

# Retail Grocery Store Services

location, ownership, size, among factors determining whether self-service, clerk-service or combination is offered customers

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*The second of a series of reports of a survey of characteristics of retail grocery stores in five counties in California made cooperatively by the Departments of Home Economics, University of California, Berkeley and Davis, and by the United States Department of Agriculture under the authority of the Research and Marketing Act as part of Western Regional Research Project WM-26.*

**Services** made available to customers by retail grocery stores in California varied considerably in the 1,028 stores—in the five counties of Alameda, Butte, Fresno, Los Angeles, and San Diego—surveyed to determine the extent to which self-service, clerk-service, or both, telephone ordering service, delivery service, and credit were provided. The survey also recorded the characteristics—rural or urban location, shopping area, ownership, and size as indicated by number of equivalent full-time employees—of the stores offering the various services.

## Stores Classified

The stores were classified as those having self-service only, clerk-service only, or a combination of self- and clerk-service.

In four counties more than one half of the stores were self-service only and from one fifth to two fifths of the stores provided both self- and clerk-service. The exception was in Alameda County where about one fifth of the stores were self-service only while four fifths were both self- and clerk-service stores. However, in each of the five counties, fewer than one seventh of the stores had clerk-service only.

In the urban areas, the proportions of stores offering self-service only varied from 18% to 76% and from 0% to 67% in the rural areas. On the other hand, the proportions of urban stores offering clerk-service only varied from 0% to 11% while the variation among rural stores was from 0% to 19%. For stores offering both self- and clerk-service, the proportions ranged from 24% to 80% in the urban areas and from 21% to 100% in the rural areas.

Whether stores were located in downtown or in neighborhood-secondary shopping areas or whether they were isolated stores, the ranges in the proportion of stores which were self-service only, clerk-service only, and both self- and

clerk-service were similar. For the most part, from 10% to 88% of the stores in each type of shopping area were self-service only, and from 12% to 85% provided both self- and clerk-service. By comparison, 0% to 17% of the stores had clerk-service only.

Stores offering self-service only were relatively more numerous among chain stores—owned and operated as groups of two or more—than they were among stores owned and operated as single-unit, independent stores. The proportions of self-service only chain stores varied from 50% in Alameda County to 93% in Butte County and for independent stores, from 9% in Alameda County to 69% in San Diego County.

Conversely, the proportions of stores providing both self- and clerk-service varied from 24% in San Diego County to 89% in Alameda County for independents, and from 7% in Butte County to 41% in Alameda County for chains.

Sales Service of Surveyed Grocery Stores

County	Self-service only	Clerk-service only	Both services
	%	%	%
Butte .....	70.7	1.8	27.5
Fresno .....	60.2	13.4	26.4
San Diego ....	72.3	6.4	21.3
Alameda .....	17.7	1.8	80.5
Los Angeles ...	53.4	4.0	42.6

Stores with clerk-service only consisted of from 2% of the independent stores in Alameda and Butte counties to 15% in Fresno County. However, no chain stores were of the clerk-service only type.

In each county the proportion of self-service only stores was higher for independent stores affiliated with other independent stores for the purpose of engaging in cooperative activities of buying, advertising, and so forth than it was for nonaffiliated independent stores. From 21% to 84% of the affiliated stores as compared with from 4% to 64% of the nonaffiliated stores were of the self-service only type. Alameda County had the highest proportions of both groups of independent self-service only stores and San Diego County the lowest.

Stores offering clerk-service only were relatively more numerous among the nonaffiliated than among the affiliated independents. The proportions varied from

2% in Alameda County to 19% in Fresno County for the nonaffiliated stores, and from none in Butte and Fresno counties to 3% in Alameda and San Diego counties for the affiliated stores.

Stores providing both self- and clerk-service varied from 26% of the nonaffiliated stores in Fresno County to 94% in Alameda County, and from 13% of the affiliated stores in San Diego County to 77% in Alameda County.

## Store Size

Size of store, as indicated by number of equivalent full-time employees, was related to the extent to which services of clerks were or were not made available to customers.

Among the smaller stores relatively fewer provided self-service only than among the larger stores. Of the smaller stores, the proportions varied from 11% in Alameda County to 64% in Butte County for stores employing one or two equivalent full-time persons, and from 6% in Alameda County to 88% in San Diego County for those employing 3-6 persons. Of the larger stores, the proportions varied from 43% in Los Angeles County to 100% in San Diego County for stores with 7-14 employees, and from 60% in Fresno County to 100% in San Diego County of those with 15 or more employees.

However, among the smaller stores, relatively more provided combination self- and clerk-service than among the larger stores. From 25% of the stores that employed one or two persons in Fresno County to 87% in Alameda County, and from 12% of those that employed 3-6 persons in San Diego County to 91% in Alameda County were of the combination self- and clerk-service type. By comparison, in stores with 7-14 employees, the proportions of the combination type stores varied from none in San Diego County to 58% in Los Angeles County, and in stores with 15 or more employees the range was from none in San Diego County to 40% in Fresno County.

The clerk-service only type of store was found solely among the smaller stores; none of the stores employing seven or more persons provided clerk-service

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## ASPARAGUS

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in old ones. Additional tests will be necessary to determine the significance of this factor.

Robert A. Kepner is Professor of Agricultural Engineering, University of California, Davis.

Robert Cowden, Senior Laboratory Technician, and Tom Clarke, Engineering Aid, Agricultural Engineering, Davis, assisted in the tests reported in the above article. The K. R. Nutting Co. and Cochran Company, Inc., cooperated in the studies.

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Results of tests with the first model are described in CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURE for October, 1952, and September, 1954.

## GROCERY STORES

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alone. Of the smaller stores, from 2% of the stores with one or two employees in Alameda County to 21% in Fresno County, and from none of those with 3-6 employees in Butte and San Diego counties to 4% in Los Angeles County were of the clerk-service only type.

To be continued

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