

Who Does the Grocery Shopping, and When Do They Do It?

Jack Goodman
The Time Use Institute
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www.timeuseinstitute.org
jackgoodman@timeuseinstitute.org

Note: This paper updates the estimates first presented in a paper by this title in 2008. That version used data from 2004-2007, whereas this update uses data mostly from 2011-13. Most of the estimates are little changed, and all of the broad conclusions are the same as before. Both this version and the 2008 version are posted on www.timeuseinstitute.org

On a typical day, 33 million American adults shop at a grocery store – one out of every seven adults nationwide. A new survey provides a wealth of fresh information on the characteristics of these shoppers and of their trips to the store.

The American Time Use Survey (ATUS) asks a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults how they spend their time – minute by minute – over a 24-hour period. Of the 511 detailed activities recorded, one is “grocery shopping.” The estimates presented here are from the Time Use Institute, and unless otherwise specified are based on the 36,307 adults responding to the ATUS during 2011, 2012, and 2013. More information on the ATUS is given in the box at the end of this paper.

Who Does the Grocery Shopping?

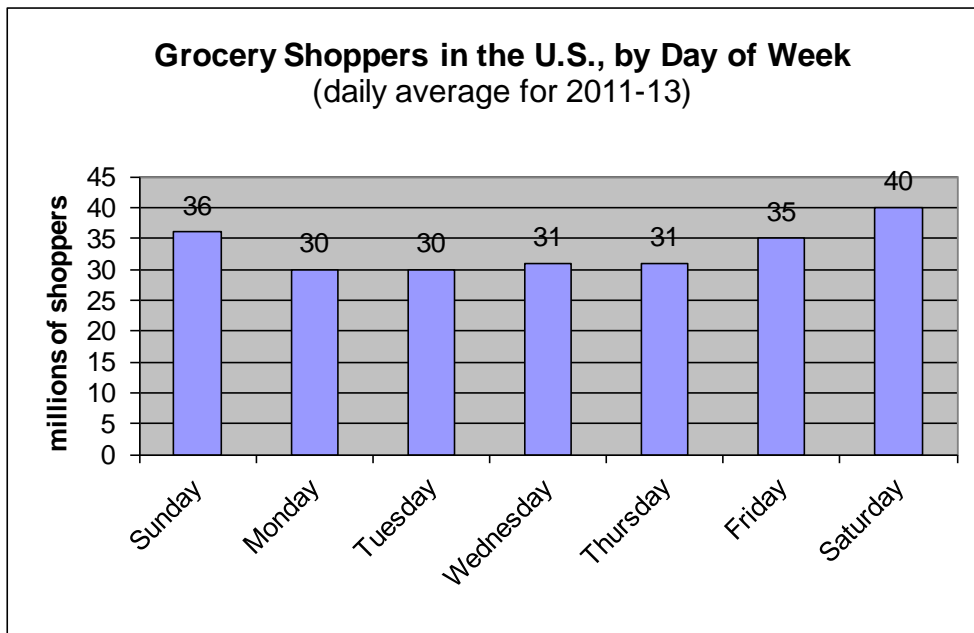
Compared with the overall U.S. adult population, grocery shoppers are a little older and much more likely to be female, as shown in the table on the next page. Women account for nearly two-thirds of all grocery shoppers. On a typical day 18 percent of all women go grocery shopping, compared with only 12 percent of men.

But in other respects – income, race and ethnicity, and even in weight -- grocery shoppers closely resemble the general population.

Grocery Shoppers: Who Are They?			
		<u>Grocery Shoppers</u>	<u>All U.S. Adults</u>
Median Age		48	44
% Female		61%	52%
Median Family Income		\$51,702	\$51,812
% Hispanic/Latino		14%	15%
% African American		11%	12%
Average Weight*			
	men	192 lbs	192 lbs
	women	155 lbs	155 lbs
		* weight statistics are for 2005-07	

When Do Grocery Shoppers Shop?

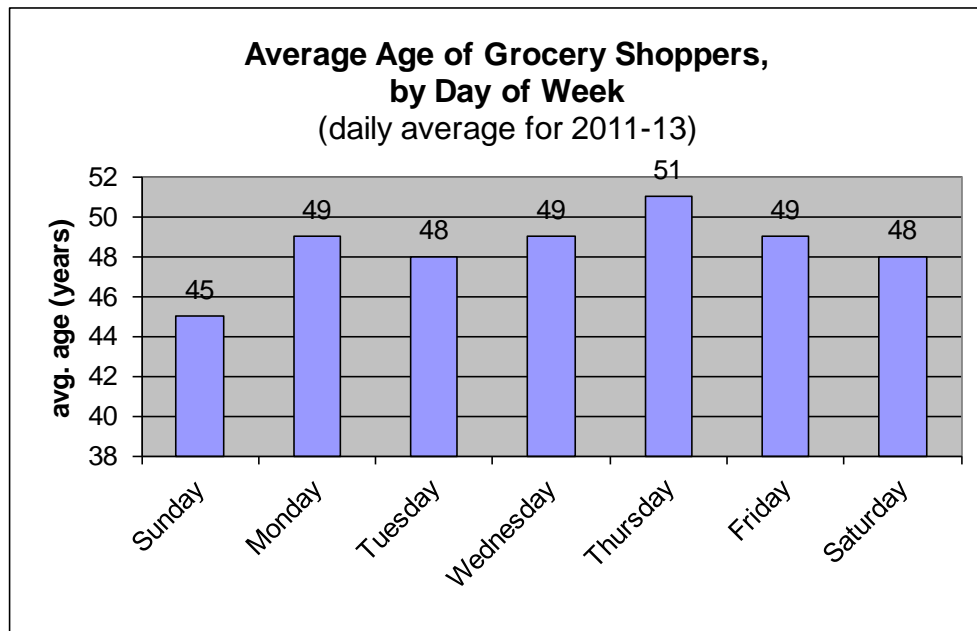
It will be no surprise to grocery store managers to see national documentation that Saturday is the busiest shopping day of the week, averaging 40 million shoppers. The next busiest days are Sunday and Friday, with Mondays and Tuesdays the least busy, averaging 30 million shoppers.



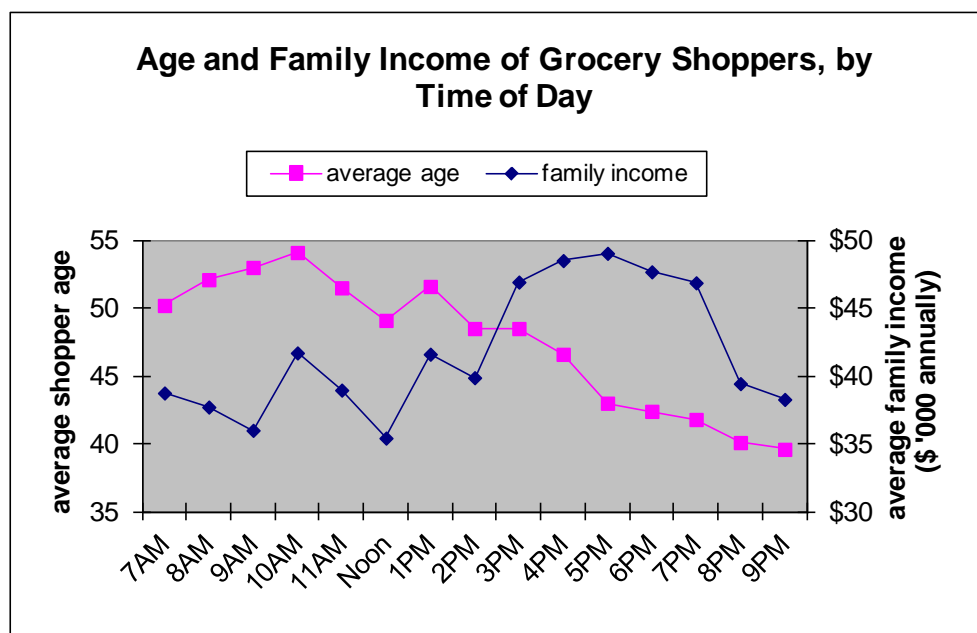
Men, more than women, do their grocery shopping on weekends. Thirty-six percent of all shopping trips by men come on Saturday or Sunday, compared with only 31 percent of the trips by women.



Shoppers on Sundays are noticeably younger than those on other days of the week. Sunday shoppers average only 45 years, way below the average age of 50 of Thursday shoppers.

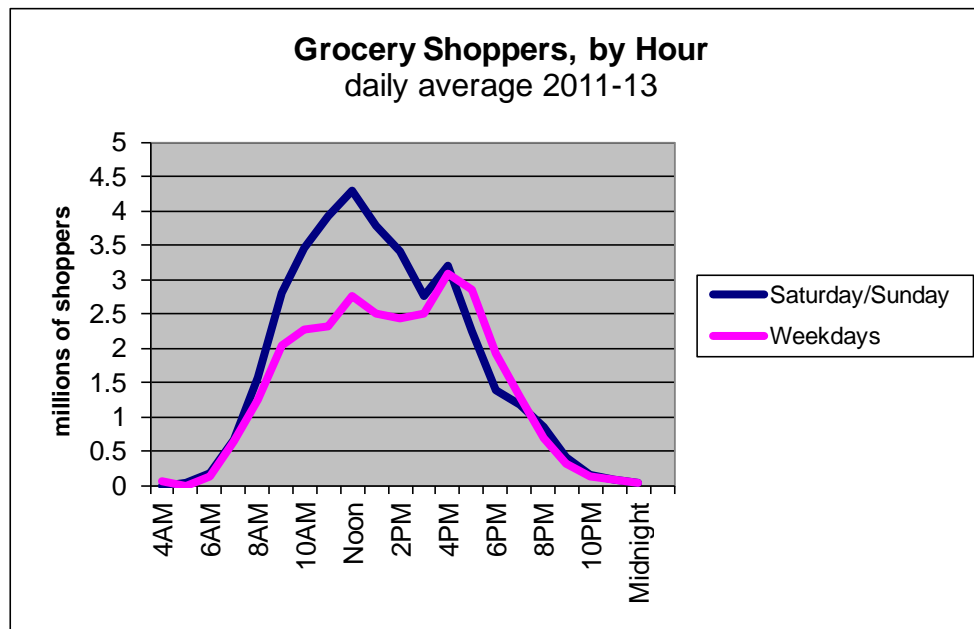


The profile of grocery shoppers also evolves over the course of the day. From mid-morning into the evening, the average age of shoppers declines, while their incomes rise. The average income of customers in stores is highest between 4PM and 7PM.



Peak Shopping Times During the Day

On weekdays, the busiest time at grocery stores is late afternoon. More shoppers arrive at the store between 4PM and 5PM than during any other hour of the day. On weekends, however, people start their errands earlier, with arrivals at grocery stores peaking between 11AM and 1PM but remaining elevated from mid-morning until late afternoon. On weekends, half of all grocery shopping trips begin before 12:20PM, whereas on weekdays half the shoppers have not arrived until 1:15PM.

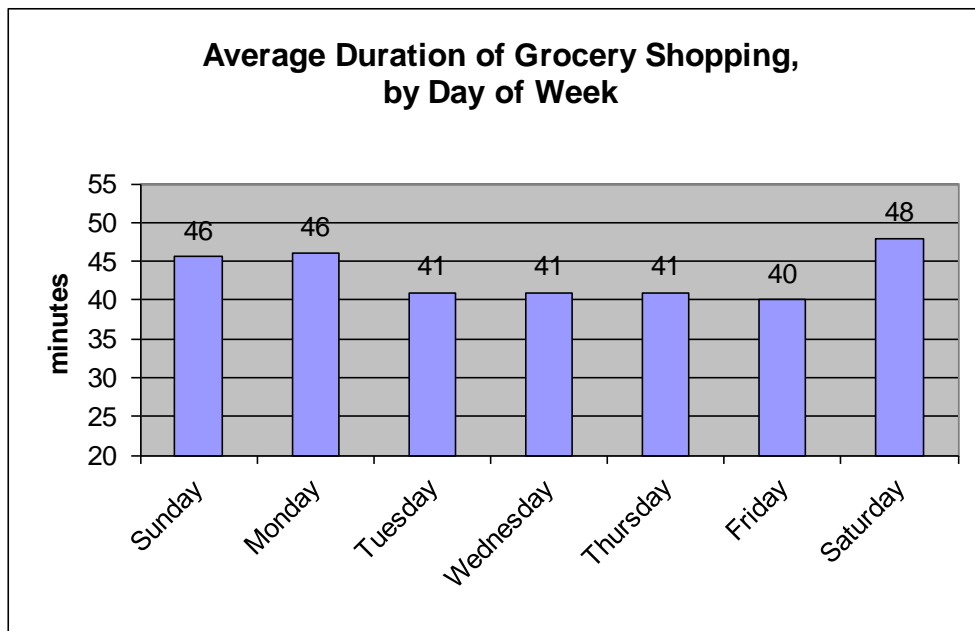


Who Spends the Longest in Grocery Stores?

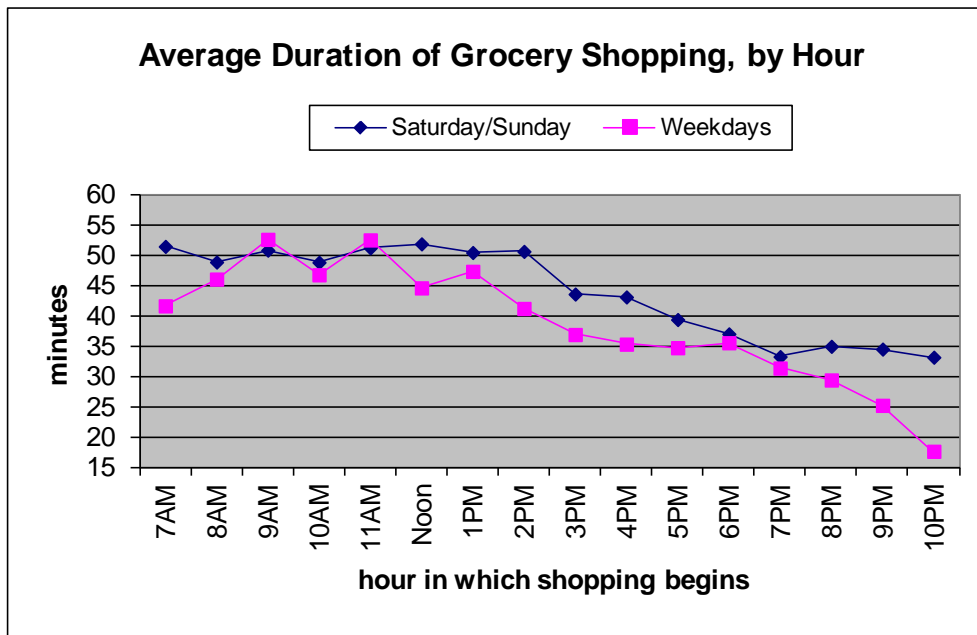
The average time spent grocery shopping – not including time spent getting to and from the store – is 43 minutes. Women spend a bit more time in the store than do men, and older adults and those with lower income also spend longer than others, although the differences across these market segments are not great.

Average Duration of Grocery Shopping	
	<u>Avg. Minutes Shopping</u>
<u>Sex</u>	
men	39
women	45
<u>Age</u>	
<30	41
30-54	43
55+	44
<u>Household Income</u>	
<\$50K	44
\$50K+	41

Not only are Saturday and Sunday the days with the most grocery shoppers, they are also the days when shoppers spend the most time in the store. The average shopping duration on weekends is 47 minutes compared with only 42 minutes on weekdays.

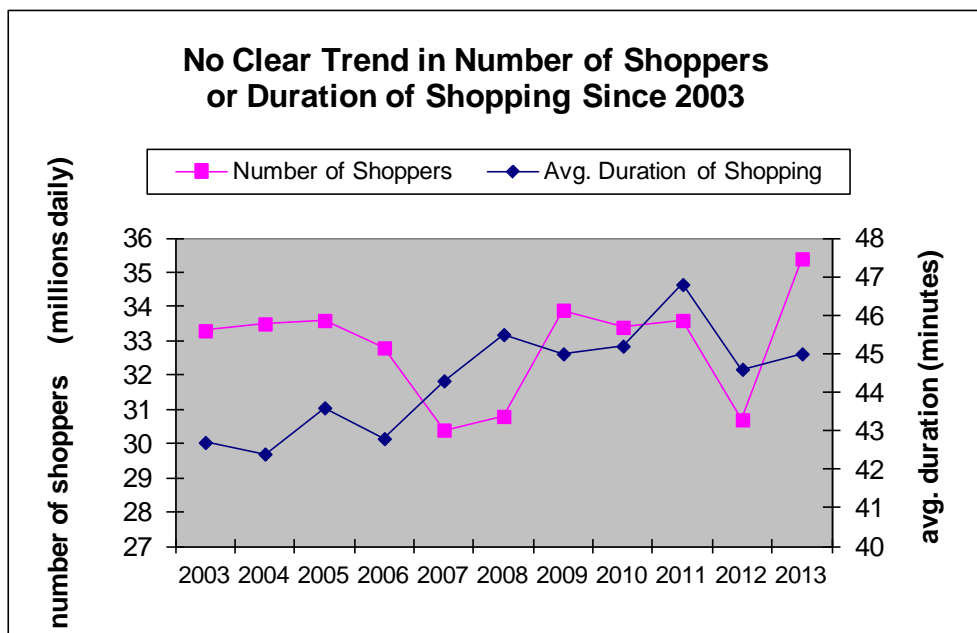


Both on weekdays and on the weekend, the longest shopping trips occur in the morning.



Changes in Grocery Shopping Since 2003

The annual estimates are based on smaller samples and bounce around some. That said, between 2003 and 2013 no clear trend is present in either the number of consumers going to a grocery store on an average day. Nor is there an obvious trend in the average duration of a trip to the grocery store, although the average duration from 2008 is about a minute longer than the average duration of 2003-07.



In Conclusion ...

The estimates presented here merely scratch the surface of the insights into consumer behavior available from the American Time Use Survey, the leading source of information on time use in the United States. The Time Use Institute was founded to promote business applications of the ATUS. More information on the Time Use Institute is available at www.timeuseinstitute.org. Its director, Jack Goodman, can be reached at jackgoodman@timeuseinstitute.org.

About the Data

Statistics presented in this report are estimates from the Time Use Institute derived from the American Time Use Survey (ATUS). Fielded annually beginning in 2003, the ATUS collects detailed information on time use over a 24-hour period from a national sample of U.S. adults age 15 and over. The survey is representative of all regions of the country, days of the week, and seasons of the year.

Most of the estimates presented in this report are from the combined 36,307 survey respondents from 2011, 2012, and 2013. Responses from these years are pooled to increase the sample size and the stability of the estimates. Of these respondents, 5,469 reported grocery shopping on the survey day. Some shoppers make more than one trip to the store in a day. On a typical day 33.2 million shoppers make 35.4 million trips, according to the ATUS. Most grocery shopping takes place in grocery stores: In 2011-13, 91.5% of all shopping activities occurred in grocery stores, 5.8% in other stores/malls, 0.9% from home, and 1.8% from all other locations. In this paper, most statistics refer to the number of shoppers, although the statistics regarding time of day refer to individual shopping trips.

The American Time Use Survey is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor and fielded by the U.S. Census Bureau. More information is available at www.bls.gov/tus