

THE 2025 STATE OF LOGISTICS REPORT:

Trends, Challenges & Opportunities



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Introduction

As businesses navigate an increasingly complex logistics landscape, balancing cost efficiency and reliable fulfillment has never been more critical.

The 2025 Logistics Report: Trends, Challenges & Opportunities dives into key trends, challenges, and opportunities in third-party logistics (3PL), outlining how brands can optimize fulfillment and shipping strategies for success.



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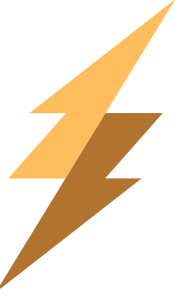
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– Mark, GoBolt, CEO



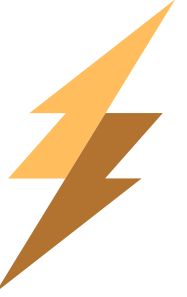
KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDING 1: COST

 **Cost** remains a dominant factor for businesses when selecting a 3PL.

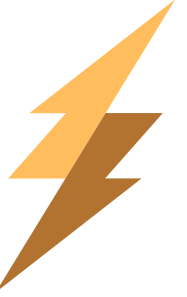


KEY FINDING 2: SPEED

 **Speed of fulfillment and delivery** are the leading reasons brands switch 3PLs.

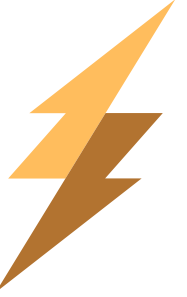


KEY FINDING 3: DIVERSIFICATION

 **Carrier diversification**
is a top priority in 2025.

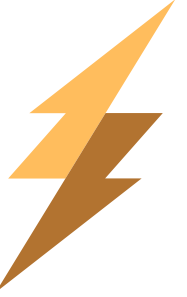


KEY FINDING 4: TECHNOLOGY

 **Technology adoption**, especially real-time inventory tracking, warehouse automation, and last-mile cost analytics, is in high demand by brands.

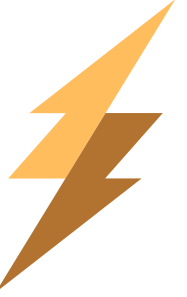


KEY FINDING 5: RETURNS

 **Returns management** remains a critical challenge for brands of all sizes.



KEY FINDING 6: SUSTAINABILITY

 **Sustainability** expectations are rising as brands look to partner with environmentally responsible carriers.





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– Matt Hertz, GoBolt, Position



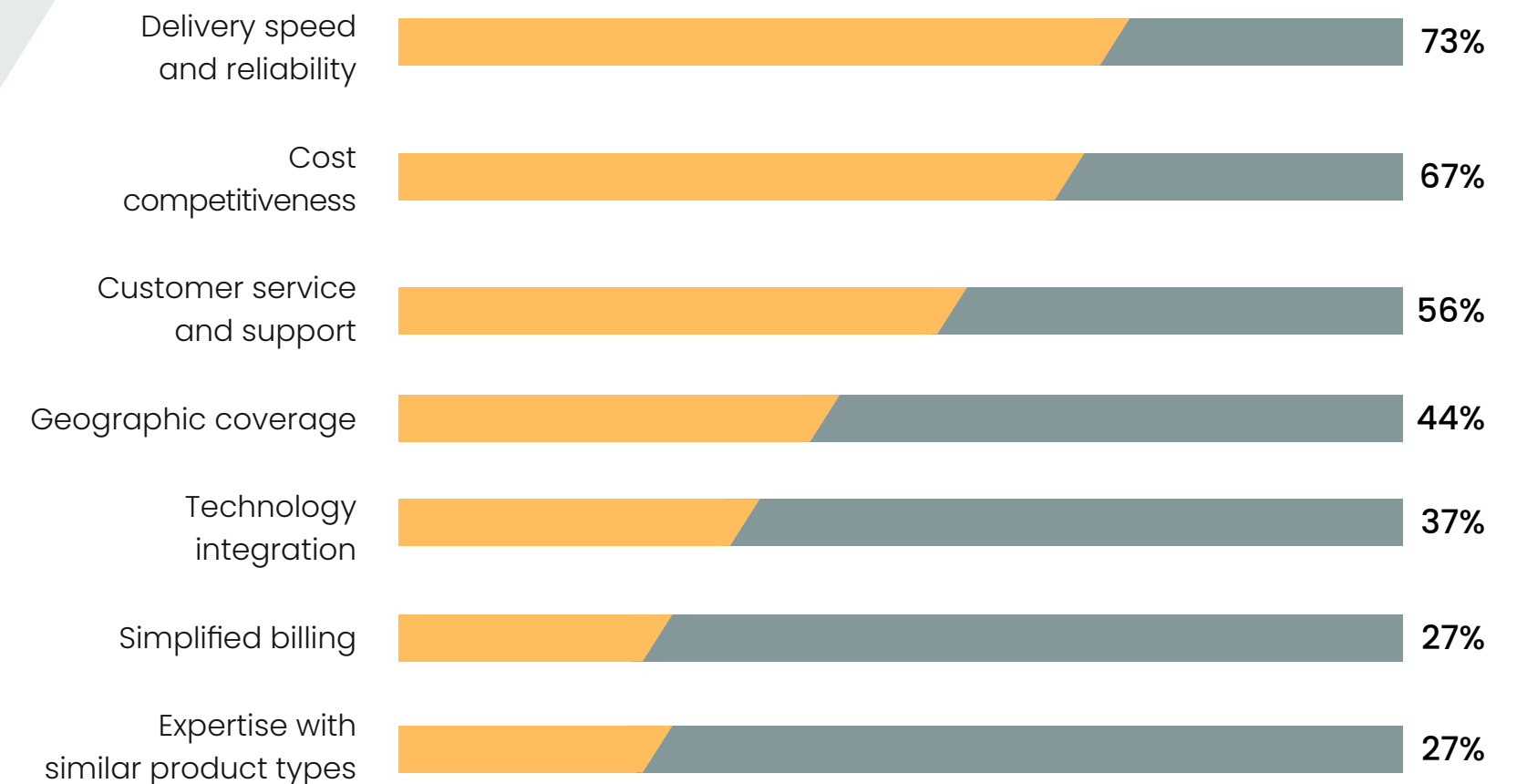
The “Cost vs. Speed” Tradeoff Is a False Choice – Brands Want Both

Brands want fulfillment and delivery speed to remain consistent while also lowering shipping costs:

- **Cost** is the #1 reason brands switch 3PLs.
- **Delivery speed and reliability** is the #1 reason brands select a new 3PL.
- **Carrier diversification** helps reduce shipping costs (65%) **and** improve delivery speed (55%).

Figure 1

What factors do you believe are most important when selecting a 3PL provider?



Balancing cost and speed doesn't have to be a tradeoff. Choosing a 3PL that offers carrier diversification can help brands strike the ideal balance between cost and reliability. By exploring multiple carrier partnerships, brands gain leverage in negotiations, maintain faster deliveries, and minimize disruptions.

Startups Struggle Most With Last-Mile Shipping Visibility and Coverage

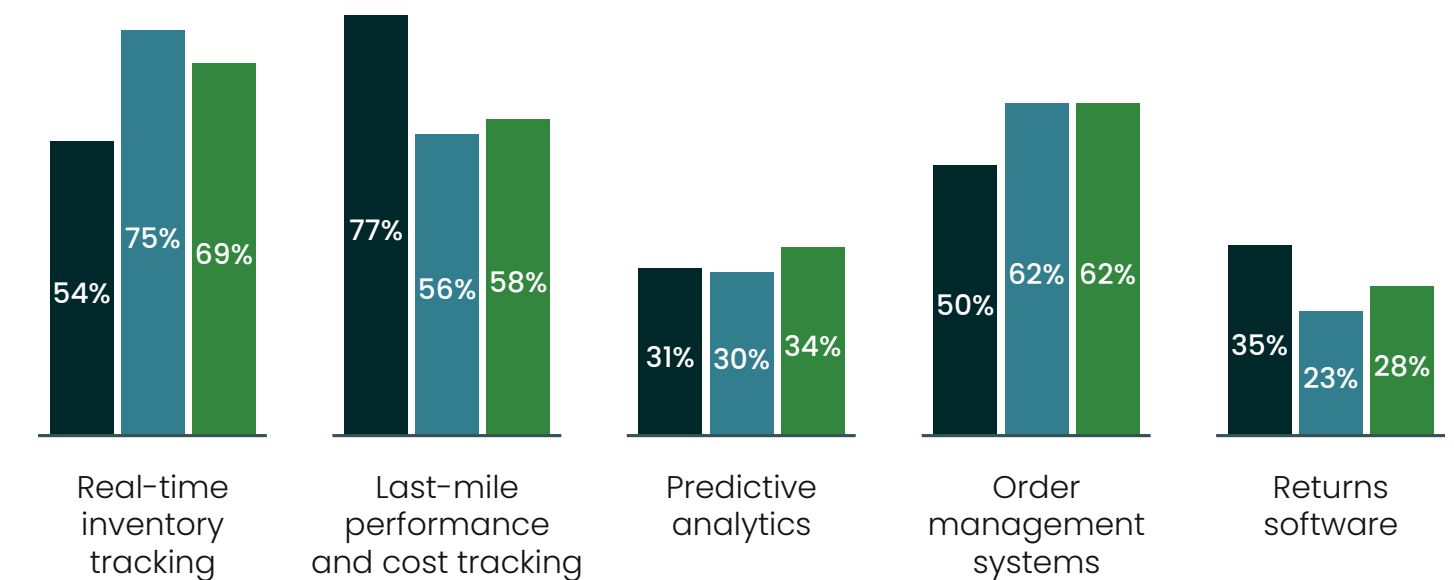
Unlike mature or scaling brands that place a heavier emphasis on cost efficiency, startups report:

- **Poor coverage (54%) and lack of tracking transparency (39%)** are the top frustrations with shipping partners.
- **77%** say **last-mile performance and cost tracking** are critical technologies for fulfillment operations.
- **54%** highlight real-time inventory tracking as essential.

Figure 2

What technologies are most critical for your fulfillment operations?

Startup	(Rapid customer acquisition, basic logistics setup)
Scaling	(Priorities include process optimization, infrastructure growth)
Mature	(Priorities include retention, efficiency, sustainability)



Startup brands often have leaner operations, making gaps in shipping coverage and tracking more impactful. Working with a **higher-touch** 3PL that offers a **better** network and more robust tracking solutions can alleviate these “blind spots” and support growth.



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– Prettydamnquick, Company, Position

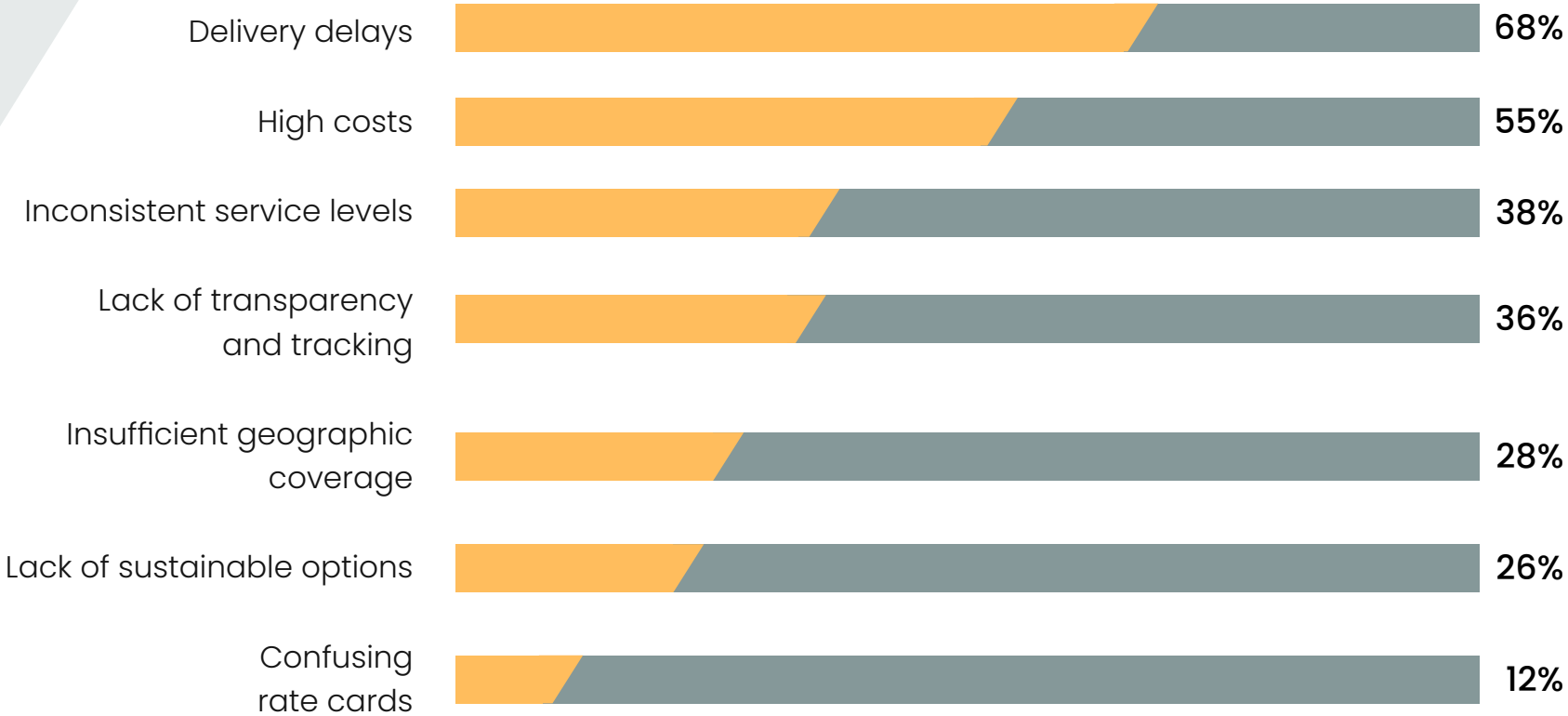


Delivery Speed and Reliability

68% of respondents cite frequent **delivery delays** as a significant operational pain point, and **65%** say that **issues between fulfillment and the last-mile carrier** negatively impact the customer experience. Nearly **60%** of respondents have changed 3PL providers multiple times due to ongoing delivery issues.

Figure 3

What are your biggest challenges with last-mile delivery? Select your top 3 challenges.



Persistent delays and poor reliability erode customer loyalty and strain the relationship between brands and 3PLs. By evaluating 3PLs based on **fulfillment turnaround times**, carrier partnerships, and delivery metrics, brands can minimize disruptions and preserve shopper satisfaction.

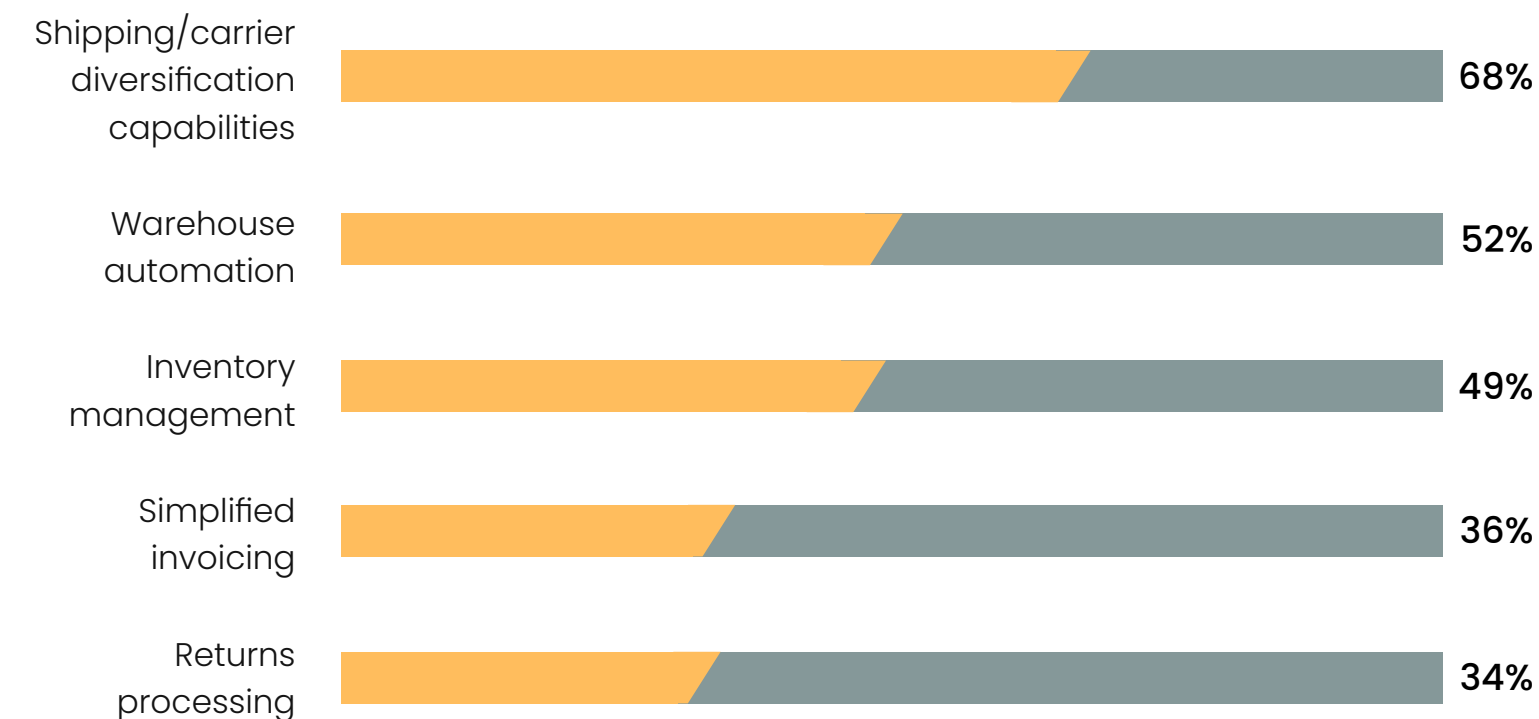
Carrier Dependency Is High – But Mostly Limited to a Few Players

Despite recognizing the need for more options, brands overwhelmingly rely on just two or three carriers – primarily **FedEx** and **UPS**. Even cost-conscious “scaling” brands haven’t diversified significantly, with only **63%** adding USPS. This highlights a significant opportunity for 3PLs – 68% of brands want their 3PLs to expand shipping options.

// We have been able to decrease our shipping expense since Sept by 18% just by moving our Canadian east coast orders over to GoBolt. Our customers are also seeing quicker delivery times. Its been a win-win for us!

Figure 4

Which technologies/business areas do you wish your 3PL would invest more into in 2025? Select all that apply.



Brands often want the benefits of carrier diversification but don’t always have a clear strategy to achieve it. Working with a 3PL that can seamlessly integrate multiple carriers on a single platform helps brands balance costs, improve delivery speed, and mitigate risks tied to single-carrier dependency.

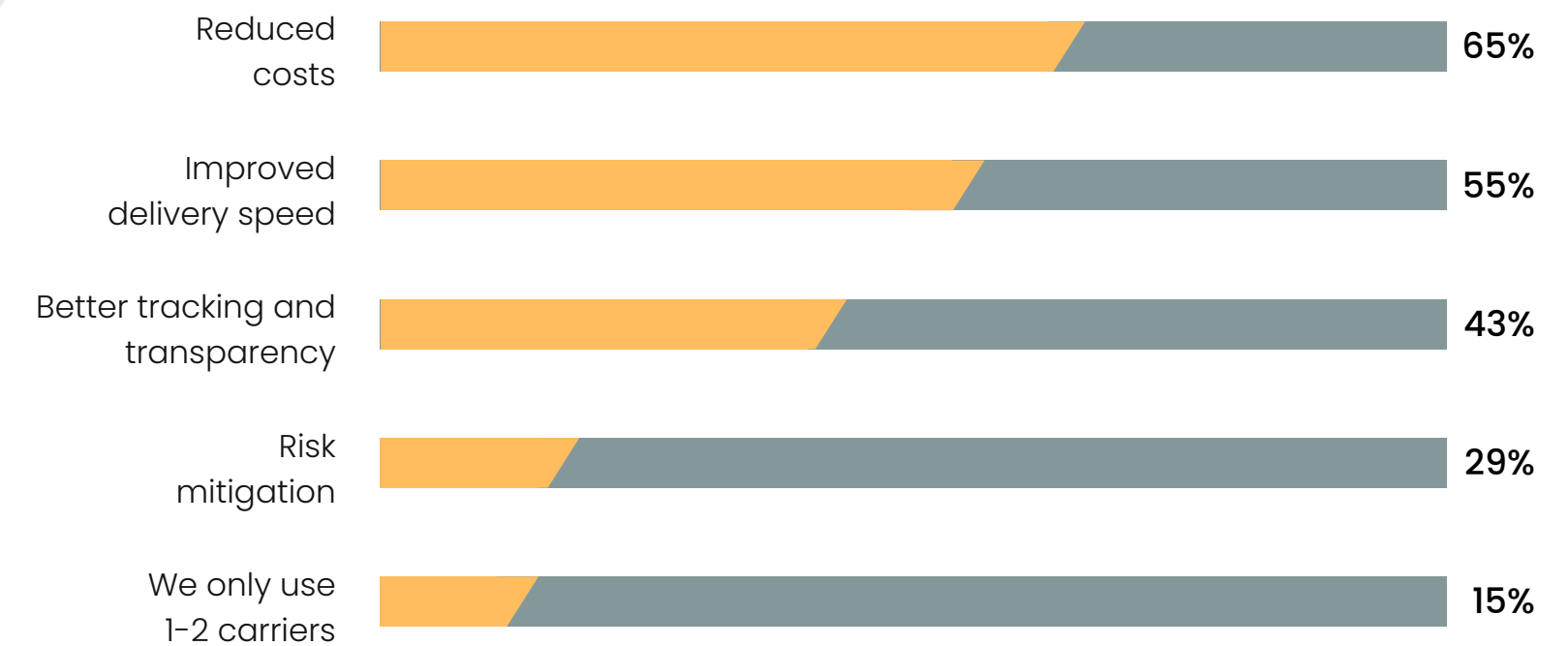
Carrier Diversification: Key to Cost Savings and Performance Gains

Brands increasingly recognize that expanding their carrier mix can reduce costs and enhance reliability:

- **65%** believe diversifying carriers leads to cost reductions.
- **55%** cite improved delivery speed.
- **59%** find it challenging to manage costs across multiple carriers.
- **54%** struggle with performance monitoring.

Figure 5

What are the key benefits of carrier diversification for your organization? Select all that apply.



Although the benefits of diversification are clear, many organizations lack the technical infrastructure or expertise to manage multiple carriers effectively. When evaluating 3PL partners, look for simplified integrations, unified data dashboards highlighting performance and cost insights, and cost-effective solutions that ease the burden of multi-carrier management.

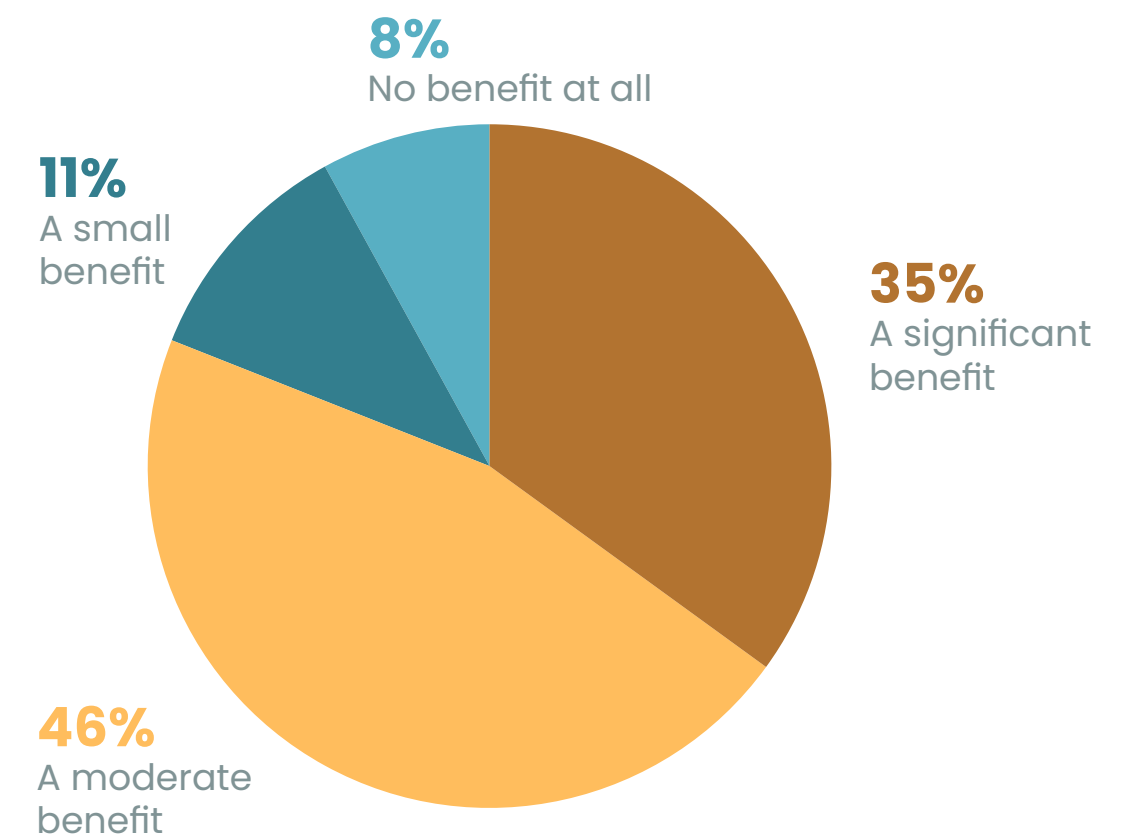
Technology and Innovation in High Demand

Brands value 3PLs that offer comprehensive, integrated solutions across key areas of their supply chain.

- **92%** see value in a 3PL **that has integrated its own first-party** and last-mile delivery solution.
- **68%** want 3PLs to invest in carrier diversification capabilities.
- **52%** consider warehouse automation crucial.
- **49%** prioritize inventory management advancements.
- **69%** say real-time inventory tracking is a necessary technology, and 59% emphasize last-mile performance and cost tracking.

Figure 6

How much would your business benefit from a 3PL that seamlessly integrates fulfillment and last-mile delivery into a single solution?



Technology extends beyond cost savings to encompass operational visibility, **quality**, and customer experience. Leading technology — spanning real-time inventory tracking, last-mile analytics, and seamless integrations — will be key for brands looking to scale efficiently.

Value-Added Service Gains Momentum

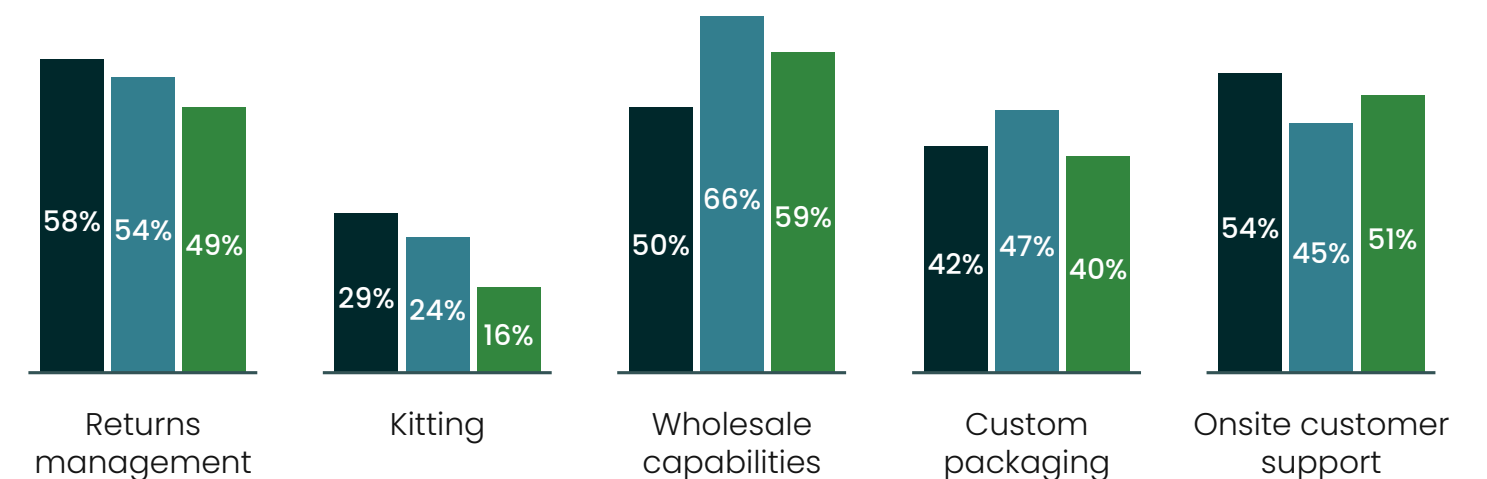
Brands increasingly need value-added services that go beyond standard eCommerce capabilities:

- Both mature and scaling brands view wholesale capabilities as one of the most appealing value-added services (59%).
- Value-added services gain momentum

Figure 7

What value-added services from a 3PL are most appealing?

Startup	(Rapid customer acquisition, basic logistics setup)
Scaling	(Priorities include process optimization, infrastructure growth)
Mature	(Priorities include retention, efficiency, sustainability)



As businesses expand, the lines between B2B (wholesale) and B2C (direct-to-consumer) fulfillment blur. Brands seeking to grow wholesale channels should look for 3PLs to handle bulk orders, manage varying retail compliance requirements, and streamline complex shipping workflows.



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– Orderful



Returns Management Is a Growing Pain for All Brands

52% of brands cite returns management as a top value-added service, and **34%** want their 3PLs to invest more in returns processing. Meanwhile, **27%** identify returns software as a critical technology, signalling the need for continuous innovation in reverse logistics.



High-quality returns management can be a competitive differentiator. By reducing processing time, increasing the percentage of returns going back to stock, and reducing fraud, brands can boost loyalty and cut losses on returned merchandise.



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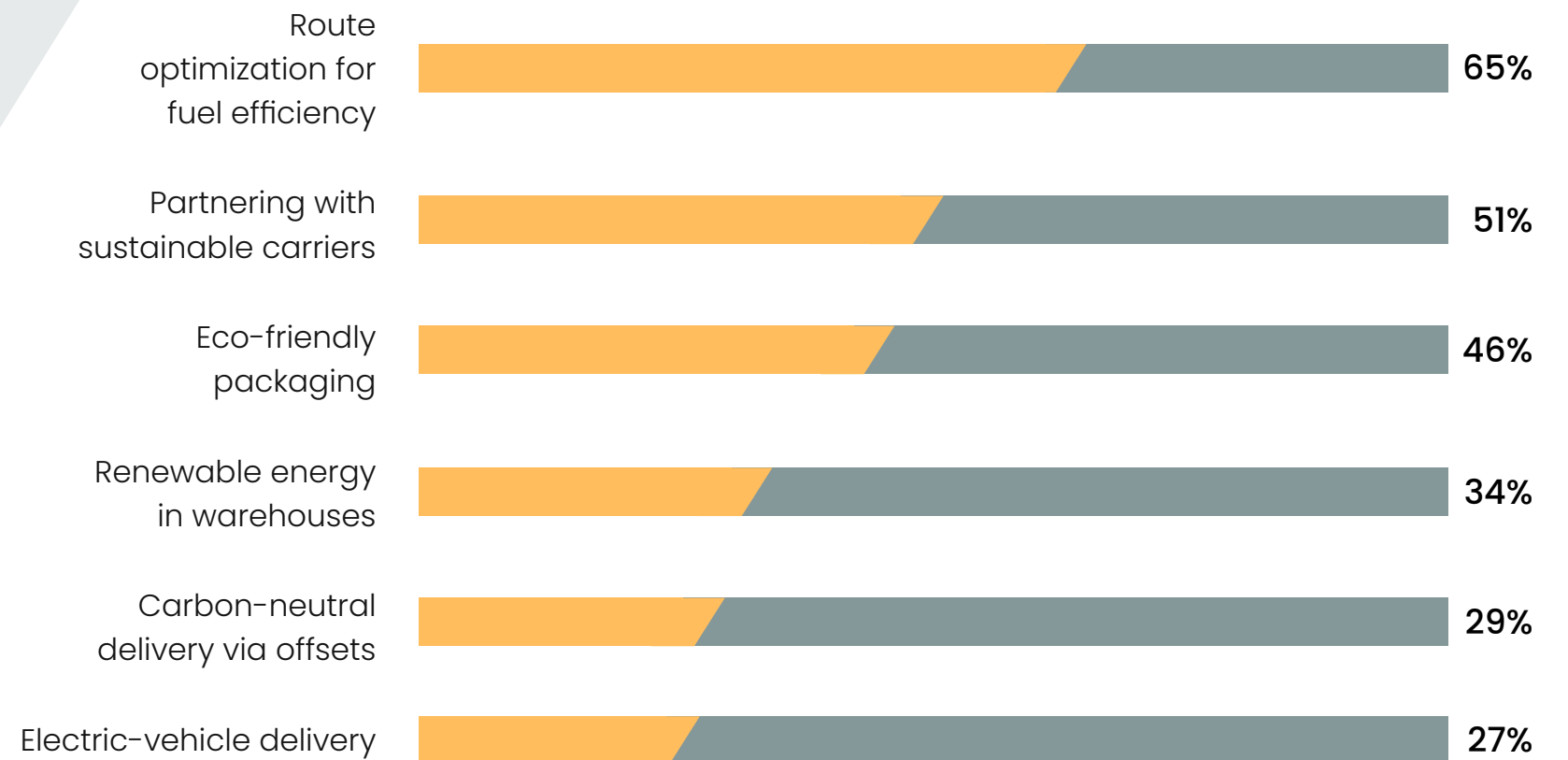


Sustainability Can Be a Competitive Differentiator

51% of respondents value partnering with **sustainable carriers**, and **65%** see route optimization for fuel efficiency as valuable to their organization. Many brands view sustainability as increasingly important, but they often struggle with where to start.

Figure 8

Which sustainability initiatives are most valuable to your organization? Select all that apply.



Brands aiming to reduce their environmental impact should partner with 3PLs and carriers that are committed to green initiatives, such as electric vehicle delivery options, carbon tracking, route optimization, or eco-friendly packaging. By doing so, brands can align logistics operations with customer values and meet corporate sustainability goals without compromising on fulfillment or delivery quality.

ACTION PLAN

Action Plan for Brands in 2025

To stay competitive, brands should consider:



Expanding Carrier Networks

- Partner with a 3PL that ships with multiple carriers, helping you reduce costs and improve delivery speeds.
- Diversify shipping to reduce risk, control costs, and maintain consistent service levels.



Investing in Real-time Shipping and Inventory Data

- Seek real-time shipping data to track costs and performance, and inventory tracking dashboards to help optimize inventory balancing and control.
- Focus on last-mile cost visibility, predictive analytics, and automated inventory insights.

Action Plan for Brands in 2025

To stay competitive, brands should consider:



Prioritizing Fulfillment Speed and Reliability

- Evaluate 3PL partners based on fulfillment turnaround times and proven carrier relationships for your product categories.
- Ensure the 3PL can consistently meet or exceed your delivery SLAs.



Optimizing Returns Management Processes

- Look for integrated returns software and flexible processes.
- Streamline reverse logistics to lower operational costs, increase revenue, improve shopper satisfaction, and reduce fraud.

Action Plan for Brands in 2025

To stay competitive, brands should consider:



Evaluating Wholesale Fulfillment Capabilities when Selecting a 3PL

- Identify 3PLs capable of managing both B2B and B2C shipments under one roof.
- Check for specialized workflows and technology that handle bulk orders and retail compliance requirements.



Embracing Sustainability

- Vet 3PLs and carriers for eco-friendly initiatives, including route optimization and eco-friendly delivery fleets.
- Showcase sustainability efforts to meet consumer expectations and strengthen brand reputation.

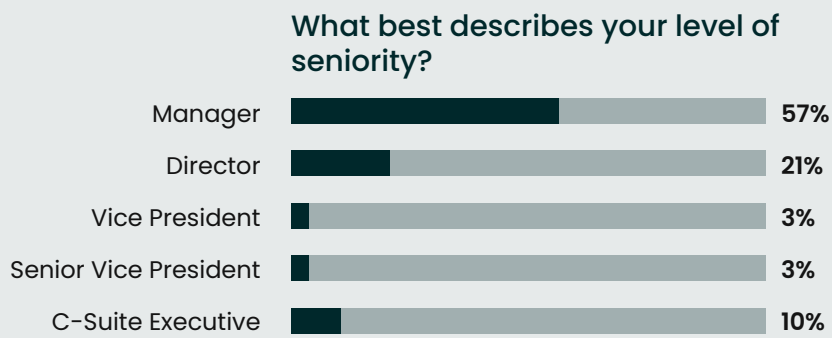
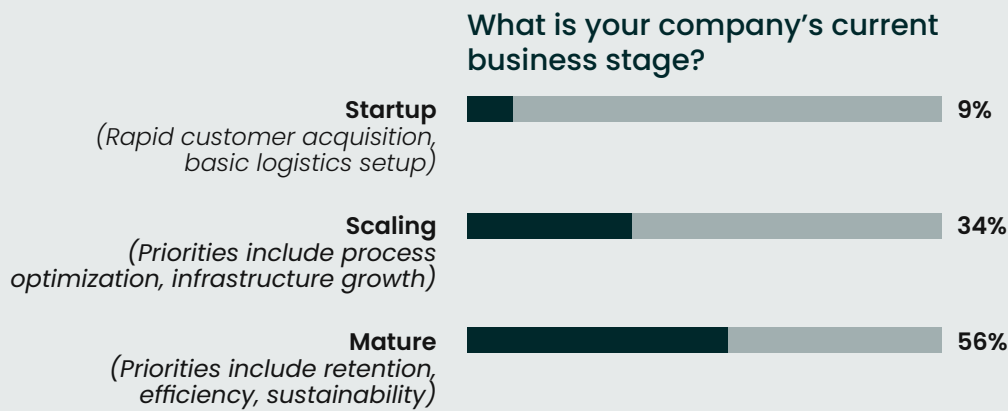
By focusing on carrier diversification, advanced data visibility technology, wholesale capabilities, returns management, and sustainability, brands can unlock new efficiencies, increase margins and deliver a superior shopper experience. Whether you're a startup facing gaps "blind spots" or a mature brand looking to expand wholesale channels, partnering with the right 3PL is key to thriving in the ever-evolving logistics landscape.

Methodology

This 2025 State of Supply Chain Logistics survey was administered online from X until Y. During this period, ABC responses were collected, and DEF were qualified and complete enough for inclusion in the analysis. Only valid or correlated findings are shared in this report.

The representativeness of this study’s results depends on the similarity of the sample to environments in which this survey data is used for comparison or guidance. Some figures are based on low sample sizes and should be used only for informational purposes.

Summarized here is the basic categorization data collected about respondents to enable filtering and analysis of the data:





About

Founded in 2017, GoBolt is building the largest sustainable supply chain network. GoBolt provides reliable warehousing, pick and pack, shipping, and last-mile delivery solutions.

With a growing network of warehouses across North America and a suite of proprietary apps designed and supported by an in-house engineering team, GoBolt unlocks enhanced transparency and control for merchants. GoBolt is proud to offer carbon-neutral deliveries by prioritizing delivery in an electric vehicle and sequestering equivalent carbon emissions when that is not possible.

[Learn More](#)



About

Demand Metric is a global research and advisory firm that helps organizations empower their people with the expertise, insights, and resources they need to unlock customer value and achieve sustainable growth.

Through strategic partnerships with the AMA, ANA, and AIPMM, Demand Metric's resources have become the industry standard for business professionals. Over the past 18 years, they have helped 6,000+ businesses worldwide rapidly build their in-house capabilities.

Enable your team with access to cutting-edge research, experienced experts, and the world's most trusted set of playbooks, tools, and templates.

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