Reclaimit®

STATE OF RETURNS

2025

Swedish consumers are returning too much- and not enough

Returns are e-commerce's great paradox.

On the one hand, nearly three out of ten consumers order items they already know they will return at the time of purchase – often several sizes or colors to try on at home. This behavior is made easier by free returns, but as volumes have grown, it has increasingly come under scrutiny. The criticism concerns both the environmental impact and the way costs eat into e-retailers' profitability.

On the other hand, three out of ten consumers refrain from returning clear mispurchases, often because the process feels too complicated. This is especially true for clothing and shoes, which are kept despite not really being wanted. The result is that many items end up unused in the wardrobe – or even thrown away.

Sending mispurchases back to the retailer instead, who can resell the product to someone else, would both extend the product's lifespan and give the retailer a chance to maintain the customer relationship – despite the mistake.

To reduce the number of returns – and what is known as return abuse – many e-retailers have introduced various restrictions. These may include return fees, limits on the number of returns per customer, or even banning customers with a high return rate.

In this report, we present for the first time how consumers are actually affected by return fees:
- One in three (34%) say the fees change their purchasing behavior – most common among women and younger consumers.
- A majority (56%) state that they shop and return just as before, despite the fees.
- Among those who are affected, six out of ten (62%) say they only buy items they are certain they will keep.
- Almost half (46%) avoid stores that charge for returns altogether.

The figures show that return fees reduce the number of returns for some, but far from all. At the same time, retailers risk losing customers when they introduce fees.

The bigger picture is a complex balancing act: we return too much, we return too little, and neither free returns nor fees provide a simple solution for everyone. I am convinced that the key lies in retailers gaining a deeper understanding of their own customers and offering tailored solutions.

With the fourth edition of State of Returns 2025, we have mapped consumer behaviors and attitudes towards returns – to give retailers the insights they need to face the future.
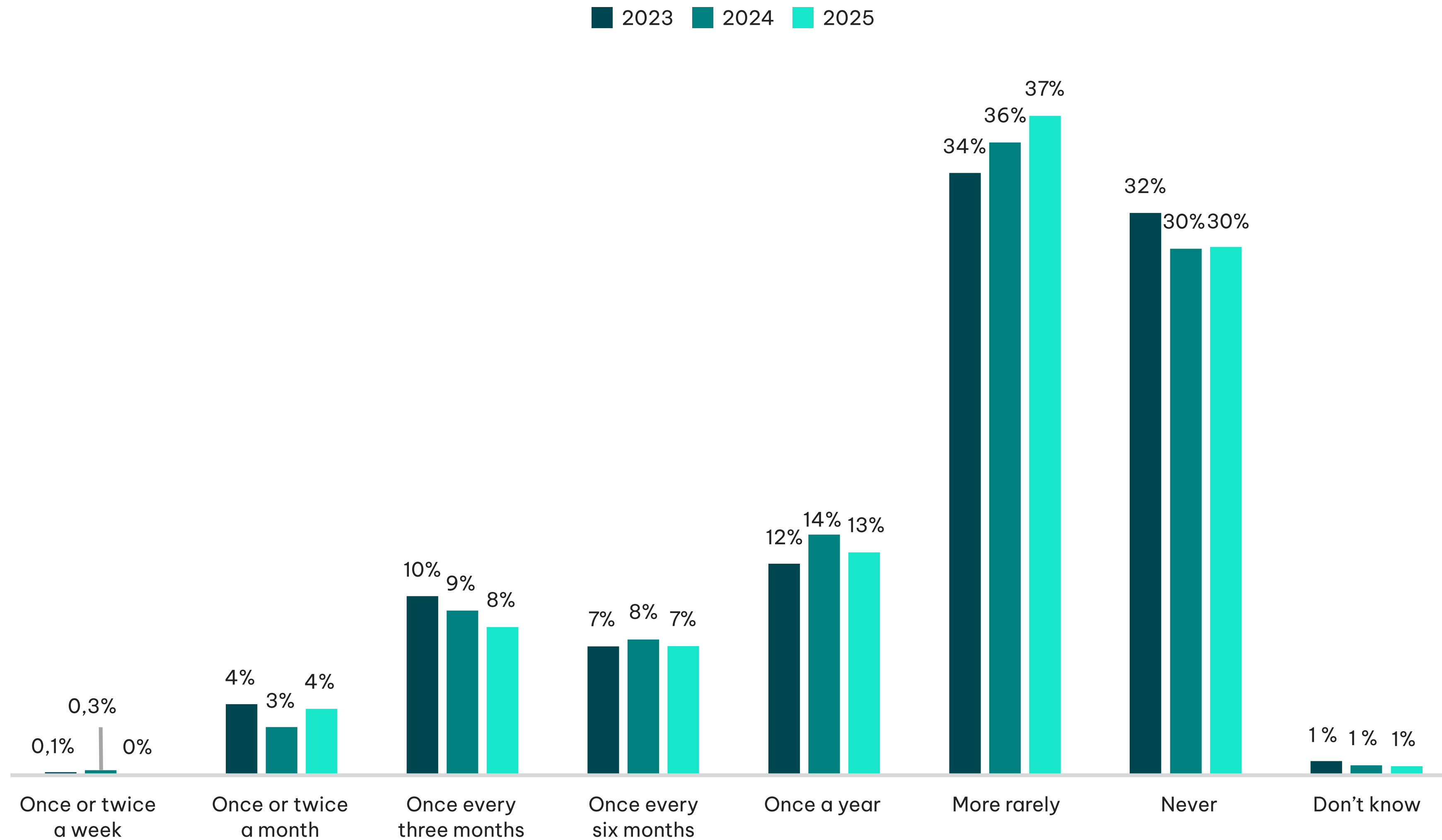
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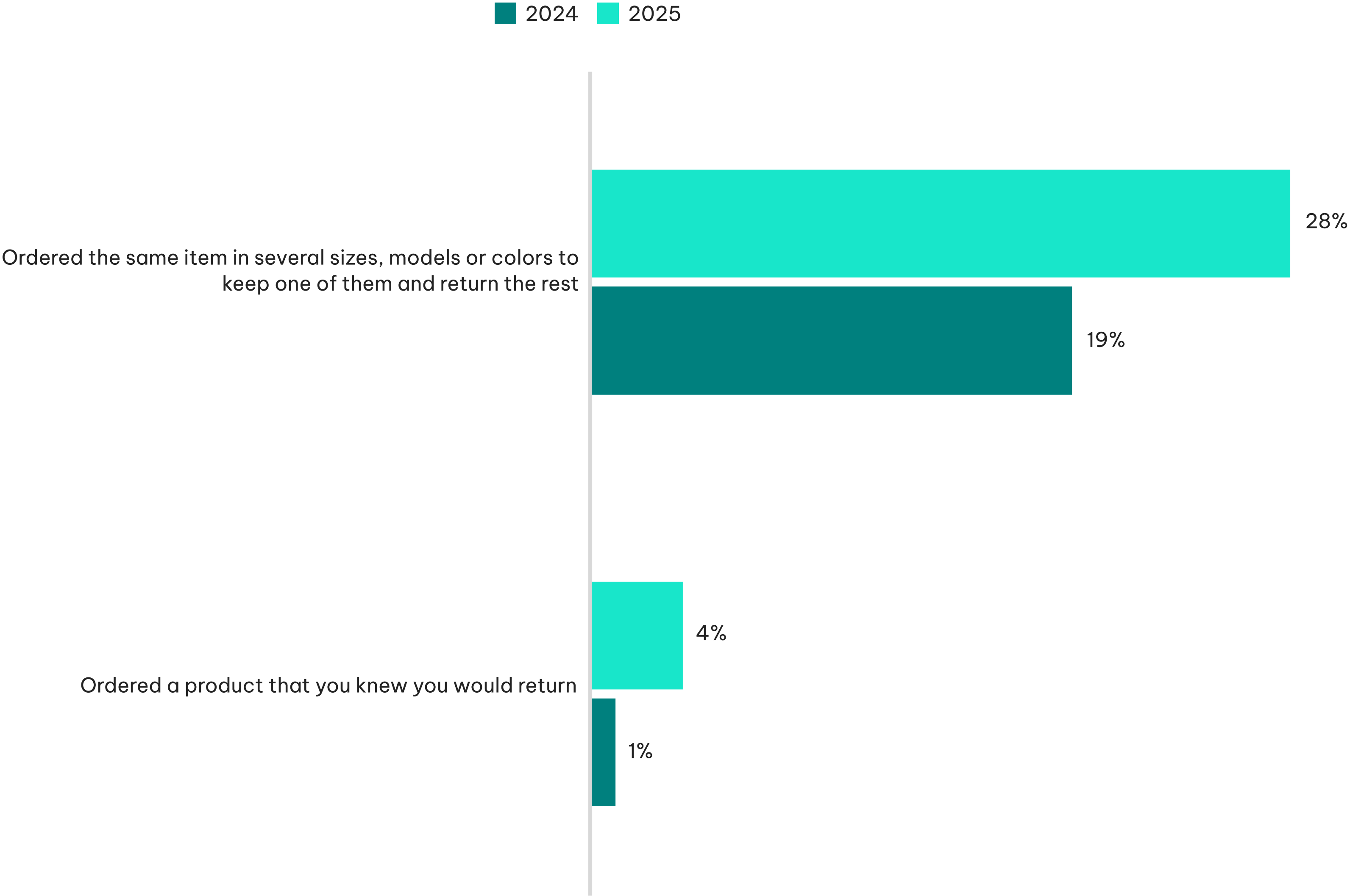
Wilhelm Hamilton
CEO, Reclaimit

Key take aways

- 28% of e-commerce customers order items they already know they will return – often several sizes, models, or colors to choose from at home. An additional 4% say they have ordered something they knew they would return for other reasons.

- 30% refrain from returning clear mispurchases, which means many items end up unused in the wardrobe.

- Despite more retailers introducing return fees, 56% of customers say they shop and return just as before.

- Three in ten (30%) e-commerce customers have at some point been dissatisfied with a return process, and when a customer is dissatisfied, a large majority (83%) never shop with that retailer again. In other words, a single mistake in handling returns is often enough to lose the customer.

- Frustration over complicated return processes is growing. It is now cited as the main reason for dissatisfaction by 40% of consumers – up from 28% last year.

- 43% of Swedish e-commerce customers say they choose local retailers over international players because of concerns about complicated returns. This gives Swedish e-retailers an advantage in the competition against international giants like Shein and Temu.

How often do you return products bought online?

	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once every three months	Once every six months	Once a year	More rarely	Never	Don't know
2023	0,1%	4%	10%	7%	12%	34%	32%	1 %
2024	0,3%	3%	9%	8%	14%	36%	30%	1 %
2025	0%	4%	8%	7%	13%	37%	30%	1%

Have you done any of the following?

■ 2024   ■ 2025

Ordered the same item in several sizes, models or colors to keep one of them and return the rest
- 28%
- 19%

Ordered a product that you knew you would return
- 4%
- 1%

Ordered a product that you knew you would return

Legend:
- Ordered the same item in several sizes, models or colors to keep one of them and return the rest
- Ordered a product that you knew you would return

Category	Ordered the same item in several sizes, models or colors	Ordered a product that you knew you would return
All	28%	4%
Men	20%	3%
Women	34%	4%
18-34	31%	4%
35-49	37%	6%
50-64	19%	2%
65-84	7%	0%

"My time is worth more than a complicated return"

Lotta, 56, Malmö, shops online two to three times a month, mostly for gadgets such as mobile accessories. Clothes are rare, and she never orders multiple sizes to return what doesn't fit.

She finds returns complicated, regardless if it's within Sweden or abroad. *"The process is the same anyway"*, Lotta says.

"I've gotten used to free returns when shopping online, so if it costs, I get annoyed. But I never check whether returns cost anything before I order."
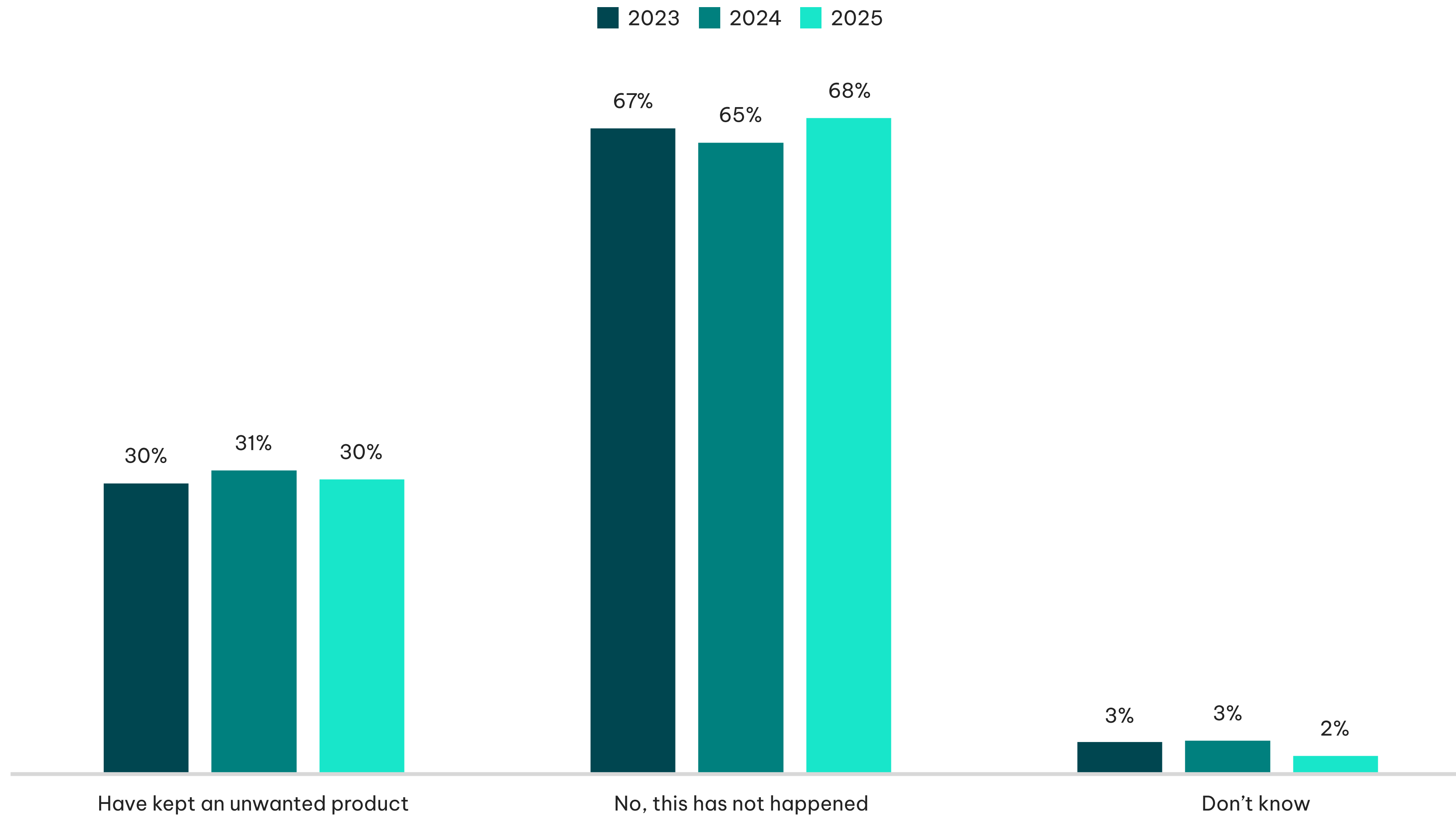
Purchases under 500 SEK that Lotta is not satisfied with, goes straight to second-hand. More expensive items she might consider sending back, but often she doesn't bother with them either.

"If I have to find a box, print a label, and drop it off... then no, my time is worth more." For Lotta, a smooth return means the packaging is reusable and a pre-printed return label is included.
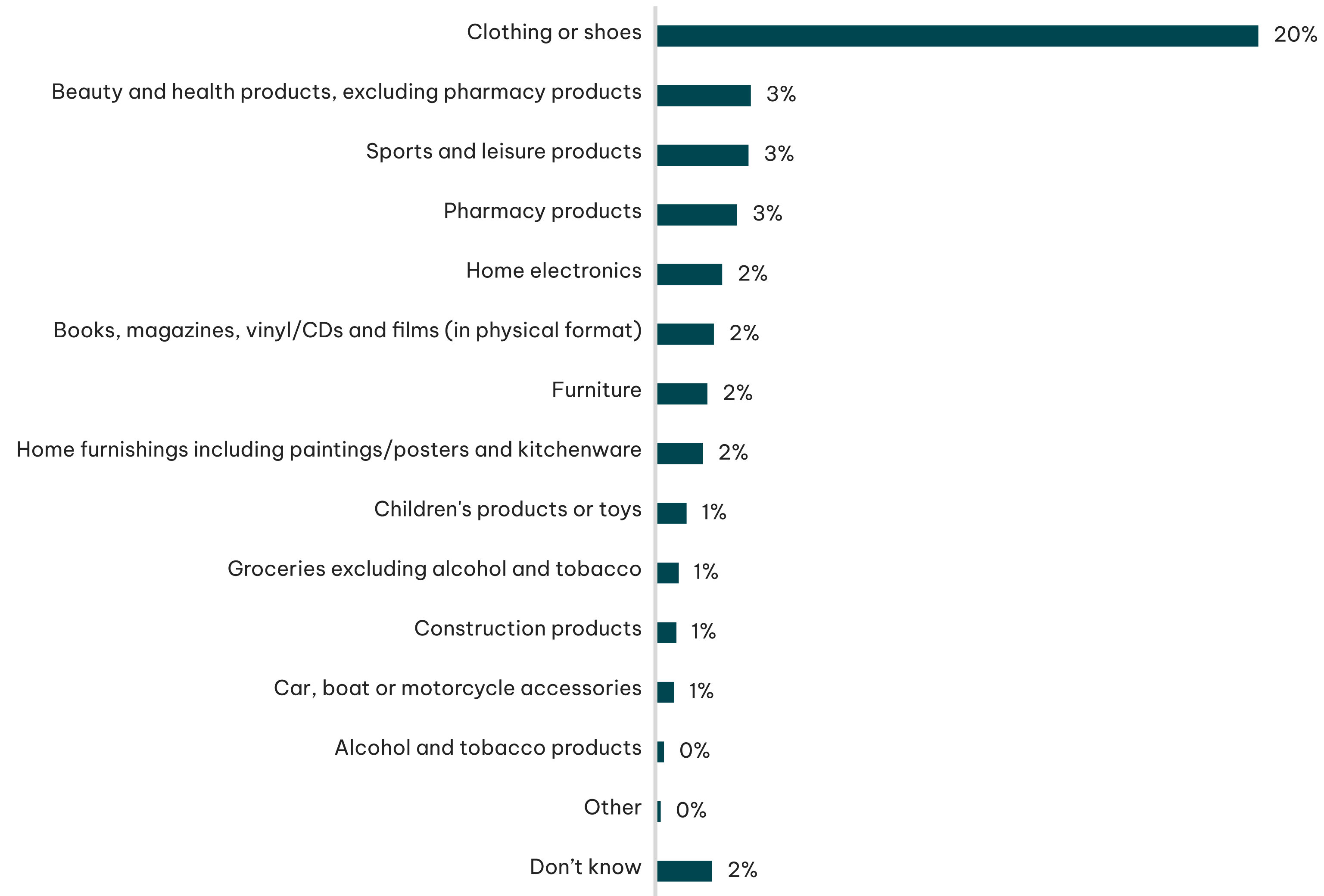
What makes her avoid an online store entirely is poor service.

"If customer service is difficult to deal with, I won't use the online shop again. I expect the same level of service online as in a physical store."

Have you kept a product that you wanted to return?

Legend: 2023 | 2024 | 2025

Have kept an unwanted product
- 2023: 30%
- 2024: 31%
- 2025: 30%

No, this has not happened
- 2023: 67%
- 2024: 65%
- 2025: 68%

Don't know
- 2023: 3%
- 2024: 3%
- 2025: 2%

What kind of products have you kept even though you wanted to return them?

Category	Percentage
Clothing or shoes	20%
Beauty and health products, excluding pharmacy products	3%
Sports and leisure products	3%
Pharmacy products	3%
Home electronics	2%
Books, magazines, vinyl/CDs and films (in physical format)	2%
Furniture	2%
Home furnishings including paintings/posters and kitchenware	2%
Children's products or toys	1%
Groceries excluding alcohol and tobacco	1%
Construction products	1%
Car, boat or motorcycle accessories	1%
Alcohol and tobacco products	0%
Other	0%
Don't know	2%

"A return depends on return cost versus item price"

Johan, 38, from Piteå, shops online at least once a week. Most often he buys health products, clothes, or electronics.

When buying clothes for his daughter, he sometimes orders several sizes and returns what doesn't fit, but only when it's a more expensive purchase. Cheaper items he usually resells or gives away.

"I often buy things for my computer. I've made some bad purchases, sometimes due to my own mistakes and sometimes because of poor information on the site."

Return fees don't discourage him before making a purchase.

"If I decide to return something, it depends on both the return cost and the item's price. But I don't check the return process or return costs in advance," he says.
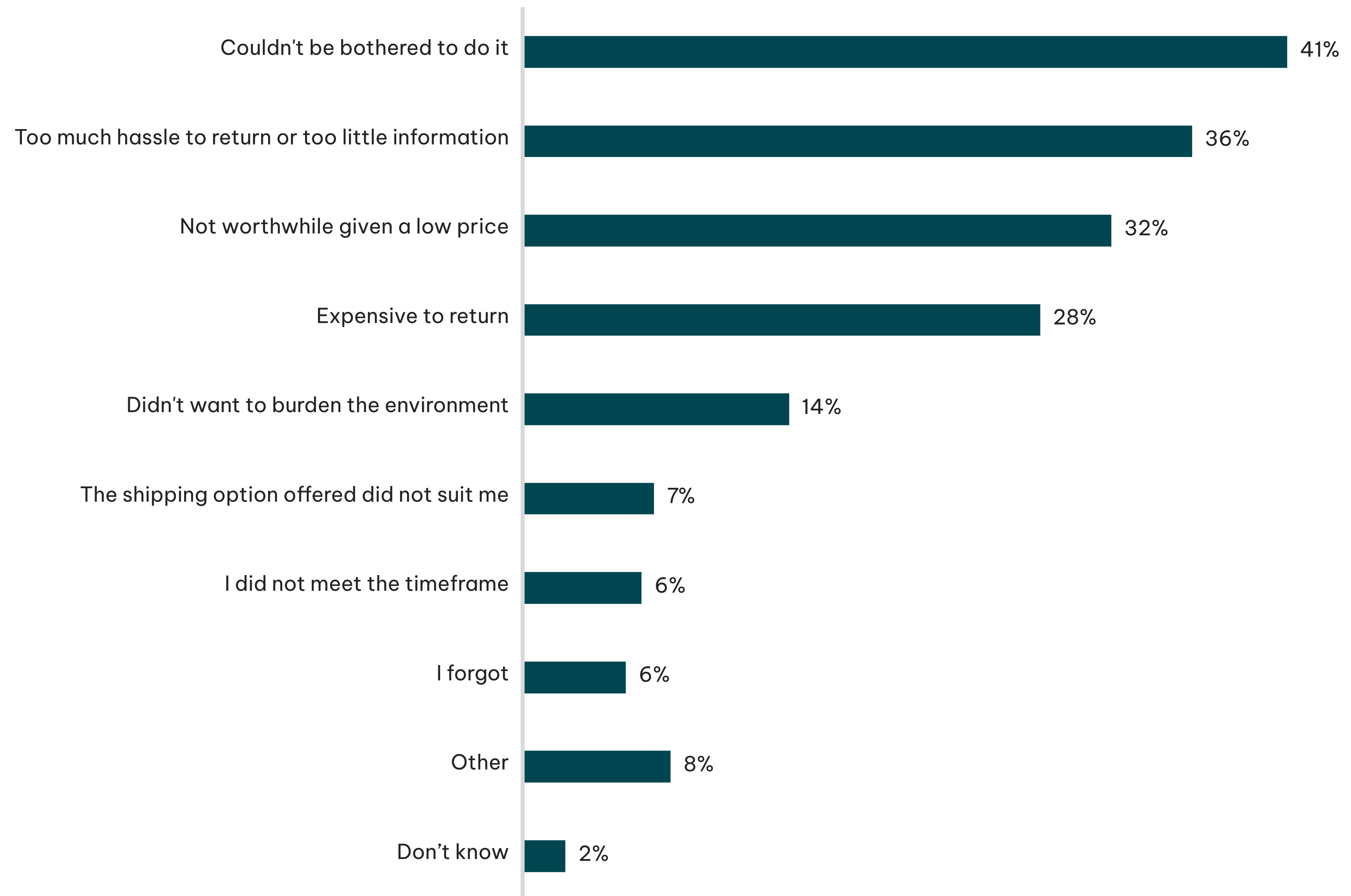
What could make him stop buying from an online store is complicated returns.
"One time I got very poor information about the return, even after contacting customer service several times. I won't shop there again,"
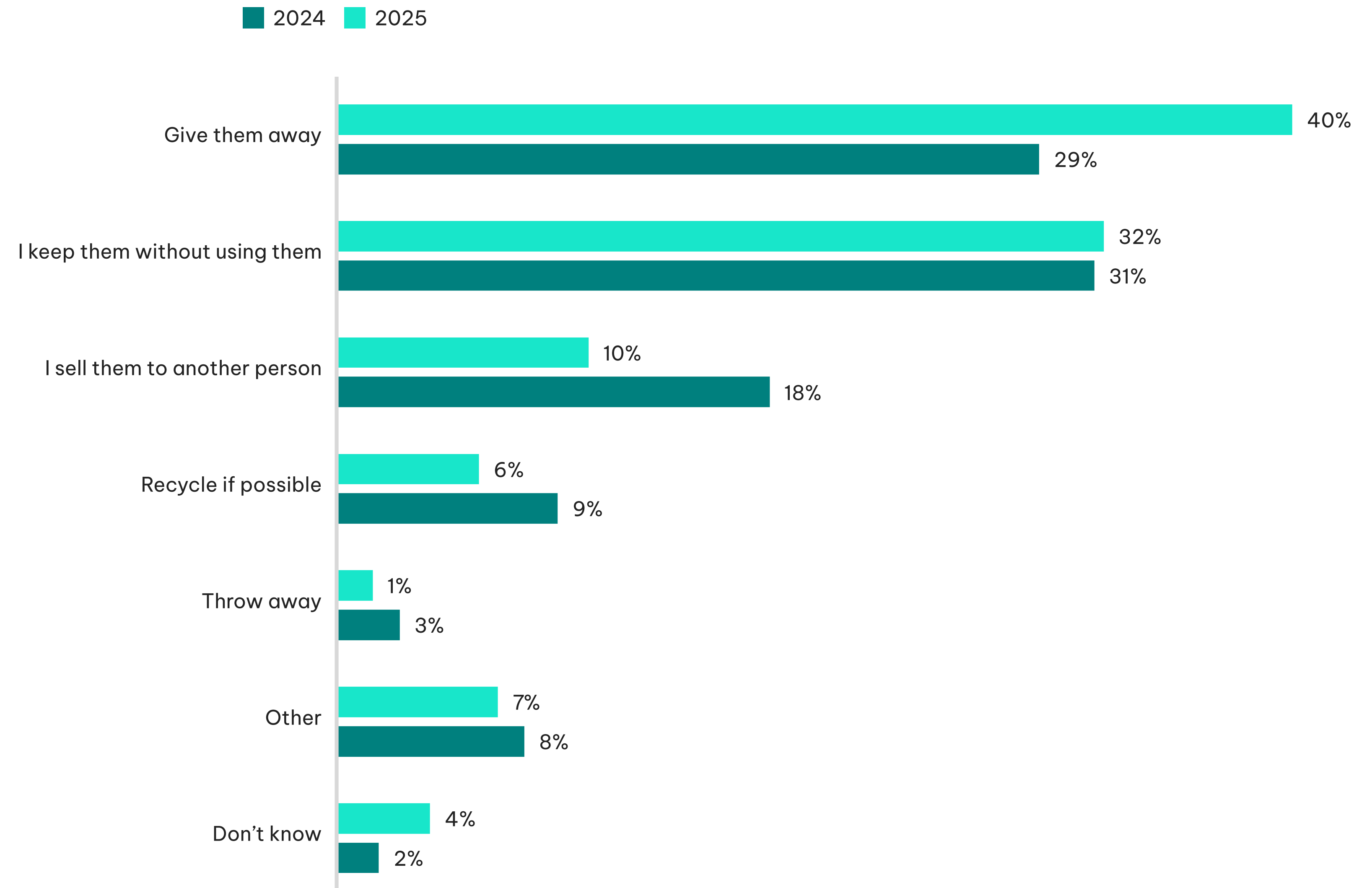
At the same time, he thinks the responsibility for returns can be shared:
"I can sort out packaging and print the shipping label myself once I've decided to make a return. It doesn't all have to fall on the company to enable easy returns."
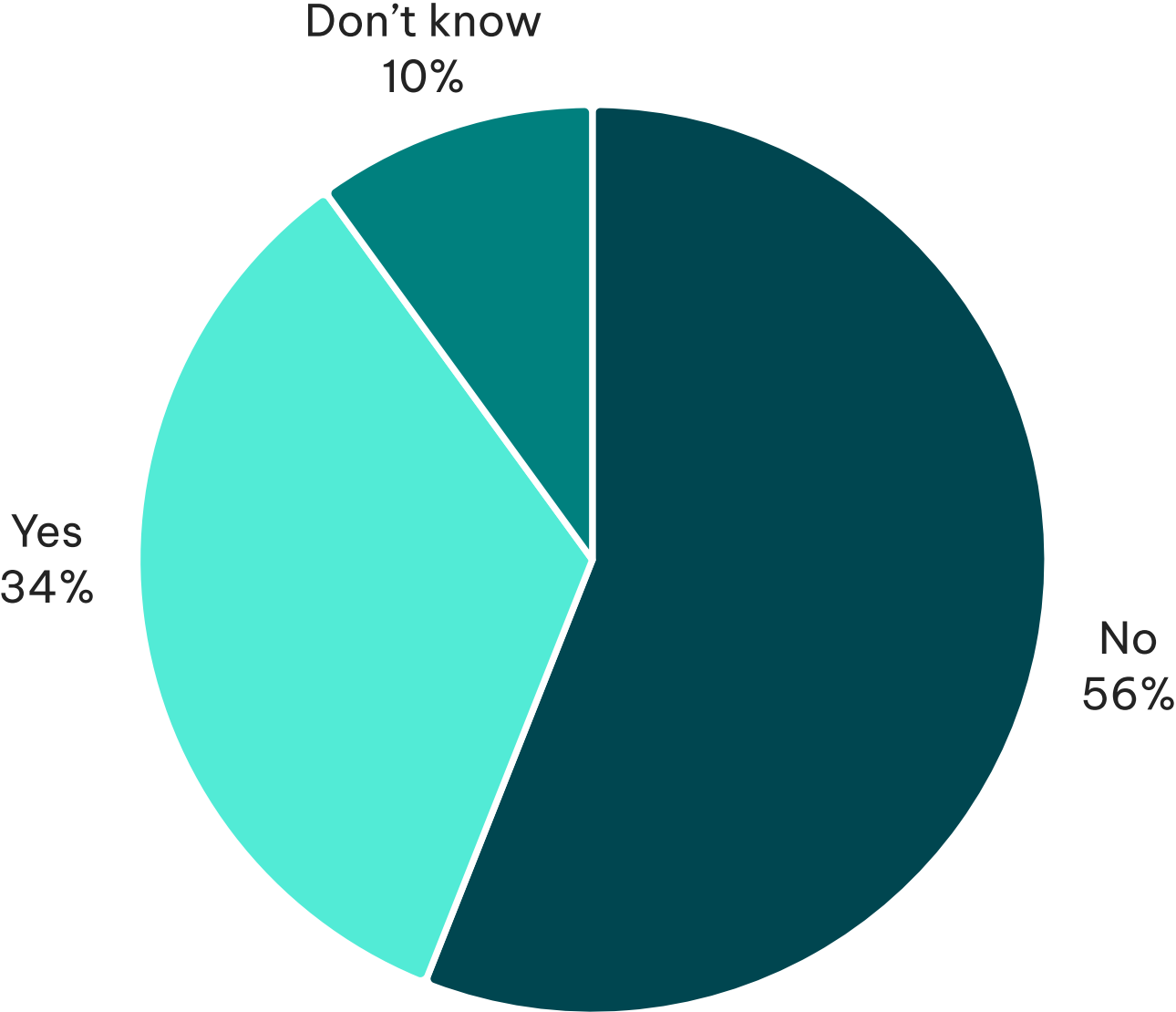
What are the most common reasons for not returning products you did not want to keep?

Reason	Percentage
Couldn't be bothered to do it	41%
Too much hassle to return or too little information	36%
Not worthwhile given a low price	32%
Expensive to return	28%
Didn't want to burden the environment	14%
The shipping option offered did not suit me	7%
I did not meet the timeframe	6%
I forgot	6%
Other	8%
Don't know	2%

What do you do with goods you don't return but don't want?

■ 2024 ■ 2025

Give them away
- 2025: 40%
- 2024: 29%

I keep them without using them
- 2025: 32%
- 2024: 31%

I sell them to another person
- 2025: 10%
- 2024: 18%

Recycle if possible
- 2025: 6%
- 2024: 9%

Throw away
- 2025: 1%
- 2024: 3%

Other
- 2025: 7%
- 2024: 8%

Don't know
- 2025: 4%
- 2024: 2%

Does the cost of a return affect your purchasing behavior?

Don't know
10%

Yes
34%

No
56%

How has the cost of a return affected your purchasing behavior?

I only buy what I'm really sure I want to keep	62%
I plan my purchases more carefully to avoid unnecessary costs	49%
I avoid shopping from online retailers that charge return fees altogether.	46%
I carefully compare prices and terms across different online retailers.	36%
Other- which?	4%
Don't know	1%
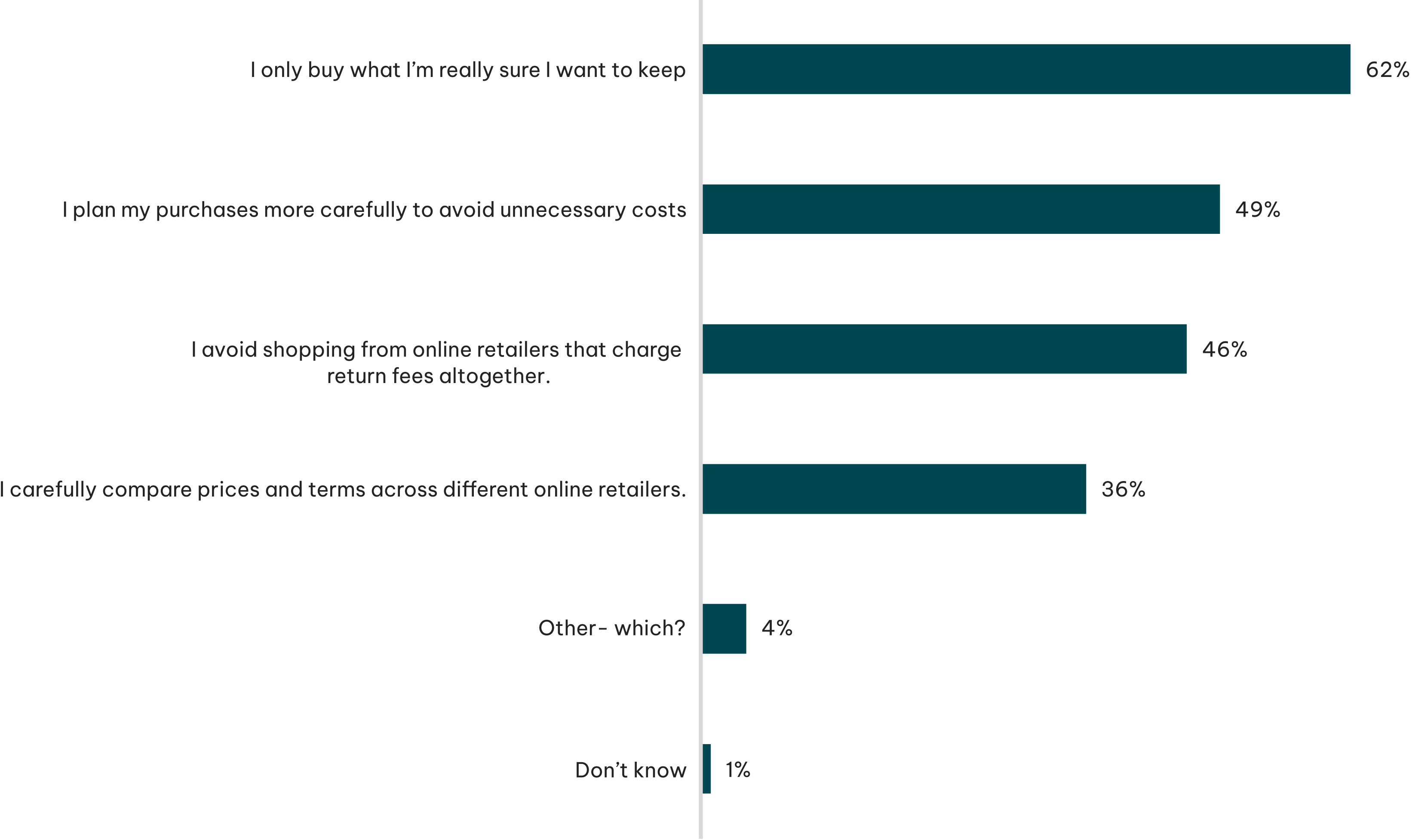
Are return fees worth the cost?

That more retailers are introducing return fees but still seeing limited impact on customer behavior shows that fees do not necessarily reduce returns – but they do risk damaging the brand. Only a third of customers are affected, but among women and younger consumers (18–34), sensitivity is significantly higher. Here, the risks of losing loyalty are clear, as nearly half avoid retailers with fees altogether.

For brands, this creates a delicate balancing act: return fees may reduce costs in the short term, but at the same time risk driving away key customer groups.

Our advice: take a differentiated approach.

Segment return fees For example, offer free returns to loyal customers or premium members.

Influence purchasing behavior through better product information, size guides, and visualization tools that help reduce mispurchases.

Communicate the value of returns as part of your sustainability strategy, so that fees feel justified rather than punitive.

By taking this approach, a brand can both reduce return volumes and maintain the trust of its most valuable customers.

Have you ever avoided to buy again from an e-commerce company because you were dissatisfied with the return process?

2024 **2025**

	Yes	No	Don't know
2024	74%	19%	7%
2025	83%	13%	4%
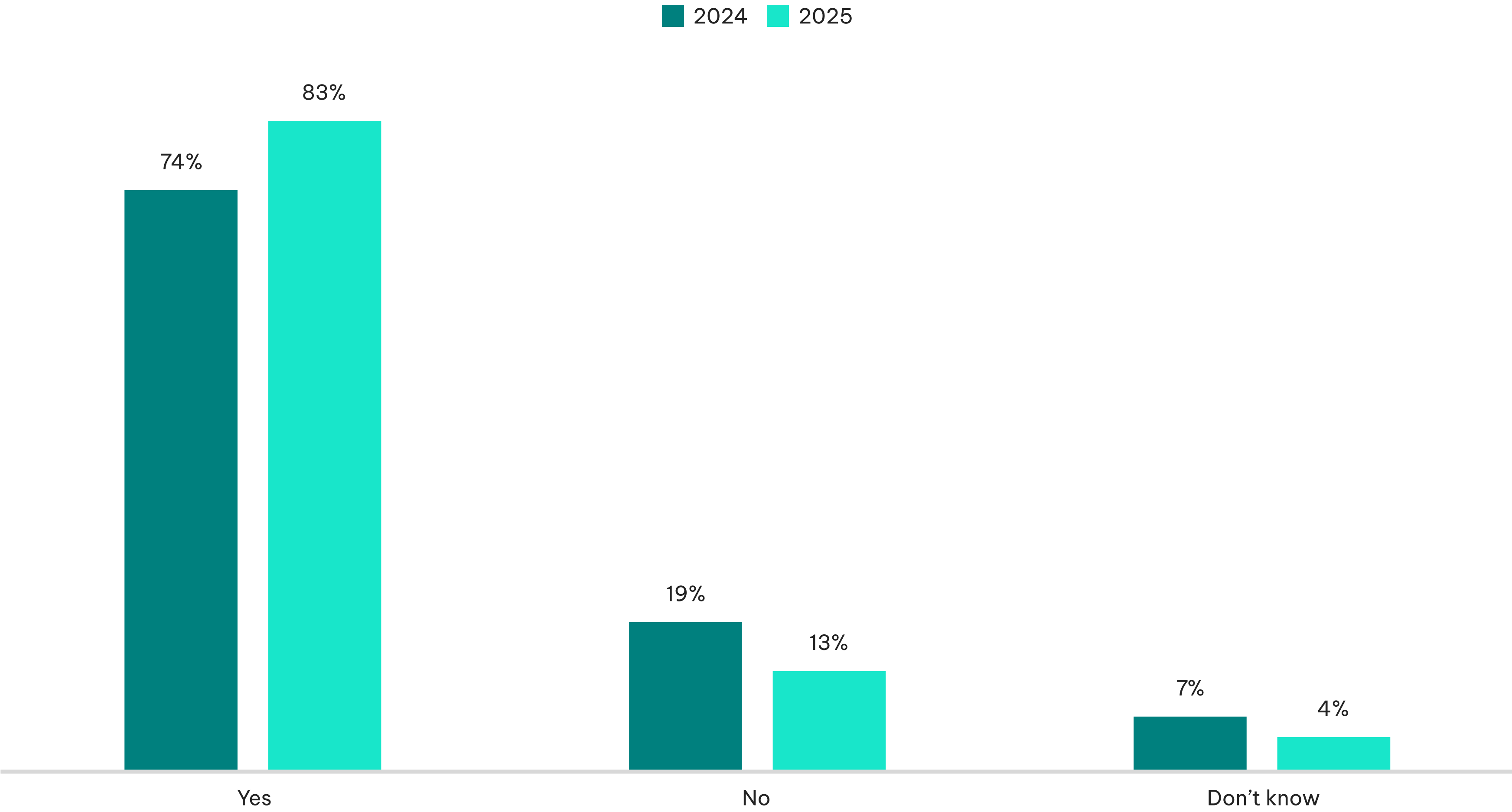
Chosen local online retailers over international ones due to concerns about complicated return processes and/or claims.
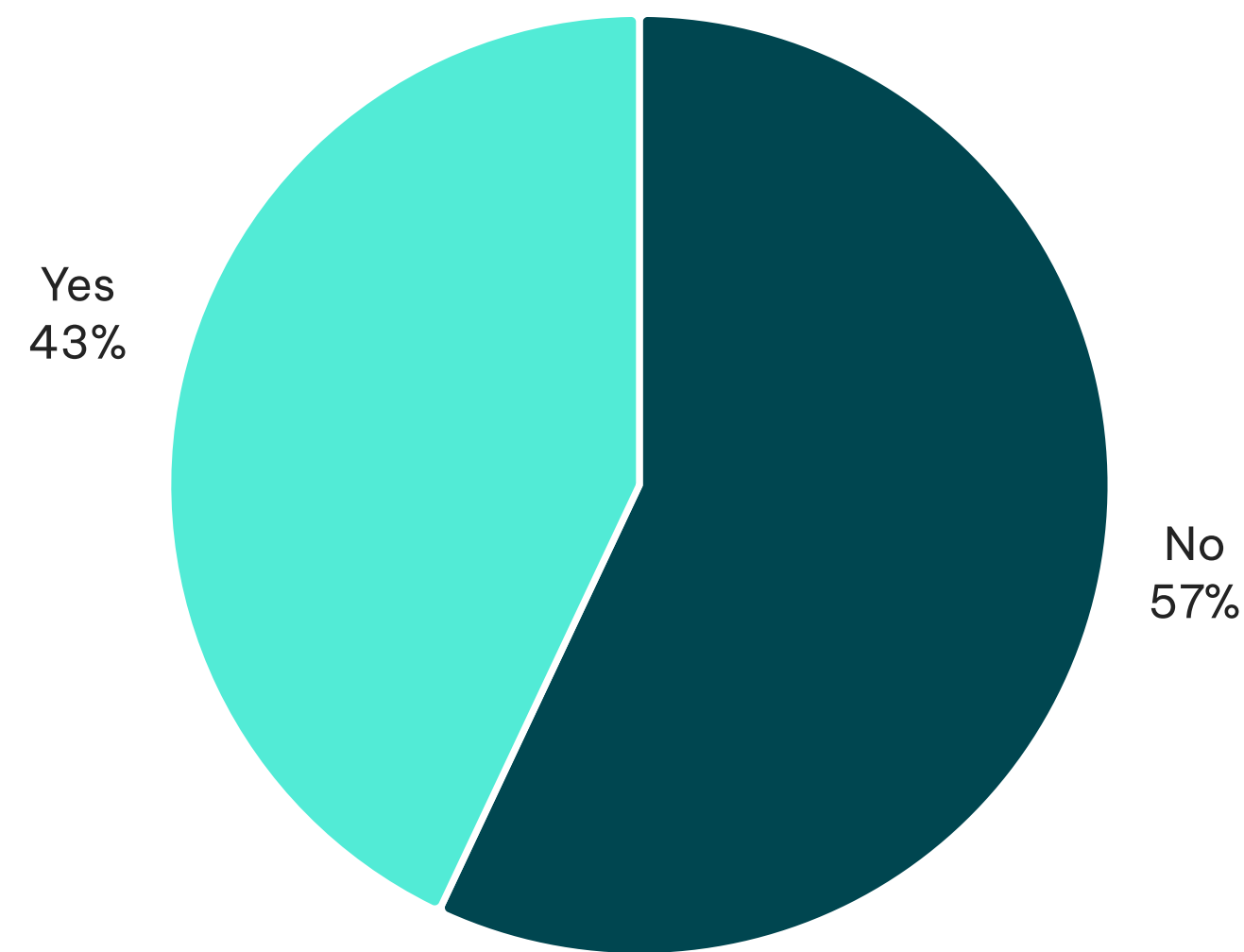
A complicated return process damage the brand

83% of e-commerce customers who have been dissatisfied with a return avoid shopping from the same online store again, up from 74% last year. At the same time, frustration with complicated return processes is growing, now cited as the main cause of dissatisfaction by 40% of customers, up from 28% last year.

This highlights that the return experience is crucial for a brand's long-term relationship with its customers. When 83% of dissatisfied customers completely avoid the retailer, the risk of loyalty loss is acute. Returns should therefore be considered a core component of the customer journey, not a logistical afterthought.

To strengthen the brand, we recommend three focus areas:

Simplify the return flow.
Invest in digital solutions that make it easy to register returns, print or receive a digital return label, and track the return status. Transparency and clarity reduce frustration.
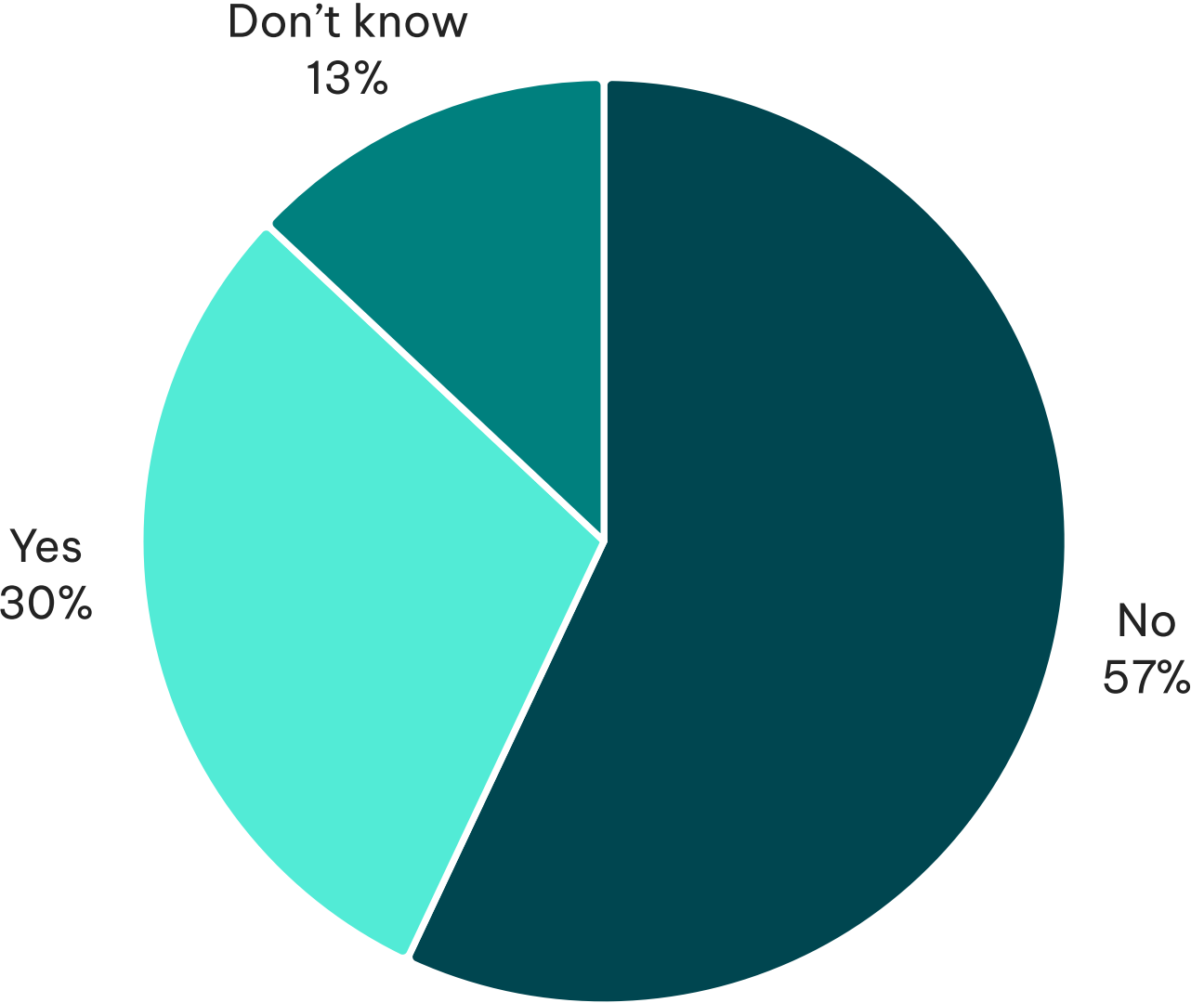
Differentiate through service.
Offer free or low-cost returns, fast refunds, and proactive customer communication. Exceeding expectations in a critical situation builds trust and strengthens brand loyalty.

Position simplicity as a USP.
Use a smooth return policy as a clear competitive advantage in your communication, especially against international competitors where customers worry about complicated processes. This can attract new customers and retain existing ones.

By viewing returns management as an opportunity to create value—rather than as a cost—the brand can establish a differentiated position in a market where customer patience is rapidly declining.

Have you ever been dissatisfied with a return process?

Don't know
13%

Yes
30%

No
57%

What is the most common reason why you were dissatisfied with the return process?

■ 2023　■ 2024　■ 2025

Uncomfortable/inconvenient/difficult
- 40%
- 28%
- 21%

Expensive/had to pay for the return
- 23%
- 24%
- 21%

Problems with customer support
- 17%
- 13%
- 10%

Long return process
- 10%
- 7%
- 13%

Return label missing or hard to find
- 7%
- 7 %
- 10%

Long time before receiving the refund
- 4%
- 6%
- 10%

Other
- 8%
- 19%
- 15%

Don't know
- 16%
- 11%
- 12%
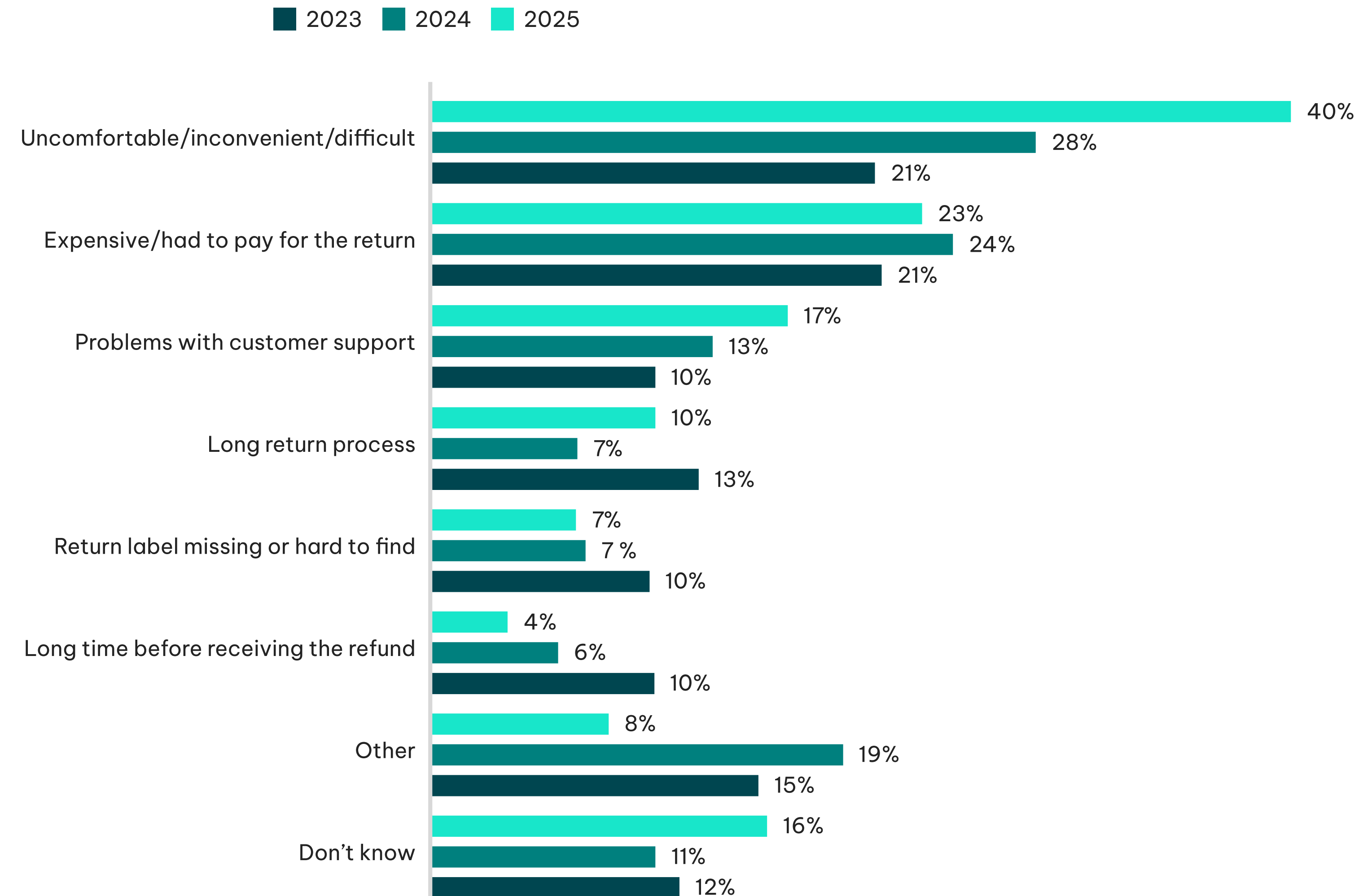
Have you ever avoided shopping online due to the risk of having to make a return?

■ 2023 ■ 2024 ■ 2025

Yes
- 54%
- 56%
- 60%

No
- 42%
- 39%
- 37%

Don't know
- 5%
- 4%
- 4%
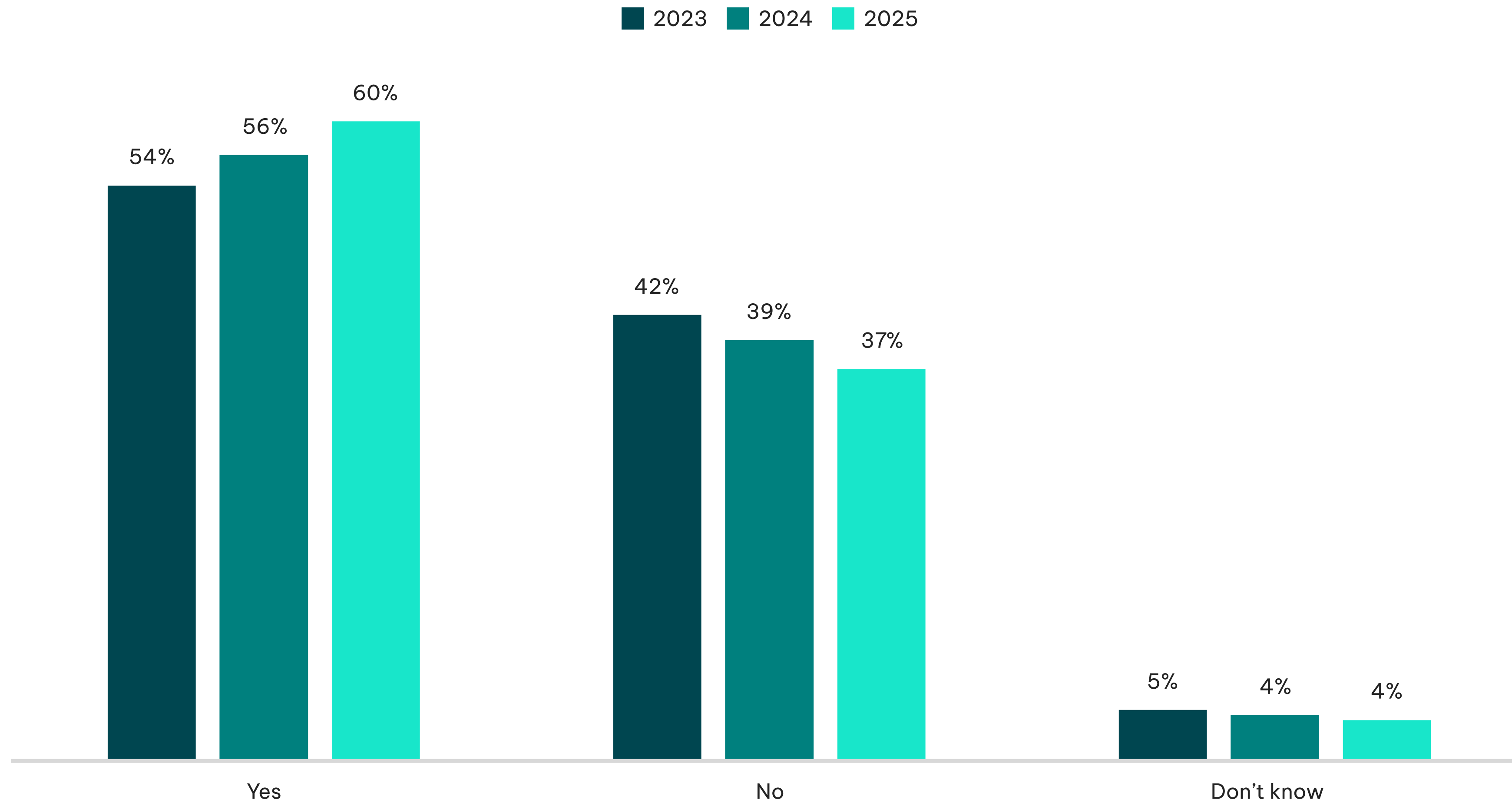
How often do you shop online?

	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Once every three months	Once every six months	Once a year	More rarely	Never	Don't know
2023	6%	44%	26%	10%	7%	4%	3%	0,2%
2024	5%	47%	26%	10%	7%	3 %	2 %	0%
2025	5%	46%	28%	7%	8%	6%	0%	1%
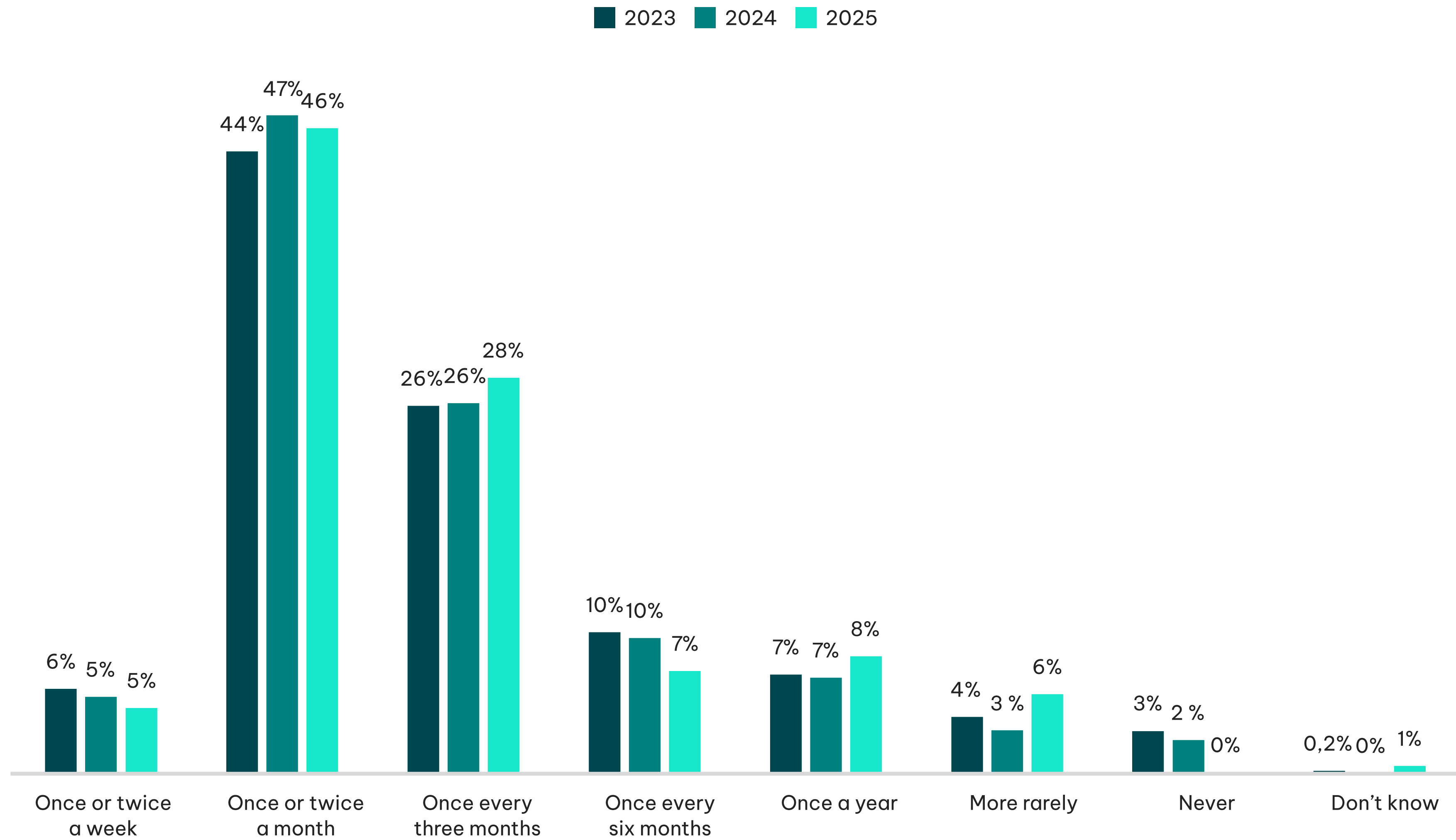
What types of products have you bought online in the last year?

■ 2024 ■ 2025

Pharmacy products
- 64%
- 61 %

Clothing or shoes
- 58%
- 67 %

Home electronics
- 31%
- 37 %

Books, magazines, vinyl/CDs and films (in physical format)
- 30%
- 32 %

Beauty and health products, excluding pharmacy products
- 30%
- 37 %

Sports and leisure products
- 27%
- 29 %

Home furnishings including paintings/posters and kitchenware
- 20%
- 28 %

Groceries excluding alcohol and tobacco
- 15%
- 17 %

Alcohol and tobacco products
- 12%
- 14 %

Children's products or toys
- 12%
- 20 %

Car, boat or motorcycle accessories
- 11%
- 11 %

Furniture
- 9%
- 11 %

Construction products
- 8%
- 8 %

Other
- 7%
- 5 %

About Reclaimit

Reclaimit is a well-established SaaS company with a market-leading return and warranty management position in the Nordic region.

We empower over 600 industry-leadingretailers and suppliers with a unique all-in-one post-purchase customer experience platform, elevating the customer journey at scale.

By transforming challenges into opportunities, we help retailers maximize profits, increase customer loyalty, and minimize carbon footprint through circular shopping and sustainable returns.

We go the extra mile to understand your unique needs, delivering solutions that guarantee success in a competitive market.

Facts about the report

The report is based on a survey conducted by Novus on behalf of Reclaimit. The same survey was conducted in 2022 and 2024, but some new questions have been added.

The survey was carried out via web interviews with Novus' randomly recruited Sweden panel, which ensures representative results. This means that the findings are generalizable to the target population.

- Number of completed interviews: 1,004
- Survey period: April 22, 2025 – April 29, 2025
- Target group: General public who shop online, aged 18–84
- Margin of error for 1,000 interviews: For a 20/80 outcome: ±2.5%, for a 50/50 outcome: ±3.1%

Reclaimit®

Transforming returns into revenue