



Who Shops for Groceries Online?

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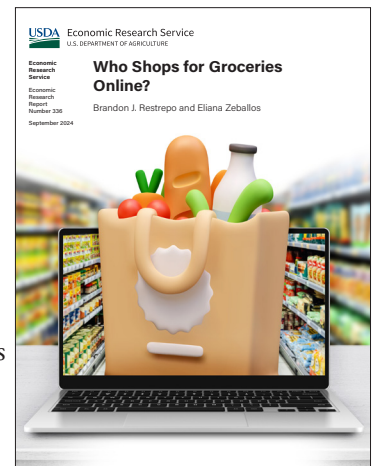
What Is the Issue?

U.S. consumers source the majority of daily calorie intake from home-prepared meals, but there is a rising trend in online grocery shopping among them. This surge gained momentum in 2020 because of social-distancing guidelines and stay-at-home orders issued in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and projections indicate continued growth. The expansion of online grocery shopping can impact the food retail landscape, food access, and purchase decisions. Previous research has indicated that preparing food at home tends to be healthier. USDA plays an important role in developing and promoting dietary guidelines, and has a goal to expand access to healthy foods that are essential to optimal health and well-being. The report presents the prevalence and frequency of online grocery shopping, methods of receiving groceries purchased online, primary motivators for U.S. consumers to purchase groceries online, and the consumer characteristics that change the participation and frequency of online grocery shopping.

What Did the Study Find?

In 2022, 19.3 percent of individuals aged 15 and older who were usually involved in at least a little of the grocery shopping in their household engaged in online grocery shopping at least once in the past month. Among those online shoppers, similar percentages opted for grocery pickup (49.1 percent) and home delivery (48.7 percent). The remaining 2.3 percent reported they evenly split obtaining groceries via pickups and deliveries. The top three reasons for shopping online that were named by respondents were:

- Time constraints (40.5 percent);
- Convenience (10.6 percent); and
- Physical safety concerns (6.6 percent).



ERS is a primary source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

Among nononline shoppers, the top three main reasons for not buying groceries online that were named by respondents were:

- Liking being able to see and touch products in person (47.4 percent);
- Not having access to the technology to place an order (5.2 percent); and
- Higher prices online (4.3 percent).

The report also found several large and statistically significant differences in online grocery shopping participation and frequency. These differences include: by age group, gender, presence of other household members, race/ethnicity, educational attainment, income eligibility for SNAP benefits, and how often respondents shop for groceries for their household. For example, online shopping participation was more likely among:

- Individuals aged 15–24 compared with those ages 55 and older (16 percentage points);
- Women compared with men (4 percentage points);
- People with a spouse or partner present versus unpartnered people (3 percentage points);
- Households with children under the age of 18 versus childless households or households with older children (4 percentage points);
- Non-Hispanic White shoppers versus non-Hispanic Black shoppers (4 percentage points) and other non-Hispanic shoppers (6 percentage points);
- People with a bachelor's degree versus those without a high school education (13 percentage points);
- Income ineligible SNAP nonparticipants versus income eligible SNAP nonparticipants (4 percentage points); and
- Individuals who did a lot or all the grocery shopping in the household versus those who did a little or some of the grocery shopping in the household (3 percentage points).

How Was the Study Conducted?

In this report, USDA, ERS researchers analyzed data on individuals aged 15 and older from the USDA's 2022 Eating and Health Module of the American Time Use Survey to achieve two objectives. First, the study generated nationally representative estimates of the prevalence of online grocery shopping in the past month, the frequency with which shoppers purchased groceries online, the methods by which shoppers received groceries purchased online, and the main reasons why shoppers bought groceries online versus in person. Second, USDA, ERS researchers performed a regression analysis to identify the socioeconomic characteristics that predict online grocery shopping participation and frequency in the past month.