

# Top Holiday Shopper Trends 2021: U.S. vs U.K.

Why this year is going to be different





## What's on the shopper's wish list?

We all knew this year was going to be different. Ecommerce sales continue to rise. Supply chains are still disrupted. And Click and Collect / Buy Online Pickup In-store (BOPIS) and Curbside are the new normal.

But how different? That's the real question.

**In September 2021, Fluent Commerce surveyed 500 U.S. and 500 U.K. shoppers on their holiday shopping plans.**

It turns out early shopping, free delivery, expedited shipping and the ability to look up store stock online are on this year's holiday wish list. With home delivery and in-store shopping more popular than store pickup options.

**Let's take a look at the details.**

# October is the new November

Move over Halloween, 'tis the season for shopping.

In the U.S., a full **28%**—**almost a third**—of shoppers plan to start early. **Before November.** And over half plan to start before Black Friday.

U.K. shoppers are less likely to start as early, but even there, **21%** **said they plan to start their holiday shopping before November, and 42% before Black Friday.**



**28%**  
of U.S.  
consumers



**21%**  
of U.K.  
consumers

plan to start their holiday  
shopping *before* November

**52%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

**42%**  
of U.K.  
consumers

plan to do start their holiday  
shopping *before* Black Friday



# Shoppers plan to spend more

While the global pandemic has lifted online customer expectations, there is a silver lining. Lots of pent-up spending. Consumers are ready to shop this season.

In the U.S., **almost a third of shoppers** plan to spend more than they did last holiday season, **with 17% planning to spend much more**. Meanwhile in the **U.K., 22% plan to spend more**.

**Gen Z outspends the rest**  
**Half** of U.S. and U.K. consumers who are considered Generation Z — between the ages of 18-24— plan to spend more on their holiday shopping this year versus last year.



**32%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

plan to spend more than  
they did last holiday season



**22%**  
of U.K.  
consumers



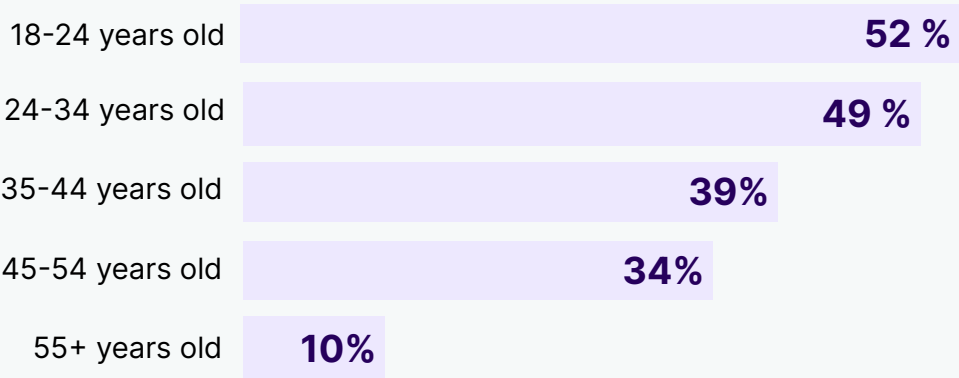
# Younger consumers are ready to spend

We now know shoppers are planning on spending more this year, especially those in Gen Z. But as you progress into older age ranges, the plan to spend more in 2021 slightly decreases in both

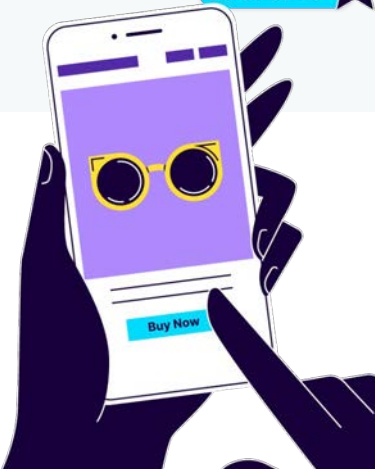
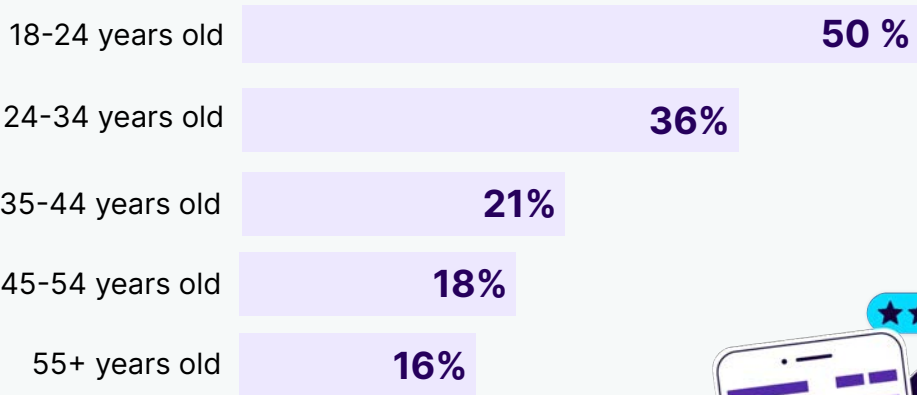
the U.S. and U.K. Of note? The sharp decline of those 55+ in the U.S. **Only 10% of Baby Boomers plan to spend more this holiday season vs. last year.**



## U.S. Shoppers



## U.K. Shoppers



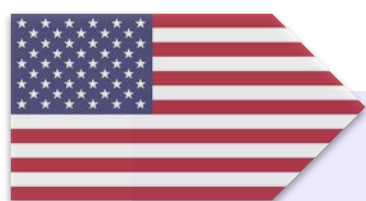
# In-Store vs Online

Good news for stores hoping to get those impulse buys. Many shoppers want to be back in stores—with 17% of U.S. and 11% of U.K. consumers planning to do **all** of their holiday shopping in-store. But a lot more will do at least some of their shopping online this year.

The pandemic brought an influx of new online shoppers, who grew to love the convenience and touch-free experience. This meant that many people who never

shopped online before did so for the first time, and plan to stick with it. In fact, **over three-quarters of U.S. consumers and nearly 9 in 10 of U.K. consumers** plan to do at least some of their holiday shopping online, with women favoring online more than men.

In addition, **22% of U.S. consumers and 16% of U.K. consumers** plan to do more holiday shopping online in 2021 than they did in 2020.



**78%**  
of U.S.  
consumers



**86%**  
of U.K.  
consumers

plan to do at least some of their  
holiday shopping online

**22%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

**16%**  
of U.K.  
consumers

plan to do more holiday  
shopping online in 2021

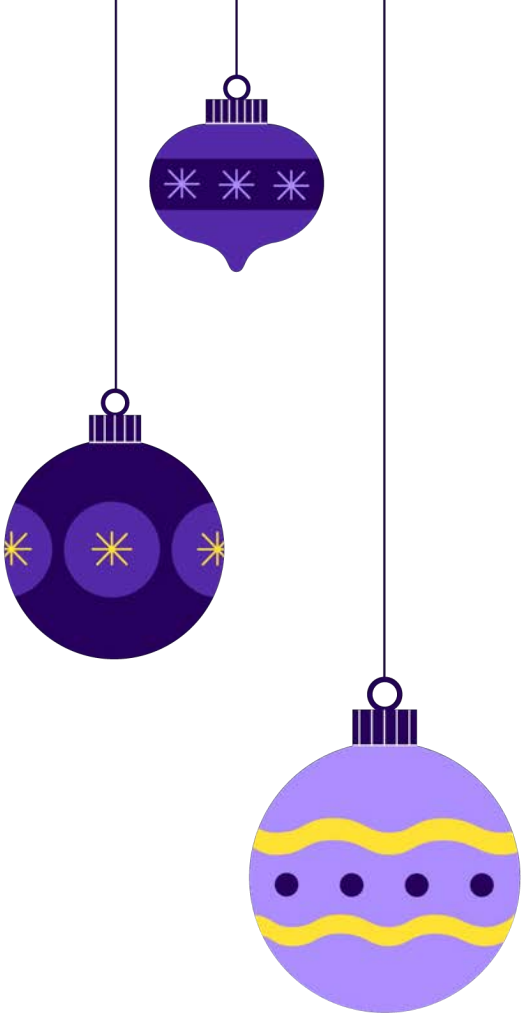
# Delivery vs Pickup

## Home Delivery Wins

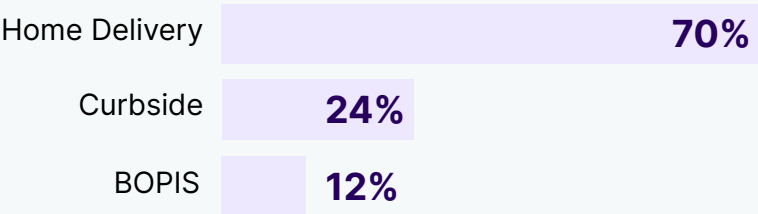
While in-store and curbside pickup has grown exponentially this year, survey respondents said it's not a priority for the holidays. An overwhelming majority **(70% in the U.S. and 79% in the U.K.)** prefers home delivery.

## Inside vs Outside Pickup

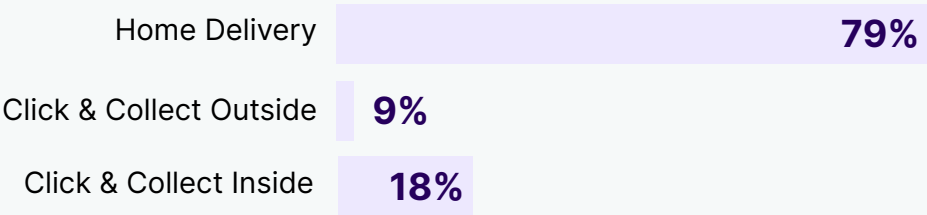
When it comes to pickup however, the results were different. While **twice as many U.S. shoppers** prefer curbside pickup to in-store, it was the opposite in the U.K. where **only 9%** preferred Click & Collect outside the store, and 18% preferred to come inside.



### U.S. Shopper Preferences



### U.K. Shopper Preferences







## Show them local stock

Accurate store stock is hard. We know. But customers expect to see it. A full **71% of U.S. consumers** and **66% of U.K. consumers** are likely to check online to see if an item is in stock before they visit your store.

So, fine-tune your safety stock levels and help make the transition to in-person shopping easier for your customers. You don't want to disappoint them. But also make sure you have a plan B.

## Save the Sale

Let's say they come to the store and the shelf is bare. Can your staff find the item for them? It turns out, if you can, you might be able to save the sale.

**72% of U.S. and 60% of U.K. consumers** surveyed said they'd be likely to purchase that out-of-stock item if you can find it and ship it to them. Talk about a holiday miracle!



**71%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

are likely to check online if an item is in stock before visiting a store in person

**72%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

are likely to purchase an out-of-stock item if a staff member can find it at another location and ship it to the customer



**66%**  
of U.K.  
consumers

**60%**  
of U.K.  
consumers



# Delivery options are important

When consumers choose to shop one retailer over another it turns out **delivery options count**.

## Free Delivery is Essential

The results were clear. If you don't offer free shipping, you're putting sales at risk. **A full 70% of U.S. and 63% of U.K.** survey respondents said that free shipping is important when choosing to shop one retailer over another.

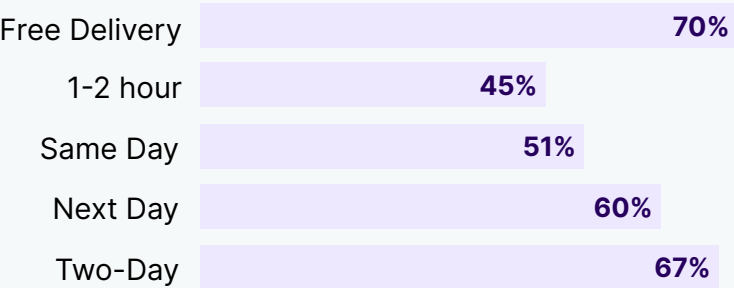
**Fast shipping options are also key.** While the two countries were split over which rush delivery options were most important, if you don't offer two-day or next-day shipping you could lose sales. Especially this year. Why?

Because Christmas falls on a Saturday—for the first time in over a decade. Which may mean [less last minute in-store shopping](#) and more pressure on fast shipping.

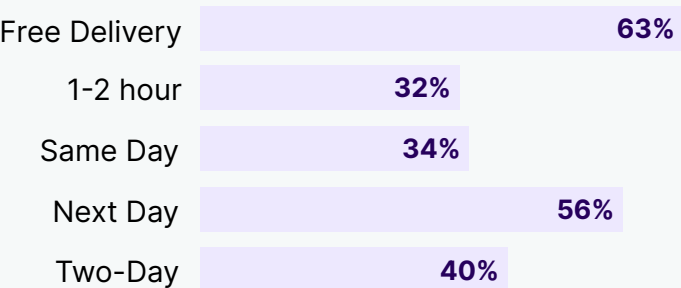
## What delivery options are important when choosing to shop one retailer over another?



### U.S. Shoppers



### U.K. Shoppers



# Don't Delay

Whether it's a home delivery order or pickup, no one likes delays. And this is especially important for the holidays.

## Delivery delays impact brand loyalty

In fact, **56% of U.S. and 41% of U.K.** consumers surveyed said that delivery delays would negatively impact future purchases. Ouch.

## Consumers want fast pickup

What's more, when placing a pickup order, they want to know how fast they can get it. **51% of U.S. consumers and 32% of U.K. consumers** consider it important that their order is ready in 30 minutes or less.



**56%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

are likely to not shop with a retailer in the future if their order is delayed

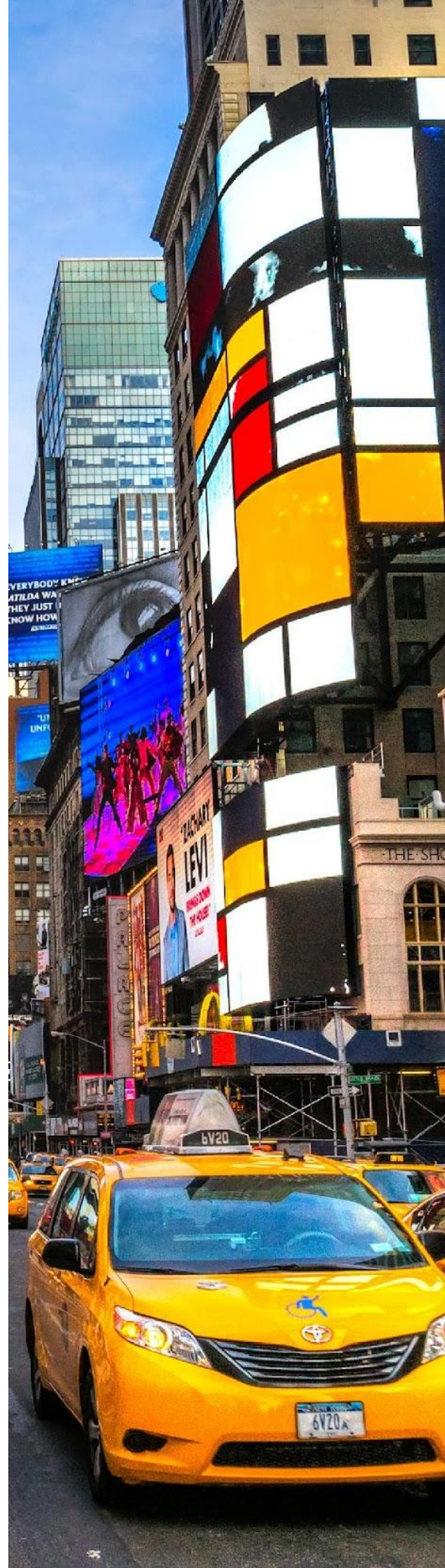
**51%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

consider it important that their online order is ready for pickup in 30 minutes or less



**41%**  
of U.K.  
consumers

**32%**  
of U.K.  
consumers



# Fast shipping doesn't have to be free

While everyone loves free shipping, it seems consumers would prefer to pay than experience delays.

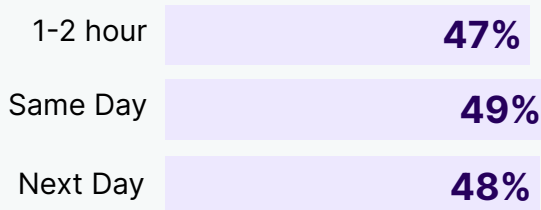
Almost **half of U.S. consumers** and **over a third of U.K. consumers**

said they were willing to pay for expedited delivery, with numbers split fairly evenly across 1-2 hour, same day and next day options.

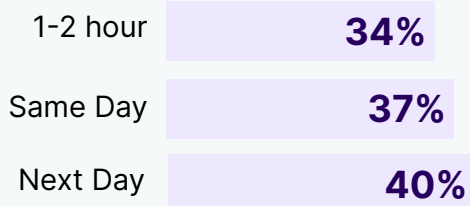
## Which expedited delivery options are shoppers willing to pay for?



### U.S. Shopper Preferences



### U.K. Shopper Preferences



## Get your return policy in order

If consumers are going to shop earlier, you need to make sure your returns policy will win their business. The survey showed that **55% of U.S. shoppers and 41% of U.K. shoppers** check for an extended holiday return policy before they buy. What's more, they expect those returns to be easy. Even for drop ship orders.

**A full 77% of U.S. shoppers and 65% of U.K. shoppers** consider it

important that they can return an online order to a physical store. And note that this includes 'only online' items.

So, if you're short on stores, consider working with a third party returns service or developing new returns partnerships. And make sure your return policy is clear to your customers.



**55%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

check for an extended return policy specific to the holiday season before they make a purchase

**77%**  
of U.S.  
consumers

consider it important that they are able to return an online order (even for an online-only item) to a physical store



**41%**  
of U.K.  
consumers

**65%**  
of U.K.  
consumers



## Summary

Consumers are starting their holiday shopping now—make sure your business is ready for them. Don't let legacy systems impact your ability to offer a seamless experience for your customers.

### **Accurate stock is more important than ever**

Do you have a near real-time, accurate view of your inventory? Make sure your Order Management System (OMS) allows for a single view of inventory, especially if you sell in multiple regions, across multiple channels or divisions.

### **What else should a flexible OMS do?**

Manage sourcing rules—so you can optimize fulfillment and get items to your customers faster. And support your in-store pick and pack strategy as the holiday season progresses. With **Fluent Order Management**, you can do all of this—and more.



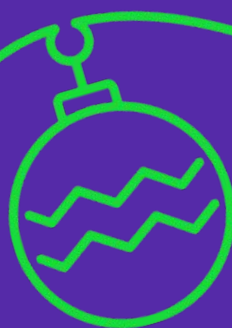
**Talk about a happy holiday season and the greatest gift of all: merry customers!**

# Create a profitable omnichannel strategy.

## See it in Action!

To learn more about how Fluent Order Management can support your holiday needs—and beyond—schedule a demo today.

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