

FREE BUYER GUIDE · 2026 EDITION

Knitwear Sourcing Benchmark Report

MOQ, lead time, cost structure, gauge, QC standards and commercial terms —
reference ranges for B2B knitwear procurement.

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Custom OEM/ODM knitwear for B2B apparel brands in North America, South America and Europe

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About this report

Sourcing custom knitwear means making decisions on MOQ, pricing, lead time and quality with surprisingly little public data to anchor them. Most buyers rely on scattered quotes and gut feel. This benchmark report compiles realistic reference ranges for B2B knitwear procurement in 2026, drawn from common industry practice and our own production experience as a Guangdong knitwear manufacturer.

These are reference ranges, not fixed prices. Every program varies with yarn, complexity and quantity. Use them to spot outliers and ask better questions — not as a substitute for a real quote.

How to read this report

The figures below reflect typical ranges for custom men's and women's knitwear produced in China for North American, South American and European brands. They assume standard commercial quality, FOB terms, and conventional construction unless noted. Premium fibers, complex patterns and very low volumes push every number toward the high end.

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Benchmark 1 · Minimum Order Quantity (MOQ)

MOQ is quoted **per color, per style** — not as a single total. The biggest driver is yarn: custom-dyed colors force higher minimums to consume a dye lot, while stock yarn keeps them low.

Scenario	Typical MOQ (per color/style)
Stock yarn, simple style	100–300 pcs
Trial / ready-style order	30–50 pcs
Custom-dyed or blended yarn	300–500 pcs
Complex jacquard / specialty yarn	500+ pcs

Licheng floor: ~30 pcs per color/style on stock yarn for trial orders — deliberately low to let emerging brands test the market before scaling.

Benchmark 2 · Lead Times

Lead time is the most common cause of missed launches — usually because development started too late, not because production was slow. **Plan backwards from your in-store date.**

Stage	Typical duration
Development sample (per round)	7–15 days
Sample rounds before bulk	2–3 rounds
Yarn sourcing (stock)	1–7 days
Yarn sourcing (custom-dyed)	1–3 weeks
Bulk production	30–45 days
Sea freight (to NA/EU)	20–40 days

Licheng standard: ~7–15 days per sampling round; ~30–45 days bulk depending on quantity and complexity.

Benchmark 3 · Cost Structure

Yarn dominates the cost stack — typically **40–60% of the unit price**. The same style can vary several-fold across fibers. The cost bands below are relative, not absolute prices.

Fiber	Relative cost band
Acrylic / acrylic blend	Lowest
Cotton / cotton blend	Low–medium
Lambswool / wool blend	Medium
Merino	Medium–high
Cashmere & cashmere blend	Highest

Unit price falls as quantity rises, because setup and dye-lot costs spread across more pieces: small runs (100–200 pcs) carry the highest unit cost; mid runs (300–500) see a meaningful drop; large runs (1,000+) reach the best pricing.

Benchmark 4 · Gauge and Construction

Gauge sets weight, stitch definition and season. Most men's sweater programs live at **5–7GG**; finer 12GG for lightweight / layering and chunky 3–5GG for winter statements.

Gauge	Character	Typical season
3GG	Chunky, bold	Deep winter
5GG	Substantial, defined	Autumn / winter
7GG	Classic mid-weight	Three-season core
12GG	Fine, lightweight	Spring / summer, layering

Licheng range: we knit across 3GG–18GG, covering deep-winter chunky cables through fine cotton lightweight summer pieces.

Benchmark 5 · Quality Control Standards

Reliable knitwear suppliers inspect at multiple stages and to a defined statistical standard.

QC element	Common standard
Inspection stages	Incoming yarn · In-line · Final
Sampling standard	AQL 2.5 (apparel typical)
Measurement tolerance	±1 cm (typical)
Key tests	Pilling · Shrinkage · Color fastness
Detection	Needle (metal) detection on finished garments

Licheng QC: multi-stage QC plus needle (metal) detection and AQL 2.5 final inspection before shipment, with photo / video confirmation available on request.

Benchmark 6 · Commercial Terms

Term	Common practice
Payment	30% deposit, 70% before shipment
Incoterm	FOB (most common for knitwear)
Sampling fee	Often charged, sometimes credited against bulk order
First order	Trial / ready-styles to reduce risk before custom development
Currency	USD; CNY-pegged via PBoC mid-rate
Returns / claims	Non-conforming bulk replaced/credited within 30 days of receipt

How to use these benchmarks

Action	What to do
Sanity-check quotes	A number far outside these ranges deserves a question — yarn grade, quantity or lead time.
Plan timelines backwards	From your launch / in-store date, with buffers on sampling and yarn sourcing.
Design to a target price	Pick the fiber first, then gauge and complexity. Yarn dominates the cost stack.
Match MOQ to your stage	Trial volumes early, custom yarn as you scale. Don't lock in custom-dye 500-pc MOQ too early.

These benchmarks reflect typical practice; your actual numbers depend on your specific program. For figures tailored to your design, yarn and quantity, request a free quote at lcsweater.com/request-quote — we provide transparent, itemized quotes for B2B buyers in North America, South America and Europe.

About Licheng Knitwear

Founded in 2018 in Dongguan, Guangdong — known across the industry as China's "Sweater Capital" — Licheng operates an **8,000 m² facility with 118 workers, 30+ knitting machines and five dedicated export production lines.**

Our founder brings 20+ years of knitwear merchandising and production experience to every program. We work end-to-end with B2B brand buyers: design consultation, yarn and gauge selection, sampling, bulk production and pre-shipment QC — operating on a "Quality First" philosophy applied to every order, large or small.

Catalog: 248 published SKUs across 19 categories — men's, women's, kids', maternity & baby, knit accessories and pet knitwear. Available in EN, DE, ES and ZH on lcsweater.com.

Markets served: USA, Canada, Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, France, the United Kingdom and Italy.

Talk to our team

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If you're planning a real project around any of the points in this report, send a short brief — we'll come back within one business day with a practical direction, MOQ + lead time estimate, and a sample plan if it makes sense.