# Locus

# State of Delivery Performance 2026: U.K. Delivery Benchmarks

Findings from 2,000+ U.K. consumers on delivery timelines, communication accuracy, and execution reliability.

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# Foreword

Delivery in the U.K. is evaluated through confirmation accuracy and promise credibility.

Consumers are demanding confirmation accuracy, predictable timelines, and consistency between promise and proof.

82% of U.K. shoppers expect delivery within a defined one to four-day window. Only 4% expect same-day fulfillment. At the same time, confirmation precision has become a dominant performance signal: 94% cite packages marked "delivered" when they have not arrived as a major irritation.

Trust in fast delivery claims reflects this heightened scrutiny. Only 7% believe retailers always keep guaranteed promises, while 41% say commitments are met only "sometimes."

Delivery leadership in the U.K. is therefore defined by disciplined execution and synchronized confirmation systems. This report outlines the benchmarks shaping U.K. expectations and the operational priorities required to meet them consistently at scale.

# Delivery Performance Has Become a Brand Standard in the U.K.

In the United Kingdom, delivery standards are shaped by predictability and confirmation accuracy rather than acceleration alone.

The dominant expectation is structured fulfillment. 82% of consumers expect orders to arrive within one to four days, reinforcing a clearly defined service range. Same-day fulfillment remains limited in demand, placing emphasis on reliability within this window.

Execution precision is evaluated most visibly at the point of confirmation. 94% of U.K. consumers cite packages marked as "delivered" when they have not arrived as a major irritation. Handling quality and secure placement further influence perception, as damaged parcels and unsafe drop-offs remain highly reported concerns.

Delivery performance in the U.K. market is therefore defined by aligned commitments, accurate status updates, and disciplined last-mile execution. Brands that consistently synchronize timeline promises with real-world confirmation standards build stronger long-term credibility.

# Executive Insights from the Survey

### Execution Accuracy Drives Frustration

## 94%

cite packages marked "delivered" when they have not arrived as a major irritation.

### Defined 1–4 Day Windows Shape Expectations

## 82%

of U.K. consumers expect delivery within one to four days.

### Return Shipping Fees Lead Returns Challenges

## 25%

of U.K. consumers say paying for return shipping is the most difficult part of the returns process.

### Refund Timelines Influence Post-Purchase Perception

## 19%

of U.K. consumers cite waiting for refunds as a key concern.

### Guaranteed Delivery Claims Face Measured Trust

## 7%

of U.K. consumers believe retailers always keep fast or guaranteed delivery promises.

### Millennials Show the Highest Trust in AI

## 62%

of U.K. millennials say AI improves their confidence in the delivery experience.

# The U.K. Delivery Standard in 2026

| CATEGORY | U.K. BENCHMARK | WHAT THIS MEANS FOR RETAILERS |
|---|---|---|
| **Delivery Window Standard** | **82%** expect delivery within 1–4 days. Same-day delivery remains a niche expectation at 4%. | Reliability across a 1–4 day window matters more than hyper-speed. Retailers must optimize route planning and capacity allocation to meet mid-range SLAs consistently. |
| **Impact on Brand Perception** | Confidence in delivery commitments is limited, with only 7% believing promises are always met. | Execution consistency directly shapes brand equity. Visibility and performance tracking must support higher on-time adherence. |
| **Trust in Fast Delivery Claims** | **41%** say fast delivery promises are kept only "sometimes." | Overpromising erodes trust. Accurate ETA prediction and real-time orchestration are essential to maintain credibility. |
| **Top Delivery Frustration** | **94%** cite incorrect "delivered" notifications as a major frustration, followed by damaged packages and unsafe placement. | Proof-of-delivery accuracy and exception management require tighter last-mile control and auditability. |
| **Role of Communication** | Communication accuracy ranks among the most frequently reported sources of frustration. | Retailers need proactive, automated notifications integrated with real-time fleet data. |
| **Returns Expectations** | **25%** cite return shipping fees as the top issue, with refund delays and process complexity close behind. | Returns orchestration must balance cost efficiency with customer transparency and faster refund cycles. |
| **Holiday Expectations** | Performance expectations remain consistent during peak periods. | Peak planning requires scalable dispatch automation and carrier coordination to sustain SLA performance. |

Key delivery performance benchmarks shaping U.K. retail strategy in 2026.

The sections that follow examine the operational signals behind these benchmarks — from delivery window expectations and confirmation accuracy to trust in retailer commitments and the returns experience — and outline what each means for enterprise logistics strategy.
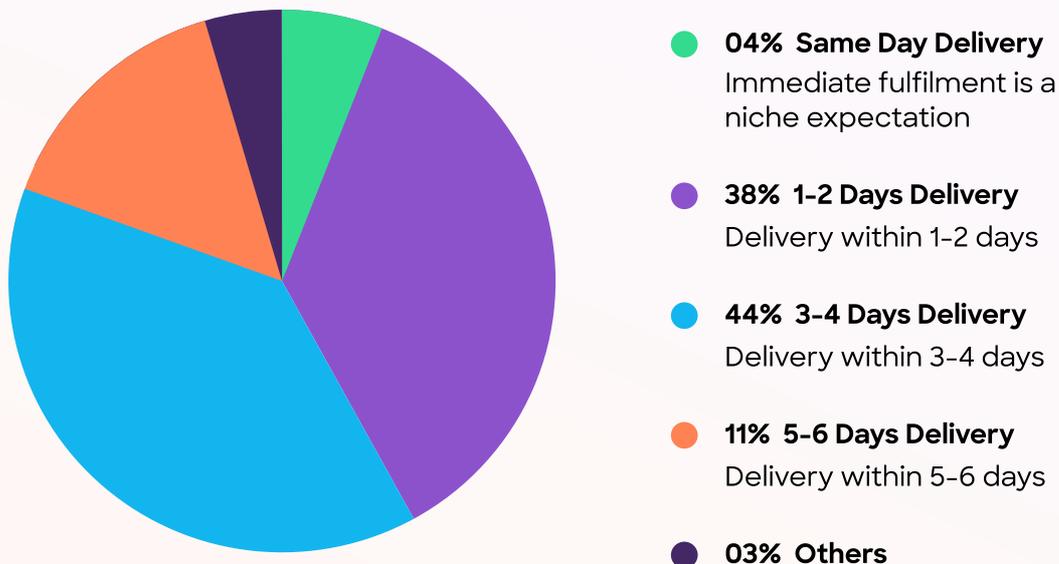
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# Defined Delivery Windows Set the Baseline for Performance

When asked what they consider an appropriate delivery timeframe for online orders, U.K. consumers align around a clearly structured window. The majority expect delivery within one to four days, establishing a defined benchmark for performance.

82% of consumers expect delivery within this range, while just 4% expect same-day fulfillment. Expectations are centered on predictable timelines rather than accelerated speed.

This concentration reinforces that delivery performance in the U.K. market is measured against clearly defined service windows supported by consistent execution.

## U.K. Consumer Delivery Timeframe Distribution



**04%  Same Day Delivery**
Immediate fulfilment is a niche expectation

**38%  1-2 Days Delivery**
Delivery within 1-2 days

**44%  3-4 Days Delivery**
Delivery within 3-4 days

**11%  5-6 Days Delivery**
Delivery within 5-6 days

**03%  Others**

In the U.K., delivery expectations are structured within a 1–4 day window, with same-day demand remaining limited.

Data from UK consumers prioritize predictable delivery windows over same-day speed. It indicates that speed remains important, but ultra-fast delivery is no longer the dominant benchmark in this market.

**4%**
expect same-day delivery, confirming that immediate fulfillment is a niche expectation rather than a widespread demand.

**82%**
expect delivery within one to four days (38% within 1–2 days; 44% within 3–4 days), establishing a clear mainstream delivery window.

**11%**
accept delivery within five to six days, indicating limited tolerance for extended timelines beyond four days.

Expectations cluster tightly around the 1–4 day range, reinforcing that delivery standards are structured and predictable.

# Building a Delivery Network That Earns U.K. Consumer Trust

Here's how to align your delivery operations with what consumers expect today.

## 1

### Build Your Network Around the 1–4 Day Standard

**Insight:**
**82%** of U.K. consumers expect delivery within one to four days

**What It Means for Enterprise Teams:**
Meeting the 1–4 day expectation requires a network architecture that supports predictable execution.

Evaluate how each structural layer contributes to delivery outcomes:
- Regional inventory positioning
- Carrier selection and performance stability
- Linehaul efficiency across key corridors
- Routing accuracy during volume spikes

Customer-facing delivery windows should reflect demonstrated network capability rather than promotional targets. When service commitments are grounded in measured performance, enterprises improve SLA stability while maintaining cost discipline.

# 2

## Make Communication Part of the Delivery SLA

### Insight:
**94%** of U.K. consumers cite incorrect "delivered" notifications as a major irritation.

### What It Means for Enterprise Teams:
Delivery confirmation accuracy should be integrated directly into operational workflows rather than treated as a downstream update.

Customer-facing status messages must be powered by synchronized execution data, including:
- A unified data layer across WMS, TMS, and carrier systems
- Real-time status alignment across all delivery partners
- Predictive delay notifications informed by routing and capacity signals

When confirmation systems reflect actual network performance, communication becomes a trust-building mechanism rather than a reactive tool.

# 3

## Align Customer Promises With Network Reality

### Insight:
**41%** of U.K. consumers say fast delivery promises are kept only "sometimes."
**7%** believe promises are always met.

### What It Means for Enterprise Teams:
Customer-facing timelines should originate from demonstrated network capability rather than promotional positioning.

High-performing organizations typically:
- Calibrate stated delivery ranges using corridor-level service history
- Reconfigure estimated arrival windows during seasonal surges or capacity shifts
- Monitor commitment adherence as a tracked performance metric

In distributed fulfillment environments, timeline misalignment often stems from disconnected planning systems and regional execution silos.

Organizations that tie shopper-facing expectations directly to live capacity signals and routing intelligence strengthen credibility, minimize repeat delivery activity, and maintain cost discipline across the network.

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# 4

## Treat Returns as a Core Logistics Workflow

### Insight:

**25% o**f U.K. consumers identify return shipping fees as the most difficult part of the process.
**19%** cite refund timelines as a key consideration.

### What It Means for Enterprise Teams:

At scale, post-purchase flows become a systems challenge spanning stock accuracy, transport coordination, and financial processing.

High-performing retailers approach this by:
- Structuring return pathways with transparent cost policies and streamlined handling
- Mapping every step from authorization to reimbursement to eliminate operational lag
- Connecting warehouse systems, carrier updates, and finance processes into a coordinated workflow

Rather than isolating post-purchase handling, forward and reverse movements are managed as part of the same transportation architecture.

Organizations that modernize these processes strengthen margin control, accelerate inventory re-entry, and reinforce long-term customer confidence.

### Nishith Rastogi

CEO / Founder

"Speed is not the only benchmark. Reliability is the benchmark. Consumers still value fast delivery. But what shapes trust is consistency at scale. Every failed delivery creates reattempts, extra miles, and avoidable costs.
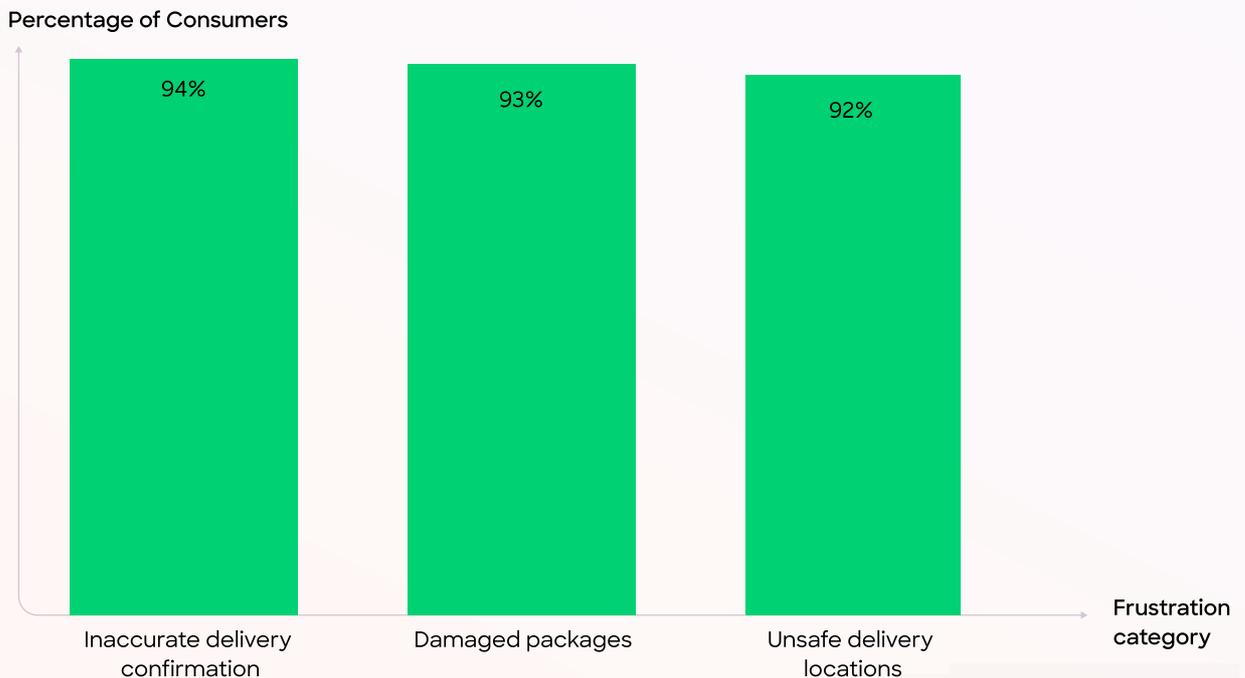
Reliability comes from aligning planning, dispatch, carrier management, and customer communication in one operating layer. Brands that match delivery promises to operational reality earn stronger trust than those that simply promise faster timelines."

# Delivery Reliability Drives Brand Trust in the U.K.

Delivery performance is now a measurable brand KPI in the United Kingdom. 82% of consumers expect delivery within one to four days, and 94% cite inaccurate "delivered" notifications as a major irritation, making logistics execution and communication accuracy visible drivers of customer trust.

## Communication Accuracy Is the Biggest Trust Driver

Inaccurate "delivered" notifications are the single largest frustration, followed by damaged packages and unsafe placement.

Percentage of Consumers

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 94% | 93% | 92% | Frustration category |
| Inaccurate delivery confirmation | Damaged packages | Unsafe delivery locations | |

In the U.K., communication accuracy and delivery handling strongly influence customer trust.

UK consumers highlighted issues tied closely to communication and reliability when asked about the most frustrating aspects of package delivery.

**94%**
cite packages marked as "delivered" when they have not arrived as a top frustration, indicating that inaccurate delivery confirmation significantly impacts trust.

**93%**
of respondents report that damaged packages are highly frustrating, which reinforces that the condition upon arrival remains a core expectation.

**92%**
mention items left in unsafe locations, showing that delivery placement decisions directly affect customer confidence.

Both communication accuracy and physical execution are critical to perceived delivery performance.

# Consumers Don't Trust Delivery Promises

Consumer confidence in advertised delivery timelines is measured and experience-driven in the United Kingdom. Only 7% believe retailers always keep fast or guaranteed delivery promises, while 41% say promises are kept only "sometimes."

Delivery credibility in the U.K. market depends on alignment between advertised timelines and consistent operational execution.

## Trust in Fast Delivery Claims Is Limited
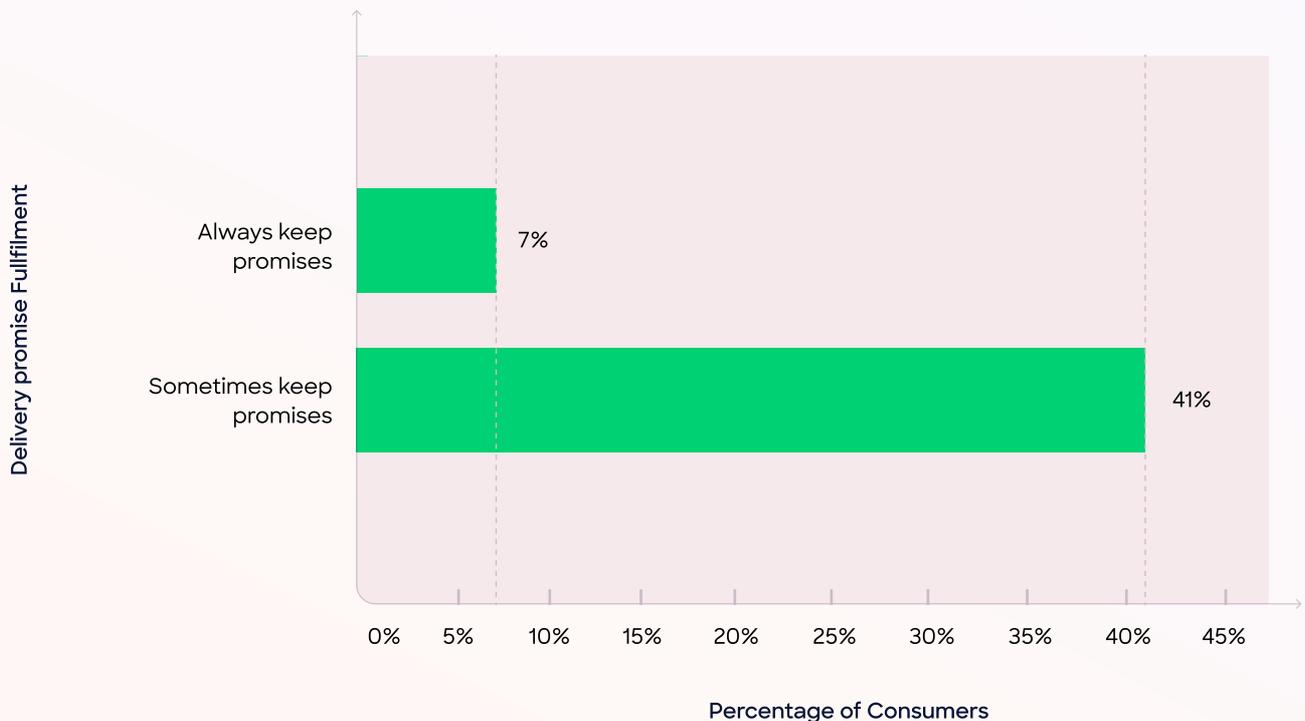


Fewer than 1 in 10 U.K. consumers believe guaranteed delivery promises are always met.

**7%**
of UK consumers believe retailers always keep their fast or guaranteed delivery promises, indicating low absolute trust.

**41%**
say promises are kept only "sometimes," reflecting variability in execution.

## Market Insight

In the United Kingdom, consumers evaluate brands based on delivery reliability rather than advertised speed alone. Consistency across promised timelines and actual execution strengthens purchase confidence and reinforces brand credibility.

At scale, accurate delivery commitments support operational efficiency by reducing service escalations and repeat delivery attempts. Over time, predictable execution becomes a measurable driver of long-term customer trust.

## How Enterprise Retailers Improve Delivery Promise Accuracy

With only 7% of U.K. consumers believing fast delivery promises are always met and 41% saying promises are kept only "sometimes," alignment between advertised timelines and operational capability is essential.

Retailers can strengthen delivery credibility by:

✅ Basing promised delivery windows on lane-level historical performance

✅ Adjusting commitments dynamically for peak periods and regional capacity

✅ Aligning marketing SLAs with transportation planning constraints

✅ Tracking promised versus actual performance across carriers

In multi-carrier networks, delivery commitments depend on coordinated SLAs, synchronized tracking data, and consistent execution standards.
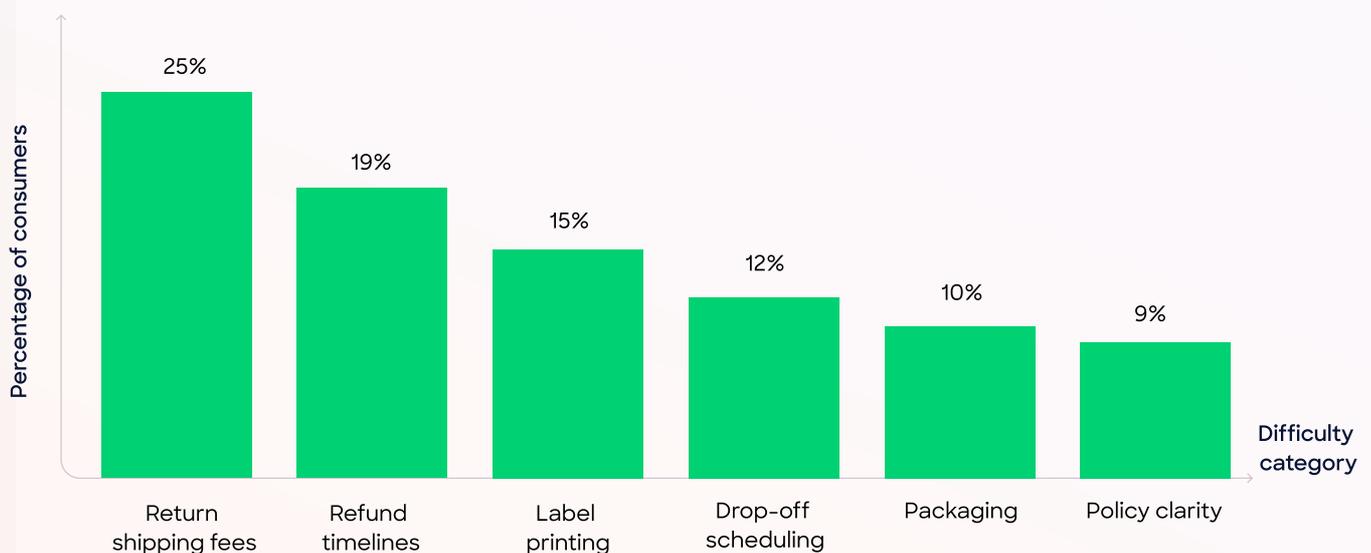
Promise accuracy is a supply chain orchestration discipline.

# Returns Frictions Are Driving Post-Purchase Churn

Across the United Kingdom, return shipping fees, refund timelines, and drop-off coordination are central to how consumers evaluate the returns experience. For enterprise retailers, reverse-logistics execution now carries equal weight to forward delivery performance.

## In the U.K., Refund Delays Erode Trust Faster Than Fees



Percentage of consumers

| Return shipping fees | Refund timelines | Label printing | Drop-off scheduling | Packaging | Policy clarity |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 25% | 19% | 15% | 12% | 10% | 9% |

Difficulty category

In the U.K., return cost is the leading friction point, followed by refund timing and process complexity.

**Return shipping fees are the leading frustration (25%),** making cost the single most significant barrier in the UK returns experience.

**Refund timelines are a major concern (19%),** indicating that post-return processing speed directly affects customer satisfaction.

**Process-related steps create additional friction,** with 15% citing label printing and 12% citing drop-off scheduling as difficult. Convenience remains a measurable issue.

**Packaging (10%) and policy clarity (9%)** further highlight that even smaller procedural hurdles contribute to overall dissatisfaction.

Across the United Kingdom, return shipping fees are the single largest consideration (25%), followed by refund timelines and drop-off coordination.

Consumers place strong emphasis on cost clarity and process transparency throughout the returns journey.

# Building a Returns Process That Keeps Customers Coming Back

Here's how to design your returns experience around cost clarity, faster refunds, and simpler processes.

## 1

### Return Fees Drive Post-Purchase Friction

### Insight:
**25%** of U.K. consumers identify paying for return shipping as the most difficult part of the returns process.

### What It Means for Enterprise Teams:
Reassess how return-related charges are structured and presented.

- Introduce complimentary returns for premium or high-margin categories
- Apply eligibility-based waivers tied to loyalty tiers or order thresholds
- Present all related costs transparently at the point of purchase

Clear pricing frameworks reduce ambiguity and reinforce confidence throughout the post-purchase journey.

**2**

## Refund speed determines final brand perception

### Insight:
**19%** of U.K. consumers cite refund timelines as a key consideration in the returns experience.

### What It Means for Enterprise Teams:
Accelerate reimbursement timelines across the post-purchase workflow.

- Initiate credits at first carrier confirmation, where risk thresholds allow
- Connect transport scans, order systems, and finance platforms to shorten approval cycles
- Apply automated validation for low-risk cases
- Provide transparent status updates until completion

Because the customer experience concludes at the point of reimbursement, cycle time discipline plays a decisive role in overall perception.

**3**

## Return convenience drives return purchase

### Insight:
**12%** of U.K. consumers cite drop-off scheduling as a key consideration.
**10%** cite packaging requirements.

### What It Means for Enterprise Teams:
Reduce the physical effort required for post-purchase handling.

- Expand parcel drop-off coverage across accessible locations
- Introduce scheduled collection options where viable
- Provide packaging solutions designed for quick resealing

Lower effort across these stages increases convenience and reinforces confidence in the overall experience.

# 4

## Process Friction Still Drives Return Abandonment

### Insight:

In the U.K., return process complexity continues to influence customer experience.
**15%** struggle with label printing
**9%** struggle with policy clarity

### What It Means for Enterprise Teams:

Eliminate unnecessary complexity from post-purchase workflows.

- Support QR-based, label-free handoffs through carrier integrations
- Align digital return flows across web and mobile channels
- Clarify policy language and automate eligibility validation

Streamlined processes reduce effort, increase transparency, and reinforce confidence throughout the post-purchase experience.
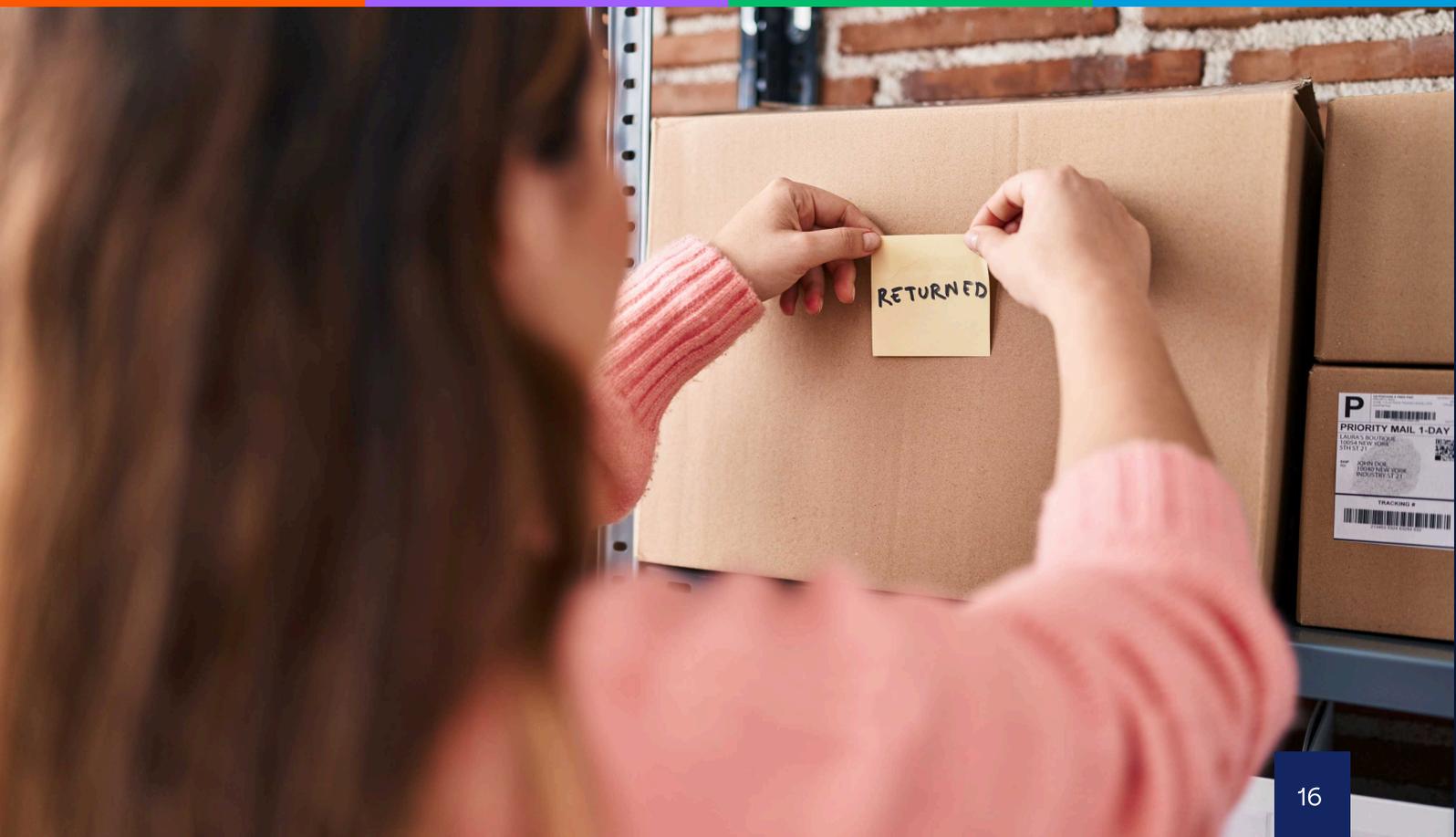
# Key Takeaways for Retail and Logistics Leaders

The findings in the United Kingdom point to clearly defined operational benchmarks.

**Design Networks for the 1–4 Day Standard:** U.K. expectations cluster around a one to four day window.

Inventory placement, routing logic, and carrier mix must support this baseline consistently.

**Execution Accuracy Drives Brand Confidence:** Delivery confirmation accuracy, careful handling, and secure placement shape performance perception.

Invest in routing precision, carrier performance management, and real-time visibility.

**Communication is Part of Delivery Performance:** With 94% citing inaccurate "delivered" notifications as a major irritation, confirmation accuracy must be embedded within execution.

Customer notifications should be driven by synchronized operational data across WMS, TMS, and carrier systems.

**Promise Management Matters:** Only 7% of U.K. consumers believe fast delivery promises are always met, and 41% say promises are kept only "sometimes."

Delivery timelines should be set using historical performance and network capacity rather than marketing targets

**Returns Are a Cost and Experience Lever:** Return shipping fees (25%), refund timelines (19%), and process simplicity influence post-purchase perception.

Reverse-logistics orchestration should be integrated into transportation planning.

**Bottom Line:** Strengthening delivery credibility in the U.K. requires coordinated orchestration across routing, carrier management, real-time visibility, and network-wide execution standards. Reliable performance within the defined window defines delivery leadership.

**Locus** ✕ DUBAIPETFOOD.COM | The **PETSHOP**

# How Petshop Built a More Efficient Last-Mile Operation with Locus

Petshop (dubaipetfood.com), a leading pet supplies retailer, partnered with Locus to optimize its last-mile delivery operations.

## Results achieved

✅ **70%** reduction in delivery planning time

✅ **20%** increase in delivery rate

✅ Improved driver productivity per day

✅ Accurate bulk route planning with precise location mapping

"This partnership helped us increase the per-day productivity of our drivers. Locus is able to plan bulk deliveries with unmatched accuracy, and the backend is very robust in identifying pinpoint locations, ensuring a hassle-free delivery experience."

**Kashif Nawaz**
Technical Project Manager, Petshop

# Future of Delivery: From Promise to Proof

The next phase of delivery in the United Kingdom will be defined by execution transparency rather than speed escalation.

Retailers will be evaluated on how convincingly they demonstrate reliability across:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Confirmation systems** | **Carrier coordination** |
| **Capacity management** | **Reverse-logistics visibility** |

The future is not built on faster promises. It is built on verifiable, synchronized, and data-backed execution.

# Methodology

Locus conducted a structured survey in Q4 2025 to assess consumer expectations for delivery performance in the United Kingdom. The study gathered responses from 2,000 active online shoppers across the U.K.

Participants evaluated delivery timelines, reliability, communication accuracy, returns experience, and trust in retailer commitments. Responses were analyzed to identify measurable performance benchmarks shaping delivery standards in the U.K. market.

# About the Research

This study was conducted to assess current consumer expectations for delivery performance in the United Kingdom. It evaluates how shoppers define acceptable delivery timelines, assess reliability, and respond to communication practices throughout the post-purchase experience. The findings establish measurable benchmarks that reflect how delivery performance is currently evaluated across the U.K. market.

*All responses were collected through standardized questionnaires to ensure consistency across respondent segments.

# About Locus

Locus is a decision-intelligent, agentic transportation management system (TMS) that plans, executes, and optimizes delivery networks using AI-driven decisions across cost, capacity, and service.

Operating in 30+ countries, Locus enables retailers, 3PLs, and enterprise brands to achieve higher on-time delivery rates, reduce logistics costs, and scale operations with 1.5B+ deliveries optimized across 360+ enterprise customers globally.

## Study Snapshot

**Fieldwork Period:**
Q4 2025

**Total Respondents:**
2,000 consumers

**Geographic Distribution:**
United Kingdom

**Respondent Profile:**
Active online shoppers

**Survey Scope:**
Delivery timelines, reliability, communication practices, returns experience, trust in delivery commitments

This approach provides a benchmark view of how delivery performance is currently evaluated U.K. consumers.

### Close the Gap Between Delivery Promises and Execution with Locus

**Schedule a Delivery Performance Audit**

*Explore Locus TMS Platform* →