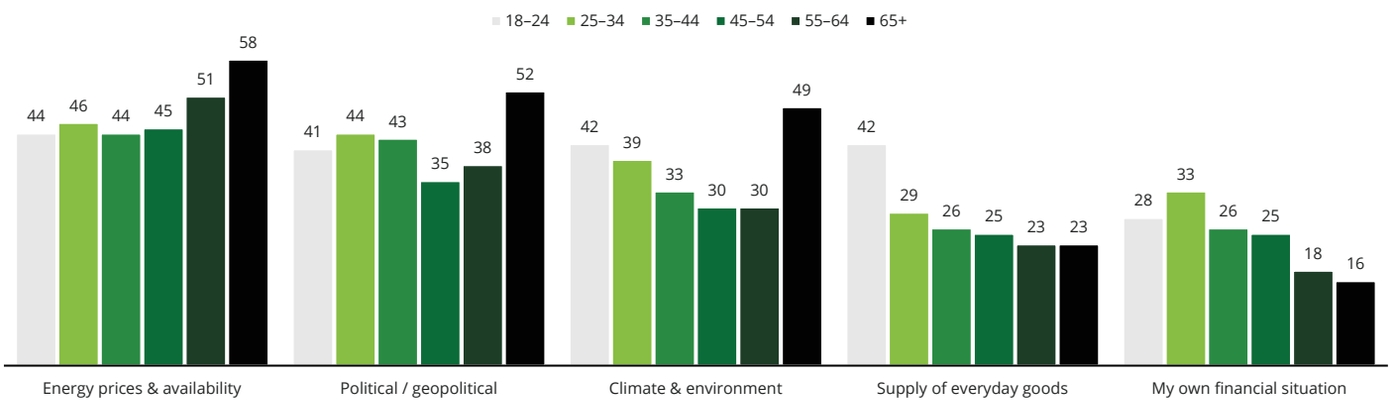
Younger and older shoppers worry about different things

Every age group ranks energy and geopolitics among its leading concerns; the difference is how strongly they are felt (Exhibit 6). Concern about the wider world increases with age: uncertainty about energy rises from 44% among 18- to 24-year-olds to 58% among consumers aged 65 and over. Concern about everyday availability moves in the opposite direction, from 42% of 18- to 24-year-olds to 23% of those aged 55 and over. Younger shoppers appear more concerned about immediate financial and practical pressures, older consumers about the wider environment, so a single message about uncertainty is unlikely to resonate equally across age groups.

EXHIBIT 6

Older shoppers worry more about the wider world; younger shoppers worry more about the shelf and their finances

Uncertainty about the future, by item and age group, % of each age group answering quite a lot / a great deal



Question: *"How much does each of the following make you uncertain about the future?" Share answering "quite a lot" or "a great deal". All age groups rank energy and geopolitics highest; the chart shows how the intensity of each concern varies with age. Bases: 18–24 n = 110; 25–34 n = 160; 35–44 n = 150; 45–54 n = 160; 55–64 n = 170; 65+ n = 251. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



Predictable prices and a credible fallback shape supermarket choice

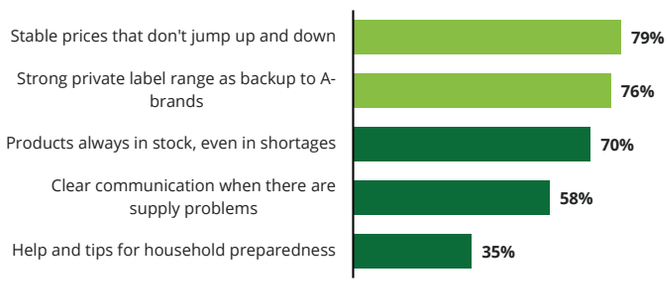
Of five factors tested, prices that do not fluctuate unexpectedly rank first as a reason to choose a supermarket: 79% say they would influence their choice a lot or somewhat. A strong private-label range as an alternative to A-brands ranks second at 76%, followed by products consistently being in stock at 70%. Clear communication during supply problems (58%) and help with household preparedness (35%) rank lower (Exhibit 7, panel A). Asked why they would trust a supermarket to supply them during a disruption, consumers most often cite scale and buying power (29%) and familiarity with the store (28%); good communication is named by just 4% (panel B). Communication alone cannot compensate for an unreliable shopping experience: retailers build trust through predictable prices, familiar stores and products shoppers can rely on.

EXHIBIT 7

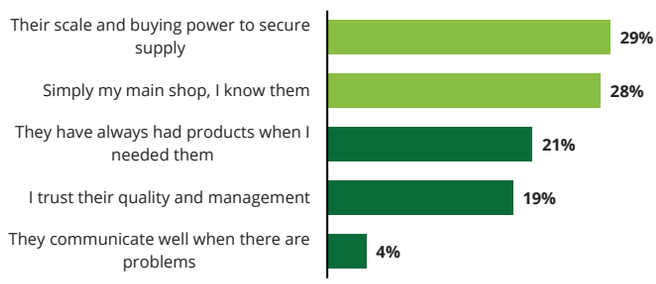
Predictable prices and a private-label fallback shape supermarket choice; scale and familiarity underpin trust

A: factors that would make shoppers choose one supermarket over another, % answering a lot / somewhat. B: main reason for trusting a supermarket during a supply disruption, % of respondents

A: Would make me choose one supermarket over another



B: Main reason for trusting a supermarket in a supply disruption



A: *"How much would each of the following make you choose one supermarket over another?"*
B: *"Why would you trust that supermarket most in a supply disruption?" (single answer). Highlighted: the two highest-ranked answers in each panel. n = 1,002. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



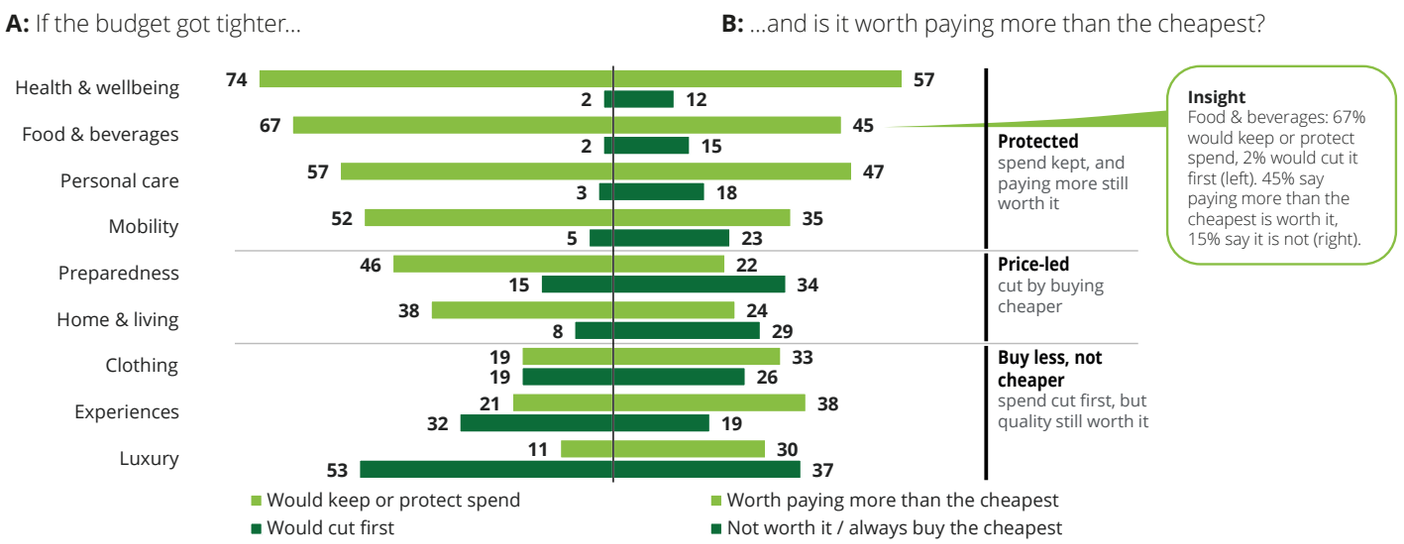
Value-consciousness takes two forms

Consumers do not economize in the same way across categories. When asked about which categories they would protect (keep consumption level same), reduce or cut first if their budget tightened, and whether quality is worth paying more for in each, the answers reveal three patterns (Exhibit 8). Consumers do not cut spending on health & wellbeing, food & beverages or personal care, and around half say it is worth paying more than for the cheapest option in these categories. Luxury, experiences and clothing are among the first to be cut, but quality expectations remain high: consumers buy less rather than cheaper. Home & living and preparedness supplies are price-led, with around a third of consumers saying paying more is not worth it or that they always choose the cheapest option. Reported behaviour over the previous year confirms the distinction: in clothing, 27% bought less and 15% traded down; in food & beverages, 24% traded down and 8% bought less. When shoppers do compromise for a lower price, the preferred brand is the first thing they give up (78%); product quality is nearly the last.

EXHIBIT 8

Consumers either buy less to protect quality or trade down to preserve spending

Budget response (left) and whether it is worth paying more than the cheapest option (right), by category and category group, % of respondents



Groups: *Protected = spending maintained and paying more than the cheapest still seen as worth it; Buy less, not cheaper = spending reduced while a third or more still see paying more as worth it; Price-led = greater willingness to economise through cheaper products. Panel A: "If your household budget got tighter, how would you treat spending in each category?" (keep the same, protect or increase vs first to cut; "would reduce" omitted). Panel B: "How important is it to prioritise [your main reason for not buying the cheapest] over simply buying the cheapest option?" The reason is the respondent's own answer to the previous question (better quality for 42%, a better fit 19%, a trusted brand 18%, habit 9%); shown are "extremely" or "quite important" vs "not very important" / "always buy the cheapest"; "somewhat important" omitted. n = 1,002. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



3 What this means for brands and retailers

Brand loyalty increasingly depends on the category rather than the consumer alone. Private label leads in food & beverages and home & living, where shoppers often see its quality as comparable to A-brands. A-brands retain a stronger position in personal care and are more competitive in health & wellbeing, the categories where consumers are more willing to pay above the cheapest option and where some still perceive a gap. For manufacturers, the opportunity is not to defend brand premiums everywhere, but to identify where consumers still recognise a meaningful difference and make that difference tangible.

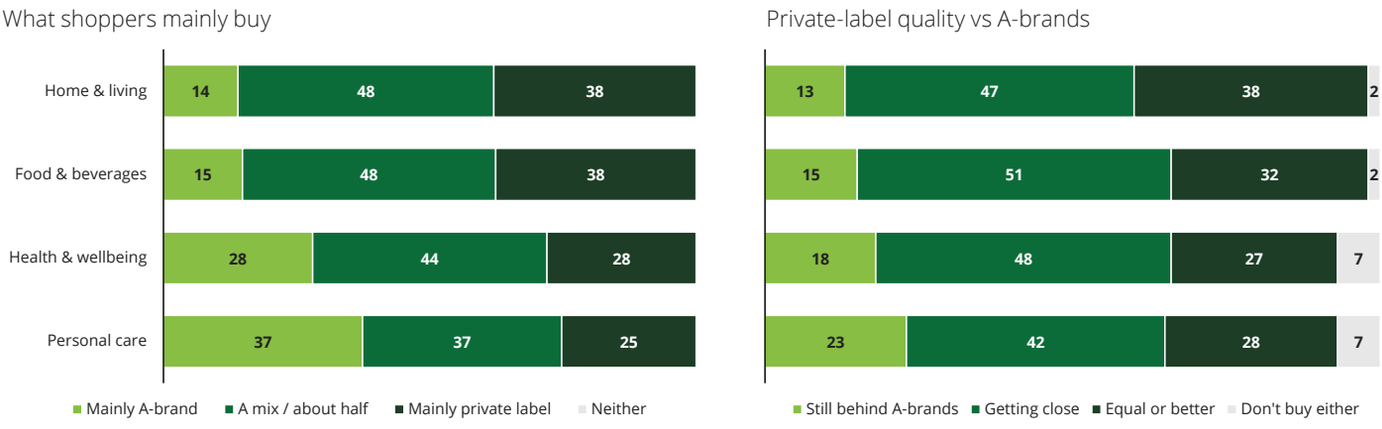
The same shopper makes different choices in different aisles

In personal care, 37% of shoppers mainly buy A-brands and 25% mainly buy private label. In home & living the pattern reverses, at 14% and 38%, and food & beverages shows a similar private-label lead. These differences align with perceptions of quality (Exhibit 9): in food & beverages and home & living, around a third or more rate private-label quality as equal to or better than A-brands, while around one in seven still considers it inferior; in personal care, nearly a quarter still rate it lower. Where private label has reached perceived parity, the brand name alone is unlikely to sustain a premium. Within grocery sub-categories, exclusive A-brand purchasing is limited: among the 682 respondents who compared supermarkets' private labels, around one in ten buys only A-brands in over-the-counter (OTC) health products and vitamins, coffee and tea, and personal care and beauty, and in these categories around half see no quality difference between the private labels of different supermarkets.

EXHIBIT 9

A-brands hold a stronger position in personal care; private label leads in food and home, where perceived quality gaps are smaller

What shoppers mainly buy and how they rate private-label quality, by category, % of respondents



Left: *"What do you mainly buy in this category?" (A-brand = exclusively or mostly A-brand; private label = mostly or exclusively private label).*
Right: *"Is private-label quality now as good as A-brands in this category?" Bars may not sum to 100 because of rounding; the grey segment represents "do not buy either" or "do not buy private label". n = 1,002. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*

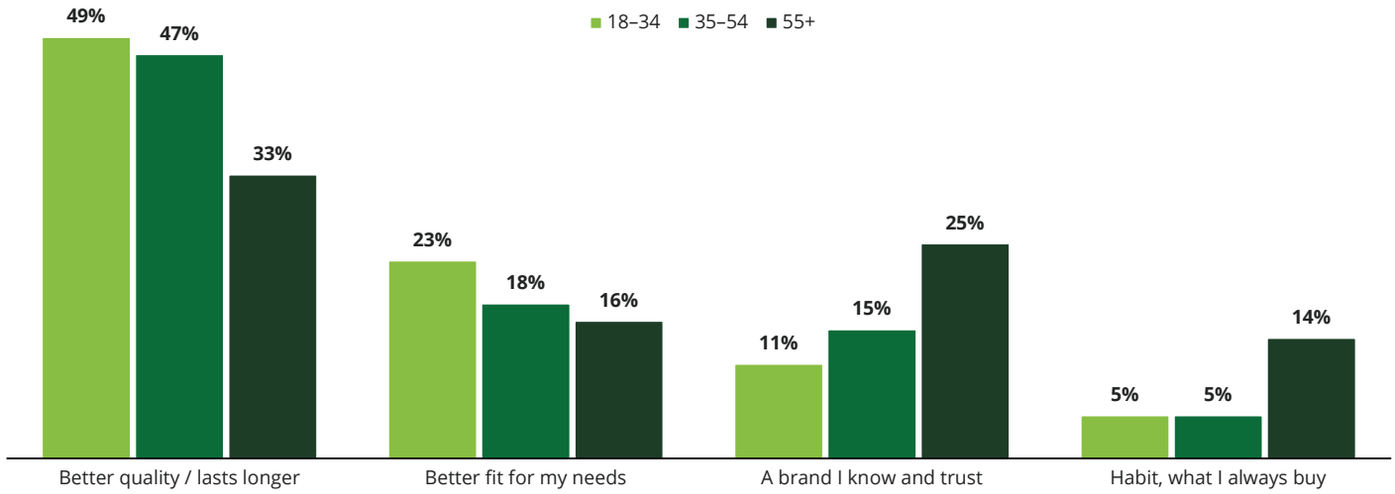
Younger shoppers pay for quality; older shoppers value familiarity

Among consumers under 35, 49% name better quality as the main reason for not choosing the cheapest option, while 11% cite a brand they know and trust. Among consumers aged 55 and over, 33% cite quality, while 25% name a trusted brand and 14% cite habit (Exhibit 10). Younger shoppers may be persuaded by clear evidence of superior performance; older shoppers may be more resistant to switching, but familiarity alone will not necessarily bring them back to A-brands if they are already satisfied with private labels.

EXHIBIT 10

Younger shoppers pay more for quality; older shoppers place greater weight on familiarity and habit

Main reason for not buying the cheapest option, by age group, % of each age group



Question: *"When you don't buy the cheapest option, what is the main reason?" (single answer; four most-cited reasons shown). Age bands consolidated to three: 18–34 n = 270, 35–54 n = 310, 55+ n = 421. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



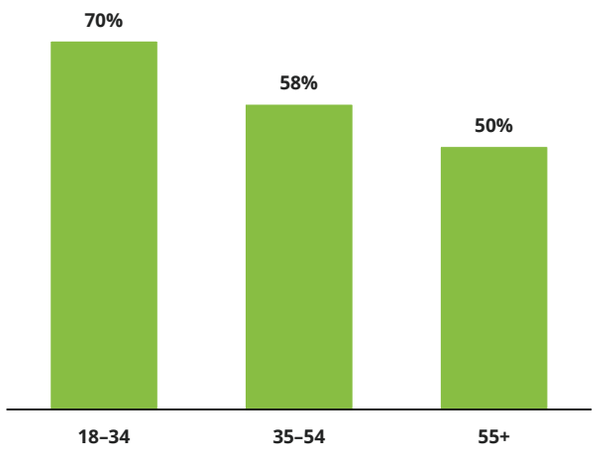
Winning back A-brand shoppers requires more than a familiar name

Six in ten shoppers say they would return to A-brands if their finances improved, either across all categories or in some; the share is 70% among those under 35, compared with 50% of consumers aged 55 and over (Exhibit 11, panel A). But brand is not what consumers are most reluctant to sacrifice for a lower price. Four in ten are unwilling to wait several weeks for a price to drop, and around a third are unwilling to accept lower quality, make an extra trip or choose a less healthy option. Only one in five is unwilling to give up their preferred brand (panel B). For A-brand manufacturers, this points to three priorities: be available when the shopper wants to buy, demonstrate a product benefit that matters, and maintain a price that feels justified.

EXHIBIT 11

Younger shoppers are more open to returning to A-brands; time and quality are harder to sacrifice than brand preferencey

A: % of each age group who would switch back to A-brands, definitely or in some categories



B: % of respondents not prepared to give up each attribute for a noticeably lower price



A: *"If your finances improved, would you switch back to A-brands?" (definitely + for some categories); age bands consolidated to three: 18–34 n = 270, 35–54 n = 310, 55+ n = 421.*
B: *"How willing would you be to give up each of the following for a noticeably lower price?" Share answering not really / not at all willing; n = 1,002. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



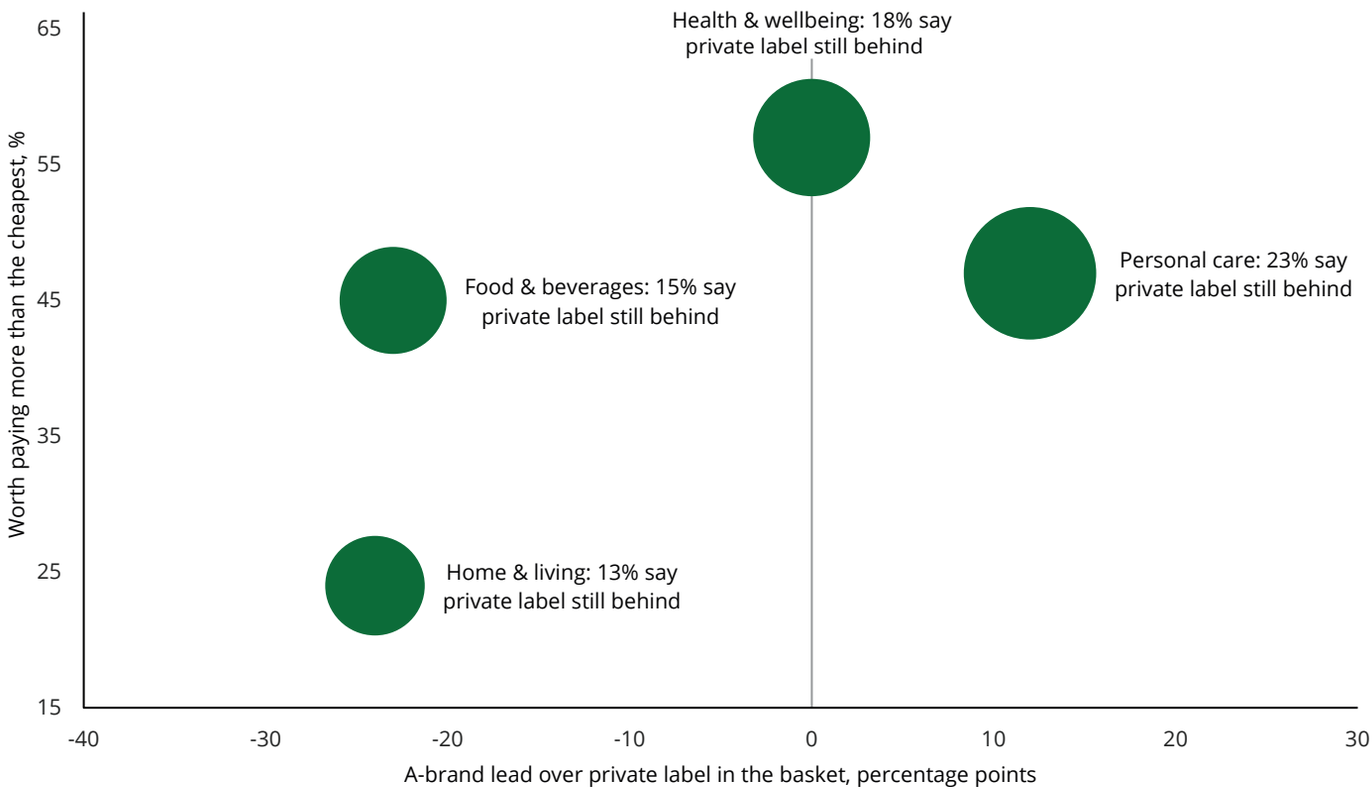
Personal care and health are the battlegrounds for A-brands

Exhibit 12 brings together A-brand position in the basket, willingness to pay more than the cheapest option and the share of shoppers who still rate private-label quality as inferior. Personal care and health & wellbeing stand out: they combine the highest willingness to pay more than the cheapest option (47% and 57%) with the largest group of shoppers who still perceive a quality gap (23% and 18%). Food & beverages is a different story: 45% of shoppers say it is worth paying more than the cheapest option, but private label leads the basket by 23 percentage points, so the willingness to pay more is increasingly benefiting private label. Similarly, home & living leaves little room to compete on the brand name alone. This makes selective investment in the categories and products where A-brands can substantiate a meaningful advantage a strategic priority.

EXHIBIT 12

Personal care and health & wellbeing offer the clearest battlegrounds for A-brands

A-brand position vs willingness to pay more than the cheapest option, by category; bubble size = share of shoppers saying private-label quality is still behind A-brands



x: *A-brand lead over private label in the basket, percentage points (mainly A-brand minus mainly private label).*
y: *share saying it is worth paying more than the cheapest option (extremely or quite important to prioritise their own main reason over the cheapest). Bubble: share saying private-label quality is still behind A-brands. n = 1,002. Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.*



The opportunity spaces

The findings point to three priorities for retailers and A-brand manufacturers: be predictable, be the fallback and be worth it. These principles are shared, but the actions differ. Consumers want prices they can plan around, credible alternatives when their preferred product is unavailable or too expensive, and products whose quality justifies their price.

1 Be predictable
earn the choice

WHAT WE SEE

Of the resilience factors tested, price stability ranks first as a reason to choose a supermarket, ahead of products always being in stock: 79% say it would influence their choice.

2 Be the fallback
keep the visit

WHAT WE SEE

When a product they come to buy is out of stock, whatever the product, 27% of shoppers go to another shop, compared with 18% who switch to private label. Three in four want a strong private-label range as the backup to A-brands.

3 Be worth it
win the basket

WHAT WE SEE

Brand is the first thing shoppers give up for a lower price; quality is nearly the last. In personal care and health & wellbeing, around one in five still rates private label lower, so a quality premium is still paid there.

Two distinct playbooks: retailers control the shelf, manufacturers own the brand

The framework is the same for both, but retailers and manufacturers control different levers. The two playbooks are not opposed: both reward the same thing, quality that shoppers can see, and the two sides compete for it with different means. Retailers win by making the basket reliable; manufacturers win by making the brand worth choosing.

	For retailers	For A-brand manufacturers
Be predictable *earn the choice*	Make stable pricing a stated promise in food & beverages, health & wellbeing and personal care, and track shelf-price volatility alongside the price index. Trade promotional depth for a dependable saving rhythm: regular savings can build confidence more consistently than occasional deep discounts.	Reduce reliance on deep promotions and build a steadier everyday price. When 78% of shoppers are willing to switch brands for a noticeably lower price, discounts alone are unlikely to sustain loyalty. Use promotions selectively to encourage trial or stimulate demand on key occasions, while reinforcing the benefits that justify the regular price.
Be the fallback *keep the visit*	Treat private label as a resilience asset: protect its availability so shoppers have a credible alternative when an A-brand is unavailable or too expensive. Make substitution effortless by placing private-label alternatives next to comparable products on shelf and signposting them clearly in the app.	Ensure brands are always stocked on shelves. When a product is out of stock, 27% of shoppers say they go to another shop and only 18% switch to private label, so a missing brand often loses the retailer the visit as well. Use adjacent sizes, variants or price points to keep the purchase within the brand when shoppers are looking for a more affordable option.
Be worth it *win the basket*	In personal care and health & wellbeing, compete only with a private label that matches A-brand quality: a premium tier, not a cheaper copy. Shoppers keep spending in these categories and are willing to pay more; three in four already rate private label as close to or equal to A-brands, and the one in five who do not will only be won by a product that is clearly as good. Maintain quality in food & beverages and home & living, where private label is already well established. Tailor the value proposition to category needs and shopping missions, rather than income alone: all income groups show a consistent commitment to returning to A-brands.	Concentrate premium investment in personal care and health & wellbeing, where shoppers are more likely to recognize a quality advantage and to say it is worth paying more than the cheapest option. In food & beverages and home & living, where many shoppers see private label as comparable in quality, make the difference tangible through product performance, ingredients or other benefits that matter to consumers.

Design for the people who actually make the trade-offs

There is no single value-conscious consumer. Three shopper profiles, based on observed survey differences rather than mutually exclusive segments, show where the three priorities matter most.

- The single parent cannot afford a wasted trip. The only household type that ranks availability above stable prices. Make reliability tangible: the product is available, or a credible substitute is immediately accessible.
- The family wants to complete the shop in one visit. Families are more likely than other households to switch to private label when a product is unavailable and less likely to go without. Make alternatives visible, dependable and easy to find.
- Older shoppers are highly committed to private label. Half of consumers aged 65 and over say they would not return to A-brands even if their finances improved. Retailers should protect this loyalty; A-brand manufacturers should demonstrate relevant quality advantages, particularly to younger shoppers, who remain more open to switching.

The broader lesson is to segment by how people shop, what they value and how they respond to trade-offs, rather than by income alone.

> The price earns the visit. The shelf keeps it. Quality wins the basket.



Randy Jagt



About the research and methodology

Deloitte's Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study is a multi-wave study of how Dutch consumers respond to uncertainty in prices, in supply and in the technologies that are changing how they shop. Wave 2 will add the agentic dimension: how far Dutch consumers are willing to let AI agents plan, compare and buy on their behalf.

Objective: understand who the value-conscious Dutch consumers are, what drives their choices at the shelf and what this means for retailers and A-brand manufacturers.

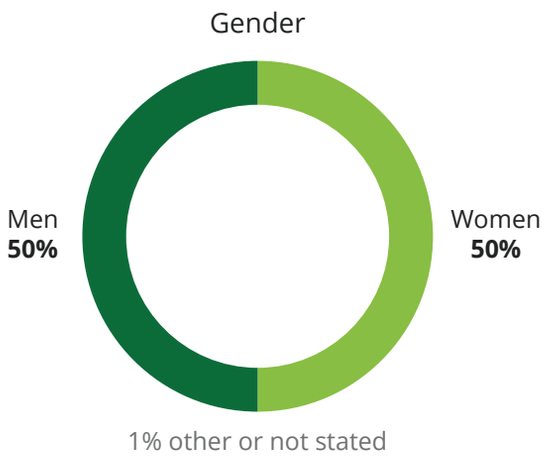
Sample size: n = 1,002 Dutch consumers aged 18 and over.

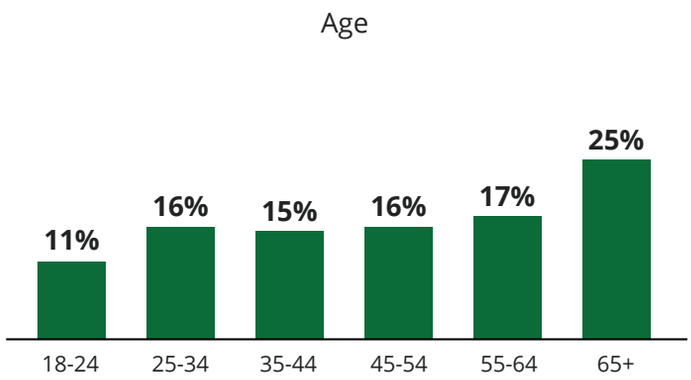
Methodology: online survey; quotas on gender, age, region, household composition and income. Percentages are of all respondents unless the exhibit states otherwise; sub-groups below n = 50 are reported as indicative.

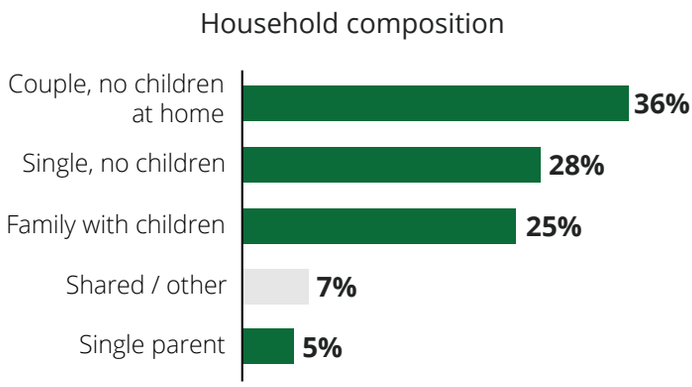
Field period: 7 to 15 September 2026.

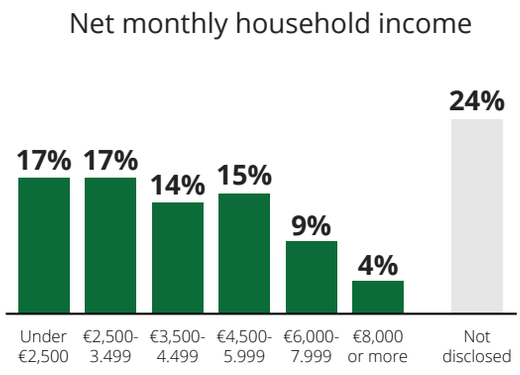
Core topics: sources of uncertainty; shopping behaviour over the past year in nine spending categories; supermarket choice and the response to stock-outs; private label versus A-brands by category; perceptions of individual supermarket formulas (available to clients on request).

Demographics of the sample









% of respondents (n = 1,002). Source: Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, September 2026.

Authors



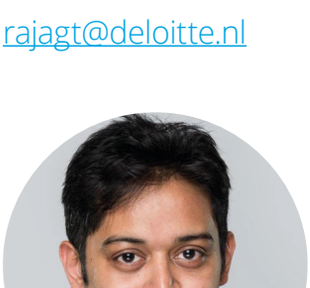
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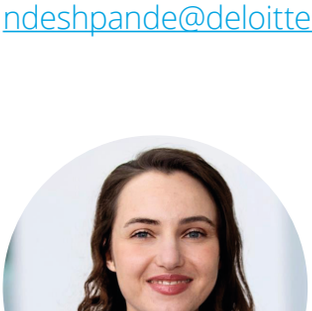
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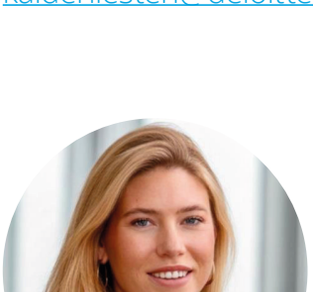
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Notes

1. Consumer confidence: Statistics Netherlands (CBS), “Vertrouwen consumenten iets minder negatief in september”, September 2026.

2. Inflation and food prices: Statistics Netherlands (CBS), “Inflatie stijgt naar 3,4 procent in september”, October 2026.

3. Supermarket sales and volumes: NielsenIQ, “Supermarkten boeken weer omzetgroei na tabaksverbod”, January 2026.

4. Private label share of supermarket sales: NielsenIQ, “Supermarkten boeken weer omzetgroei na tabaksverbod”, January 2026; the share includes the brands of Aldi and Lidl.

5. Deloitte Resilience & Consumer Behaviour study, Wave 1, n = 1,002 Dutch consumers aged 18+, fieldwork 7–15 September 2026. Full question wording and bases are given under each exhibit.

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