

Coupon Statistics 2026: The State of Shopper Trust in Promo Codes

Original research on promo code failure rates, shopper trust, and savings behavior from a survey of 1,463 U.S. online shoppers.

BY SEAN FISHER, CANSU KAYA, DAKOTA NUNLEY, ELENA MADRIGAL, DAVID GUZMAN · JUNE 10, 2026

In April 2026, SimplyCodes conducted a survey of 1,463 U.S. online shoppers about how they find, use, and experience promo codes at checkout. The goal was straightforward: build a comprehensive, data-backed picture of the American coupon experience — what's working, what's failing, and what shoppers actually want from the savings tools they rely on.

The results point to a systemic problem we're calling the Checkout Gap: a measurable distance between what shoppers expect when they enter a promo code and what they actually get. More than 1 in 3 code users experienced some form of failure at checkout in the past 60 days. Half of all respondents believe retailers intentionally make promo codes harder to use. And more than half have paid full price for a purchase, only to find a working code afterward — a pattern that erodes trust in both directions.

But the data also reveals a clear demand signal. When asked whether they'd use a tool that verifies promo codes actually work before they try them, 82% of shoppers said yes.

Every statistic in this report is drawn from a single primary research source: a nationally fielded survey of 1,463 complete responses, collected via the Alchemer platform using a Cint general population panel, fielded on April 27, 2026. Full methodology at the end.

Key Findings at a Glance

- **35%** of U.S. online shoppers who used a promo code in the past 60 days experienced failure — the code either didn't work at all or delivered a smaller discount than expected.
- **50%** of shoppers believe retailers are intentionally making promo codes harder to use than they need to be.
- **55%** have completed a purchase at full price, only to discover a working promo code afterward.
- **59%** of U.S. online shoppers used a coupon code in the past 60 days.
- **54%** have switched retailers specifically because a competitor had a working promo code.
- **38%** buy at full price anyway after a code fails — the most common post-failure behavior.

- **24%** abandon the purchase entirely when a coupon code doesn't work.
- **57%** aged 35–44 believe retailers make promo codes harder to use
- **24%** of shoppers only search for a promo code when they see the empty code field at checkout.
- **35%** have had a coupon code fail because it was expired — the most common failure type.
- **36%** say the discount they receive from promo codes is sometimes or often less than what was advertised.
- **10%** of shoppers have had a code apply successfully, then disappear before checkout completed.

How U.S. Online Shoppers Search for Promo Codes

Key Findings in This Section:

- 24% of shoppers only search for a code when they see the promo code box at checkout
- 24% always search for codes before buying
- 48% of U.S. online shoppers actively search for promo codes, either habitually or at checkout
- Only 11% use a browser extension that automatically applies codes

Before measuring what goes wrong with promo codes, it helps to understand how shoppers look for them in the first place. The survey asked respondents to identify the single behavior that best describes their typical approach to finding codes and discounts when shopping online.

The results split into five roughly even behavioral groups, with no single approach commanding a majority:

BEHAVIOR	% OF RESPONDENTS
I always search for codes before buying	24%
I search when I see a promo code box at checkout	24%
I only use codes if they come to me (email, text, notifications)	22%
I rarely or never look for promo codes	19%
I use a browser extension that automatically applies codes	11%

The two largest groups — habitual searchers and checkout-triggered searchers — are tied at 24% each, but they represent meaningfully different behaviors. Habitual searchers build code-hunting into their purchase routine before they reach the cart. Checkout-triggered searchers only begin looking when they encounter an empty promo code field during the payment process. The promo code box itself is the prompt: 1 in 4 U.S. online shoppers wouldn't search for a code at all if the field weren't there.

Behind them, 22% of shoppers take a passive approach: they'll use a code if one arrives in their inbox or notifications, but they don't go looking. Another 19% rarely or never engage with promo codes at all.

Browser extensions, which automatically scan and apply codes at checkout, account for 11% of shoppers. This is the smallest behavioral segment — a notable finding given the category's visibility in recent years.

Taken together, the data shows that nearly half of U.S. online shoppers (48%) actively search for promo codes, either as a habit or in response to the checkout field. Another 22% will use codes opportunistically. Only about 1 in 5 opt out of using coupon codes entirely.

Where Shoppers Go for Promo Codes — and Who They Trust

Key Findings in This Section:

- Coupon websites are the most trusted source for promo codes, ranking #1 of 7 sources
- Browser extensions rank 5th of 7 in source trust — below brand newsletters, above Reddit
- Brand loyalty programs lead savings tool trust at net +32%
- Social media deal accounts are the only savings tool category at or below net zero (-1%)

Knowing that nearly half of U.S. online shoppers actively search for codes raises a follow-up question: where do they go, and which sources do they trust to deliver working codes?

Promo Code Source Trust

Respondents ranked seven common promo code sources from most to least trusted. The results are reported as mean rank, where a lower number indicates higher trust.

SOURCE	MEAN RANK (1 = MOST TRUSTED)
Coupon websites (RetailMeNot, Coupons.com)	3.34
Google search	3.46
Friends or family	3.53
Brand newsletters or emails	3.75
Browser extensions (Honey, Capital One Shopping)	4.05
Reddit or online forums	4.91
TikTok or social media	4.97

Coupon aggregator websites hold the top position, followed closely by Google search and personal recommendations from friends and family. Brand-direct communications (newsletters, promotional emails) rank fourth – trusted, but not as much as third-party aggregators or personal networks.

Browser extensions rank fifth of seven sources. The gap between brand newsletters (3.75) and browser extensions (4.05) is the largest single-step drop in the ranking, placing extensions closer to community platforms than to established coupon channels.

Reddit and TikTok/social media sit at the bottom. Despite growing visibility as deal-sharing platforms, community and social channels have not yet displaced traditional coupon sources in consumer trust.

Savings Tool Trust

A separate question measured trust in five categories of savings tools on a 1–10 scale. The net trust score below represents the difference between the top-two-box (high trust) and bottom-two-box (low trust) shares.

SAVINGS TOOL	NET TRUST (TOP 2 BOX - BOTTOM 2 BOX)
Brand loyalty programs	+32%
Coupon websites	+21%
Cash-back apps	+17%
Browser extensions	+10%
Social media deal accounts	-1%

Brand loyalty programs lead by a wide margin, the only savings tool category that carries a direct, first-party relationship between the shopper and the retailer. Coupon websites and cash-back apps hold solidly positive positions. Browser extensions sit in net-positive territory but at a fraction of the trust levels enjoyed by loyalty programs and coupon sites. Social media deal accounts are the only category at or below zero — as many shoppers actively distrust them as trust them.

The two rankings tell a consistent story. Whether measured by source trust or tool trust, the hierarchy follows a pattern: first-party and established aggregator channels lead, browser extensions occupy a middle-to-low tier, and social and community platforms trail.

Promo Code Failure Rates — the Checkout Gap

Key Findings in This Section:

- 59% of U.S. online shoppers used a promo code in the past 60 days
- 35% of code users experienced some form of failure — either the code didn't work at all (18%) or delivered a smaller discount than expected (16%)
- Expired codes are the most common failure type at 35%, followed by hidden restrictions (28%) and new-customer-only codes (23%)
- 10% of shoppers experienced a code that applied successfully, then disappeared before checkout completed

Of the 1,463 respondents in the study, 59% had tried using a promo code online in the past 60 days. Those code users were asked a direct question: did the code work, and did you receive the discount you expected?

CODE OUTCOME	% OF CODE USERS
Code worked and delivered the expected discount	66%
Code worked but the discount was smaller than expected	16%
Code did not work — no discount received	18%

One in three code users (34%) experienced some form of failure. Rounded, that figure is 35% — the consistent baseline used for all segment comparisons in this report.

The 35% breaks into two distinct failure modes. Full failure — the code simply didn't work and no discount was applied — accounts for 18% of code users. Partial failure — the code was accepted but the discount was smaller than advertised — accounts for another 16%. Both are checkout

failures, but they feel different to the shopper. Full failure is immediate and obvious. Partial failure is quieter and often goes unnoticed until the order confirmation.

Why Promo Codes Fail at Checkout

Respondents who had experienced a code failure at any point were asked to identify what happened. Responses were multi-select, meaning shoppers could report more than one failure type.

FAILURE TYPE	% OF ALL RESPONDENTS
The code was expired	35%
The code had restrictions I didn't know about	28%
The code was only for new customers	23%
The site showed an error message	18%
The discount was smaller than advertised	15%
The code applied, then disappeared	10%

Expired codes top the list at 35% — a failure mode that is, in principle, preventable through real-time code verification. Hidden restrictions (28%) and new-customer-only limitations (23%) represent a different category of failure: the code technically works, but eligibility rules the shopper didn't know about prevent it from applying.

The bottom of the list surfaces a less common but more disorienting experience. One in ten shoppers reports a code that appeared to apply successfully and then vanished before the transaction completed (likely a session-expiry or single-use logic issue that produces a uniquely frustrating checkout moment).

Coupon Behavior by Age and Gender

Key Findings in This Section:

- 35–44 year-olds are the most active code users: 70% tried a promo code in the past 60 days
- Shoppers aged 25–34 experience the highest failure rate of any age group at 37% — nearly double the rate of those 65 and older (19%)
- 18–24 year-olds hit "hidden restrictions" at 40%, the highest of any age cohort
- Men are 11 points more likely than women to have paid full price and then found a working code afterward (61% vs. 50%)

- 25–34 men experience a 45% code failure rate and a 71% Reverse Checkout Gap rate — the sharpest intersection in the dataset

The previous sections report topline findings across all 1,463 respondents. This section breaks down the same coupon metrics by age, gender, and their intersections. The demographic cuts reveal variance that the overall averages obscure — particularly by age, where the spread between the youngest and oldest cohorts is substantial across nearly every measure.

By Age

Code usage. Respondents were asked whether they had tried using a promo code in the past 60 days. Usage peaks in the middle age bands and drops sharply after 55.

AGE GROUP	% USED A CODE IN PAST 60 DAYS
35–44	70%
18–24	68%
45–54	65%
25–34	63%
55–64	53%
65+	48%

The steepest single drop is between 45–54 (65%) and 55–64 (53%), a 12–point decline. By age 65 and older, fewer than half of respondents had used a promo code in the preceding two months.

Failure rates. Among those who used a code, the share who experienced any form of failure (full failure or smaller–than–expected discount) varies considerably by age.

AGE GROUP	FAILURE RATE (AMONG CODE USERS)
25–34	37%
18–24	35%
35–44	33%
45–54	32%
55–64	29%
65+	19%

Shoppers aged 25–34 experience the highest failure rate at 37%. The rate declines with each successive age band, reaching 19% for those 65 and older, roughly half the rate of the youngest cohorts.

Failure types. The nature of code failure also differs by age. The three most common failure types are broken out below.

FAILURE TYPE	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Expired codes	30%	34%	36%	43%	32%	34%
Hidden restrictions	40%	32%	29%	25%	24%	24%
New customers only	28%	28%	29%	20%	21%	15%

Hidden restrictions are the top failure type for the 18–24 group at 40%, nearly double the rate reported by those 65 and older (24%). The "new customers only" pattern follows a similar age gradient: 28–29% for shoppers under 44, dropping to 15% for those 65+. Expired codes, by contrast, are relatively consistent across all age groups.

Post-failure behavior. When a code fails, what shoppers do next also varies by age.

BEHAVIOR	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Bought at full price	49%	43%	41%	38%	32%	29%
Abandoned the purchase	30%	23%	23%	25%	24%	23%
Left for a competitor	28%	21%	23%	21%	12%	17%
Came back later	21%	16%	19%	13%	11%	9%

The 18–24 group reports the highest rates across every post-failure behavior measured — buying at full price (49%), abandoning (30%), switching to a competitor (28%), and returning later (21%). The pattern narrows with age: shoppers 65 and older report lower rates on every measure, with buying at full price at 29% and returning later at 9%.

Deliberate-intent belief. Respondents were asked whether they believe some retailers intentionally make promo codes harder to use.

AGE GROUP	YES	NO	NEVER THOUGHT ABOUT IT
35–44	57%	23%	21%
18–24	53%	26%	22%
45–54	52%	21%	27%
25–34	51%	33%	15%
55–64	49%	19%	32%
65+	42%	15%	44%

The 35–44 cohort holds the strongest conviction at 57%. The belief exceeds 50% for every age group under 55. Among those 65 and older, the "yes" rate drops to 42% — but that decline is driven primarily by the 44% who have never considered the question, not by active disagreement (only 15% say "no").

Verification tool appetite. The share of respondents who say they would "definitely" use a code verification tool peaks at 35–44 (46%) and is lowest among those 65+ (29%). However, the combined top-two-box measure (definitely + probably) remains high across all ages: 85–87% for shoppers 18–54, 80% for those 55–64, and 76% for those 65+.

Retailer switching and the Reverse Checkout Gap.

AGE GROUP	SWITCHED RETAILER FOR WORKING CODE	PAID FULL PRICE, THEN FOUND CODE
18–24	64%	62%
25–34	58%	66%
35–44	62%	64%
45–54	61%	58%
55–64	49%	50%
65+	41%	39%

Both measures show a clear age gradient. Shoppers aged 25–34 report the highest Reverse Checkout Gap rate (66%). Retailer switching peaks at 18–24 (64%). Both drop substantially for shoppers 55 and older.

Code reliability perception. Asked whether promo codes feel more or less reliable compared with one to two years ago, the youngest cohorts are the most likely to say "more reliable" (31% of 25–34 year-olds), while 65+ respondents overwhelmingly report no perceived change (67% say "about the same"). The "less reliable" response is relatively consistent across ages at 10–16%.

By Gender

Gender differences in coupon behavior are smaller than age differences but follow a consistent directional pattern across most measures.

Code usage. Men are slightly more likely to have tried a code in the past 60 days (62% vs. 58%). Code-seeking style — the split between habitual searchers, checkout-triggered searchers, passive recipients, and non-users — is nearly identical across genders.

Failure rates. Among code users, men experience a slightly higher overall failure rate: 32% vs. 29% for women. The composition of that failure differs: men are more likely to receive a smaller-than-expected discount (19% vs. 12%), while women are slightly more likely to experience total code failure (15% vs. 11%).

Post-failure behavior. The largest behavioral gender gap appears in the "bought at full price anyway" response: 41% of men vs. 34% of women, a 7-point difference. Abandonment rates are nearly identical (women 25%, men 24%).

Deliberate-intent belief. Men are more likely to believe retailers intentionally make codes harder to use: 53% vs. 47%, a 6-point gap. Women are more likely to have never considered the question (32% vs. 23%). Brand trust erosion after code failure is nearly identical across genders, with approximately 26% reporting reduced trust in the retailer.

The Reverse Checkout Gap. This is where the largest gender difference in the dataset appears. 61% of men have paid full price and then found a working code afterward, compared with 50% of women — an 11-point gap. Men are also slightly more likely to have switched retailers for a working code (56% vs. 53%).

Code reliability perception. Men are more likely to say codes feel "more reliable" than one to two years ago (26% vs. 15%, an 11-point gap). Women are slightly more likely to say "less reliable" (15% vs. 12%). Both genders report "about the same" at similar rates (women 60%, men 55%).

By Age × Gender

When age and gender are crossed, several cohort-level findings emerge with sharper variance than either dimension produces alone.

COHORT	STAT	OVERALL BENCHMARK	COMPARISON
Men 25–34	71% experienced the Reverse Checkout Gap	55% overall	vs. 39% of women 65+ (32–point spread)
Men 25–34	45% code failure rate	35% overall	vs. 16% of men 65+ (29–point spread)
Men 35–44	59% believe retailers deliberately break codes	50% overall	vs. 39% of women 65+ (20–point spread)
Men 25–34	61% switched retailer for a working code	54% overall	vs. 42% of women 65+ (19–point spread)

Men aged 25–34 appear at the high end of three of the four intersection cuts — failure rate, Reverse Checkout Gap, and retailer switching. Men aged 35–44 hold the highest deliberate–intent belief at the intersection level. In each case, women aged 65 and older sit at the opposite end of the distribution, producing cohort–level spreads of 19 to 32 percentage points.

Sample sizes at the intersection level are smaller than the single–dimension cuts. The 25–34 male cell includes 140 respondents in the full sample and 84 code users after filtering. These are sufficient for reporting but are noted here for transparency.

What Shoppers Do When a Code Fails

Key Findings in This Section:

- 38% of shoppers buy at full price anyway after a code failure
- 24% abandon the purchase entirely
- 20% leave for a competing retailer
- 54% of all U.S. online shoppers have switched retailers specifically because a competitor had a working promo code

Respondents were asked to select all actions they took after their most recent code failure. The results represent the full sample, not only those who experienced failure in the past 60 days, since the question captured lifetime behavior.

POST-FAILURE BEHAVIOR	% OF ALL RESPONDENTS
Bought anyway at full price	38%
Searched for another code	28%
Abandoned the purchase entirely	24%
Left and looked at another retailer	20%
Came back later to try again	15%
Contacted customer service	9%

The most common response is to absorb the loss and pay full price — 38% of shoppers report doing so. But the commercially consequential behaviors are substantial. Nearly 1 in 4 shoppers (24%) abandon the purchase entirely, and 1 in 5 (20%) leave for a competing retailer. In both cases, the retailer loses a transaction that was, moments earlier, close to completion.

A separate question asked whether respondents had ever switched their purchase to a different retailer specifically because that retailer had a working promo code. 54% said yes — a majority of U.S. online shoppers have, at some point, redirected a purchase based on code availability alone.

The 20% who leave for a competitor after a single failure and the 54% who have switched retailers over time describe two views of the same behavior: code reliability functions as a competitive lever. Retailers whose codes work retain customers. Retailers whose codes fail risk losing those customers to a competitor who happens to have a functioning discount.

How Broken Codes Erode Brand Trust

Key Findings in This Section:

- 25% of shoppers trust the retailer less after a code failure — even when the code came from a third-party source
- Only 13% redirect blame to the coupon source rather than the retailer
- 50% of U.S. online shoppers believe some retailers intentionally make promo codes harder to use
- Coupon websites and browser extensions absorb the most blame for code failures (36%), followed by the retailer (24%)

Brand Perception After Code Failure

Respondents were asked how a code failure affected their perception of the brand or retailer involved.

EFFECT ON BRAND PERCEPTION	% OF RESPONDENTS
It did not change how I felt about them	50%
I trusted them less	25%
I blamed the coupon source more than the retailer	13%
I already did not trust them	12%

Half of shoppers report no change in perception after a code failure. But 25% say they trusted the retailer less — a finding that holds even when the code originated from a third-party coupon site or browser extension, not from the retailer itself. Only 13% correctly redirect blame to the coupon source. The remaining 12% say they already didn't trust the retailer before the code failed.

Blame Attribution

A separate question asked who shoppers consider most responsible when a promo code doesn't work.

WHO SHOPPERS BLAME	% OF RESPONDENTS
The coupon website or browser extension	36%
The retailer	24%
No one specifically — just how the system works	21%
Myself for not reading the details	19%

Blame is fragmented. No single party absorbs a majority. Coupon websites and browser extensions take the largest share at 36%, consistent with heightened scrutiny of the savings-tool category. Retailers are blamed by 24%. One in five respondents attributes the failure to the system itself rather than any specific actor, and a similar share (19%) blames themselves for not reading the fine print.

The brand-perception and blame-attribution findings create an asymmetry worth noting. When asked directly who is responsible, shoppers are most likely to point at coupon sites and extensions (36%). But when asked how the failure affected their view of the retailer, 25% say it reduced their trust in the brand — regardless of where the code came from. Blame and trust damage do not flow to the same target.

Retailer Intentionality

Respondents were asked whether they believe some retailers intentionally make promo codes harder to use than they need to be.

RESPONSE	% OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	50%
I have never thought about that	28%
No	23%

Half of U.S. online shoppers believe retailers deliberately make codes harder to use. 23% do not believe this. The remaining 28% have never considered the question.

The belief is broadly held but not uniform. As reported in the age and gender breakdown, it peaks at 57% among shoppers aged 35–44 and is lowest among those 65 and older at 42% — though the lower rate in that cohort reflects a high share (44%) who have never thought about it rather than active disagreement.

This is a perception finding, not a behavioral claim. The survey measures what shoppers believe, not what retailers do. But as a measure of consumer sentiment, it indicates that half of the online shopping population approaches the promo code experience with a baseline expectation that the system is working against them.

The Reverse Checkout Gap — Paying Full Price, Then Finding a Code

Key Findings in This Section:

- 55% of U.S. online shoppers have paid full price for a purchase, only to discover a working promo code afterward
- 36% say the discount they receive from promo codes is sometimes or often less than what was advertised
- 52% say the discount usually matches what was advertised; 9% say it rarely or never does

Respondents were asked whether they had ever completed a purchase at full price and then discovered a working promo code afterward. 55% said yes.

This is the Reverse Checkout Gap — the other side of the promo code failure problem. Where the Checkout Gap measures codes that don't work when shoppers try them, the Reverse Checkout Gap measures working codes that were invisible when shoppers needed them. Both produce the same outcome: a shopper who paid more than they had to.

Discount Accuracy

A related question asked whether the discounts shoppers receive from promo codes typically match what was advertised.

DISCOUNT ACCURACY	% OF RESPONDENTS
Yes, it's usually what was advertised	52%
Sometimes it's less than advertised	27%
I don't pay attention to the exact amount	12%
It's often less than advertised	9%

A bare majority (52%) say the discount usually matches. But 36% — combining the "sometimes" and "often" responses — report that the actual discount falls short of what was advertised. Another 12% don't track the exact amount, meaning they may experience discount shortfalls without recognizing them.

These findings describe a promo code ecosystem with friction on both sides. Codes fail when shoppers try them (35% failure rate among users). Working codes go unfound when shoppers don't know to look (55% have experienced this). And even when codes do work, more than a third of shoppers perceive the discount as smaller than promised.

Promo Code Reliability — Is It Getting Worse?

Key Findings in This Section:

- 57% of shoppers say promo code reliability feels about the same as one to two years ago
- 21% say codes have become more reliable
- 13% say codes have become less reliable
- 22% are either uncertain or perceive a decline — a minority, but not a negligible one

Given the failure rates and trust erosion documented in the preceding sections, a natural question is whether shoppers believe the situation is getting worse. The answer, for the majority, is no.

Respondents were asked whether promo codes feel more reliable, less reliable, or about the same compared with one to two years ago.

RELIABILITY PERCEPTION	% OF RESPONDENTS
About the same	57%
More reliable	21%
Less reliable	13%
Not sure	9%

The largest group (57%) perceives no change. Among those who do perceive a shift, optimists outnumber pessimists: 21% say codes are more reliable, compared with 13% who say less reliable. An additional 9% are unsure.

The combined "less reliable" and "not sure" share totals 22% — roughly 1 in 5 shoppers who are not confident that code reliability is holding steady. This is a minority position, but it exists alongside the 35% failure rate and the 50% who believe retailers deliberately make codes harder to use — a combination suggesting the perception of stability may reflect that most shoppers treat code failure as a normal cost of online shopping rather than a worsening trend.

As noted before, this perception varies by age. Shoppers aged 25–34 are the most likely to say codes have improved (31%), while those 65 and older overwhelmingly report no change (67%). The "less reliable" response is relatively consistent across all age groups at 10–16%.

The Five Types of Promo Code Shoppers

Key Findings in This Section:

- Five psychographic segments emerge from the data, defined by trust orientation, savings behavior, and purchase confidence — not demographics
- The two largest segments — Bargain-Focused Mainstream (28%) and Uncertain Mid-Journey Shoppers (28%) — together represent 55% of U.S. online shoppers
- High-Trust Power Shoppers (10%) are the smallest segment but report the highest code-seeking engagement, the highest verification tool demand, and the highest retailer-switching rate
- 74% of High-Trust Power Shoppers say they would "definitely" use a code verification tool — nearly 50% higher than the next-highest segment (Savvy Confident Researchers at 51%)

The topline statistics in this report describe the average U.S. online shopper. But shoppers are not uniform in how they approach promo codes, how much they trust the savings ecosystem, or how they respond when codes fail. A psychographic segmentation analysis — using K-means clustering on attitudinal and behavioral variables, with demographics reserved for post-hoc profiling — identifies five distinct shopper types.

SEGMENT	SHARE	SIZE (N)
Disengaged Skeptics	13%	189
Bargain-Focused Mainstream	28%	406
Savvy Confident Researchers	22%	314
Uncertain Mid-Journey Shoppers	28%	403
High-Trust Power Shoppers	10%	151

Segment 1: Disengaged Skeptics (13%)

The lowest-trust segment across every dimension measured. 36% rarely or never look for promo codes. 52% believe retailers intentionally make codes harder to use — but unlike other segments that hold this belief, Disengaged Skeptics are the least likely to act on it. Only 16% say they would "definitely" use a code verification tool, and 18% say "definitely not" — the highest outright rejection rate in the study.

This segment skews older (33% are 65+, 19% are 55–64) and slightly female (52%). Their purchase confidence is the second lowest in the study at 6 out of 10. When codes fail, they are among the most likely to abandon the purchase entirely (29%) and among the least likely to search for another code (42% did, compared with 68% of Savvy Confident Researchers).

Segment 2: Bargain-Focused Mainstream (28%)

The largest segment tied with Uncertain Mid-Journey Shoppers. Bargain-Focused Mainstream shoppers are active code users — 34% always search for codes before buying, and 76% tried a code in the past 60 days. Their purchase confidence is high (8 out of 10), suggesting they generally feel good about their shopping decisions.

Their frustration with code failure is real: 55% believe retailers intentionally make codes harder to use (second highest of any segment), and 29% experienced full code failure when they tried one. 89% would probably or definitely use a verification tool.

This segment skews older (36% are 65+) and slightly female (55%). Despite their active code-seeking, they have very low AI spend tolerance — 71% would not trust an AI recommendation for any purchase over \$25 without checking another source.

Segment 3: Savvy Confident Researchers (22%)

The segment with the broadest trust profile. Savvy Confident Researchers report elevated trust in every information source measured — reviews, expert publications, friends and family, and AI tools alike. Their purchase confidence matches Bargain-Focused Mainstream at 8 out of 10, but they pair it with meaningfully higher AI spend tolerance (willing to trust AI recommendations in the \$51–\$100 range without verification).

15% already use a browser extension to apply codes automatically — the highest rate outside of High-Trust Power Shoppers. 93% would probably or definitely use a code verification tool, with 51% saying "definitely." When codes fail, this segment is the most likely to search for another one (68%) and the least likely to buy at full price (19%).

This segment skews younger (21% are 25–34, 19% are 35–44) and is evenly split by gender. They are the most likely to have switched retailers for a working code (69%).

Segment 4: Uncertain Mid-Journey Shoppers (28%)

Tied as the largest segment, Uncertain Mid-Journey Shoppers are defined by low purchase confidence (5 out of 10 — the lowest in the study) paired with a flat, uniform trust profile. They rate every information source — AI, reviews, Reddit, YouTube, experts, brand websites — around 5 out of 10. They haven't formed strong preferences about who to trust.

Their code-seeking behavior is predominantly passive: 33% only use codes that arrive via email or notifications, and 24% rarely or never look. Only 9% always search before buying. Their deliberate-intent belief is the lowest of any segment at 37% — they are the most likely to give retailers the benefit of the doubt, or simply not to have considered the question.

This is the youngest segment profile in the study (18% are 18–24, 22% are 25–34) and is evenly split by gender. Despite their low confidence and passive savings behavior, they show surprisingly high AI spend tolerance — comparable to Savvy Confident Researchers — suggesting openness to tools that reduce decision-making burden.

Segment 5: High-Trust Power Shoppers (10%)

The smallest segment and the most distinctive. High-Trust Power Shoppers report near-ceiling scores on every trust measure: retailer trust 9 out of 10, AI trust 9 out of 10, review confidence 6 out of 6. They are not selectively trusting; they extend high trust broadly and uniformly.

40% always hunt for codes before buying. 83% tried a code in the past 60 days — the highest usage rate of any segment. 74% say they would "definitely" use a code verification tool, nearly 50% higher than the next-highest segment (Savvy Confident Researchers at 51%). 78% have switched retailers specifically for a working code.

When codes fail, this segment is the most likely to search for another (72%), the most likely to leave for a competitor (38%), and the least likely to buy at full price (16%) or abandon entirely (14%). They are the most active, most engaged, and most responsive segment in every coupon behavior measured.

How the Segments Relate

The five segments are organized primarily along a single dominant dimension: general trust in the information and savings ecosystem. Disengaged Skeptics anchor the low end; High-Trust Power Shoppers anchor the high end. The three middle segments — Bargain-Focused, Savvy Confident, and Uncertain Mid-Journey — occupy similar positions on that trust axis but differ on a second dimension: purchase confidence paired with AI tolerance. Bargain-Focused shoppers are confident but AI-averse. Savvy Confident shoppers are confident and AI-open. Uncertain Mid-Journey shoppers lack confidence but are AI-curious.

These are attitudinal segments, not demographic ones. Age, gender, and income were excluded from the clustering basis and applied afterward as descriptive overlays. A 28-year-old woman and a 52-year-old man who share the same trust orientation, savings behavior, and purchase confidence land in the same segment.

What Shoppers Want — the Demand for Code Verification

Key Findings in This Section:

- 82% of U.S. online shoppers would probably or definitely use a tool that verifies whether promo codes actually work before they try them
- 37% say "definitely"; 45% say "probably"
- Only 5% say "definitely not"
- Demand is broad-based: the top-two-box rate exceeds 76% in every age group and every psychographic segment except Disengaged Skeptics

The final survey question asked respondents a direct product-concept question: would you use a tool that verifies whether promo codes actually work before you try them?

RESPONSE	% OF RESPONDENTS
Definitely would use it	37%
Probably would use it	45%
Probably would not use it	14%
Definitely would not use it	5%

82% of respondents fall in the top two boxes. The "definitely" rate alone — 37% — represents more than a third of U.S. online shoppers expressing strong intent to use a verification tool that does not yet widely exist in the market.

Resistance is concentrated in a small minority. Only 5% say "definitely not," and the 14% who say "probably not" are disproportionately drawn from the Disengaged Skeptics segment, where the "probably not" and "definitely not" responses together account for 49% of that group.

The demand signal is consistent across the demographic and psychographic cuts reported throughout this study. By age, the top-two-box rate ranges from 76% (65+) to 87% (35–44). By segment, it ranges from 52% (Disengaged Skeptics) to 92% (High-Trust Power Shoppers and Savvy Confident Researchers). The appetite for code verification is not confined to a narrow demographic or attitudinal profile — it is a majority position across nearly every subgroup measured.

This finding sits at the end of the report for a reason. The preceding sections documented how often codes fail (35%), what shoppers do when they fail (24% abandon, 20% switch retailers), how failure erodes brand trust (25% trust the retailer less), and how many shoppers believe the system is deliberately stacked against them (50%). The 82% verification demand is consistent with that picture: it describes dissatisfaction with code reliability as a widespread, measurable condition.

Methodology

This report presents findings from a study conducted by SimplyCodes and Product.ai. The study was designed to measure promo code failure rates, shopper trust in the savings ecosystem, and consumer attitudes toward code verification tools among U.S. online shoppers.

Survey Design and Fielding

The survey was built on the Alchemer platform and fielded on April 27, 2026, using a Cint general population panel. Respondents were U.S. residents who shop online. The Checkout Gap block required respondents to have used a promo code in the past 30–60 days. The survey consisted of five blocks: Purchase Confidence, AI Trust, Savings Behavior, Checkout Gap, and an Open-Text Closer.

Scales used included 0–10 numeric ratings, a 7–point Likert scale (retailer trust), and categorical and multi–select response formats. Ranked questions (e.g., promo code source trust) used a 1–7 forced ranking.

Sample

The survey collected 3,638 total responses. After removing disqualified respondents (1,778) and partial completions (397), 1,463 complete responses form the analysis basis for this report. All percentages and mean scores are calculated from complete responses only (Status = 'Complete').

Sample Composition

The final sample composition reflects the screener–gated design. Respondents are active online shoppers, not a general population sample. Key demographic breakdowns:

DEMOGRAPHIC	DISTRIBUTION
Age	18–24: 12% · 25–34: 18% · 35–44: 16% · 45–54: 16% · 55–64: 17% · 65+: 22%
Gender	Male: 50% · Female: 50%
Household Income	Under \$30K: 30% · \$30K–\$59K: 31% · \$60K–\$99K: 22% · \$100K–\$149K: 10% · \$150K+: 7%

The sample skews slightly older than the U.S. online shopping population (22% are 65+) and includes a meaningful share of lower–income households (30% under \$30,000). These characteristics are consistent with a general population panel recruitment that does not quota–match to Census benchmarks for online shoppers specifically.

Key Denominator Notes

Several statistics in this report use different denominators depending on the question structure. The two most important:

The 35% headline rate. The headline failure rate of 35% is calculated from n=876 (definitive outcomes only, excl. "Not applicable" responses). Using the broader denominator of all respondents who tried a code in the past 60 days (n=967, incl. "Not applicable" responses), the failure rate is 28.4%. Both figures are reported here for transparency.

Multi–select questions. Several questions in the Checkout Gap and Savings Behavior blocks (failure types, post–failure behavior) allowed respondents to select all options that applied. Percentages for these questions are reported as a share of all respondents (n=1,463), not as a share of those who selected at least one option. Totals may exceed 100%.

Psychographic Segmentation

The five-segment psychographic model was produced using K-means clustering (K-means++ initialization, 50 restarts, random seed 42) on 20 standardized attitudinal and behavioral variables. Demographic variables (age, gender, income) were excluded from the clustering basis and applied as post-hoc profiling descriptors. The k=5 solution was selected based on within-cluster sum of squared errors, silhouette score, and segment interpretability. Full segmentation methodology, including variable selection rationale and dimensional structure analysis, is available in the companion Psychographic Segmentation Report.

Citation

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