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*Together makes progress*

# The omnichannel consumer post-purchase experience: Deloitte’s 2026 consumer insights survey

# Contents

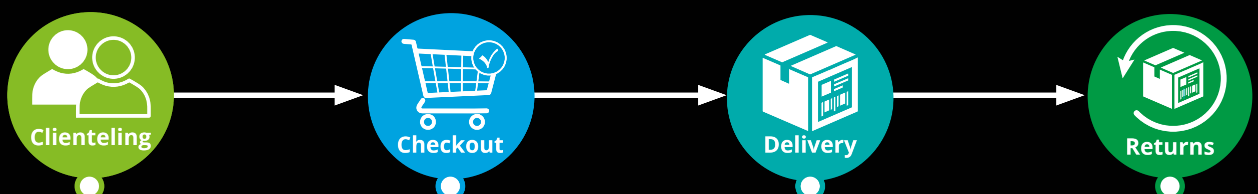
# Executive summary:
# Where consumers say to focus post-purchase

Once consumers find an item they want to purchase online, they enter the post-purchase phase of their shopping journey. The tools and services a company offers—and what consumers experience throughout this phase—can influence trust and loyalty just as much as the merchandise they buy.

Deloitte conducted a consumer post-purchase survey to understand what matters most to consumers after they click "buy," and where the omnichannel services currently available to them fall short of their priorities and needs.

These findings are critical for companies to be aware of because they pinpoint gaps between what consumers value in post-purchase services and what retailers currently provide—helping omnichannel retailers avoid misallocating digital investment to tools customers do not need or will not adopt.

### What is the post-purchase experience?




| Clienteling | Checkout | Delivery | Returns |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Tools that help customers make online purchase decisions and complete transactions smoothly, such as fit-selection support and gift services | Steps required to place an online order: entering contact and address details, selecting a last-mile preference and choosing a payment method | Services to execute the last mile to the customer, either via delivery to a preferred address or through in-person pickup at a preferred location | Options to accommodate customers that need to return or exchange a purchase and processes to receive a replacement or a refund |

### Where do the greatest gaps currently exist between consumers' post-purchase priorities and what they experience when shopping online?

| **Post-purchase areas** | **Delivery choices and clear timing expectations** | **Online return options** | **Accurate fit guidance** | **Services for gifting** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Influence on purchase decisions** | Basic purchase consideration | Basic purchase consideration | Considered when basics are met | Considered when basics are met |
| **Current consumer sentiment** | Needs moderately met | Needs not sufficiently met | Needs not sufficiently met | Needs not sufficiently met |

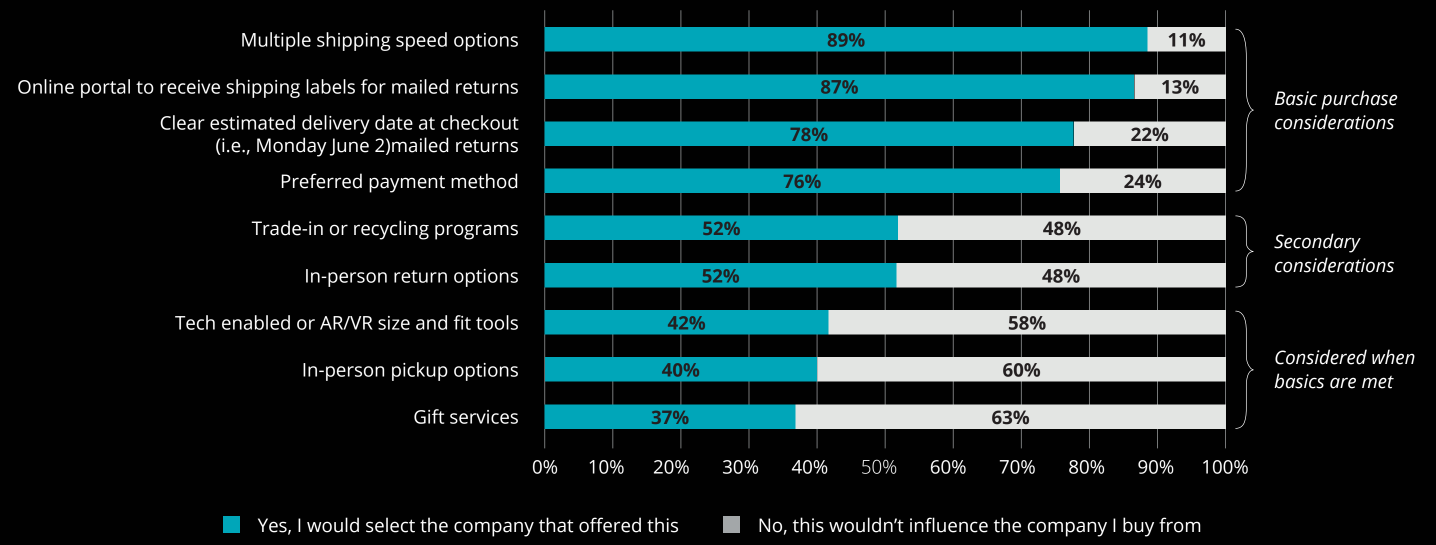
*In addition to these four post-purchase areas, there is an overarching imperative to ensure successful order fulfillment, as out-of-stock cancellations can erode the consumer experience and brand perception*

# Minding the gap

We identified priority areas for post-purchase focus by comparing the capabilities consumers say would make them more likely to shop with a company (importance) with whether they feel those capabilities currently meet their online shopping needs (current experience)…

We also considered what consumers say drives them to return an item or contact customer service for help

**Would you be more likely to shop with a company that offered:**




**Overall, do you feel the capabilities currently available to you meet your online shopping needs?**

| | % Yes Responses | |
|---|---|---|
| Size and fit tools (charts, recommendations, virtual try-on) | 62% | Needs not sufficiently met |
| Gift services (wrapping, messages, selection tools) | 80% | |
| Returns by mail available | 83% | |
| In-person return options (return in-store or third-party store drop-off) | 85% | |
| Return policies (time allowed, refund speed) | 87% | Needs moderately met |
| In-person pickup options (BOPIS or third-party store pickup) | 88% | |
| Shipping speed options (standard, express, same-day, economy/no rush) | 89% | |
| Checkout methods (membership required, guest checkout, social media ID) | 93% | Needs adequately met |
| Additional checkout tools (business address, cart sharing, cross-brand checkout) | 94% | |
| Payment options (credit card, payment apps, peer-to-peer, buy now/pay later) | 96% | |

# Solving the "need for speed" means offering more delivery speeds

Despite the industry's ongoing cost versus speed debate, consumers have made a clear choice: 81% of consumers indicated that the lowest delivery cost is more important to them than speed when they select a home-delivery option. From the customer perspective, "speed" does not always mean "fast"—customers want multiple delivery-speed options to accommodate their varying needs and budgets.

Consumers surveyed indicated that they most often choose a standard delivery service option. However, the current industry median fee for this service level is more than 60% higher than what consumers feel is reasonable. As a result, economy options are consumers' second-highest choice...and the primary reason they do not select economy more often is that it is not offered.

### Standard delivery service usage and consumer expectations

84%

**Consumers who select standard services for online order delivery**

| Consumer expectations vs. industry offerings for standard delivery service | Average consumer response | 2026 industry median benchmark[1] |
|---|---|---|
| When you select standard home delivery for an online purchase, in how many days do you expect your items to arrive? | 5 | 8 |
| What do you consider to be a reasonable cost for standard home delivery service of an online order? | $5.50 | $8.99 |

### Insights on other delivery speed options

| | **Overall 12%** select faster than standard options | | **Overall 30%** select slower than standard options | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Consumers who indicated they frequently use other delivery speed options** | 12% **Small parcel express services** | 19% **Same/next day from stores** | 48% **Economy/no rush services** | 12% **Select future date option** |
| **Top reason not used more often** | Cost of this option | Cost of this option | Not offered or aware of this option | Not offered or aware of this option |
| **Consumers who would use more often if more widely available at a reasonable cost** | 24% | 33% | 43% | 22% |

# Consumers need clear delivery-timing expectations at the point of purchase

The key to helping consumers choose the right delivery-speed option is to show a specific delivery date during checkout (for example, Monday, June 2). Using vague "business days" ranges —or burying delivery caveats and exceptions in customer service and FAQ pages—can confuse customers and may feel misleading.

A lack of delivery-time clarity at checkout cannot be offset by an overabundance of emails after an order is placed. If post-purchase messages contradict what the customer expected when they committed to the purchase, it can create further confusion and may even drive unnecessary customer service contacts.

Additionally, a conservative under- promise/over-deliver approach to delivery estimates shown at checkout does not automatically create a "surprise and delight" experience. While consumers may be fine with delivery within 1–2 days of what they selected at checkout, 25% of consumers surveyed said deliveries that arrive much earlier than expected are just as concerning—or even more concerning—than a delivery delay.

**Consumer sentiment on delivery timeframe communication at checkout**

| What is your level of confidence in making an online purchase with a company based on how they indicate their delivery timeframe? | % High Responses |
|---|---|
| The estimated delivery timeframe is shown as an actual date (arrives by Monday, June 2) | 50% |
| The estimated delivery timeframe is shown as number of day estimates (arrives in 4-6 business days) | 35% |
| The estimated delivery timeframe reflects the carrier service that will be used for delivery (UPS or FedEx Ground) | 16% |
| Need to refer to the company's shipping policy or customer service FAQs for delivery timeframe information | 9% |

78% of consumers indicated they would be more likely to choose a company that provides an actual date over one that does not

**Consumer sentiment on order delivery timeframe communications after checkout**

| **Order delivery activity** | Order has shipped | Carrier picked up package | The day before delivery | Package is out for delivery | Package may arrive a day or two earlier | Package delivery delay | Package has been delivered |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Consumer thoughts on communication** | Beneficial | Not beneficial | Not beneficial | Beneficial | Not beneficial | Beneficial | Beneficial |

Almost 20% of consumers feel they currently receive too many notifications during order delivery, and these can be bothersome or confusing.

# Delivering for the consumer who prefers pickup for online orders

Although most frequent online shoppers we surveyed select delivery to a preferred address, 13% said they also frequently choose pickup. Similar to delivery speed sentiment, consumers most often cite saving on delivery costs as the primary reason for choosing pickup—not receiving their items faster. Another benefit they noted is reduced risk of packages being lost or stolen.

Shopping a local store's inventory and selecting buy online, pickup in-store is the most frequently used pickup option. The next most common choice is ship to store, which lets consumers shop a full website assortment and have items shipped to a company's local store for pickup.

A third pickup option consumers use is having their package delivered to a third-party store for pickup. This creates an in-person pickup experience for shoppers buying from companies that do not have stores, or whose stores are not easily accessible.

This is currently the least-used option due to limited availability, but 65% of consumers said they would consider third-party store pickup if it were more widely available at a reasonable cost.

**Consumer usage and sentiment on online order pickup services**

| Pickup options | % currently use frequently | Primary reason not used frequently | Would use more often if more widely available at a reasonable cost | Top benefit cited for option |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Buy online / pickup in store | 19% | Not offered or aware of this option | 84% | Delivery cost savings |
| Ship to store | 11% | Not offered or aware of this option | 73% | Delivery cost savings |
| Ship to third-party store for pickup | 8% | Not offered or aware of this option | 65% | Delivery cost savings |

40% of consumers said they would be more likely to choose a company that offers pickup for online orders versus one that does not. In addition, 56% said they would be likely to make an unplanned purchase at the company or a third-party host store at the time of pickup.

# Return frequency by purchase channel and why it differs

Consistent with broader industry sentiment, consumers we surveyed said they return items purchased online more frequently than items purchased in a store. They attributed this primarily to the lack of physical interaction with products online (for example, being able to see, touch, or try an item in-store), as well as factors unique to online purchases, such as issues that can occur during delivery.

The primary cause of returns cited by consumers we surveyed was pre-purchase factors....

65% of respondents cited pre-purchase issues, such as website details and fit not matching expectations. By comparison, 11% attributed returns to delivery-related problems.

**Consumer insights on return frequency by purchase channel and reasons for returns**

**What percentage of the items you purchase do you end up returning?**

## In-store purchases = 15%

**Reasons for in-store purchase returns**

| | |
|---|---|
| Issues with product size or fit | 43% |
| Issues with product performance after wearing or using | 29% |
| Changed my mind after purchase | 19% |
| Found a better price elsewhere | 5% |
| Gift purchases that recipients didn't want | 4% |

## Online purchases = 25%

**Reasons for online purchase returns**

| | |
|---|---|
| Issues with product size or fit | 38% |
| Issues with product performance after wearing or using | 10% |
| Changed my mind after purchase | 6% |
| Found a better price elsewhere | 5% |
| Gift purchases that recipients didn't want | 2% |
| Products not matching online descriptions or quality expectations | 24% |
| Issues with product condition from shipping | 7% |
| Incorrect items being shipped | 6% |
| Late deliveries | 2% |

Reasons unique to online

**Root causes for online returns**

| | |
|---|---|
| 65% | Returns due to pre-purchase capabilities: Issues with product size and fit Products not matching online descriptions or quality expectations |
| 11% | Returns due to post-purchase delivery capabilities |

# Online return policy features most important to consumers—and that influence whether they buy

In our survey, 85% of consumers said they check a company's return policy before making an online purchase. 40% said they will not proceed with a purchase if the return policy lacks the features they consider critical or important, and nearly 10% said they would not buy even if a product is not available elsewhere.

Overall, these results suggest return policies and processes are as important to consumers as initial delivery services—yet consumers also indicate that online return services currently offered often do not adequately meet their needs.

### How consumers rate the importance of return policy features

| **Return policy feature** | The time allowed to make a return | Return by mail available | Products can be returned to company stores | Ability to exchange a product online | Returns can be dropped off at third-party stores | Product trade-in or recycling options offered |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **% critical and important responses** | 94% | 92% | 87% | 81% | 70% | 53% |

### Additional consumer insights on return policy features

**Time allowed to make a return**

*On average, consumers said a **36-day** return window is fair and reasonable for companies, but they typically initiate returns within **10 days** of receiving an item*

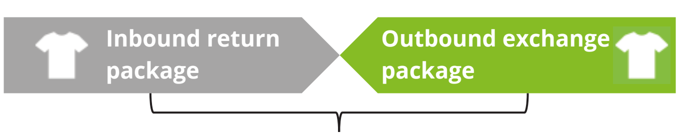

*The 2026 cross-industry benchmark for time allowed is **30 days**[2]*

**Trade-in and recycling programs**


*Although overall importance is lower, younger consumers currently use trade-in and recycling programs more often*

*If these programs were more widely available, they would continue to use them as much as **40% more often** than Gen X and baby boomers*

**Ability to exchange a product online**




***Online exchange** capabilities enable these two transactions to **occur concurrently.***

*When consumers must initiate a return and then place a separate new order to get a different color, size, or product, **47% said they would proceed with the return but NOT place the replacement order***

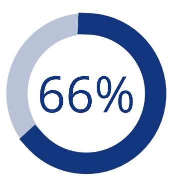
# Digitally native consumers prefer returning by mail—and need better services to support it

Just as they more often choose delivery for online orders, digitally native consumers prefer to handle returns by mail. The most common reason indicated is they simply prefer not to make a trip to a store to return an item.

This is the part of the post-purchase journey with the greatest gap between what consumers need and what they are offered today. Beyond long refund timelines, some companies do not offer services to support mailed returns. Making returns by mail cumbersome in the hope that it will shift all consumers to return in store is risky—as consumers indicate they are more likely to purchase elsewhere.

Despite the industry focus on meeting customer needs for online order delivery speed, companies indicate it takes twice as long as consumers expect to process mailed returns and issue refunds...

**Mailed return service usage and consumer expectations**




**Consumers who select to return their online orders by mail**

| Consumer expectations vs. industry offerings for mailed retu rn service | Average consumer response | 2026 industry median benchmark[3] |
|---|---|---|
| When you return your purchases by mail, in how many days do you expect to receive your refund once the company receives the package? | 7 | 14 |
| What do you consider to be a reasonable cost for mailed return delivery of an online purchase return? | $4.10 | $7.50 |

**How consumers rate the importance of mailed return capabilities**

| Mailed return capability | % Critical and important responses |
|---|---|
| Provide an online portal to request a return shipping label | 95% |
| Reasonable cost to use a company return shipping label | 94% |
| How long it takes to receive a refund | 87% |
| The time to process a return is indicated in the return policy | 85% |

Although more consumers return online orders by mail, they say the services available for mailed returns are lacking compared to services available for in-store returns

**Consumer sentiment on return and refund processing communications**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mailed return activity** | Return request received | Carrier picked up return package | Return package received | Return complete and refunded |
| **Consumer thoughts on communication** | Beneficial | Not beneficial | Beneficial | Beneficial |

77% of consumers indicate they receive an adequate number of notifications to understand the progress of their returns

# How to maximize opportunities with consumers who will drop off returns in person

Consumers who are willing to make a trip to a store to return an item are similar to those who pick up their online orders: they are motivated by avoiding return shipping fees as this was the most-cited reason for choosing in-person returns.

These consumers also cite that the key reason they do not return in person more often is because the option is not always available, especially when they buy from with online-only retailers.

That said, the same opportunity exists to use third-party stores as return drop-off hubs.

In fact, 52% of consumers indicated they would choose in-person returns more often if the company they bought from offered it more frequently—either at its own stores or through a third-party location.

**Consumer usage and sentiment on online order return drop off services**

| Drop off options | % currently use frequently | Primary reason not used frequently | % more likely to shop with a company that offers in-person return options | Top benefit cited for in-person return options |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Buy online / return in store | 44% | Not offered or aware of this option | 52% | Save on return delivery costs |
| Return drop off at third-party store | 19% | Not offered or aware of this option | | |

58% of consumers said they would be likely to make an unplanned purchase at the company or a third-party host store when they drop off an online return.

# Helping consumers choose the right size, fit, or shade the first time may help reduce returns

Since almost 40% of consumers indicated that size and fit issues are the most common reason for their returns, accurate size guidance is a key capability. It can help companies address internal concerns about return handling and reverse logistics costs while also meeting an unmet consumer service need... noted by 62% of consumers

Online "bracketing" (buying multiple options to try, with the intention of returning some) is occasionally raised as a potential fraud risk for online shopping. However, it may also reflect how digital shoppers replicate the in-store fitting room experience—trying items at home before deciding what to keep.

The fewer tools consumers have to choose the right clothing size and fit at home—or the right makeup shade—the more likely they are to go the multi-unit bracketing route.

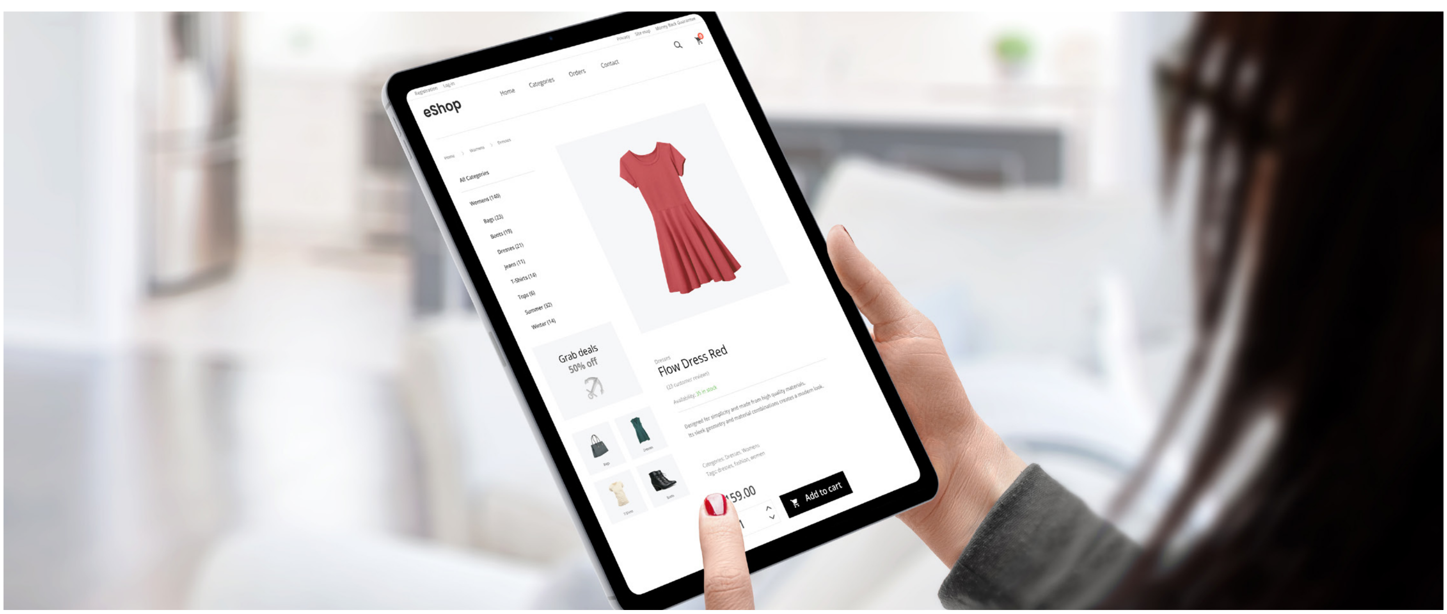
66% of consumers indicated that they believe that more advanced tools to assist them with selecting the best size or fit when shopping online would reduce the likelihood of needing to return a product

**Consumer insights on size and fit tools currently used and their level of accuracy**

| Size and fit prediction tools | % currently use frequently | % find tool to be very accurate and reliable |
|---|---|---|
| Information and details shown on the webpage for the product | 70% | 32% |
| Size charts or tables that list generic measurements corresponding to sizes | 55% | 26% |
| Software enabled recommendation tools or "fit finders" | 26% | 17% |
| Virtual try-on and try-at-home tools that enable product visualization of fit, size or shade | 10% | 20% |

Two-thirds of consumers said that the tools currently available to them aren't very accurate at predicting size and fit.

Low consumer confidence in accuracy of tech-enabled solutions indicates a need to determine better data sources or service providers to power these tools.



# Tools that enable enhanced, seamless end-to-end gift giving and receiving experiences

In our survey, 60% of consumers said they buy gifts online and have used available gift services, but this is the second-highest area where consumers say current online shopping offerings do not meet their needs.

Although the availability of gift services has less of an impact on consumer purchase decision, offering them can create unique advantages for companies. First, each gift order engages two customers: the buyer and the recipient. Second, demand for gift services can fluctuate throughout the year, often increasing around holidays. Lastly, gift services can expand brand exposure.

Because traditional gift services—such as printed messages or gift wrapping—can add complexity and time to order fulfillment, some companies are offering simpler alternatives, such as digital messages sent by email and do-it-yourself wrapping materials. Some also offer more advanced digital gift-selection tools that let gift givers (and, in some cases, recipients) pick recommendations before purchase.

Almost 40% of consumers indicated they would use gift services more often throughout the year if those services were more widely available at a reasonable cost, especially non-traditional services.

**Consumer insights on online gift services currently used**

| **Types of gift services** | Printed gift message | Digital gift message via email | Digital gift selection tools | Gift wrapping services | Purchase DIY gift wrap materials |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **% currently use** | 81% | 67% | 57% | 57% | 37% |
| **Primary reason not used frequently** | Not offered or aware of this option | Not offered or aware of this option | Not offered or aware of this option | Cost of this option | Cost of this option |
| **Would use more often if more widely available at a reasonable cost** | 85% | 80% | 79% | 72% | 57% |
| | | | ***Higher growth potential*** | | ***Higher growth potential*** |

84% of consumers indicated that enhanced gift services would reduce issues with online gift giving that lead to customer service contacts and reduce the likelihood that their gifts would be returned.

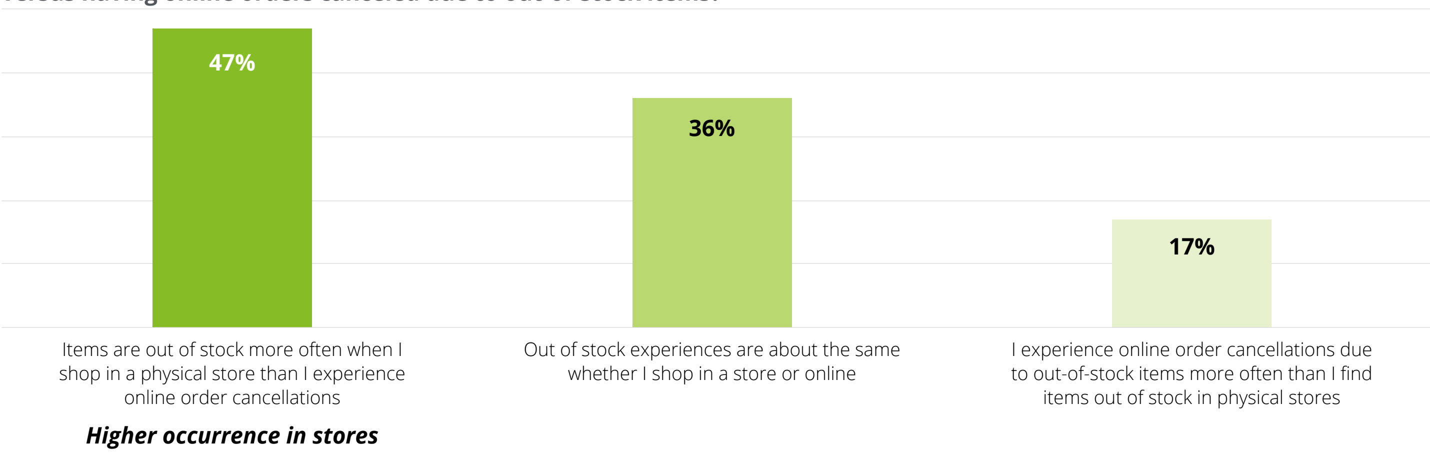
# The consumer experience when orders can't be fulfilled

Even if companies address the four post-purchase priority focus areas, it is still critical to ensure online orders can be fulfilled. Cancellations due to inventory issues—such as items sold online being out of stock—have the greatest long-term impact on consumers' shopping experiences. Although consumers reported encountering out-of-stock items more often when shopping in physical stores, almost 40% say items they purchase online are canceled just as often.

Each product cancellation can affect a consumer's perception of a company; at a minimum, they feel their time was wasted, and 14% indicate they would hesitate to make future purchases from that company when this occurs

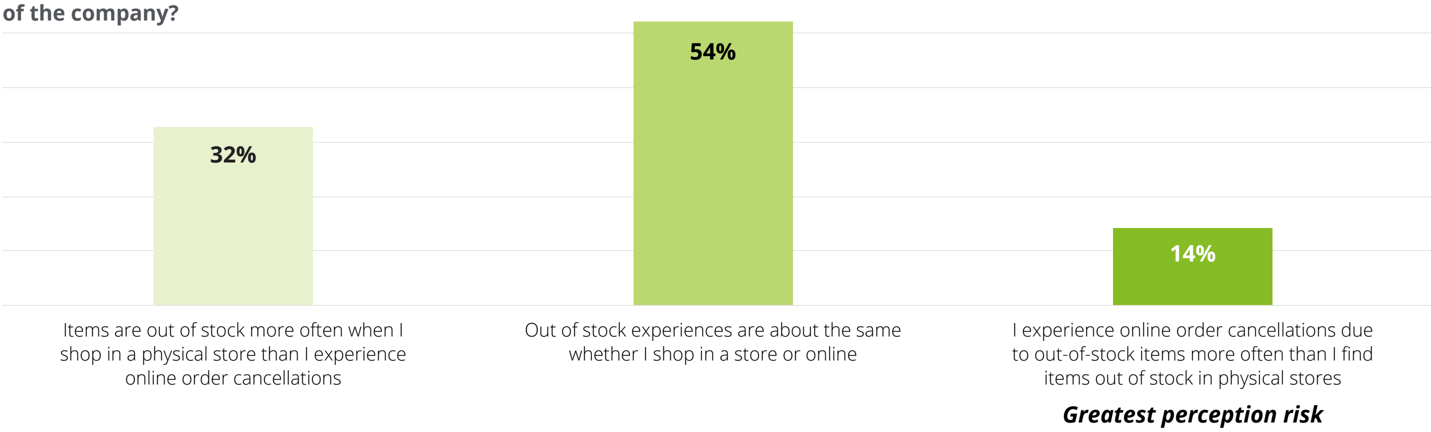
**Consumer insights on out-of-stock and order cancellation experiences by sales channel**

**When you compare your shopping experiences, how often do you encounter products being out of stock in physical stores versus having online orders canceled due to out-of-stock items?**




**The consumer experience impact**

**When an online order you placed is canceled because the products are out of stock, how does this impact your perception of the company?**



# The result of focusing on problems consumers don't have

In our survey, 96% percent of consumers surveyed said the payment methods they are currently offered meet their online shopping needs. In addition, 84% said they most often pay for online orders with a credit or debit card because it is their preferred method; this was consistent across all age groups in our survey.

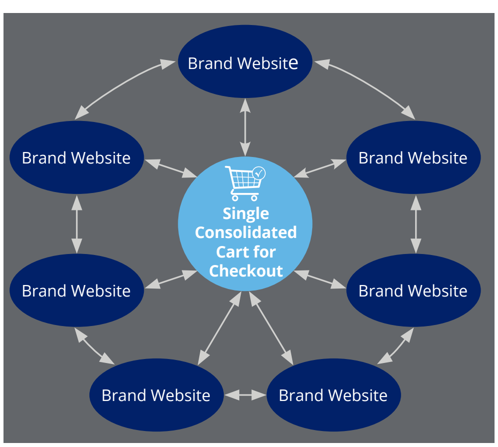
Even though payment methods do not appear to be a key pain point for consumers, Deloitte's annual research on post-purchase capability offerings across the retail industry shows that expanded payment options saw the greatest increase between 2025 and 2026[4]. If companies continue investing in payment methods that consumers may not adopt, they risk misallocating investment and resources that could be better directed to post-purchase focus areas where consumers report greater unmet needs.

## 8% of consumers currently use buy now, pay later options frequently, but only 14% say limited availability is the reason

**Consumer insights on additional payment methods offered at online checkout**

| Payment method option | % who currently use frequently | % who don't use because it's not offered | % who would use frequently if it was offered more | Potential change in usage with more availability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PayPal | 30% | 25% | 35% | **+ 5%** |
| Quick response apps (i.e., Google Pay, Apple Pay) | 10% | 21% | 13% | **+3%** |
| Buy now, pay later | 8% | 14% | 11% | **+3%** |
| Peer-to-peer payment (i.e., Venmo, Zelle)\ | 6% | 26% | 6% | **---** |
| Cryptocurrency/bitcoin | 3% | 21% | 4% | **+1%** |

Most consumers surveyed did not cite lack of availability as the reason they do not use additional payment method options. Consumers also indicated that greater availability of these options would not lead to a significant increase in how frequently they use them.




Where there is a higher-potential opportunity in the consumer checkout experience: Cross-brand checkout options…

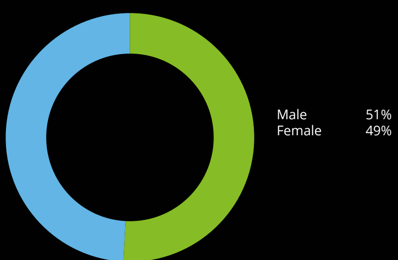
Enabling customers to shop across a company's brand websites while consolidating items into a single cart for checkout can improve the customer experience and create operational efficiencies. These efficiencies can include fewer order transactions, fewer email communications, and potentially fewer packages to deliver.
Only 11% of consumers surveyed said they frequently use a cross-brand checkout option. The primary reason is that it is not offered when they shop today. By contrast, 72% said they would use this feature if it were more widely available—***almost three times higher potential usage than additional payment methods.***

# Survey methodology and respondent demographics

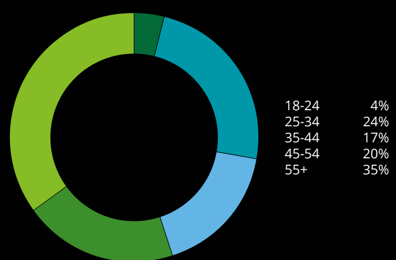
| | |
|---|---|
| **Survey methodology** | The 2026 Consumer Insights Survey on the Omnichannel Consumer Post-Purchase Experience was developed by Deloitte and conducted online by an independent research company from February 2, 2026, through February 13, 2026 |
| **Who we surveyed** | 1,282 US consumers who make online purchases 5 or more times per month and made purchases online from 10 or more different companies within six months of taking the survey |

## Respondent demographics

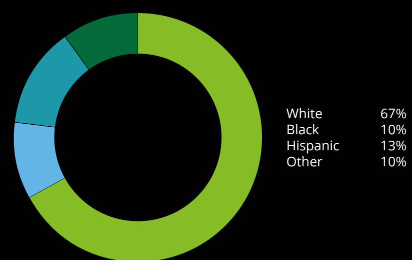
### Gender



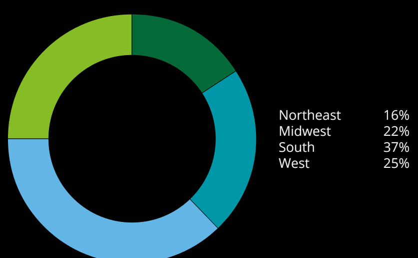

### Age group



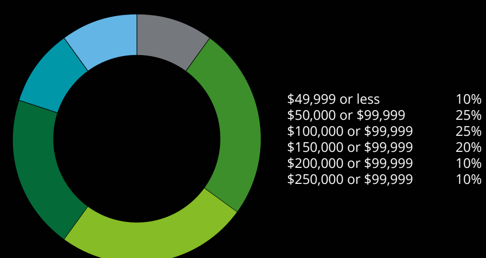

### Race / ethnicity



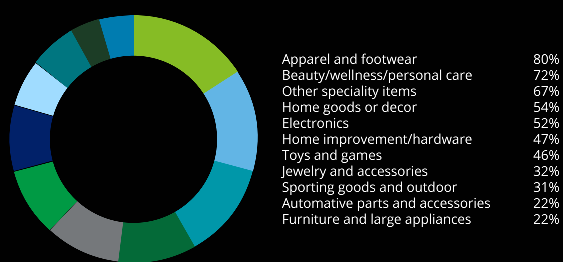

### Geography (U.S. regions)




### Annual household income




### Product types purchased



# Deloitte's omnichannel competitive landscape services

Deloitte's omnichannel competitive landscape research and assessment services can help companies quickly understand where they are leading or lagging key competitors across the end-to-end customer journey. We benchmark current capabilities, identify the gaps that matter most, and translate the findings into a practical set of priorities. We can also help you build the business case—linking improvements to customer experience and cost drivers—and support implementation of leading capabilities, from operating model and process changes to enabling technology and performance measurement.

## Deloitte omnichannel competitive landscape research

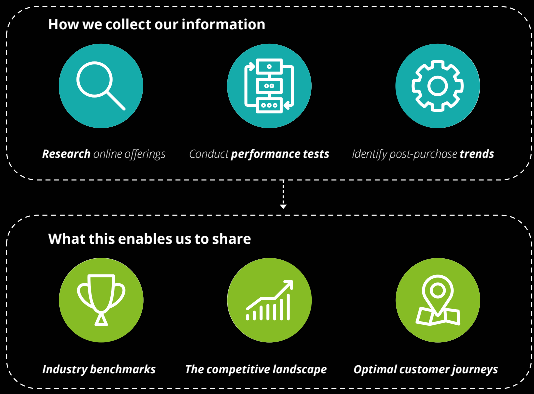
We monitor and test the services retail companies offer across the post-purchase customer experience, including capabilities to transact and fill orders as well as services that retain ongoing loyalty

**Research focus**


- Gift services
- Subscriptions & auto renewals
- Returns & reverse logistics
- Sustainability missions & goals
- Marketplace offerings & policies

- Demand forecasting & planning
- Inventory allocation & management
- Size & fit prediction
- Checkout & payment options
- Order management
- Fulfillment and delivery options & performance
- Packaging materials & processes

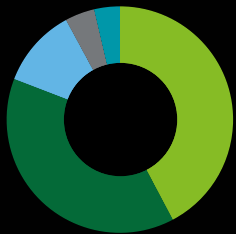
**Methods & outcomes**




## Research companies: Key statistics

We include companies of varying sizes, maturity, and operating models to capture the broadest spectrum of capabilities across the retail industry

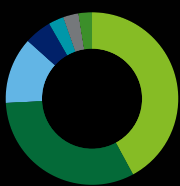
**Our scope: over 350 global companies**



| | |
|---|---|
| Wholesale/retail brands | 42% |
| Specialty retailers | 39% |
| Grocery and convenience stores | 11% |
| Big box and department stores | 4% |
| Discount/off-price & resale | 4% |

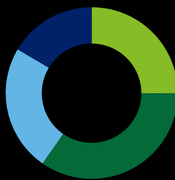
**Research company statistics**

**Annual revenue**



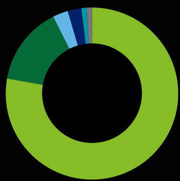
| | |
|---|---|
| Under $1B | 42% |
| $1B – $4B | 32% |
| $5B – $9B | 12% |
| $10B – $24B | 5% |
| $25B – $49B | 3% |
| $50B – $99B | 3% |
| Over $100B | 3% |

**Years in business**



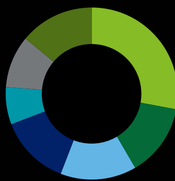
| | |
|---|---|
| Under 25 | 25% |
| 25 – 49 | 35% |
| 50 – 100 | 24% |
| Over 100 | 17% |

**Headquarters**



| | |
|---|---|
| United States | 77% |
| Europe | 15% |
| Asia | 3% |
| Canada | 3% |
| Australia | 1% |
| South America | 1% |

**Number of brick-and-mortar stores**



| | |
|---|---|
| None | 28% |
| Under 25 | 14% |
| 25 – 99 | 14% |
| 100 – 249 | 13% |
| 250 – 499 | 7% |
| 500 – 999 | 10% |
| Over 1K | 14% |

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# Endnotes

1 - 4. Internal research conducted by Deloitte's Omnichannel Competitive Landscape Services

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*Together makes progress*