



The Association of
Pallet Networks

2023 pallet sector report

APN collates data from all of the UK's pallet networks, allowing its members to benchmark their performance. This data also provides a unique insight into the health of the UK logistics and palletised freight distribution sectors.

Key highlights from our data is below. For more information on the significance of this data please contact Paul Sanders, APN Chairman on info@theapn.co.uk

Health and safety gains

Across all networks there was a 23.9% reduction in accidents this year, with an average of 0.36 accidents per 100,000 pallets delivered. This is the sixth year running in which Hub injuries have been substantially reduced, due to the continued and collaborative efforts of the APN Health and Safety Forum which includes operational and H&S professionals from every network. The Forum identifies best practices, as well as the most common causes of injury and devises training and resources to reinforce Hub safety protocols.

Volumes by size

In 2023 all pallet sizes have declined from 2022 volumes, although still show strong growth against 2019. Full pallets achieved growth of +4.7% and half-pallets +2.6% against 2019. Quarter pallets saw a 9.7% increase in volume.

Full pallets account for 49.0% of the volume, half-pallets 29.1%, and quarter-pallets make up the remaining 21.9%.

Q4 volumes for half-pallets were 0.5% lower than Q4 2022, while full pallets rose by 0.1% and quarter pallets by 1.2%.

Average pallet weight

The average weight per pallet in 2023 was 366kg. This is 3kg lower than the 2022 figure, and continues a gradual but distinct trend. In 2020 the average weight of a pallet was 379kg and in 2021 374kg.

Total volumes

APN members delivered 28.4 million pallets in 2023. That's 2.8% lower than 2022, but 5.1% higher than 2019 pre-pandemic levels. Q4 volumes rallied slightly and saw Q4 end almost 10,000 pallets higher than Q4 2022.

Volumes by service

Next-day services accounted for 61.6% of total volume, (17.4 million pallets) and economy 38.4% (11 million) in 2023. Next-day volumes in Q4 2023 were 5.8% lower than Q3 but were 0.1% higher than Q4 2022. Economy volumes in Q4 saw an increase of 0.2% from the same period 2022.



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Home delivery reduction

15.8% of all pallets were delivered to residential addresses (B2C) in 2023, a 3% reduction from volumes seen in the same period in 2022. For quarter pallets, B2C deliveries have fallen slightly to 19.6% of the volume.

Half of all B2C pallets were delivered on an economy service in 2023. Next-day services remain the most popular option for suppliers and customers in the B2C sector, with slightly higher figures this year than last. 57.5% of quarter pallets used a next-day service in the year.

Trailer utilisation

Trunk capacity utilisation reached a five year high to average 76.6%. The current Department for Transport statistics (rfs0125) puts the national loading factor for articulated vehicles at 69%, so pallet networks are almost eight percentage points higher.

Furthermore, the DfT places average running empty at 30%; network trunk vehicles very rarely run empty, as the model is based on trunk vehicles taking freight into the Hub and returning to base with a full delivery load.

Increased service levels

Service levels increased during 2023 to an average 96.7% on time, in full delivery. Customer preferences are shifting slowly back towards next-day services, rather than economy. This suggests less price sensitivity around premium services than we might expect given the inflationary pressures on industry.

The lack of a suitable recipient at point of delivery, or an unsuitable delivery location can both complicate delivery. This tends to apply mostly to B2C services. Increased use of technology, including customer alerts, and a continued emphasis on gaining appropriate delivery information from the consignor, both help to ensure efficient delivery rates.

This efficiency is both welcomed and demanded by freight owners and recipients, as evidenced by the growing use of timed delivery services. Of the 12.3 million next-day consignments delivered, timed delivery was requested for 16.6%, a 3.4% increase from 2022.

Average consignment size

Consignments in 2023 declined by 1.9% since 2022, although the KPI average of 1.43 pallets per consignment across 2023 remains steady.