



Market Report

A Snapshot of your Marketing Sector

Courier

This pack has been designed to provide information on setting up a business in the **Courier** industry in Scotland, as well as helping to inform the market research section of your business plan. You can find more information on how to write a business plan from the Business Gateway website (www.bgateway.com/businessplan), including an interactive template and tips to get you started.

This market report was updated by Business Gateway in **April 2025**.

What do I need to know about the Courier market?

The following summary statistics have been taken from market research reports and reliable resources that the Information Service uses to compile industry information. They should give you an indication of how your industry is faring at present and whether there is demand for your type of business:

- ◆ Mintel estimates that the value of online retail orders collected in 2023 was £22.6 billion, up 5.1 years-on-year, accounting for 18.4% of all online retail sales. This is aligned to the penetration seen in 2022 (18.2%), and up nearly five percentage points from 2021 (13.5%). Excluded within these estimates is reserve and collect, which 38% of in-store shoppers have used to ensure the product they wanted is available when visiting stores. (Mintel, *Online Retailing: Delivery, Collection and Returns UK*, October 2024).
- ◆ The UK courier and express delivery market has returned to growth in 2024, though it remains below the peak levels seen during the pandemic. This market is on a gradual upward trajectory, with an estimated growth of 8.4% between 2024 and 2029. The cost of living crisis has shaped consumer behaviour, driving demand for lower-priced delivery options, yet the market shows resilience as inflation eases. (Mintel, *Courier & Express Delivery UK*, September 2024).
- ◆ Industry revenue is projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 2.6% over the five years through 2029-30 to £18.5 billion. Couriers will face numerous challenges, including labour shortages as migration falls and intensifying competition. Nonetheless, opportunities for growth remain. Delivering for e-commerce companies will remain in high demand, offering the biggest growth potential as consumers continue to shift purchases online. (IBISWorld, *Courier Activities in the UK*, November 2024).
- ◆ Companies have increasingly innovated to reduce costs and improve efficiency - like Evri's introduction of electric vehicles, sustainable practices and automated distribution hubs. Despite inflationary pressures keeping operational costs high, businesses have successfully managed to streamline operations using parcel shops and locker services to stay competitive. As demand for rapid delivery grows, the industry's alignment with e-commerce has bolstered courier volumes, sharpening its competitive edge in a saturated market. Revenue is forecast to inch upwards by 2.6% in 2024-25 as online shopping activity remains high. (IBISWorld, *Postal & Courier Activities in the UK*, April 2025).
- ◆ The national organisation for this industry is [The National Courier & Despatch Association](#). Other industry bodies include the [Freight Transport Association](#), the [European Express Association](#) and the [British International Freight Association](#).



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Where can I find more information on my market?

The Information Service has access to a number of databases which can offer more detail on this industry. Some of these reports are listed below - if you would like to be sent extracts from any of these reports, please contact us on **0300 013 4753** or email info@bgateway.com.

- ◆ **Mintel – Courier & Express Delivery UK (June 2024).** The use of courier and delivery services increases with age, with Generation X and Baby Boomers showing the highest usage rates. This trend indicates that older consumers rely more on delivery services for convenience, possibly due to greater household demands or a preference for avoiding in-store shopping. In contrast, Generation Z shows the lowest usage of these services, likely reflecting a preference for alternative shopping methods or different consumption habits compared to older generations.
- ◆ **IBISWorld – Courier Activities in the UK (November 2024).** The pandemic brought about a surge in sales from retailers. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that online retail sales reached a record high of 37.8% (£2.5 billion) in January 2021. This has since dropped to 26.8% (£2.3 billion) in September 2024 but remains substantially higher than the pre-COVID-19 level of 19.1% (£1.3 billion) in February 2020.
- ◆ **IBISWorld – E-Commerce & Online Auctions (April 2025).** Over the five years through 2029-30, e-commerce revenue is expected to climb at a compound annual rate of 4.2% to reach £70.3 billion. The rapid growth of m-commerce is set to continue, driven by increasing smartphone use and better internet access, especially as the UK government has recently committed another £500 million into improving broadband speed and 5G network coverage through Project Gigabit.

There are also a number of online resources you may find helpful:

- ◆ [Annual monitoring report on the postal market 2023-2024](#), **Ofcom**. The postal market in the UK is monitored by Ofcom and then they publish financial year reports.
- ◆ **Delivery Law UK** - information for consumers, businesses and practitioners on their rights and obligations in relation to parcel delivery. (www.deliverylaw.uk)
- ◆ **Courier News** – (www.couriernews.co.uk) online industry magazine with daily news updates and market trend features.
- ◆ **Post & Parcel** – an industry website containing comprehensive current surveys and research for purchase, as well as a free online magazine featuring post and parcel insights. (www.postandparcel.info)

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How can I find out about my competitors?

Business Gateway's online guide to [Competitor Analysis](#) explains how to find your competitors, how to research what they're doing and how to act on what you learn about them.

Immediate competition will be from other businesses in your local area. There are several online directories which can be used to find company information and generate lists easily and at no expense. Many Local Authorities also publish local business directories on the web. Below are some key web resources:

- ◆ General business directories such as [Yell](#), [Thomson Local](#) or [Google Maps](#)
- ◆ Trade specialists like [EuroPages](#) (European directory), [The Wholesaler](#) or [Free Index](#)
- ◆ Business to business (B2B) specialists such as [Kompass](#)

Likewise, your local Chamber of Commerce may publish a members' directory; find your local Chamber on the [Scottish Chambers](#) website.

Once you've identified who your competitors are, the next step is to gather information on the way they do business. Which services do they provide? How do they market themselves? How much do they charge?

To learn about your competitors:

- ◆ Look for articles or adverts in local newspapers, trade press and directories.
- ◆ Try to read their marketing material; if the company has an online presence, visit the company's website as a first port of call. Not only does it give you a better understanding of the company's activities, it can also offer a wealth of information such as a company history or staff biographies, as well as the company's partners or suppliers
- ◆ Search for information on limited UK companies via the [Companies House](#) website
- ◆ Gain an insight into your competitor's performance using credit checks and the accounts that limited companies are required to submit to Companies House each year.

We can provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using this resource, or looking for us to help you find relevant publications, please contact us by emailing info@bgateway.com or by calling **0300 013 4753**



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What about suppliers?

[Choosing and Managing Suppliers](#) can help you decide what you need from a supplier, how to identify one and how to choose one to deal with.

Trade associations or industry specific organisations may also be able to recommend suppliers or contacts. You can also use the aforementioned resources for finding competitors to find suppliers.

Once you have decided on a supplier, we can run a credit check on the company to help assess their financial stability. We provide credit checks free of charge; if you are interested in using the resource please info@bgateway.com or by calling **0300 013 4753**.

Who are my customers?

Your business plan should include information about the customers you would expect. Business Gateway's guides on [Market and customer research](#) will help you to identify new trends, opportunities, customers and competitors.

It can be useful to group your customers by geographical location, age or lifestyle. The websites listed below are freely available and can provide most of this information. If you can't find what you're looking for from these websites, please contact us and one of the team will be happy to help:

- ◆ Access the latest population estimates from the [National Records of Scotland \(NRS\)](#). NRS also offers demographic factsheets for each council area in Scotland, which can provide summary statistics for the area you will be based in.
- ◆ Information from the most recent census in 2011 is released via the official website. See in particular the [Census Area Profiles](#). Clicking on your area of interest will give the latest population figures, including estimates by age.
- ◆ [Understanding Scottish Places](#) has interactive profiles of towns and cities across Scotland. It can be useful for understanding the interrelationships and flows between towns, and also gives comparisons between two or more places.
- ◆ [Scottish Government Statistics](#) provide accurate and up-to-date statistics on Scotland, covering population, health, education and housing.
- ◆ [The Scottish Household Survey](#) provides information on the structure, characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of Scottish households, both at a national and local level.
- ◆ [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) is the recognised national statistical body for the UK. ONS covers a wide range of demographic, economic and social issues at a UK level.



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How can you help me with other aspects of starting my business?

The Business Gateway website has guides, videos, online tutorials and tips on all aspects of starting up a business in Scotland. Follow the links below to explore each resource:

Accountancy

Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland's (ICAS) "[Find a Chartered Accountant](#)" tool

Funding

[Practical information](#) on finance and funding for starting and growing your business

Insurance

[Business insurance guide](#)

Legal Help

Gov.uk "[Licence Finder](#)" tool

Law Society of Scotland's "[Find a Solicitor](#)" tool

Pricing

Business Companion [Pricing & payment guide](#).

Please note: the most effective way to research pricing is to conduct your own research – visit wholesalers or suppliers to obtain price lists, find quotes from similar companies and work out what other businesses in your area are charging

Promotion

[BG guides to Marketing](#)

Training

[Skills Development Scotland's My World of Work](#)

[Funding for training](#)

[Small Business Bonus Scheme \(Scotland\)](#)

Your local Business Gateway can offer events, workshops and 1:2:1 support on all aspects of starting and developing your business. Call the helpline on **0300 013 4753** to find out what is available in your area.

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You must not rely on the information in the report as an alternative to advice from an appropriately qualified professional. If you have any specific questions speak to your Business Gateway Advisor or consult an appropriately qualified professional.

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