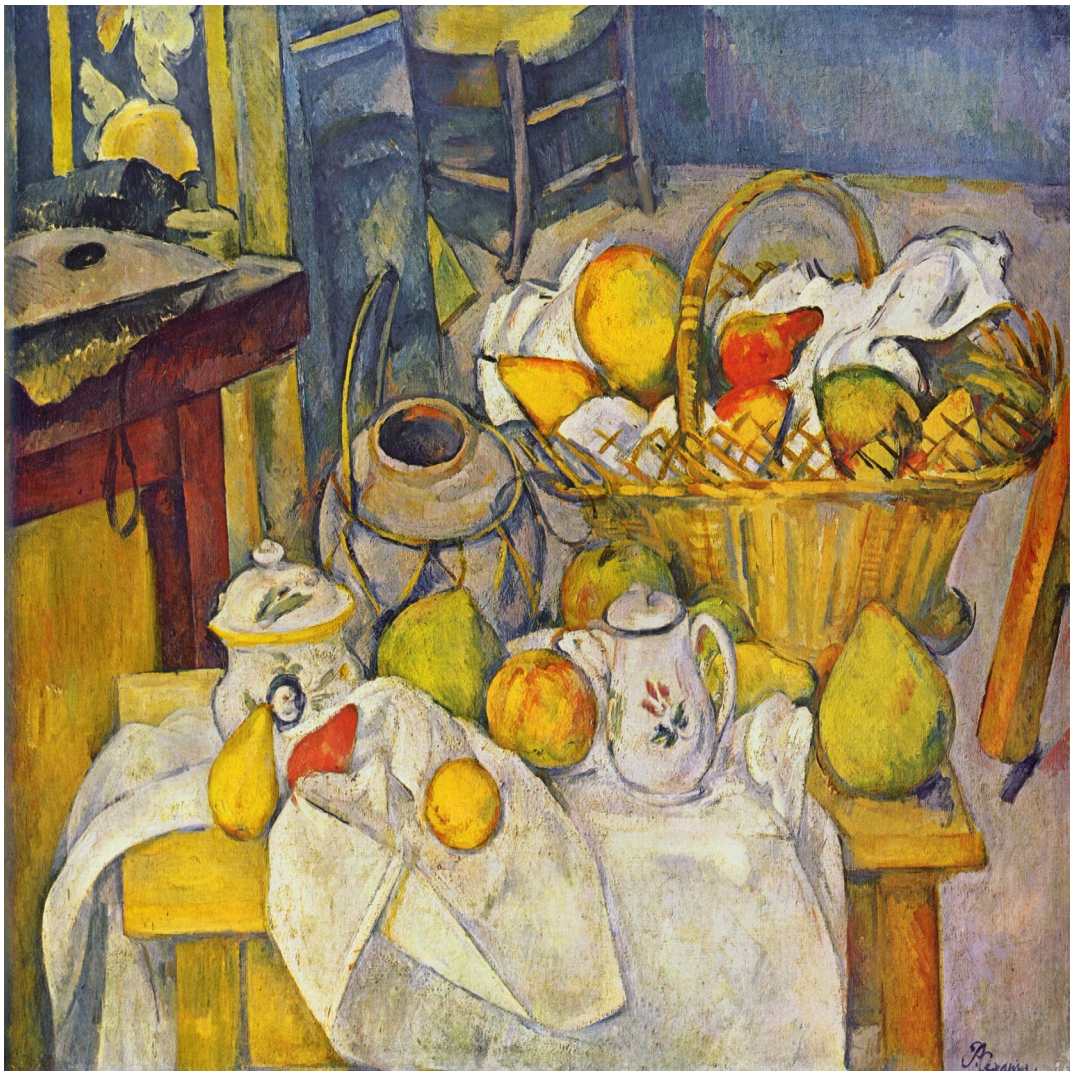

Paul Cezanne, Still life with basket (kitchen table), Musée d'Orsay, Paris, France

Hungry at the Table

White Paper on Grocery Workers at the Kroger Company

January 2022

ECONOMIC ROUNDTABLE
Knowledge for the Greater Good

This report has been prepared by the Economic Roundtable, which assumes all responsibility for its contents. Data, interpretations and conclusions contained in this report are not necessarily those of any other organization.

This report can be downloaded from the Economic Roundtable web site:
www.economicrt.org

Hungry at the Table

White Paper on Grocery Workers at the Kroger Company

January 2022

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Underwritten by
United Food and Commercial Locals 7, 21, 324, 770

Report available at: www.economicrt.org

Perhaps the World Ends Here

BY JOY HARJO
United States Poet Laureate

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.

It is here that children are given instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.

Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together once again at the table.

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table, and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

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Photo credit:
Denver Post

1. Executive Summary

Evidence about Wages and Working Conditions

"It is frustrating to work a full time job and not receive a living wage especially with all the abuse we receive from customers and since we are considered essential workers. It is insulting that we have worked through the pandemic, gotten sick with covid, have long-term effects from covid, and had to endure the abuse from customers without being compensated."

A Checkout Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

Not too long ago, getting a job at a major supermarket was an entry into the middle class. Most workers worked full-time. A job in the grocery industry meant that one could make ends meet, afford decent housing, provide adequate meals for one's family, even take a vacation and save some money for a rainy day. That is no longer the case, as this report documents.

The largest independent survey of retail workers that has ever been conducted in the United States provides the foundation for this report. It was carried out at the request of United Food and Commercial Workers locals 7, 21, 324, and 770 to provide reliable, evidence-based analysis about the working and living conditions of Kroger workers.

Three regions with 36,795 Kroger workers were surveyed: The Puget Sound region of Washington, the State of Colorado, and Southern California. Completed surveys were received from 10,287 workers for a 28 percent response rate.

The living and working conditions of Kroger workers have declined markedly over the past 20 years. Kroger's current low-wage, part-time workforce strategy relies on poorly-paid, part-time workers with constantly changing schedules.

Even though food surrounds Kroger grocery workers every hour on their job, *over three-quarters of Kroger workers are food insecure*, based on the U.S. Department of Agriculture food security assessment tool. These workers cannot afford balanced and healthy food. They run out of food before the end of the month, skip meals, and are hungry sometimes. Those with children report they go hungry to provide food and other essentials for their children. Kroger workers' exceptionally high rate of food insecurity is seven times greater than the U.S. average.

Workplace safety represents another crucial challenge for Kroger workers. We all must eat. Grocery stores have remained open and grocery workers continue to be the essential frontline workforce for providing food to their communities where the COVID pandemic has caused pervasive public apprehension about health risks, social isolation, financial uncertainty, and anxiety about obtaining food and household necessities.

Kroger management's cost-cutting practices have compromised personal, health and food safety in stores. Not surprisingly, workers report high rates of depression and anxiety resulting from their unsafe and insecure working conditions.

At the same time Kroger font-line jobs have declined from middle class to marginal poverty wage and working conditions, the company significantly grew its revenues, profits, and compensation for its top executives. In

addition, Kroger's buy-back stock practices have resulted in high returns to its stockholders. Meanwhile workers struggle with lower cost-of-living pay and challenging work requirements.

The data demonstrate that workers' financial distress, housing insecurity and food insecurity are not resulting from their personal failures but rather, from Kroger's companywide policies for cutting costs and increasing profits. These conditions are documented in this report.

Wages and Economic Conditions

Kroger is the only employer for 86 percent of their workers, making it their sole source of earned income. Working full-time to earn a living wage would require Kroger to pay $22 per hour for an annual living wage total of $45,760. The average annual earnings of Kroger workers, however, equal $29,655. This is $16,105 short of the annual income needed to pay for basic necessities required for the living wage.

More than two-thirds of Kroger workers struggle for survival due to low wages and part-time work schedules. Nine out of ten Kroger workers report that their wages have not increased as much as basic expenses such as food and housing have increase. Since 1990, wages for the most experienced Kroger food clerks have declined from 11 to 22 percent (adjusted for inflation) across the three regions surveyed. Across the entire grocery industry, 29 percent of the labor force is below or near the federal poverty threshold.

Nearly two-thirds of Kroger workers say they do not earn enough money to pay for basic expenses every month. Among the workers who are unable to afford necessities, 44 percent say they are unable to pay for rent and 39 percent say they are unable to pay for groceries. *Fourteen percent of Kroger workers are homeless now or have been homeless during the past year.*

A significant number of Kroger workers of all ages face economic hardship, but it is most prevalent among young workers. Among workers 21 to 29, 53 percent are unable to pay for rent.

More than two-fifths of Kroger workers report that in the past year, they had to borrow money from their family or friends to pay for basic expenses. There is no end in sight for most workers. More than nine out of ten say they will not have enough money to support themselves after they retire.

How can workers' living wage challenges be addressed? Many part-time workers reported that they would like to work more hours. Kroger workers' could be employed full-time at a minimum hourly wage of $22 Alternately, part-time workers, who currently average 1,560 annual

"They do not pay a salary to be able to survive in CA, they do not have emergency benefits, there is no possibility of moving up with an appropriate salary given the responsibilities that increase. I had to miss work because I had symptoms of COVID. They only paid me because we reminded them that under labor laws workers have to be rewarded."

A Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"Every day it's a struggle and the constant fear of getting fired is getting to me. I'm a single father and I live on pay check to pay check to make sure my kids eat. There be days were I would starve myself so that my kids can eat but even that's not enough. There's been times were I couldn't pay my rent and ended up on the street. Thankfully, I had my car so my family had some what a safe place to sleep."

A Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

working hours, could be paid a premium hourly wage of $29.33, for continuously changing schedules.

Food Insecurity

Kroger says that its purpose is to "feed the human spirit," but falls short in using its abundant food resources to meet the essential needs of its front-line employees. Kroger provides its employees a shallow and narrow discount of 10 percent on Kroger brand groceries, which excludes fresh produce. This discount falls far short of enabling employees and their families to eat healthy and balanced meals.

Among Kroger workers who are single parents, 85 percent are food insecure. This means that after their workday of putting food in the hands of other people, they return to their homes and are unable to provide the nutritious food that their children need to be healthy.

Food is part of a bundle of necessities that include transportation, apparel, utilities, housing, health care, and childcare. Workers who cannot afford other necessities – housing, clothing, and transportation – also cannot afford nutritious meals.

Housing and Homelessness

Fourteen percent of Kroger workers are homeless now or have been homeless during the past year. The rate of homelessness decreases as earnings increase. However, because Kroger's wage structure is depressed and part-time employment is so prevalent, homelessness still occurs among workers in the top wage bracket. Even among full-time employees, nine percent have experienced homelessness.

Thirty-six percent of Kroger workers say that they worry about being evicted. Concern about eviction increases with age until workers are in their mid-fifties. This corresponds with the years when workers are most likely to have children in their households.

At the time of the survey during the summer of 2021, 18 percent of Kroger workers had not paid the previous month's rent or mortgage on time. Over a quarter of Kroger workers have no confidence or only slight confidence that they will be able to pay their next rent or mortgage payment on time. This kind of housing insecurity is greatest among young, part-time employees with low hourly wages, and among African American, Native American and Latino workers. But even 15 percent of full-time employees couldn't pay the rent or mortgage bill.

Forty-four percent of Kroger workers live in inadequate housing. This includes doubling up with another family or unrelated individual, living in a unit that is too small for the household and being overcrowded,

multigenerational housing where grandparents and parents live with their adult children, and homelessness.

Workload and Schedule

Less than a quarter of Kroger workers think the company is headed in the right direction. The most senior workers, who are the backbone of Kroger's workforce, voice the strongest critical assessments.

Seventy-three percent of Kroger workers say they are not fairly compensated based on their experience and the work that they do. Even though most of them rely on Kroger as their sole source of income, two-thirds of Kroger workers say that working for Kroger is a short-term job rather than a career opportunity because of low pay and short staffing at stores.

Company labor policies are responsible for workers' frustrations. Two-thirds of workers report that Kroger has increased the amount of work that they have to complete during their shift. Over three quarters of workers say that there are not enough workers at their store to provide good customer service, and that are not able to complete all of the assigned tasks at their store.

Kroger's just-in-time scheduling practices cause additional insecurity, with detrimental impacts for childcare or those seeking additional, part-time employment elsewhere to supplement Kroger's pay. Over half of Kroger workers have work schedules that change at least every week, and 13 percent have schedules that change every day. A quarter of workers are told about schedule changes the same day or only one day in advance. Another one-third get 2 to 5 days' notice of schedule changes. Only 16 percent of workers have schedules that do not change.

Kroger's labor force clearly recognizes that the unpredictable schedule and intense work demands make it difficult for workers to fulfill their responsibilities as family members (including as parents) and as workers. Workers strongly back the idea that Kroger should support their co-workers who are parents by subsidizing the cost of childcare.

Turnover at Kroger is high. The number of workers leaving Kroger has increased four-fold since the onset of COVID. Departures are caused by workers' safety concerns and desire for better opportunities.

Workplace Safety, Fairness and Respect

Most Kroger workers are proud of the work they do but feel that the company underpays and disrespects them. As a result, the longer employees

"I want to know why big wigs and store managers are making 6 FIGURE incomes and getting major bonuses on top of that, while I'm stuck at 19$ an hour and barely making rent on top of my other bills. FYI the average household needs to be making over 30 bucks an hour here in Colorado. No my wages have not gone up. Yes, I've had to ask for help for rent because I can't save for anything."

A Produce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

work at Kroger, the more critical they are of the company's practices toward workers and consumers.

"The Kroger CEO was given $22,400,000 this year, while worker bonuses and hazard pay were constantly either being cut or threatened. Employees at some points had no basic supplies including paper towels and Band-Aids. The company was making money hand over fist and did everything in its power to screw lower level employees in the middle of a pandemic."

A Section Lead at Fred Meyer in Washington

The COVID pandemic has impacted frontline grocery workers through direct infection and through disruption of civility in grocery stores. Kroger workers feel physically unsafe at work. Especially during the pandemic, workers had to deal with angry and abusive customers and people with erratic behavior within the store.

Despite widespread evidence of greater needs, Kroger has failed to provide adequate security and staffing in the stores. Workers report that inadequate staffing results in unfinished food handling and cleaning work. These staffing shortfalls reduce the quality of food and services and jeopardizes the health and safety of customers.

Over two-thirds of the workers report having difficult experiences with customers during the pandemic. The most frequent problems were customers who refused to wear masks, were verbally abusive, or refused to maintain social distance. A quarter of Kroger workers were confronted by customers who threatened violence, and over a fifth had violent incidents in their store.

According to Kroger workers, store managers did not support workers in a majority of the cases where workers were confronted by abusive or violent customers. Workers report that the overriding management priority during the COVID pandemic has been to maximize store sales over employee safety.

Workers also feel vulnerable to getting COVID. Workers complain that Kroger has failed to enforce well-recognized health standards, such as social distancing and mask wearing among customers.

Workplace stress has a direct impact on the emotional well-being of workers. Over three-quarters of Kroger workers say that their workplace stress follows them home in the form of ongoing depression and anxiety.

A third of workers say that managers change work schedules to retaliate against workers who they do not like. Over a fifth of workers who report such retaliatory management practices are, or recently have been, homeless. This suggests that loss of earnings as a result of arbitrary reductions in hours of work causes some workers to become homeless.

Nearly half of Kroger workers report that store managers unfairly treat some workers better than others. Workers say that managers are not held accountable for their wrongdoing and favoritism.

Despite all these challenges the share of workers who express pride in their work increases with age and seniority. Two-thirds of workers say what they like best about the job at their store is their co-workers. The bond that workers build among themselves as they cooperate to solve problems

on the job and withstand economic adversity outside the job represents a rewarding and sustaining outcome from their work at Kroger. These findings suggest that with living wage pay and adequate workplace staffing, Kroger could build a strong and loyal workforce.

Kroger Company

Kroger is the largest supermarket chain in the United States and one of the largest corporations in terms of revenues ($132.5 billion, #17) and employees (465,000, #4). It earned $4.05 billion in operating profits in 2020. Unlike many other companies, Kroger has prospered during the COVID-19 pandemic as consumers spent more money buying food in grocery stores (in-person and on-line) and less money in restaurants.

Kroger has not shared the corporation's prosperity with its front-line employees. Food clerks with the most seniority and at the top of their wage scale have seen a significant decrease in their real wages. A similar pattern of wage stagnation and decline has been the reality for other Kroger front-line workers.

The pay for Kroger's CEO has increased 296 percent over the past decade and is now 909 times greater than the median pay for company employees. This is one of the largest CEO-worker pay gaps of any major American company. As Kroger's stock price increased, the company recently adopted a stock buyback program that enriched its largest shareholders rather than invest in its front-line workers.

For two months at the start of the pandemic, Kroger provided its front-line grocery store employees with additional pay, but after two months withdrew that extra pay just as the pandemic conditions were getting worse. When local governments proposed mandating such "hazard pay" to reflect the harmful and arduous conditions facing grocery workers, Kroger forcefully opposed these laws, lobbying elected officials to vote against them, just as Kroger has fought efforts by local and state governments to raise the minimum wage.

Kroger's business practices alienate and frustrate its front-line employees and thus undermine the personal ties between workers and consumers. Their treatment of workers is not sustainable in the long run. Kroger has the resources to do better. It can become a more responsible employer by investing in its employees and its communities.

"They are a well-known corrupt company sitting on a net worth of $34.57 billion and refusing every day to pay their employees a few more dollars an hour. When you work hard, more work is forced onto you, with no help offered. You are expected to work impossible tasks in the shift you are given. Kroger is a miserable company."

A Coffee Bar Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Economic Benefits of a Living Wage for Kroger Workers

Raising the minimum hourly wage and scheduled hours for front-line Kroger workers to provide annual earnings of at least $45,760 a year will

generate $624 million more in annual earnings for workers represented by the four UFCW locals that participated in this study. This will create two waves of economic multiplier impacts in those geographic regions.

The first wave of impacts will be from this increase in their spending power, which will create 6,573 new year-round jobs and $1.2 billion in added local sales in Denver, Seattle, Los Angeles County, and Orange County, and their surrounding areas.

These wage increases will reduce workers' dependence on the social safety net. A consequence of low wages is that taxpayers are subsidizing Kroger by providing vital financial assistance to its low-paid employees. After the increase to a living wage, public assistance outlays in the four regions covered by this study will decrease by $68 million. This includes federal-funded, locally administered SNAP, Medicaid and cash aid benefits.

The second wave of impacts will come from a wage bump for grocery workers who already an annual living wage above $45,760 per year but whose pay will be increased to prevent wage compression with lower-paid workers when their wage is raised. Their aggregate raise of $127 million will support an additional 1,341 new local, year-round jobs and $249 million in added local sales in the four areas represented in this study.

"Once upon a time I enjoyed my job. Now it is a constant struggle to even get out of bed to go to work. I am on antidepressants because of my job. I have eaten unhealthy food and gained weight from the stress of my job. I am constantly worried about retaliation if I ask for time off. I have not taken a real vacation in years because no one at work can do what I can."

A Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

Occupation and Skill Change in the Grocery Industry

Grocery stores are a growing industry, and should be expanding their benefits and training for employees who are supporting that growth. Expenditures for groceries in the United States have grown one percentage point a year over the past 20 years. As a result, overall grocery sales in the U.S., adjusted to 2020 dollars, increased from $536 billion in 2000 to $649 billion in 2020.

These increased sales have been supported by increased productivity. A quarter of a million dollars of groceries are now sold annually for every grocery worker.

The occupations employed in grocery stores are steadily changing. The number of grocery store cashiers has declined 18 percent in the past 20 years. This decline has been offset by growth in food preparation, nonfood merchandise sales and customer service jobs.

Grocery industry employment is projected to decline eight percent over the next decade. A significant part of this decline will be loss of cashier jobs, which are projected to shrink by 17 percent.

Changes in the occupational composition of the grocery industry indicate that stores are relying less on personal salesmanship and more on merchandising, including on-line shopping. The next generation of grocery workers will require even more skills. Grocery workers report

seeing their jobs moving increasingly toward functioning within complex systems that require critical thinking, coordination with other workers, budgeting time, system monitoring, comprehending written information, and assessing the costs and benefits of different courses of action.

Private-Public Actions to Reduce Food Insecurity

All American metropolitan areas have "food deserts" – areas without full-service grocery stores. As a result, residents of these communities buy most of their food as convenience stores, where prices are high, the choices are few, the food is less healthy (filled with more sugar), the milk and other items are often out-of-date, and there is little fresh produce. This is a major cause of higher rates of obesity and poor health in America's low-income neighborhoods. America's largest grocery chains, including Kroger, have abandoned many of the nation's low-income areas. One measure of this scarcity is that poorer households have fewer square feet of grocery store footprint per capita than households that are more affluent.

Public actions to promote greater access to healthy foods tend to subsidize existing grocery chain businesses through loans and grants, plus the buying power of SNAP benefits received by low-income shoppers. The vision for these programs needs to expand to include sustainable terms of employment for grocery workers.

Kroger receives government subsidies for building its warehouses and grocery stores. Government subsidies for Kroger should be linked to its investments in low-income areas that lack sufficient grocery options – food deserts. If Kroger and other major grocery chains fail to locate stores in these low-income areas, there are alternative ways to eliminate food deserts. Community-owned, consumer-owned, and employee-owned nonprofit food cooperatives offer another model for distributing fresh food. Food co-ops have succeeded in urban and rural settings for decades. With public support, food cooperatives can also offer a better standard for grocery worker jobs, especially if employees are unionized. As a condition of opening stores in more affluent areas, Kroger should be required to provide financial assistance to food cooperatives that provide a diversity of healthy and affordable food and pay living wages.

In a growing number of cities, Food Policy Councils are hubs for the healthy food systems advocacy, and sometimes organized under the auspices of local government. They are often the best "big tent" for unifying food diverse regional constituents, such as social justice advocates and organized labor, food and nutrition advocates, public agencies, large institutions (such as school districts and hospitals), and environmental and public health advocates. Labor unions should be active participants in these efforts to ensure food integrity, including improving regional food systems and making grocery store jobs more sustainable.

"I'm perpetually stuck here where I can't afford anything and food prices and rent just keep going up. Sooner rather than later my family might have to move in with my parents or my in laws."

A Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

"I make less than rent after taxes. Kroger makes billions in profits while we are told to speed up but given too few hours to adequately complete all of our tasks each day. With unpredictable schedules it is impossible to budget or save money or even to consistently pay bills on time."

A Meat Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

Recommendations

1. Increase the minimum pay for Kroger workers to $45,760 a year through labor negotiations or action by state and local governments.
2. Provide immediate housing assistance for Kroger employees who are experiencing homelessness or face the threat of eviction.
3. Double the share of Kroger workers who have full-time jobs from 30 percent to 60 percent.
4. Provide a 50 percent discount on all groceries for Kroger workers to end their food insecurity.
5. Provide childcare subsidies for Kroger employees' who have children younger than 12 years of age.
6. Provide at least one weeks' notice of schedule changes for part-time Kroger workers. If this advance notice is not given, provide overtime pay for the hours worked on short notice.
7. Add two positions to Kroger's Board of Directors for Kroger's unionized employees, elected by workers. In addition, create regional worker representative committees, with members selected by the unions that represent the largest share of front-line Kroger employees. These committees will collect data from represented workers, anecdotally and through an annual survey that is reported to Kroger's Board of Directors and at the annual shareholder meeting.
8. Amend guidelines for the SNAP program (food stamps) to require a living wage for grocery workers at stores that accept SNAP benefits.
9. Provide public support for food cooperatives that pay living wages in neighborhoods that are under-served by grocery chains and require Kroger to contribute financial assistance to these co-ops as a condition of getting tax breaks, zoning approvals, and other forms of government subsidies and relief.
10. Promote food policy councils as "big tent" venues for addressing food integrity issues and unifying food diverse regional constituents, including social justice advocates and organized labor, food and nutrition advocates, public agencies, large institutions (such as school districts and hospitals), and environmental advocates.

Photo credit: Reddit

2. Investigating a Disrupted Company

"Going to work is stressful now and it's sad that no one wants to come to work. The morale sucks and it is very sad to see all the associates complain. Yes, it is our job to come to work and work, but we work hard and we deserve sometimes to be appreciated. Kroger makes a lot of money and they act like our work isn't worth a raise or even to show us appreciation. That's not fair."

A Food Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

Introduction

We all must eat. Offices, schools, churches, restaurants, hotels, retail stores gyms, airplanes, and public roads have become eerily empty during much of the COVID pandemic. But grocery stores have remained open as centers of community life and, too often, of anxiety and disorder.

The grocery industry was already upended by e-commerce and aggressive efforts to cut costs in order to increase profits before the onset of the COVID pandemic. For Kroger workers, the pandemic caused pervasive apprehension about health risks, social isolation, financial uncertainty, and anxiety about obtaining food and household necessities. Grocery workers were, and continue to be, the essential frontline workforce for providing food and handling public disquietude.

The mass shooting on March 22, 2021, at Kroger's King Soopers supermarket in Boulder, Colorado that took the lives of 10 people underscores a new layer of vulnerability for millions of grocery workers, many already overwhelmed after taking on bigger workloads, longer hours and heightened health risks in the first and second year of the pandemic.

The COVID pandemic has made the essential work done by grocery workers and the risks they face more visible to the public, elected officials and the union leaders who represent them. Because of the difficult working and living experiences of their members, leaders of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) locals 7, 21, 324, and 770 commissioned the Economic Roundtable to conduct an independent survey of their 36,795 members who are employed at Kroger grocery stores.

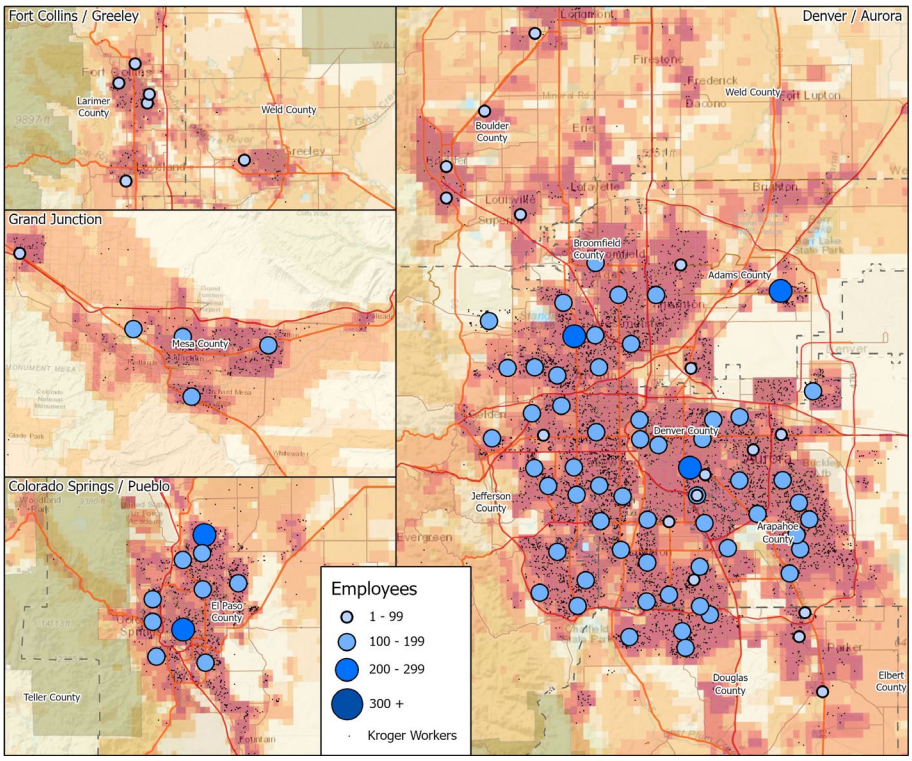
The Roundtable has completed independent, reliable, evidence-based research to support public policies and union decisions for ensuring that grocery workers have fair, safe and sustainable jobs. These four UFCW locals represent workers in Los Angeles and Orange counties in Southern California, the Puget Sound region of Washington and the State of Colorado.

This is the largest independent survey of retail workers that has been conducted in the United States, with responses from 10,287 workers. This is a 28 percent response rate. Workers were powerfully motivated to tell their stories. Ninety-six percent of respondents completed the entire 74-question survey and a majority provided additional open-ended comments. The survey was conducted at 401 stores. There was a 100 percent response rate from stores, with workers from every store responding to the survey.

Profile of Kroger Workers

On a given day there are 36,795 workers employed at 401 Kroger grocery stores in the four regions covered by this study.

Figure 1: Kroger Stores in the State of Colorado, Represented by UFCW Local 7



5 City Market stores
102 King Sooper stores

Maps

The locations of the 401 Kroger grocery stores that were surveyed are shown on the maps in *Figures 1 to 3*. UFCW Local 7 covers the state of Colorado and part of Southern Wyoming (*Figure 1*).

Local 21 covers the Puget Sound region in Washington, extending from Seattle to the Canadian border (*Figure 2*).

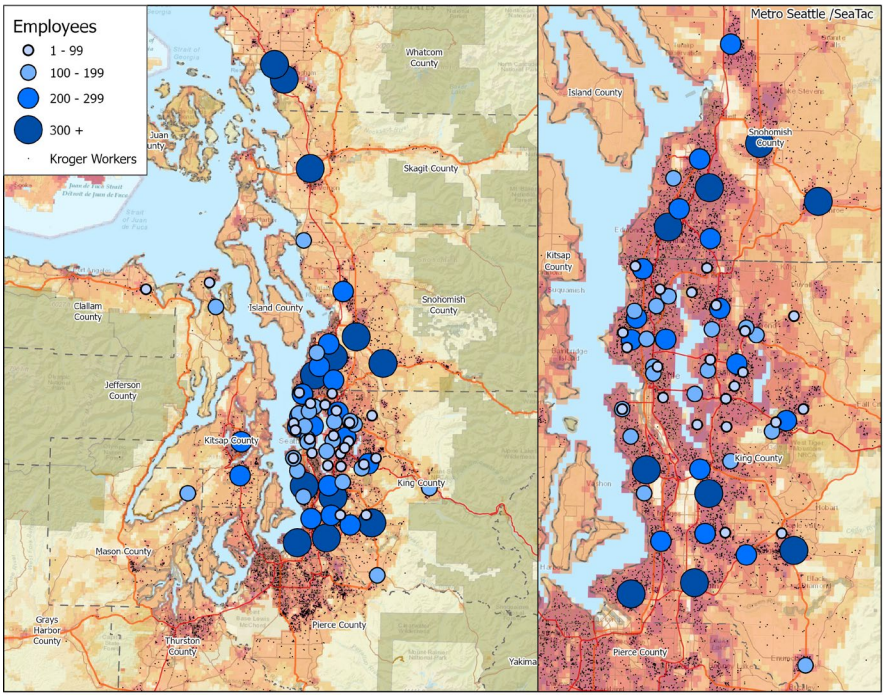
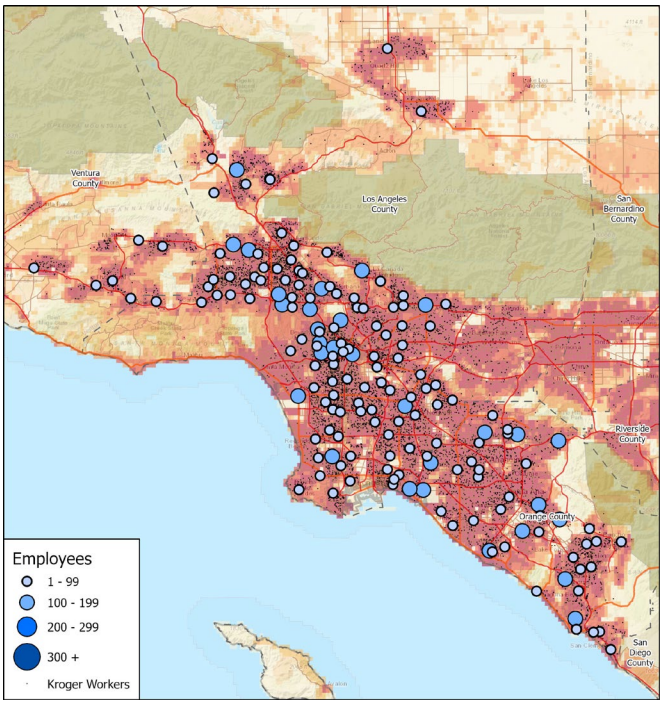


Figure 2: Kroger Stores in the Puget Sound Region, State of Washington, Represented by UFCW Local 21

33 Fred Meyers stores
54 Quality Food Centers

Figure 3: Kroger Stores in Southern California, Represented by UFCW Locals 324 and 770



Local 324 represents:

- **17 Food 4 Less stores**
- **49 Ralphs stores**

Local 770 represents:

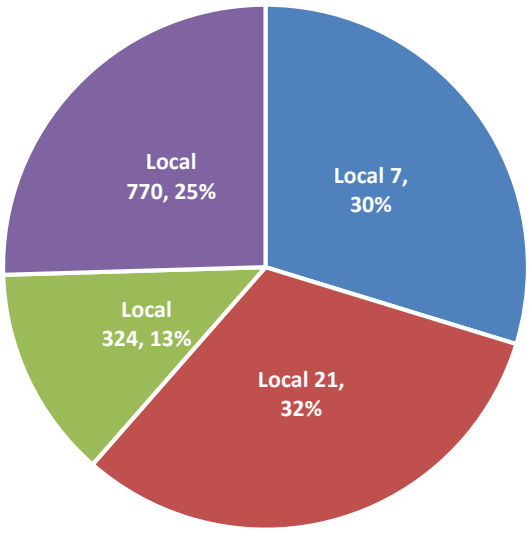
- **38 Food 4 Less stores**
- **102 Ralphs stores**

Locals 324 and 770 are contiguous and cover much of Southern California (*Figure 3*). Local 324 covers Orange County and the Long Beach area of Los Angeles County. Local 770 covers the balance of Los Angeles County, Ventura County and Santa Barbara County.

Union Locals

The share of Kroger workers represented by each of the four UFCW locals is shown in *Figure 4*. The largest share, 32 percent, is represented by Local 21 in the Puget Sound region. The smallest share, 13 percent is represented by Local 324 in the greater Orange County region.

Figure 4: Number of Workers and Children in Households of Kroger Workers



Source: Membership records of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Kroger Brands

Eight Kroger brands are covered by this study. In Colorado there are two brands, City Market and King Sooper, with a third brand, Smiths, in Southern Wyoming.

In the Puget Sound region, there are two brands, Fred Meyers and Quality Food Centers.

In Southern California, there are three brands, Ralphs, Food 4 Less and Food Co.

The share of the Kroger workforce in this study that is employed by each brand is shown in *Figure 5*.

Wage Levels

The wage distribution of Kroger workers, in rough quintiles, is shown in *Figure 6*.

Workers in the study are employed in four states and 20 counties, and covered by contracts with each store brand. The varying coverage and levels of minimum wage legislation together with wage differences among store brands results in different levels of pay in different regions for the same job.

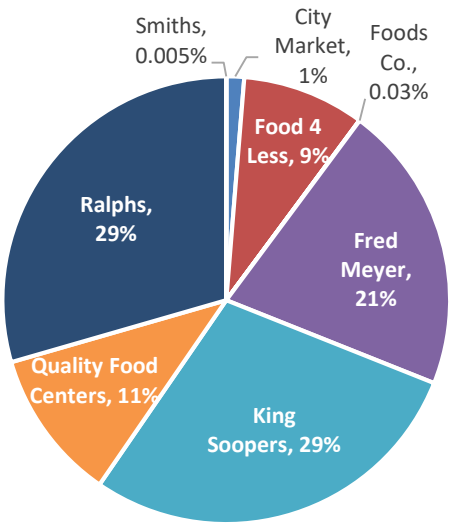
The bottom wage quintile of Kroger workers is paid $11.10 to $14.30 an hour. The top wage quintile is paid $21.61 and more.

Seniority

Over a fifth of workers have been on the job for less than one year, and almost a fifth for just one year, as shown in *Figure 7*.

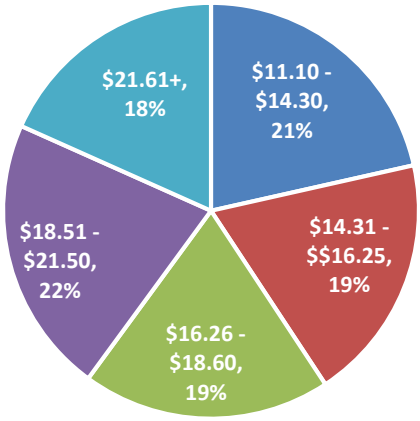
In contrast to these newcomers, another large

Figure 5: Share of Workers Employed by Kroger Brands Covered in Study



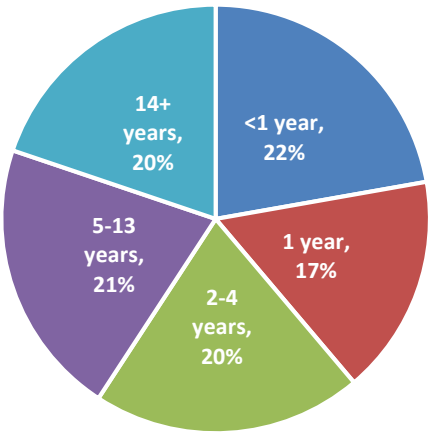
Source: Membership records of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 6: Wage Level of Workers in Study



Source: Membership records of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 7: Seniority Level of Workers in Study



Source: Membership records of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

"I have anxiety and fear going to work because of the bomb threat in January 2021 and the man with the knife in the store this month. I am extremely uncomfortable working at Fred Meyer because of these instances. I feel vulnerable and threatened. I am looking for another job because of these circumstances."

A Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

block of workers has long-term employment connections with Kroger. Over a fifth have been with the company for 5 to 13 years, and another fifth have been with the company for 14 or more years.

Differences in seniority affect workers' pay level, their level of commitment to the job and their view of changes that have occurred at Kroger.

Gender

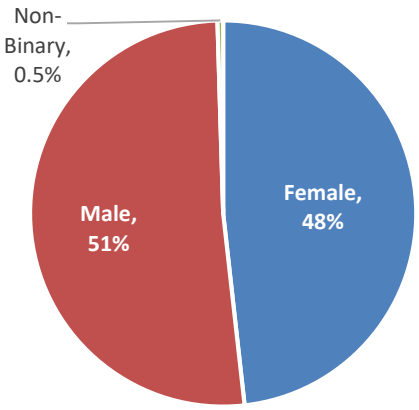
Slightly more than half of Kroger workers (51 percent) are men and slightly less than half (48 percent) are women. Less than 1 percent are known to have a non-binary gender identity (we include transgender individuals in this category). This breakout is shown in *Figure 8*.

Age

The age distribution of Kroger workers, in rough quintiles, is shown in *Figure 9*. Almost a fifth are 20 years of age or younger, many of whom are living with their parents and still in school.

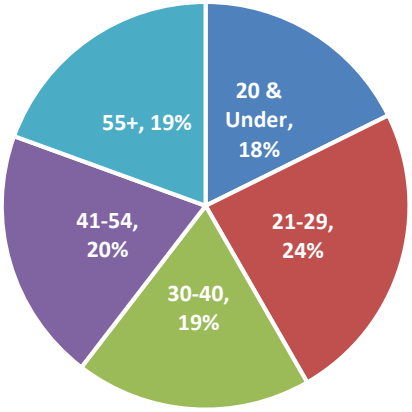
Older workers, 55 years of age or more, make up almost a fifth of workers and usually have more seniority.

Figure 8: Gender



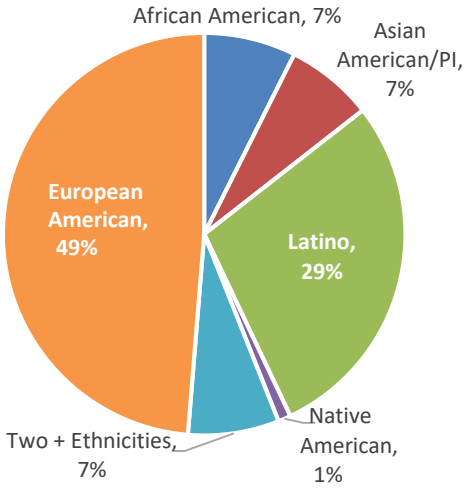
Source: Membership records of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 9: Age



Source: Membership records of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 10: Ethnicity



Source: Membership records of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770 and survey responses.

Ethnicity

Almost half (49 percent) of Kroger workers in the study are European American (White). The next largest ethnic group, encompassing over a quarter (29 percent) of workers, is Latino. This is followed by three groups that each represent seven percent of workers: African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and individuals with two or more ethnicities in their background. Native Americans make up one percent of workers. This ethnic distribution is shown in *Figure 10*.

Survey of Kroger Workers

The survey questions were based on issues raised by multiple focus groups with workers in each region and then refined through pilot tests. The English version of the survey was translated into Spanish. The survey was conducted through an internet platform with separate sites for the English and Spanish-translated versions. Workers provided informed consent before taking the survey, after which they provided their employee identification number. This was used to verify that they were Kroger employees and to prevent duplicate responses. The survey questionnaire is shown in the *Appendix*.

Survey respondents skewed slightly toward workers with more seniority and women. Responses were weighted to be representative of the overall survey population of 36,795 workers. The weighting methodology and profiles of survey respondents and the total labor force are included in the *Appendix*.

Scope of Report

Results from the survey of Kroger workers are provided in the following five chapters with findings about:

- Wages and Economic Conditions
- Food Security
- Housing and Homelessness
- Workload and Schedule
- Fairness and Respect

The four chapters that follow draw on information from records of the Kroger Company and government data:

- Economic Impacts of Living Wages for Kroger Workers
- Food Scarcity and Public Actions to Ensure Food Security
- Occupational and Skill Change in the Grocery Industry
- Kroger Company Profile

"Our workforce is almost nonexistent. How we are even operating? There are too many customers for us to handle safely and responsibly, but that's how Kroger wants it. More profit. Our team is overworked and the turnover is insane."

A Checkout Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

The report concludes with recommendations for making grocery jobs fairer, safer and more sustainable.

"So many incidents, so much theft, don't feel safe. Why doesn't Kroger value the lives of their employees? We need security guards at the doors!"

A File Maintenance Clerk working at Fred Meyer in Washington

"When my store manager asked us to simply remove a moldy strawberry from a piece of cake and then to place it back into the case to be sold, it was clear he did not care about the well-being of customers or us and just wanted the sale. To put someone in jeopardy for $3.99??? Ridiculous."

An Assistant Bakery Manager at Ralphs in Southern California

Customers are really hard on the employees and being short staffed every single day doesn't help the customers emotions.

A Deli Manager at King Soopers in Colorado

Afraid of catching covid every single day.

An All Purpose Clerk at Food 4 Less in Southern California

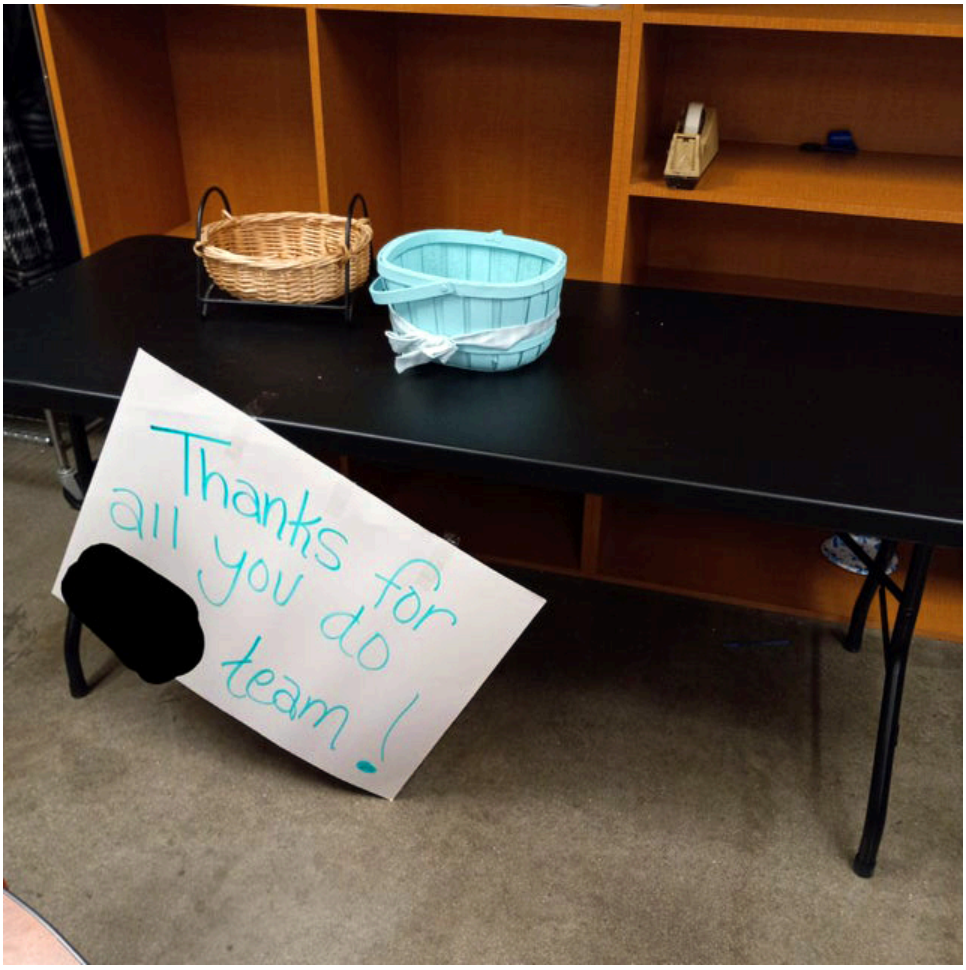


Photo credit: [Reddit]

3. Wages and Economic Conditions

Wage and Earnings Gap

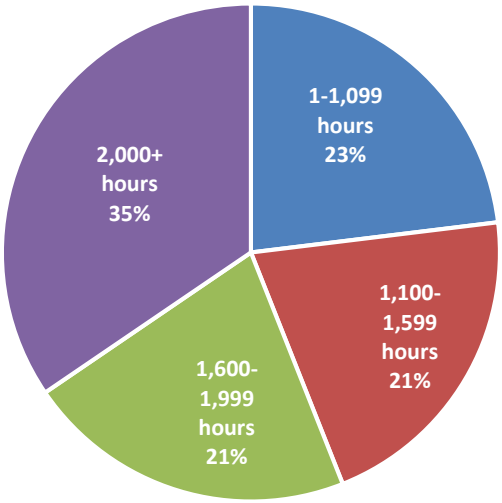
"Yes, it's changed. They used to care about me as a human being with my family."

A Food Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

The living wage is the hourly rate that an individual in a household who works full-time must earn to pay for necessities such as food, housing, transportation, childcare and medical care for his or herself and their family. It is calculated using the MIT Living Wage Calculator.[1]

The living wage varies by cost of living in the county where a worker resides as well as the composition of a worker's household – the number of people and of wage earners. The weighted average based on where Kroger workers in this study live and their household composition is $22 an hour for full-time workers.

Figure 11: Annual Hours of Paid Employment



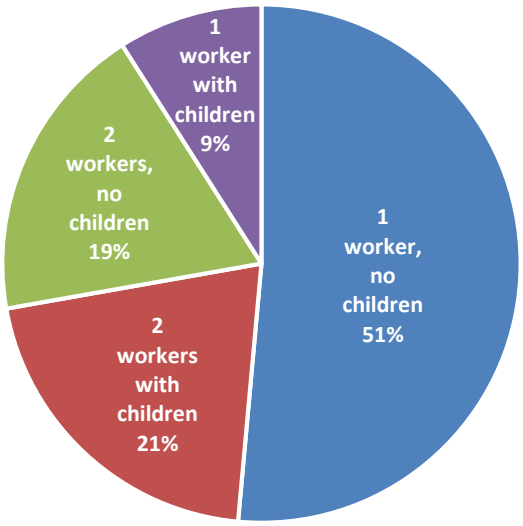
Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

The hourly living wage is predicated on full-time work. The hourly living wage of $22 an hour represents annual earnings of $45,760.

The earnings deficit of workers is larger than the living hourly wage gap because two-thirds of Kroger workers are employed only part-time. Kroger's personnel records for the entire labor force covered by this study classify 30 percent of workers as being full-time employees. A slightly larger share of survey respondents, 35 percent, now report full-time employment, as shown in *Figure 11*.

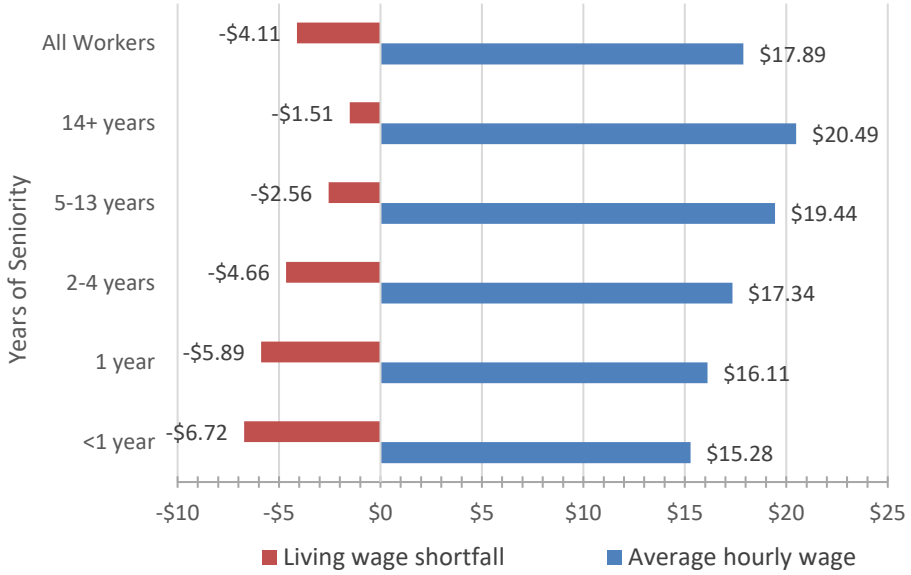
Kroger's average wage lags "cost of living" wage standards by 19 percent *if* workers have full-time jobs. The average Kroger worker is paid $17.89 an hour, but to earn a living wage – enough to make ends meet – full-time Kroger workers need to earn at least $22 an hour, based on their household structure *(Figure 12)*.

Figure 12: Number of Workers and Children in Households of Kroger Workers



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 13: Average Hourly Wage, Seniority and Hourly Living Wage Gap



Source: Kroger wage records for members of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770 and MIT living wage calculator.

Even career workers with 14 or more years of seniority at Kroger fall $1.51 an hour short of earning a living wage. The shortfall for new workers is $6.72 an hour short of being able to afford the necessities of life *(Figure 13)*.

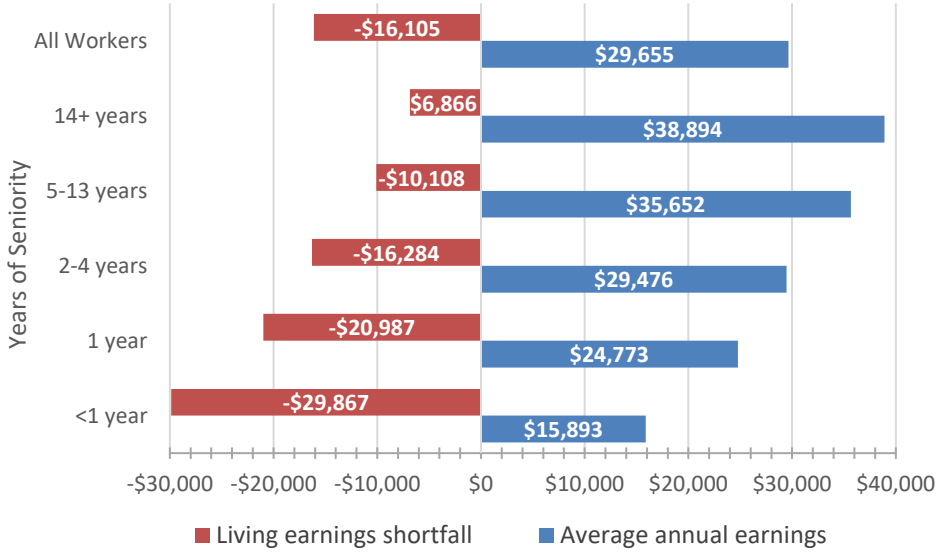
The average hourly wage of Kroger workers falls $4.11 an hour short of a full-time living wage.

Kroger is the only employer for 86 percent of workers, making it their sole source of earned income. Workers' economic struggles are shaped both by low hourly wages and by part-time hours of work.

"Please help me. I'm broke."

A Coffee Bar Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Figure 14: Average Annual Earnings based on Seniority and Living Earnings Shortfall



Source: Kroger wage records for members of UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770 and MIT living wage calculator.

The gap between current annual earnings of workers based on seniority and living wage annual earnings is shown in *Figure 14*.

Average annual earnings of Kroger workers fall $16,105 short of living-wage earnings. Unless Kroger provides full-time employment for all workers, this gap can be only be closed by raising the minimum hourly wage to $29.33.

The economic benefits for the public when Kroger pays living wages are discussed later in this report.

"Customers have basically hate-crimed me when I wear my 'they/them' pin."

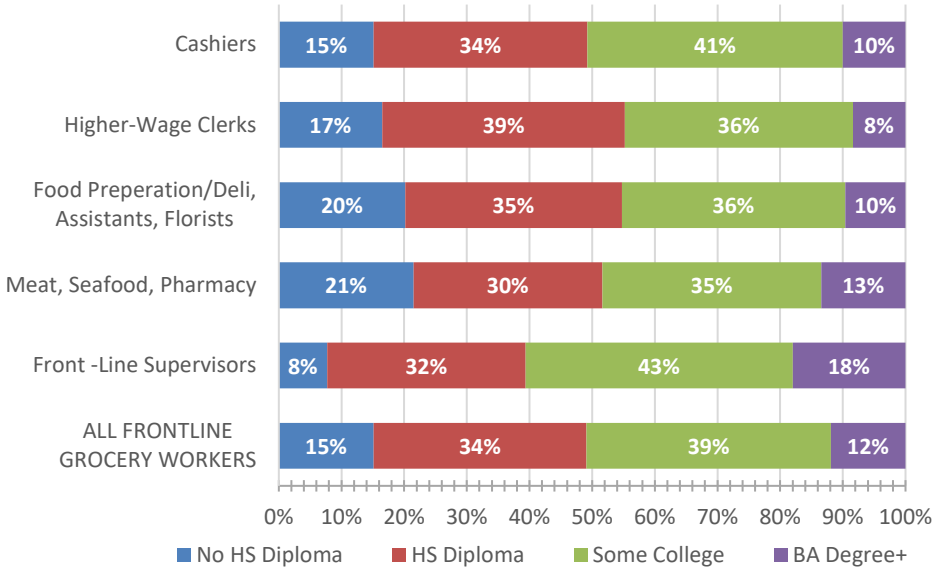
A Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

Education and Poverty

Over half of frontline grocery workers (51 percent) have some level of college or post-graduate education and 85 percent are high school graduates *(Figure 15)*. This educational information is from the U.S. Census Bureau's survey of households in the 20 counties covered by this study. It includes all grocery workers, roughly half of whom work for Kroger, and shows that the grocery industry workforce brings valuable human capital to their jobs.

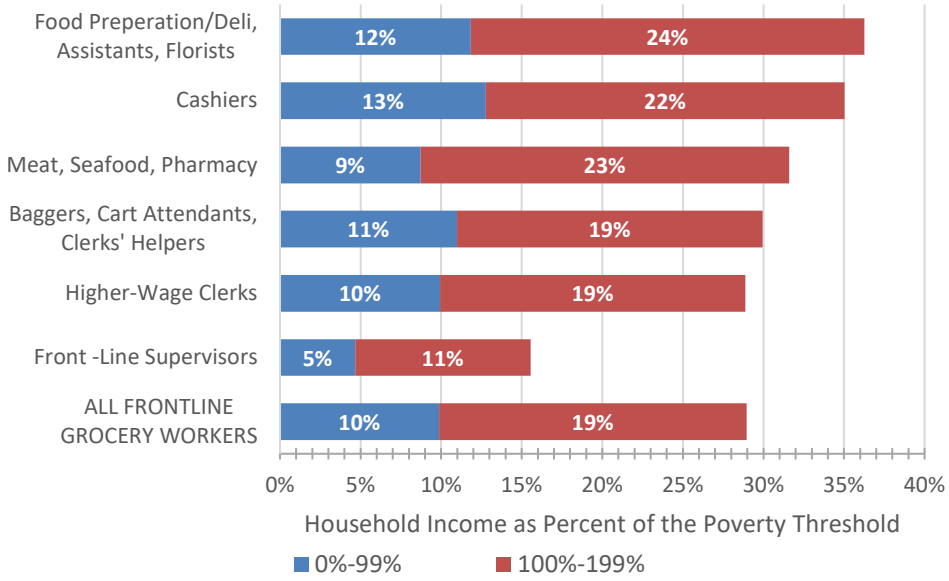
Despite their educational attainment and crucial skills for continuously dealing pleasantly and effectively with the public, 29 percent of the currently employed grocery industry labor force is below or near the federal poverty threshold, which varies by household size, beginning at $12,880 for a single adult[2] *(Figure 16)*. Ten percent of all grocery workers have household incomes that are 0 to 99 percent of the poverty threshold, meaning they are in poverty. An additional 19 percent of grocery industry

Figure 15: Educational Attainment of Grocery Workers by Occupation



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample records for the 20 counties represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770. Data is for all grocery workers.

Figure 16: Poverty and Near-Poverty Status of Grocery Workers by Occupation



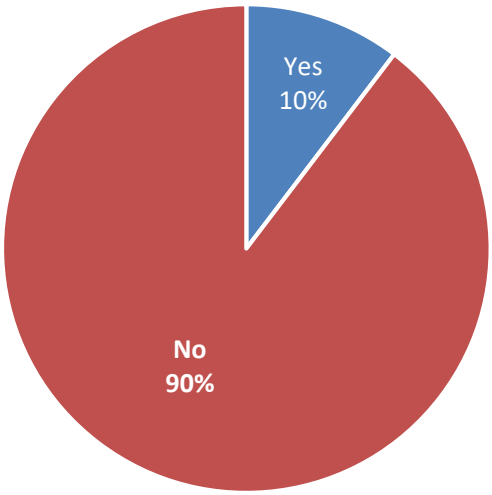
Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample records for the 20 counties represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770. Data is for all grocery workers.

workers have household incomes that are 100 to 199 percent of the poverty threshold, meaning they are near poverty.

Things that Workers Cannot Afford

Nine out of ten Kroger workers report that their wages have not increased as much as basic expenses such as food and housing have increased, as shown in *Figure 17*.

Figure 17: "Have your wages at Kroger increased as much as basic expenses such as food and housing have increased?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

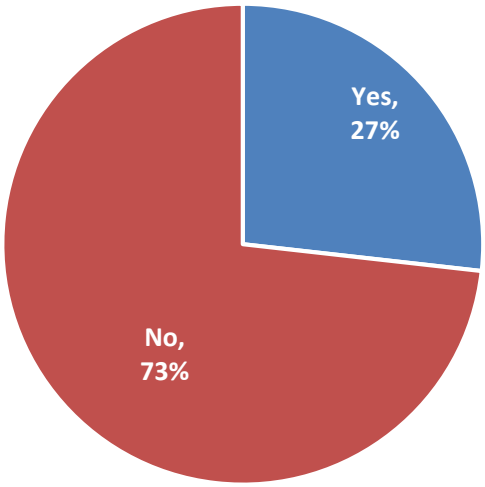
Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of Kroger workers say that their wages and benefits do not fairly compensate them for their experience and the work that they do, as shown in *Figure 18*. Nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of Kroger workers say they do not earn enough money to pay for basic expenses every month, as shown in *Figure 19*.

The things that workers cannot afford and that they go without or go into debt to obtain are the necessities of life. Among workers who said they do not

earn enough to pay for basic expenses, the things they cannot afford are:

- Rent 44%
- Vehicle maintenance and insurance 43%
- Groceries 39%
- Medical care 38%
- Utility bill 37%
- Clothing 32%
- Car payment 29%
- Shoes 28%
- Phone service 18%
- Child care 11%
- Bus pass 5%

Figure 18: "Do your wage and benefits from Kroger fairly compensate you for your experience and the work you do?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

"It's nerve wracking, frustrating, aggravating, morale sucks. We don't get paid enough to put up with all the crap."

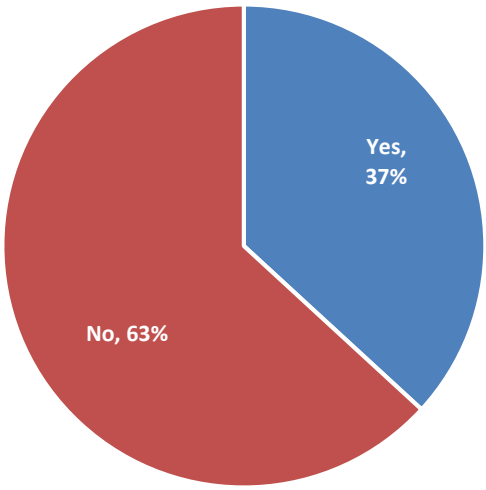
A Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Kroger workers report that the part of their household expenses that is least affordable is the monthly rent. The consequences of wages that are too low to pay for shelter include overcrowded and precarious housing as well as homelessness.

Many workers cannot afford groceries, resulting in in a high level of food insecurity among the workers who put food on American tables.

The hardship of being unable to pay for rent and food falls most heavily on young workers *(Figure 20)*, who typically have low seniority, the lowest wages and part-time hours.

Figure 19: "Do you earn enough money to pay for basic expenses every month?"



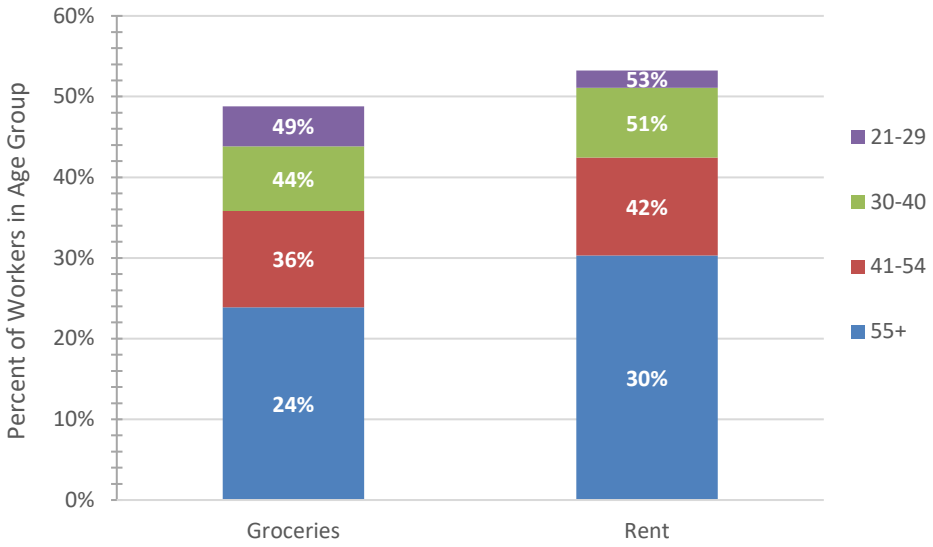
Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

The share of workers who cannot afford groceries increases from 24 percent among workers 55 years of age and older to 49 percent among workers 21 to 29. The share who are unable to pay for rent increases from 30 percent among workers 55 and older to 53 percent among workers 21 to 29.

Living on Borrowed Money

Some workers are able to get financial support from family and friends. Forty-two percent

Figure 20: Lack of Money to Pay for Rent and Groceries by Age of Worker

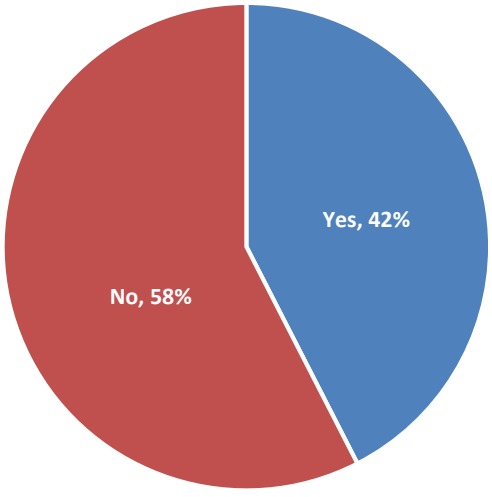


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

report that in the past year, they had to borrow money from their family or friends to pay for basic expenses. This reliance on borrowed money is shown in *Figure 21*.

Almost every worker says that there is no end in sight for a life where they are unable to pay for necessities. Ninety-two percent of workers say they will not have enough money to support themselves after they retire based on the wages and benefits that they receive from Kroger. This response is shown in *Figure 22*.

Figure 21: "In the past year, have you had to borrow money from your family or friends to pay for basic expenses?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Summary

The average Kroger worker is paid $17.89 an hour, which is 19 percent less than the average full-time living wage of $22 an hour needed by Kroger workers for basic necessities.

The shortfall for full-time new workers is $6.72 an hour short of being able to afford the necessities of life.

The wage deficit of workers is larger than the living wage gap because two-thirds of workers

"I have gone farther underwater every year because wages have not come close to keeping up with expenses. I am a lot poorer today than 14 years ago when I was hired. Although wages have increased about 30% over that period, living expenses have more than doubled. And I'm a manager."

A Head Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

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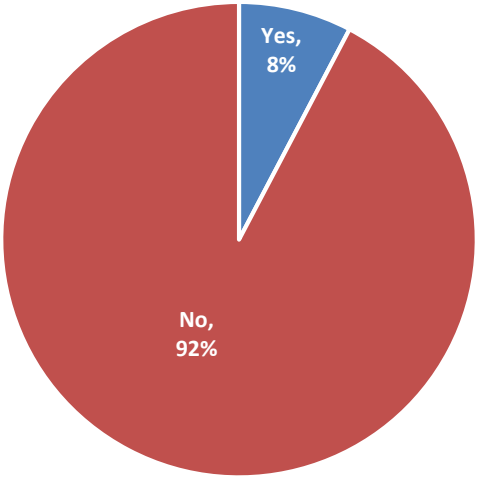
are employed only part-time by Kroger. Kroger is the only employer for 86 percent of workers, making it their sole source of earned income. Workers economic struggles are the result of both low hourly wages and by part-time hours of work.

The hourly living wage is predicated on full-time employment. The hourly living wage of $22 an hour represents annual earnings of $45,760.

Figure 22: "Will you have enough money to support yourself after you retire based on the wages and benefits that you receive from Kroger?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Average annual earnings of Kroger workers fall $16,105 short of the living earnings that these workers require for necessities. Unless Kroger provides full-time employment for all workers, this gap can be only be closed by raising the minimum hourly wage to $29.33.

Nine out of ten Kroger workers report that their wages have not increased as much as basic expenses such as food and housing have increased.

Despite their educational attainment and crucial skills for continuously dealing pleasantly and effectively with the public, 29 percent of the currently employed grocery industry labor force is below or near the poverty threshold.

Two-thirds of Kroger workers say they do not earn enough money to pay for basic expenses every month. This includes 44 percent who say they are unable to pay rent and 39 percent say they are unable to pay for groceries.

Economic hardship is most prevalent among young workers. The share of Kroger workers who cannot afford groceries is 49 percent among workers 21 to 29 years of age versus 24 percent among workers 55 and older.

The share of Kroger workers who are unable to pay for rent is 53 percent among workers 21 to 29 versus 30 percent among workers 55 and older.

More than two-fifths of workers report that in the past year, they had to borrow money from their family or friends to pay for basic expenses. There is no end in sight for most workers. More than nine out of ten say they will not have enough money to support themselves after they retire.

Photo credit: *Reddit*

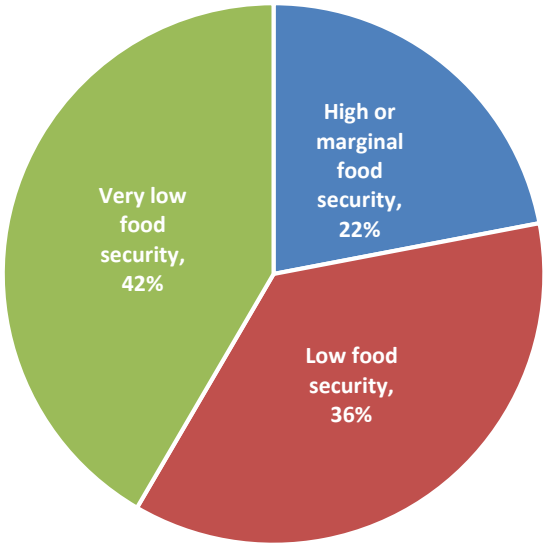
4. Food Insecurity

Level of Food Security

Kroger grocery workers are surrounded by food in their working lives and are responsible for providing food to their communities, but 78 percent of these workers are food insecure, as shown in *Figure 23*. This high rate of food insecurity is more than seven times greater than reported by US households in 2020 (10.5 percent), according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).[3]

The USDA defines food insecurity as lack of access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food necessary to lead a healthy life. Food insecurity is caused largely by low household income and the competing cost of necessities such as housing and health care.

Figure 23: Food Security Level of Kroger Workers



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Survey respondents were asked the six questions that comprise the USDA Economic Research Service's short form of the Food Security Survey. The six-item short form is one of the accepted tools to measure food security developed by the agency.[4]

"Not much to like when I can barely afford to eat right or afford anything for my family."

A Clerk with 17 years seniority working at King Soopers in Colorado

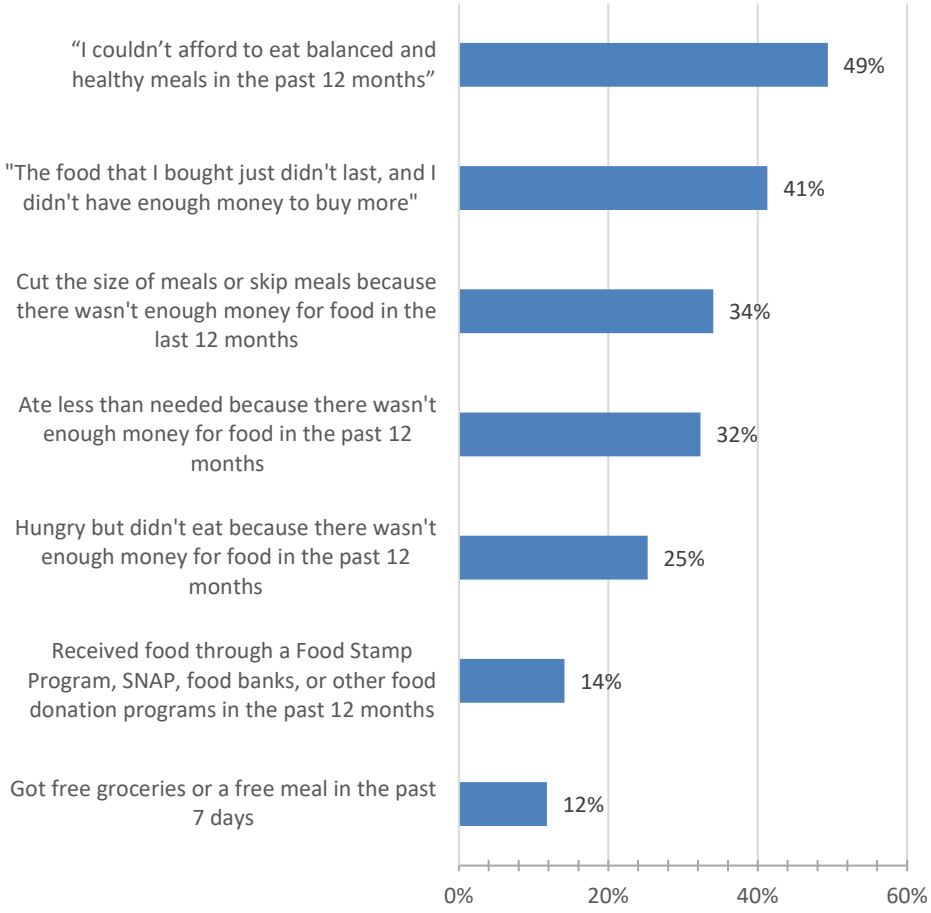
Among Kroger workers, 42 percent are classified as having "*very low food security*." This condition is characterized by disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake. Another 36 percent are classified as having "*low food security*." This is characterized by reduced quality, variety, or desirability of their diet.

Indicators of Food Insecurity

The share of Kroger grocery workers who reported each of six USDA indicators of food insecurity (plus an additional question about free groceries) is shown in *Figure 24*. Nearly half of workers (49 percent) cannot afford balanced and healthy meals. Almost as many workers (41 percent) say they run out of food and cannot afford to buy more.

Over a third of workers (34 percent) say they cut the size of their meals or skip means because they do not have enough money. A similar share of

Figure 24: Survey Responses to Questions about Food Security



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

workers (32 percent) say they eat less than they need because they cannot afford to buy more food.

A quarter (25 percent) of Kroger workers say they have been hungry but did not have money to buy food.

Fourteen percent of workers report getting tax payer-funded Food Stamps (SNAP) or food from a food bank or community donation program. Twelve percent received free groceries or a free meal in the previous week. Public tax dollars and scarce nonprofit resources are filling some of the gap in food security that results from the low earnings of Kroger workers.

"The cost of living in the city I work (Seattle) is becoming unsustainable with the wages I receive."

A Receiving Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

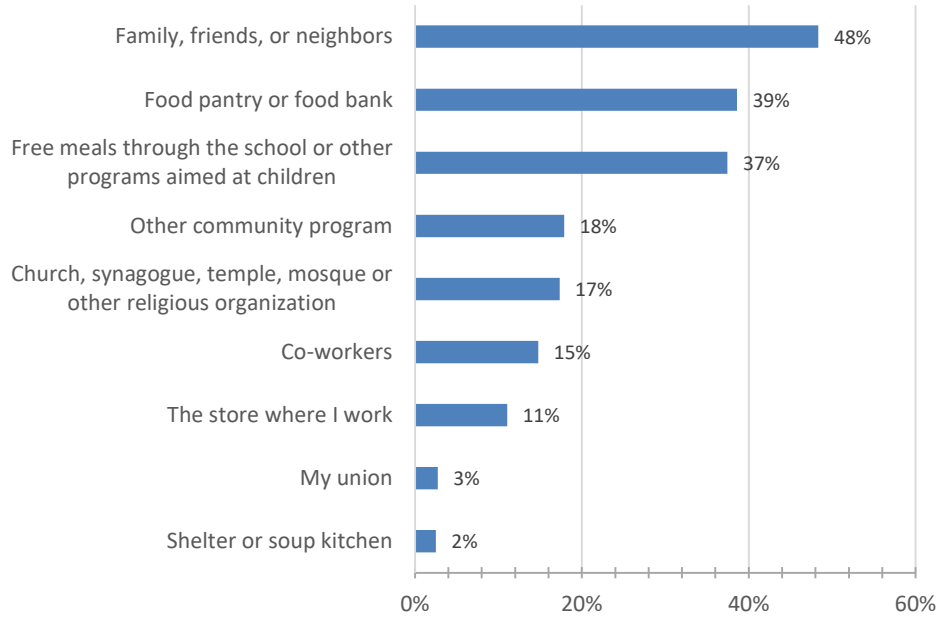
Sources of Free Food

The most common source of free groceries or meals is workers' personal network of family, friends and neighbors, as shown in *Figure 25*, and reported by 48 percent of workers receiving free groceries or food.

"Pay a livable wage to EVERYONE! Stop singling people out. We need to live too. I've got bills to pay and mouths to feed, can't do that on 15 fakn dollars an hour. You know rent for a one bedroom on average is about 1300?? And when ya bring home 1900 doesn't leave much for other things. Guess I don't need to eat.... Haven't eaten in 3 days actually cuz I'm so broke."

A Home Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

Figure 25: Sources of Free Groceries or Meal in the Past Seven Days



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Over a third of the workers receiving free food said it came from a food pantry or food band (39 percent) or free meal programs aimed at children (37 percent). Two percent of workers receiving free food in the past week got it from a homeless shelter.

Only 11 percent of workers receiving free food got it from the Kroger grocery store where they work. These store pantries are stocked largely with food donate by employees rather than by the store. Kroger says that its purpose is to "feed the human spirit,"[5] but it falls short in feeding the hungry bodies of its workers.

A shallow and narrow discount of 10 percent on Kroger brand groceries, which excludes fresh produce, is available to employees. This gesture falls far short of enabling employees and their families to eat healthy and balanced meals.

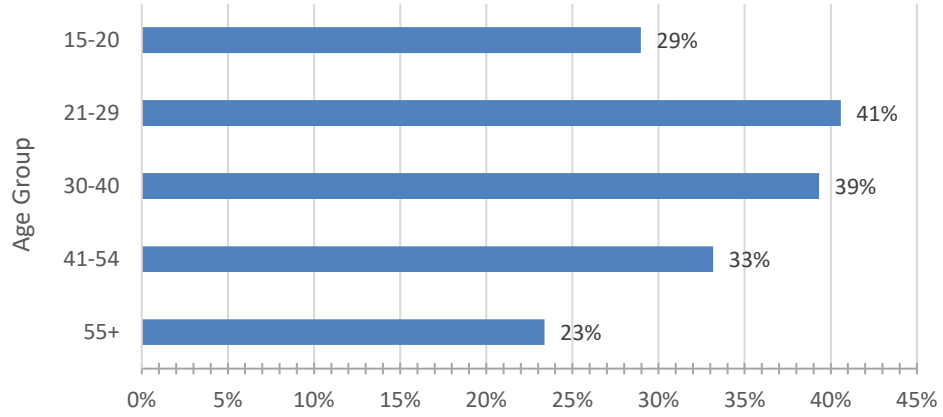
Prevalence of Food Insecurity

The prevalence of food insecurity is linked to other indicators of financial security including workers' age, household structure, ability to afford necessities, and homelessness.

Level of Food Insecurity based on Age

There is a direct association between age and food insecurity, as shown by the responses in *Figure 26* to the question, *"In the last 12 months, did you*

Figure 26: Level of Food Insecurity based on Age and Responses to the Question, "In the last 12 months, did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?"

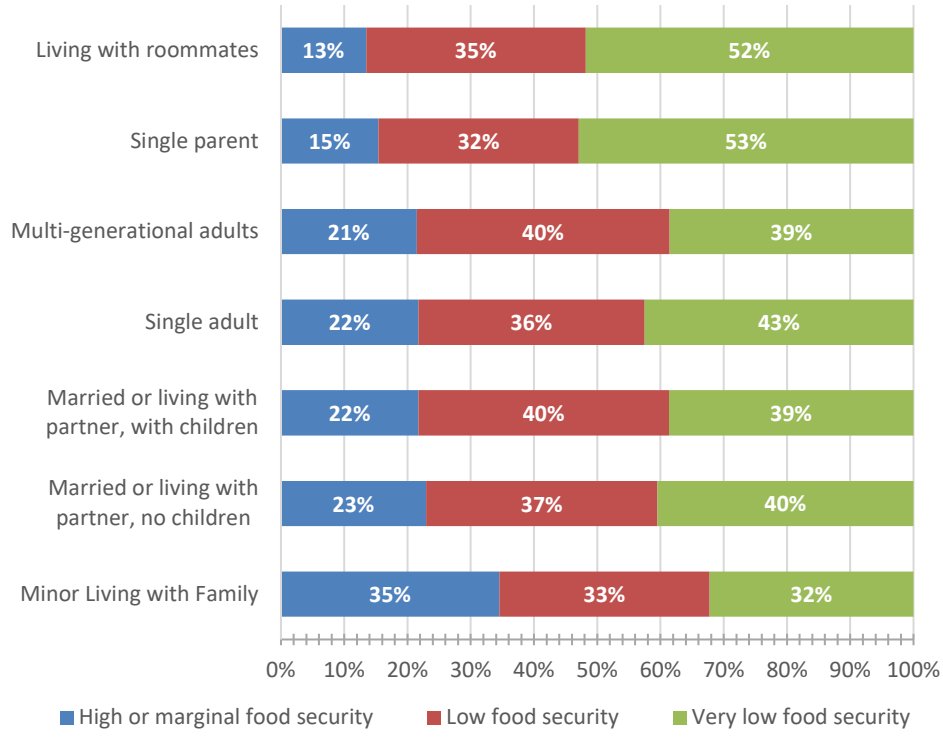


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?"

Workers who are under 21 years of age, and often living with their parents, have a comparatively low rate of food insecurity – 29 percent. The level of food insecurity jumps to 41 percent among workers who are 21 to 29 years old. These young adults are typically the lowest paid workers with part-time hours. Their lack of earnings results in lack of food.

Figure 27: Level of Food Insecurity based on Household Structure



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

The share of workers skipping meals or cutting the size of meals drops to 23 percent for workers 55 years of age and older. However, even among these higher-paid workers, who often are career employees, nearly a quarter cannot afford full, healthy and balanced meals.

"I am not paid enough to live and the pay step increases are not sufficient to overcome this issue."

A Bakery Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

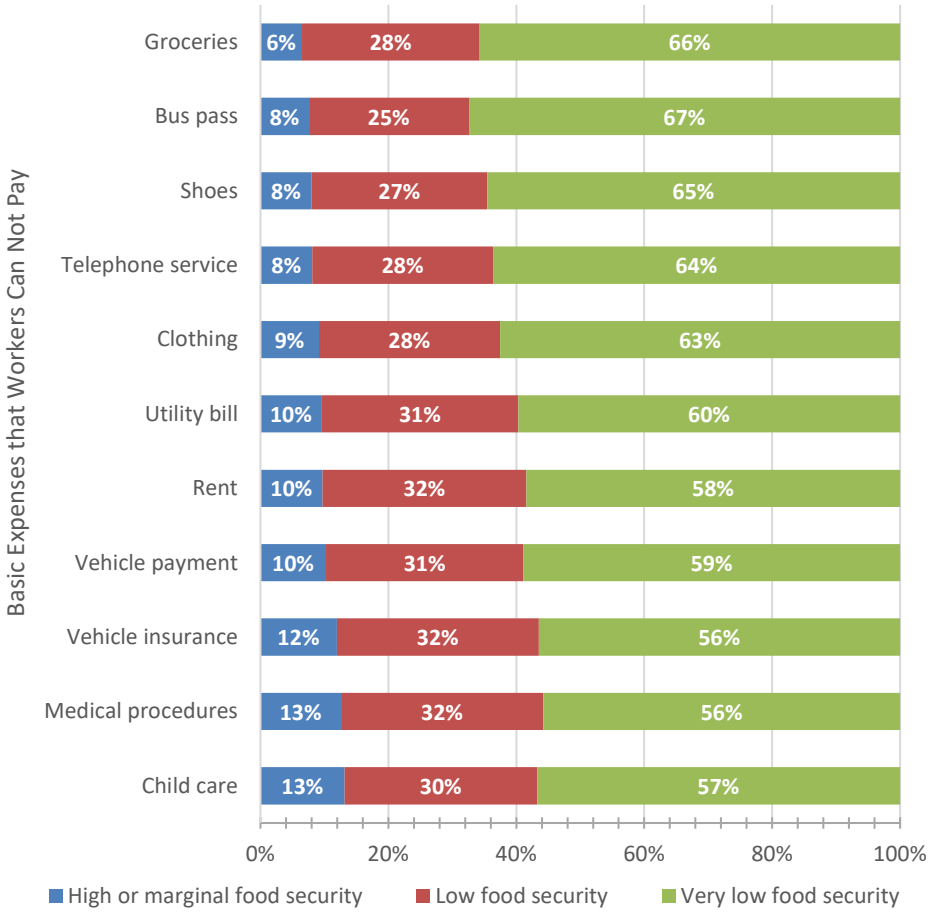
Level of Food Security Based on Household Structure

Eighty-five percent of single parents who work for Kroger are food insecure. This means that after their workday of putting food in the hands of other people ends, they return to their homes and are unable to provide the nutritious food that their children need to be healthy *(Figure 27)*.

Workers who share housing with roommates, and often are young, have even higher rates of food insecurity (87 percent).

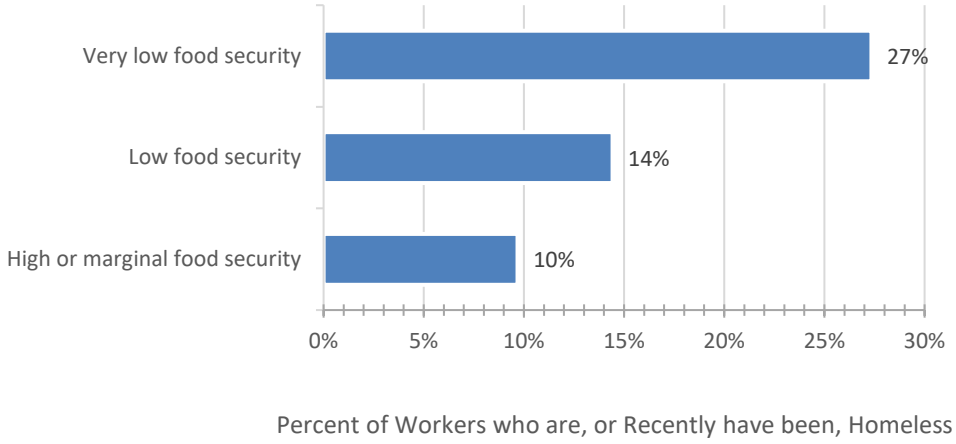
The highest level of food security is among workers 15 to 20 years of age who are living with their parents. Kroger's wage structure does not support food security for an adult workforce.

Figure 28: Level of Food Insecurity among Workers based on the Necessities that they Cannot Afford



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 29: Rate of Homelessness among Workers at Each Food Security Level



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Level of Food Security for Workers Who Cannot Afford Necessities

The direct connection between insufficient earnings to pay basic living expenses for necessities and inability to afford adequate nutritious food is shown in *Figure 28*. Not surprisingly, 94 percent of workers who are unable to pay for groceries are also food insecure.

Food is part of a bundle of necessities that include transportation, apparel, utilities, housing, health care, and childcare. Food insecurity accompanies inadequate access to all of the necessities of life. As *Figure 28* shows, workers who cannot afford other necessities – housing, clothing, and transportation – also cannot afford healthy nutrition.

Rate of Homelessness based on Level of Food Security

Very low food security is linked to homelessness. Twenty-seven percent of Kroger workers with very low food security are, or recently have been, homeless, as shown in *Figure 29*.

Nearly half of Kroger workers (42 percent) have very low food security, and over a quarter of these workers (27 percent) struggle with homelessness.

"Over the years I have worked for Kroger or Fred Meyer it has steadily gone from a great place to work, to a store that I am ashamed of. They don't care if u can pay rent."

A Personal Shopper at Fred Meyer in Washington

Summary

Food surrounds Kroger grocery workers in their working lives and they provide food to their communities, but 78 percent are food insecure, including 42 percent who have very low food security.

"We need to be paid more. Prices are rising everywhere and the wages are not going with it. We have associates who are quitting because we don't give them enough hours or money."

A Personal Shopper at Fred Meyer in Washington

Only 11 percent of workers obtain free food to meet their nutritional needs from the Kroger grocery store where they work, and even then, it is from a food pantry that is stocked largely with food donated by employees. Kroger says that its purpose is to "feed the human spirit," but falls short in using its abundant food resources to meet the essential needs of its workers.

There is a direct association between age and food insecurity. The share of workers skipping meals or cutting the size of meals drops to 23 percent for workers 55 years of age and older. Even among these higher-paid workers, who often are career employees, nearly a quarter cannot afford full meals.

Eighty-five percent of single parents are food insecure. This means that after their workday of putting food in the hands of other people ends, they return to their homes and are unable to provide the nutritious food that their children need to be healthy.

The highest level of food security is among workers under 21 years of age who are living with their parents. Kroger's wage structure does not support food security for an adult workforce.

Food is part of a bundle of necessities that include transportation, apparel, utilities, housing, health care, and childcare. Workers who cannot afford other necessities – housing, clothing, and transportation – also cannot afford healthy nutrition.

Very low food security is connected to homelessness. Twenty-seven percent of Kroger workers with very low food security are, or recently have been, homeless. Nearly half of Kroger workers (42 percent) have very low food security, and over a quarter of these workers (27 percent) struggle with homelessness.

"Although retirement is important, the cost of living has increased so much it makes it impossible to retire off our current monthly pay out. You would be homeless and go hungry because the prices of food, utilities and rent has increased crazy high."

A Front End Bookkeeper at Ralphs in Southern California

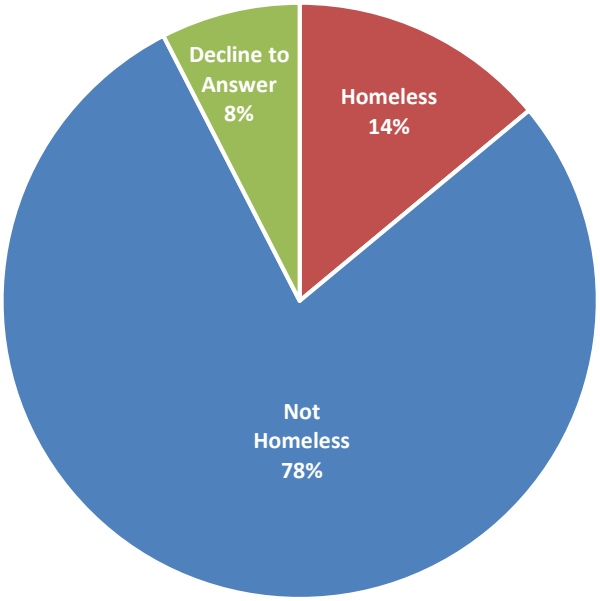
Photo credit:
Reddit

5. Housing and Homelessness

Homeless Grocery Workers

Fourteen percent of Kroger workers are homeless now or have been homeless during the past year. Another 8 percent declined to answer this question and 78 percent reported that they were not homeless. This is shown in *Figure 30.*[6]

Figure 30: "Thinking back over the past year, was there ever a time when you did not have a place of your own to sleep and had to sleep in the home of a friend or relative, in your vehicle, at a homeless shelter, or in a place that is not meant for people to sleep?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324 770.

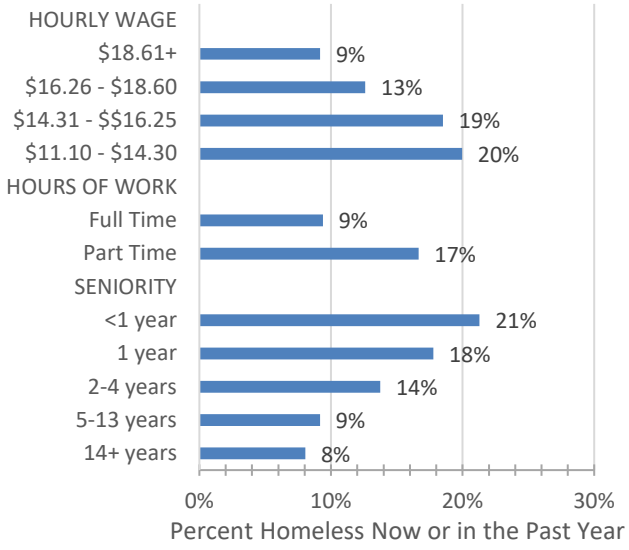
The rate of homelessness among Kroger workers may well be higher than 14 percent. Some of the 8 percent of workers who declined to give their homeless status may also have been homeless but did not want to disclose this because homelessness is often seen as stigmatizing.

"Keeps getting worse every year, and now I'm homeless and management can give a fuck less."

A Meat Cutter at King Soopers in Colorado

Homelessness means not having a place of your own to sleep. It includes sleeping in a vehicle, a homeless shelter, in a park, on a public bench, or couch surfing with a friend or relative.

Figure 31: Rate of Homelessness Based on Wages, Seniority and Hours of Work



Source: Kroger wage records and survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

The hard work done by frontline grocery workers has lifted Kroger's wealth, stock dividends and executive compensation, but many of these workers are precariously housed and often homeless.

Higher wages prevent homelessness. Twenty percent of workers paid $14.30 or less an hour, versus 9 percent of those paid $18.61 or more an hour, are currently, or recently have been, homeless. Similarly, it decreases as seniority, which brings higher wages, increases. Twenty-one percent of workers who have been on the job for less than one year are, or have been, experiencing homelessness compared to eight percent of workers with 14 or more years of seniority. In addition, homelessness is lower for full-time workers (nine percent) than for part-time workers (17 percent). *Figure 31* shows these homeless rates.

Although higher wages prevent homelessness, Kroger's wage structure is sufficiently depressed and part-time employment is so prevalent that homelessness still occurs among workers in the top wage bracket.

High rates of homelessness are linked to specific indicators of economic hardship and social exclusion among Kroger workers. *Figure 32* shows the rate of homelessness among workers who reported each type of economic vulnerability in the survey.

The strongest connections are between housing insecurity and homelessness. Thirty-five percent of workers who worry very often about being evicted, 29 percent of workers who have no confidence about paying rent next month, and 26 percent of workers who did not pay last month's rent on time currently are, or recently have been, homeless.

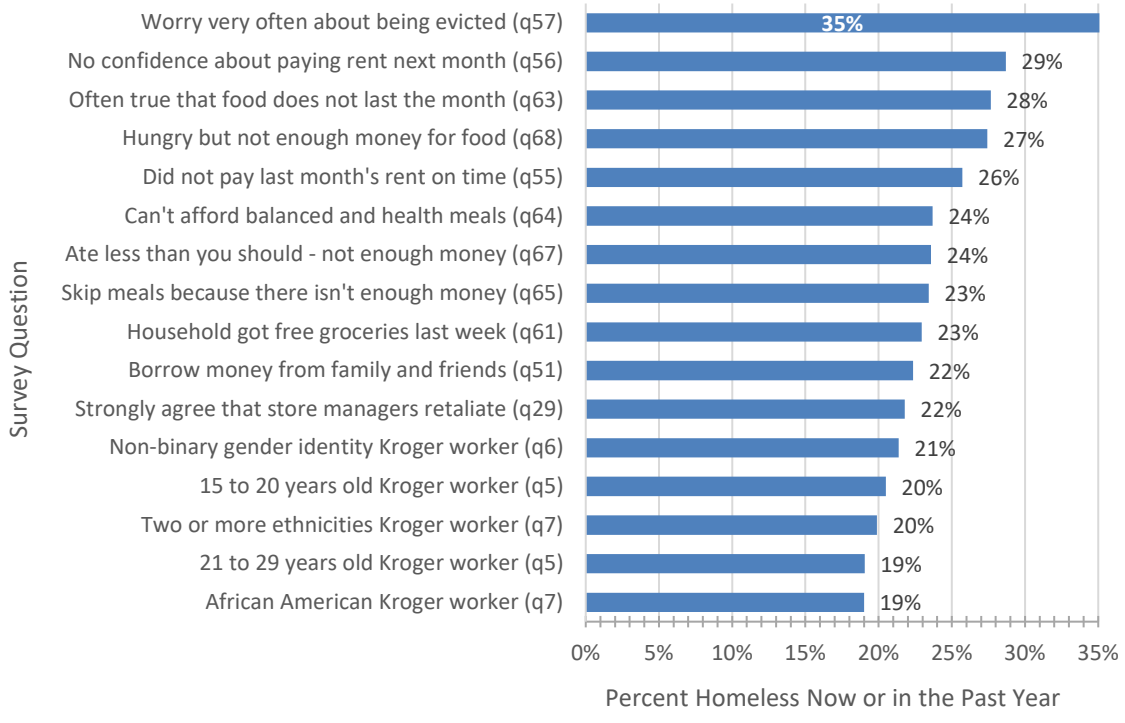
"I've had to get another job just to make ends meet. I will have nothing for savings upon retirement. I will be essentially homeless."

A Meat Clerk at Quality Food Centers in Washington

Food Insecurity

There is a strong link between food insecurity and homelessness. Although 14 percent of all Kroger workers have experienced homelessness, the rate

Figure 32: Rate of Homelessness Based on Wages, Food Security and Worker Attributes



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

of homelessness is higher for workers with specific risk factors. These include:

- Among workers who say that food does not last until the end of the month, 28 percent have been homeless
- Among workers who are sometimes hungry but don't have enough money for food, 27 percent have been homeless
- Among workers who can't afford balanced and healthy meals, 24 percent have been homeless
- Among workers who eat less than they want to because they can't afford more food, 24 percent have been homeless
- Among workers who skip meals because there isn't enough money for food, 23 percent have been homeless
- Among workers who get free groceries, 23 percent have been homeless

"We need a raise. I'm not sure how many I speak for, but for me to work 6 days, 48+ hours a week and have to worry about whether or not I'm going to be homeless next month. It is incredibly stressful and very depressing."

A Deli Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

Borrowing Money

Twenty-two percent of workers who borrow money from family and friends to pay for basic expenses are, or recently have been, homeless.

Retaliation

Twenty-two percent of workers who report "store managers change work schedules to retaliate against workers who they do not like" are, or recently have been, homeless.

Demographics

Being young or part of a group that experiences discrimination is linked to homelessness.

- Among workers with non-binary gender identity, 21 percent have been homeless
- Among workers 15 to 20 years old, 20 percent have been homeless
- Among workers 21 to 29 years old, 19 percent have been homeless
- Among African American workers, 19 percent have been homeless.

Precarious Housing

Workers' low wages force many to live in overcrowded apartments because they cannot afford the cost of adequate housing. Many do not have

enough income to pay rent, making them precariously housed and sometimes homeless.

Worried about Eviction

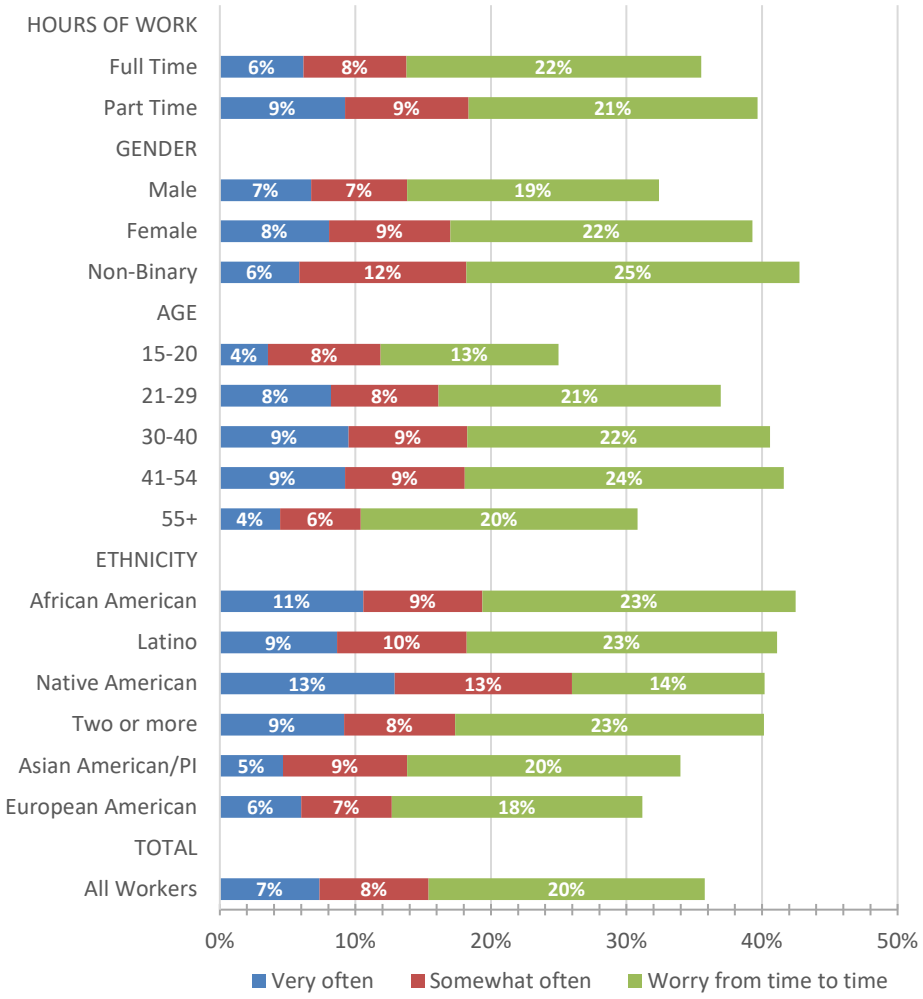
Thirty-six percent of Kroger workers say that they worry about being evicted, as shown in *Figure 33*. Native American workers express the highest level of acute concern with 13 percent saying that they worry very often about eviction. The same acute concern is reported by 11 percent of African American workers.

Among part-time workers, 40 percent worry about being evicted. Even among full-time workers, 36 percent worry about being evicted.

"They need to get more help in the deli but if that happens KROGER cut the hours for everyone who is part-time n then everyone is the same hole - no money and no hours. Therefore can't eat and still HOMELESS."

A Deli Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Figure 33: "How often do you personally worry about being evicted from your residence?"



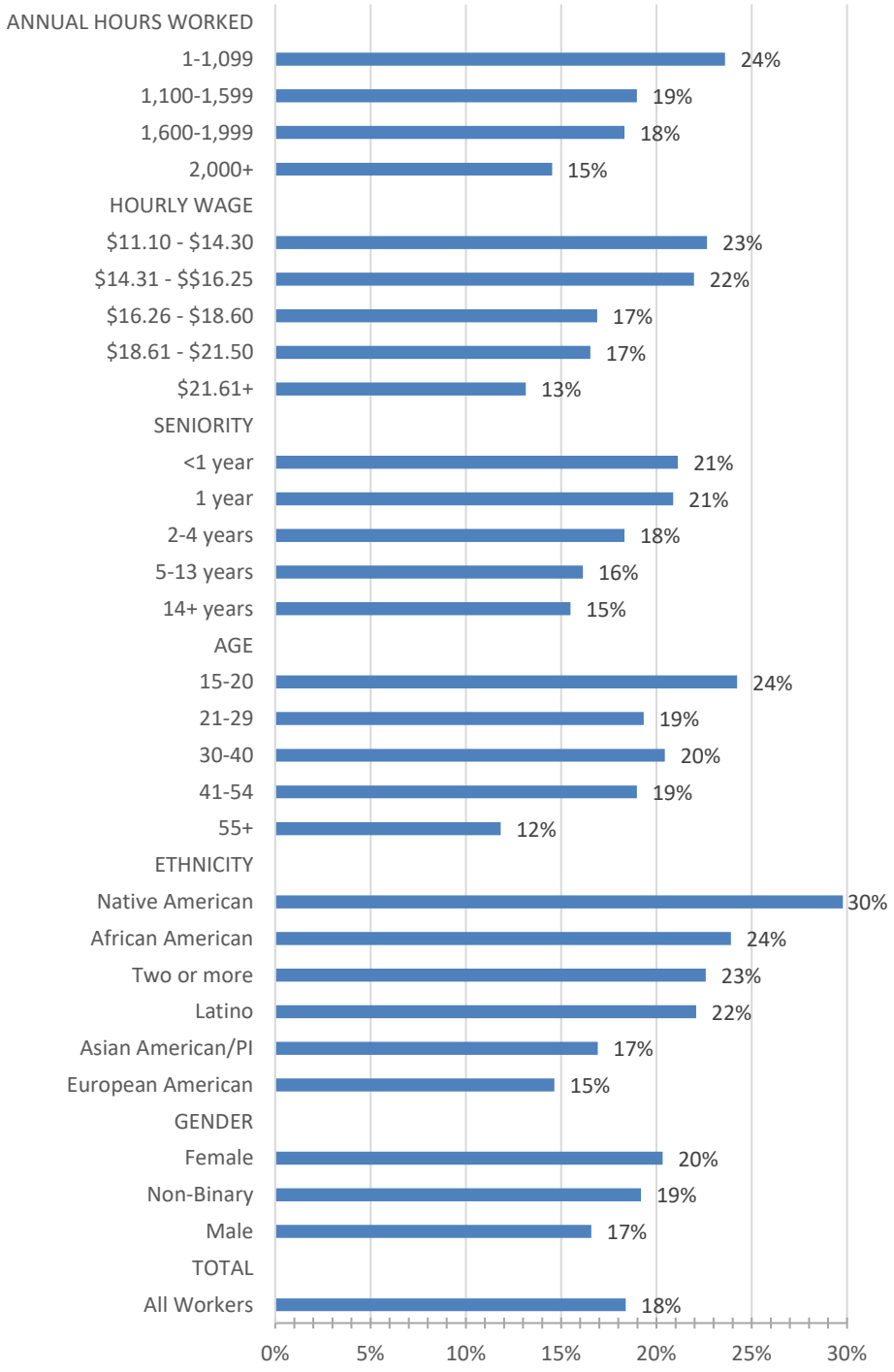
Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

"My wife works so we can pay bills. If I was the only income it would not be possible. I have co-workers that are homeless or don't have food. I buy food for others if they are hungry. The company treats people like shit. They retaliate and push good workers out."

A Head Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Concern about eviction increases with age until workers are in their mid-fifties. Twenty-five percent for workers 15 to 20 years old are concerned about eviction and this increases to 42 percent for workers 41 to 54 years old. This increase corresponds with the years when workers are most likely to have children in their households.

Figure 34: Workers Answering "No" to the Question: "Did you pay your last month's rent or mortgage on time?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Gender

Women worry about eviction more frequently than men (39 versus 32 percent). Workers with non-binary gender identities worry the most about eviction – 43 percent.

In Arrears on Rent or Mortgage

Eighteen percent of Kroger workers did not pay the previous month's rent or mortgage on time, as shown in *Figure 34*. Workers who are most likely to be precariously housed because they have not paid the rent or mortgage are young, part-time, with low hourly wages, and Native American, African American, or Latino.

The share of workers who have unpaid housing costs and are precariously housed is especially high among workers with the following attributes:

- Native American 30 percent
- 15-20 year old 24 percent
- African American 24 percent
- 1-1,099 annual hours of work 24 percent
- $11.10 - $14.30 hourly wage 23 percent
- Two or more ethnicities 23 percent
- Latino 22 percent

Not Confident about Paying Next Month's Rent or Mortgage

Twenty-six percent of Kroger workers have no confidence or only slight confidence that they will be able to pay their next rent or mortgage payment on time, as shown in *Figure 35*.

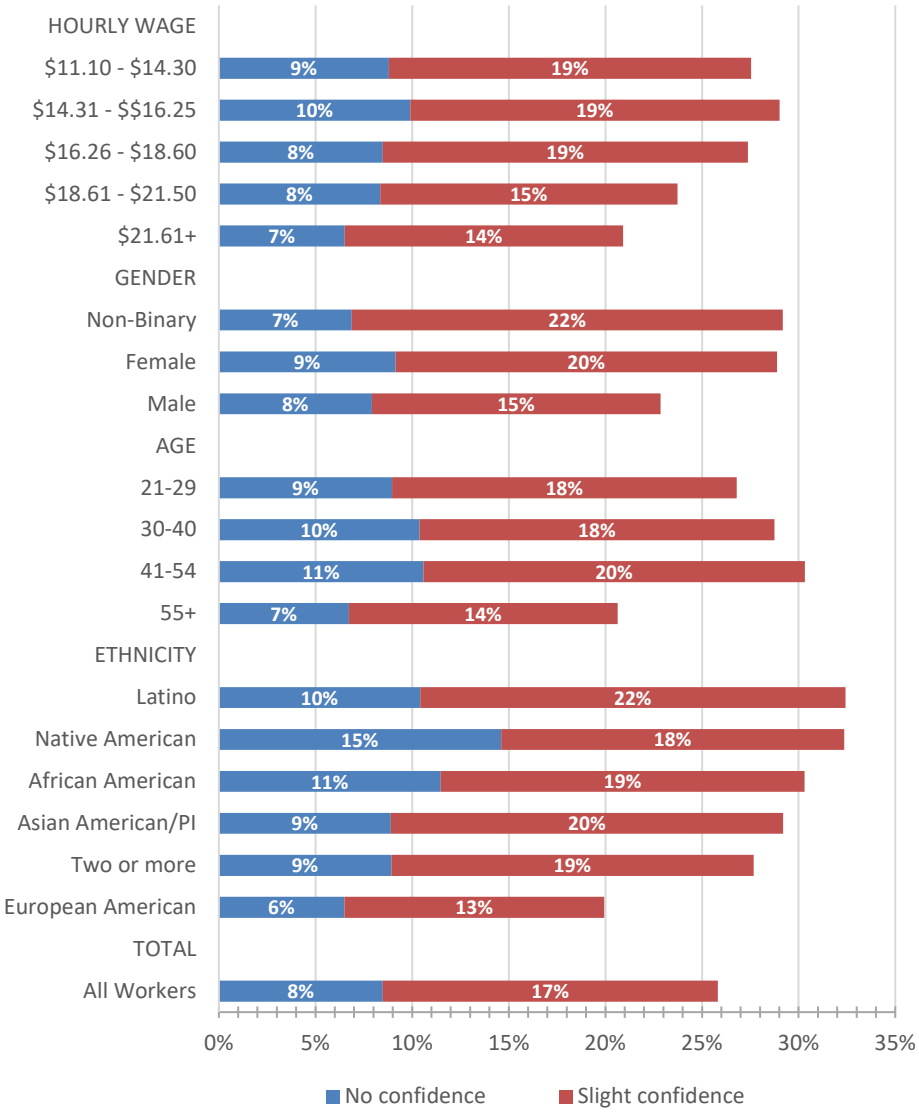
The groups of workers who report the most uncertainty about whether they will be able to pay rent and remain sheltered are similar to who did not pay last month's rent or mortgage on time. The rates on uncertainty about paying next month's rent or mortgage are:

- Latino 32 percent
- Native American 32 percent
- Part-time hours 31 percent
- 41-54 years old 30 percent
- African American 30 percent
- 1 year seniority 29 percent
- Asian American or Pacific Islander 29 percent
- Non-binary gender identity 29 percent
- $14.31 - $16.25 hourly wage 29 percent

"I cry almost every day when I'm at work trying to figure out how my family is going to pay for an $800 a month increase in rent starting next month... if my family can even qualify off of income to rent a house. My landlord will be kicking us out at the end of this month so he can sell his house to make a profit. My family may very well be homeless very soon."

A Produce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Figure 35: "How confident are you that your household will be able to pay your next rent or mortgage payment on time?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

- Female 29 percent
- 30-40 years old 29 percent

"Now if I retire I would be homeless living on the streets."

A Food Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

Tenancy

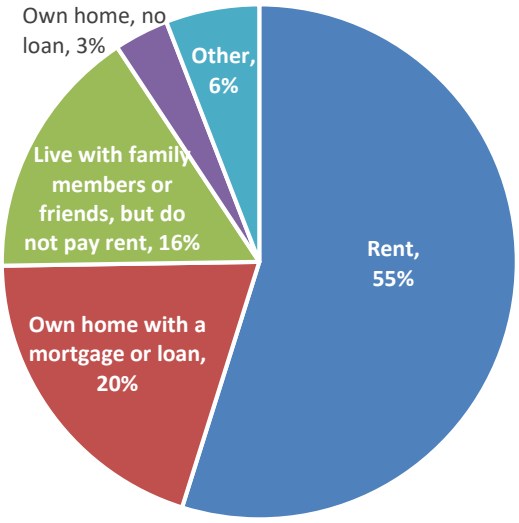
Most Kroger workers rent their homes or are nonpaying household members, as shown in *Figure 36*. Twenty percent own a home and still have regular mortgage payments. Only three percent own their own home free and clear with no mortgage.

Sixteen percent are in households where they do not pay rent. They include workers living with their parents. They also include homeless

couch surfers – 27 percent of this group that does not pay rent report that they are homeless.

The six percent of workers in "Other" housing situations includes individuals in multi-generation housing as well as homeless workers. Twenty-six percent of workers in this group report being currently or recently homeless.

Figure 36: "Please tell us about where you live."

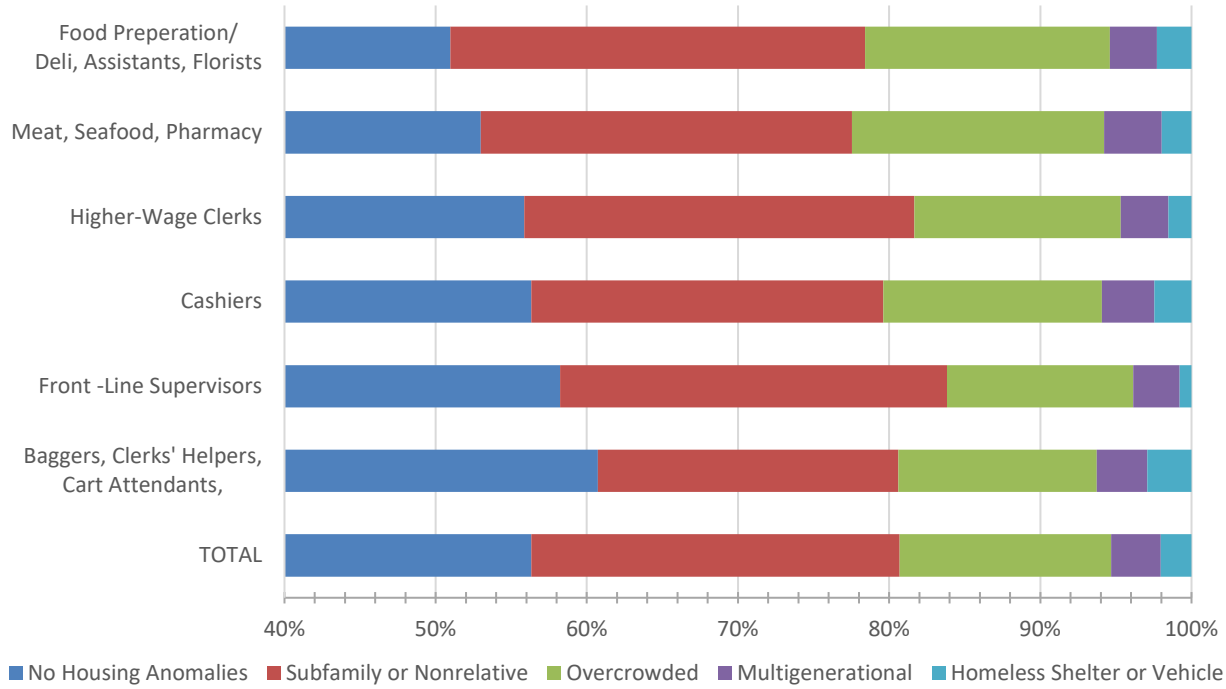


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Housing Conditions

Forty-four percent of grocery industry workers in the regions covered by the survey live in inadequate housing, as shown in *Figure 37*, which breaks out housing conditions by occupation. This information is from the U.S. Census Bureau's survey of households in the 20 counties covered by this study. It includes *all* grocery workers, roughly half of whom work for Kroger.

Figure 37: Household Structure of Grocery Workers' Homes by Occupation



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, Public Use Microdata Sample records for the 20 counties represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770. Data is for all grocery workers.

"Our house is falling apart and considered by far the worst in a several block radius because of the dilapidation but we can't afford improvements. My girlfriend and I are incredibly depressed and want to move out, but can't."

A Produce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

The frequency of housing deficiencies varies with earnings level as well with the age of workers. The occupational group of baggers, cart attendants and clerk's helpers includes many adolescent workers living with their parents and not yet facing the challenge of paying rent for their own home.

Even among front-line supervisors, who are among the higher-paid grocery workers, 39 percent have inadequate housing.

The most common solution that workers settle on for dealing with unaffordable housing is to double up with another family or unrelated individuals. Households spread out high housing costs among more income earners in other families or unrelated individuals. *Thirty-two percent* of workers are doubled-up in housing – this includes some of the workers shown in *Figure 37* as being overcrowded, which often is an additional layer of housing inadequacy. The nonrelatives in these households include some homeless couch surfers.

The second most common solution is to rent a unit that is too small for the number of people in the household. *Fourteen percent* of grocery workers live in overcrowded housing.

The third most common solution is multi-generational housing – grandparents and parents living with their adult children. *Twelve percent* of workers live in multi-generational housing. Housing. This includes some of the workers shown in *Figure 37* as being overcrowded

Although the Census Bureau undercounts homelessness, *two percent* of all grocery workers are identified as being currently homeless and living in a place such as a vehicle, garage or homeless shelter that is not meant for human habitation.

Summary

Fourteen percent of Kroger workers are homeless now or have been homeless during the past year. The rate of homelessness decreases as earnings increase, so higher wages prevent homelessness. Because Kroger's wage structure is depressed and part-time employment is so prevalent, homelessness still occurs among workers in the top wage bracket, although at a lower rate.

There is a strong link between food insecurity and homelessness as well as with needing to borrow money from family and friends to pay for basic expenses.

Twenty-two percent of workers who report "store managers change work schedules to retaliate against workers who they do not like" are, or recently have been, homeless. This suggests that loss of earnings as a result of arbitrary reductions in hours of work causes some workers to become homeless.

Thirty-six percent of Kroger workers say that they worry about being evicted. Concern about eviction increases with age until workers are in their mid-fifties. This corresponds with the years when workers are most likely to have children in their households.

Eighteen percent of Kroger workers did not pay last month's rent or mortgage on time. Workers who are most likely to be precariously housed because they have not paid their rent are young, part-time, with low hourly wages and all ethnicities other than European American or Asian American.

Twenty-six percent of Kroger workers have no confidence or only slight confidence that they will be able to pay their next rent or mortgage payment on time.

Most Kroger workers rent their homes or are nonpaying household members. This includes homeless couch surfers. Few Kroger workers own their own home.

Forty-four percent of grocery workers live in inadequate housing. This includes doubling up with another family or unrelated individual, living in a unit that is too small for the household and being overcrowded, multigenerational housing where grandparents and parents live with their adult children, and homelessness.

"This survey made me extremely depressed. I will NEVER be able to support myself working at king soopers. Any time I start to save a little money and pay off my bills, my hours are cut. It's like I'm in a trap. My debt only increases working at Kroger, affecting my general well being and quality of life. Rodney McMullen can afford helicopters and yachts, and I will be homeless when my parents die."

A Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

"There should not be homeless and hungry workers when the company has made hundreds of thousands of dollars off this pandemic. I am lucky compared to other coworkers, yet I cannot afford to move out from my overcrowded parent's house, or drive a car, or buy a week's worth of groceries for my family. We are all exhausted and angry."

A Clerks Helper at Ralphs in Southern California

"Very Hard, it's corporate America. We are just a number. Very little respect, or acknowledge of work done. Not making a living wage, when everything keeps going up. Hard to believe that some that work for King Soopers need assistance to eat and are virtually homeless! Tired of Kroger CEO's getting bonuses and pay increases, off my back! Not spending the wealth that we helped make. They just keep wanting more for less! Tired of not get paid properly for what I do, from this Shady Company!!"

A Produce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

"I am homeless living in a Motel 6 and every 28 days I move in between two of them and even when I try to ask for time off to move my things I'm always told that it's something they can't help them with. It's never just an okay. My situation is also used against me instead of offering me more money I work more hours. To try to get as much as I can but in result of that I feel exhausted every single day. I'm also working on things that a manager does normally for no extra pay, just my usually earnings, and it's frustrating that I'm doing what my own managers does but get paid way less than she does."

A Meat Clerk at Food 4 Less in Southern California

Photo credit:
Reddit

6. Workload and Schedule

Is Kroger Headed in the Right Direction?

"We are busier than ever, our workload has doubled, and I am not being fairly compensated."

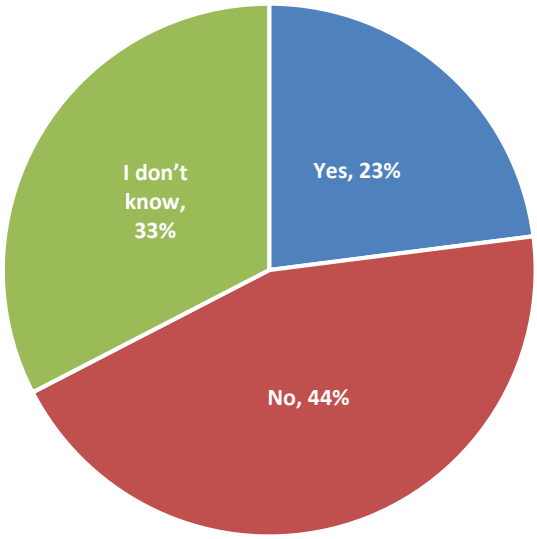
A Head Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

The survey asked the overarching question of whether workers think Kroger is headed in the right direction.

Less than a quarter (23 percent) of Kroger workers think the company is headed in the right direction, as shown in *Figure 38*. Forty-four percent give a vote of no confidence in the company, and 33 percent say they are unsure.

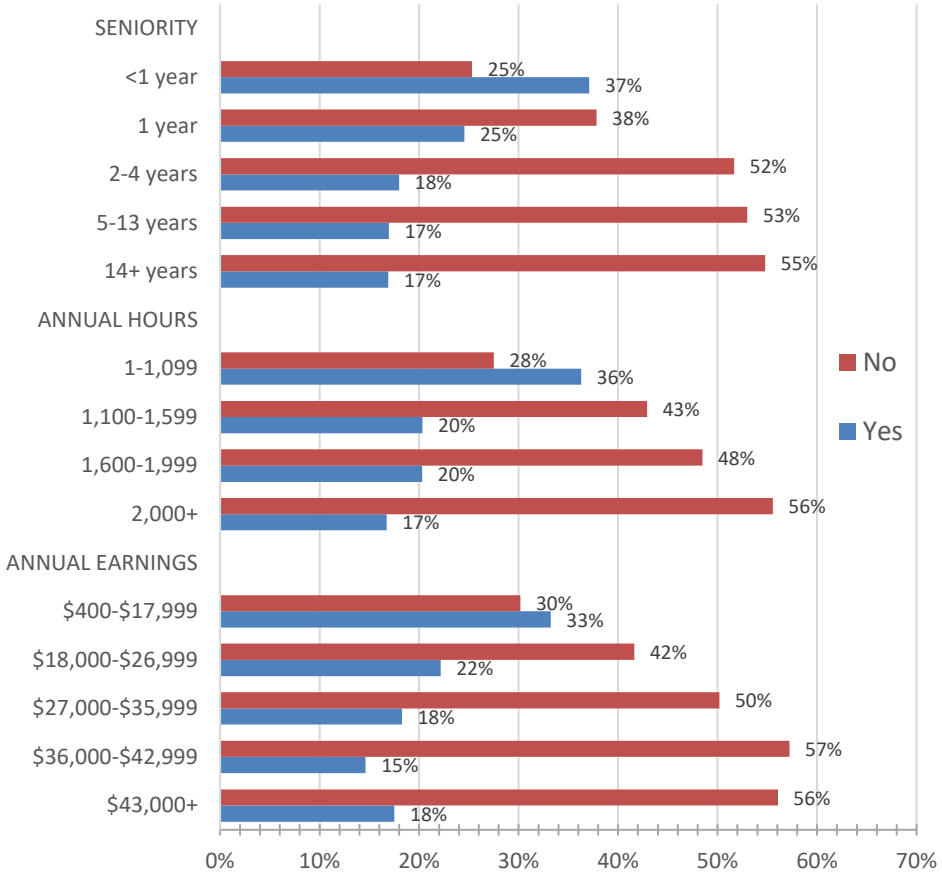
The more workers know about Kroger, the less

Figure 38: "Overall, do you think that Kroger is headed in the right direction?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 39: Responses based on Seniority, Hours and Earnings to the Question, "Overall, do you think that Kroger is headed in the right direction?"

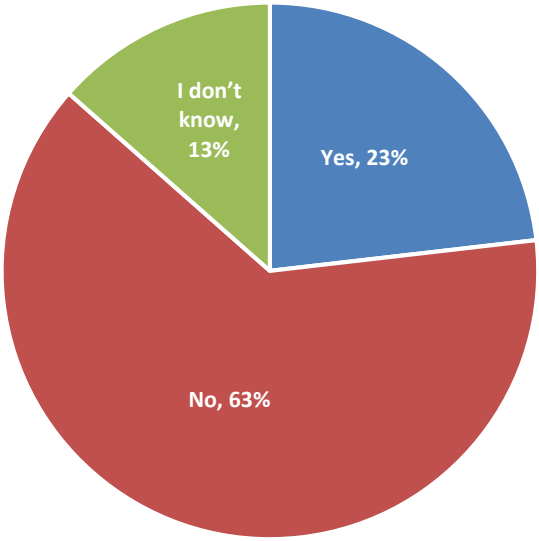


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

confidence they have in the company, as shown in *Figure 39*. Responses of "I don't know" come from new workers rather than long-term workers.

The share of workers who say Kroger is headed in the right direction plummets after the first year, dropping from 37 percent down to 17 percent among workers who have been employed at Kroger for 14 or more years. The same surge in no-confidence votes is found among workers based on annual hours of employment and annual earnings. The more hours workers spend at Kroger and the more seniority they accrue, the greater their doubts in the company.

Figure 40: "Do your wage and benefits from Kroger fairly compensate you for your experience and the work you do?"

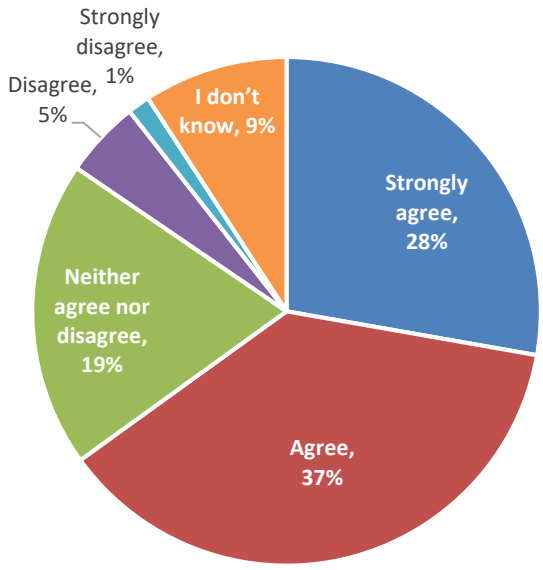


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Staying with Kroger

Less than a quarter of workers (23 percent) say that they are fairly compensated by Kroger for their experience and the work that they do *(Figure 40)*. Two-thirds (63 percent) say they are not fairly compensated and 13 percent are not sure.

Figure 41: "Most workers see Kroger as a short-term job rather than a career opportunity."



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Two-thirds of workers (65 percent) say that Kroger is a short-term job rather than a career opportunity (*Figure 41*). Only 6 percent of disagree with this statement. It is a rare worker who sees a good future working for Kroger.

Grocery stores are a service industry. Value is created through services that workers provide for

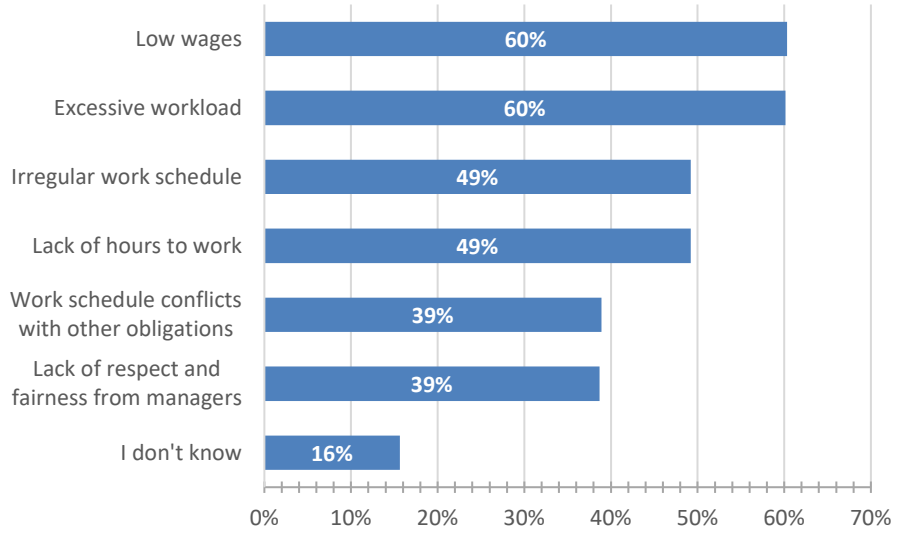
"EVERY department lacks hours despite more work."

A Deli Manager at King Soopers in Colorado

"There are constant requirements to accomplish more with less. I hit the door running and behind because no one can accomplish everything that needs to be accomplished, we are short on help, and hours are regularly being cut. Kroger's focus is squarely upon Wall Street and not upon their employees."

A Sales Manager at Ralphs in Southern California

Figure 42: "Why do workers quit their jobs at your store? *(Check all that apply)*?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

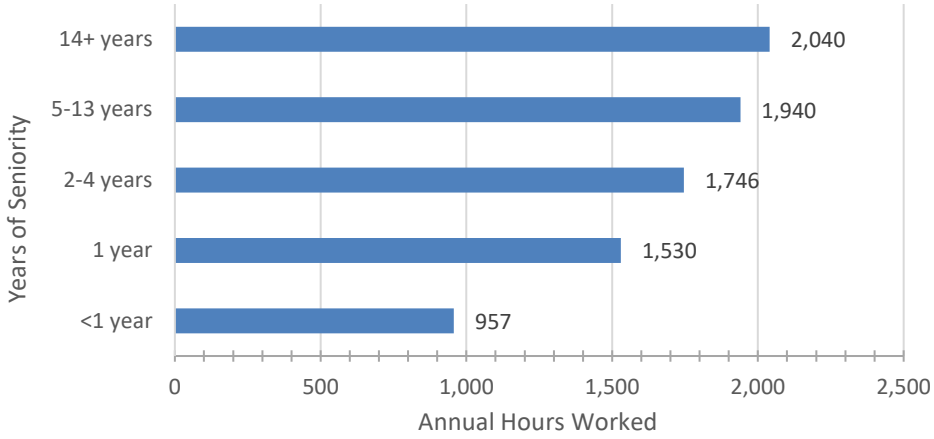
customers. In the case of Kroger, the workers who create the most value do not see a successful company emerging from their hard work.

Kroger has high employee turnover. Workers give two overriding reasons for why their colleagues quit working for Kroger. Sixty percent say it is because of low wages, and 60 percent say it is because of excessive workloads *(Figure 42)*. They do not think that they are fairly compensated for their hard work serving customers and making Kroger profitable.

Half (49 percent) say workers quit their jobs because of irregular work schedules and part-time hours that do not provide enough earnings.

Over a third of Kroger workers (39 percent) say that their colleagues quit because their work schedule conflict with other obligations and because of lack of fairness and respect from managers.

Figure 43: Median Annual Hours Worked Based on Seniority



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

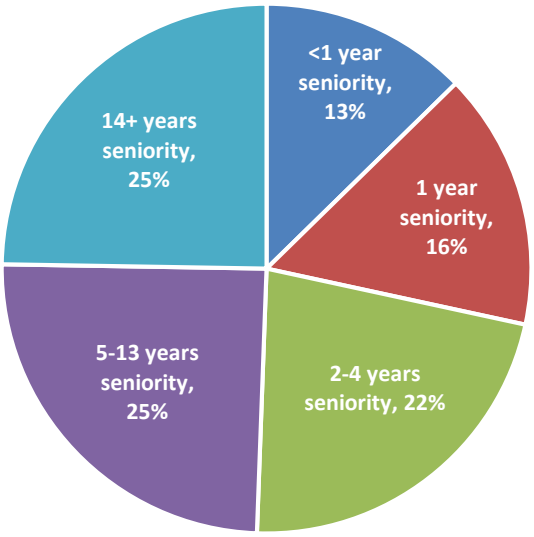
Experienced Workers

Its most experienced workers who are the backbone of its workforce voice critical assessments of Kroger most strongly.

Workers with the most experience work the longest hours at Kroger stores *(Figure 43)*.

The minority of workers with five or more years of seniority cumulatively provide half of the total annual hours of labor at Kroger stores *(Figure 44)*. The workers who see Kroger most critically are the same workers who keep the stores running.

Figure 44: Share of Total Number of Hours Worked at Kroger Stores by Workers' Seniority

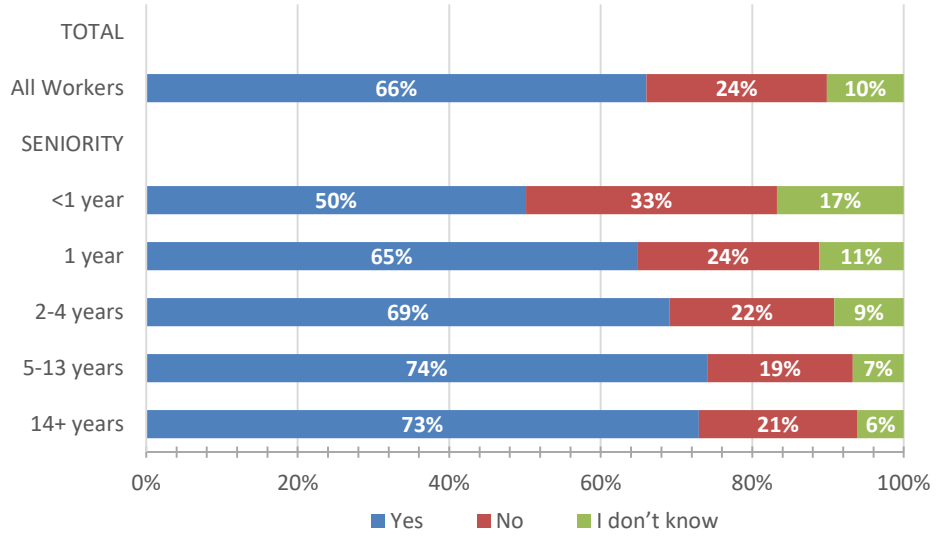


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Workload

Two-thirds of workers report that Kroger has increased the amount of work that they have to complete during their shift *(Figure 45)*. The share of workers giving this assessment increases based on seniority – from 50 percent of new workers with less than one year of seniority to 74 percent

Figure 45: "Has Kroger increased the amount of work that you have to complete during your shift?"

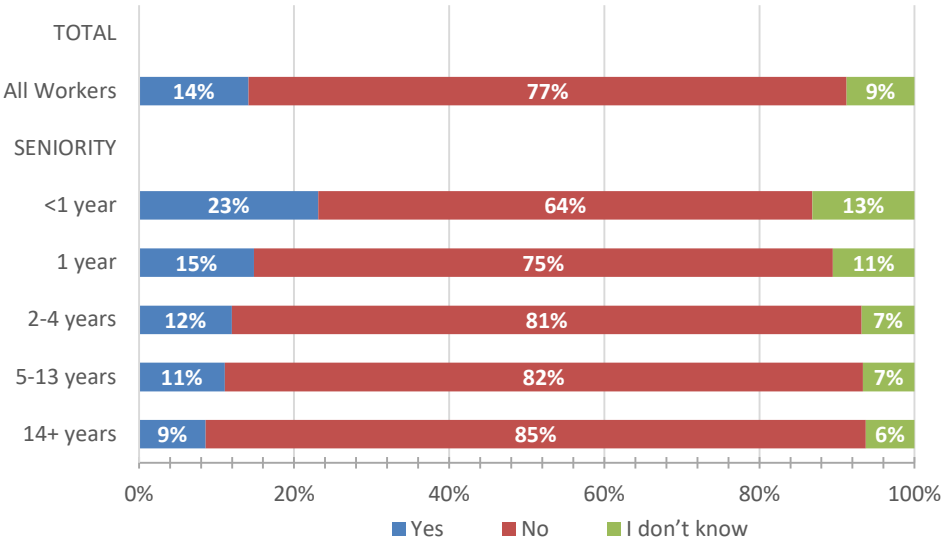


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.b

"I love working for Food 4 Less but my hours don't match the work that I do and sometimes it's overwhelming like I can't breathe."

An All Purpose Clerk at Food 4 Less in Southern California

Figure 46: "Are there enough workers at your store to provide good customer service?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

"I am regularly the only one working in my department leading to undue stress, an inability to take my mandatory breaks and lunches, and a general inability to take care of myself."

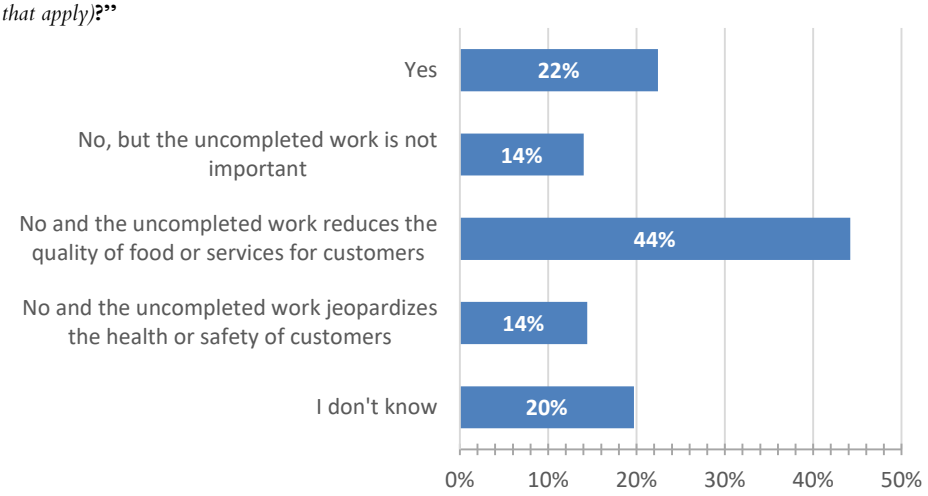
A Personal Shopper at Quality Food Centers in Washington

of workers with over five years of seniority. Kroger's most experienced workers say they are being asked to do more.

Over three quarters (77 percent) of workers say that there are not enough workers at their store to provide good customer service *(Figure 46)*. This assessment also increases with seniority – from 64 percent of new workers to 85 percent of the most experienced workers.

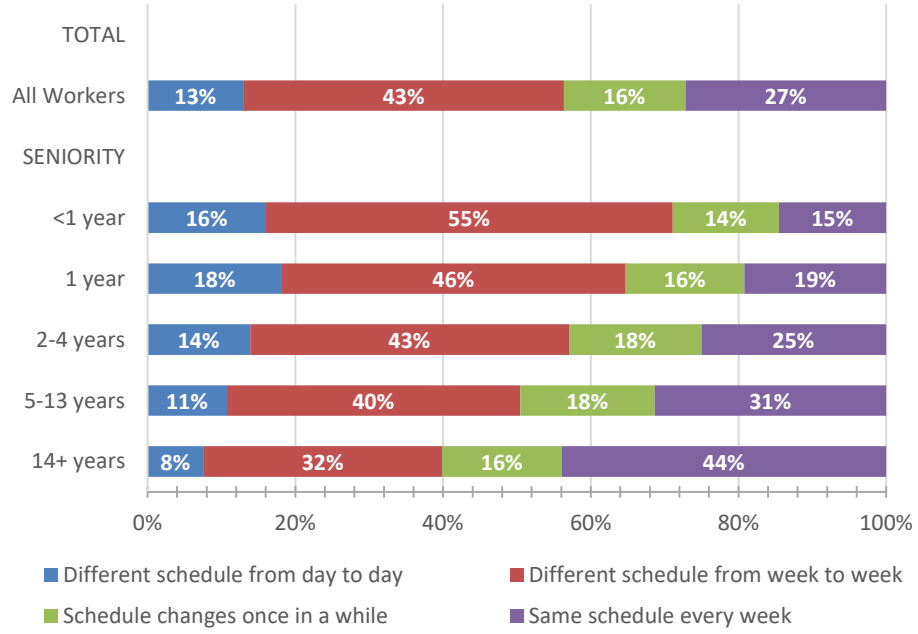
Over three-quarters of workers also say that workers are not able to complete all of the assigned tasks at their store *(Figure 47)*. This includes 44 percent of workers who say that uncompleted work reduces the quality of food or services for customers and 14 percent of workers who say the uncompleted tasks jeopardize the health and safety of customers.

Figure 47: "Are workers able to complete all of their assigned tasks at your store *(check all that apply)***?"**



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 48: "Which of the following describe your Kroger work schedule?"

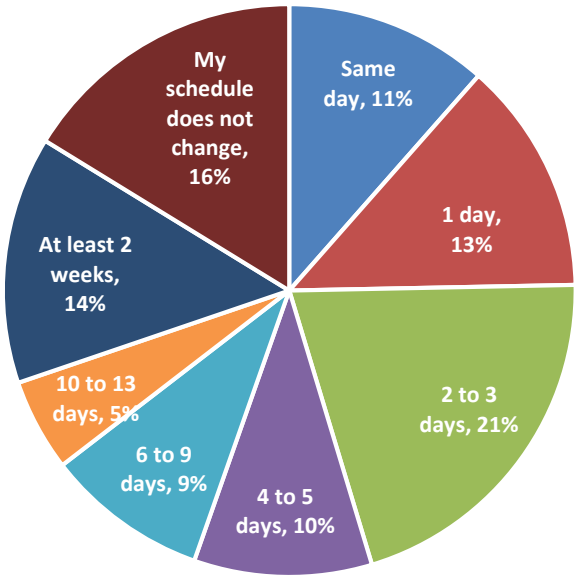


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Work Schedule

Over half of Kroger workers have work schedules that change at least every week *(Figure 48)*. Schedule stability increases with seniority, with 71 percent of new workers having schedules that change at least weekly, but even with 14 or more years of seniority, 40 percent of these experienced workers have schedules that change at least every week.

Figure 49: "How many days in advance are you USUALLY told about changes in your final work schedule?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

A quarter of workers are told the same day or only one day in advance about schedule changes *(Figure 49)*. Another 31 percent of workers get 2 to 5 days' notice of schedule changes and 28 percent of workers get 1 to 2 weeks' notice. Only 16 percent of workers have schedules that do not change.

The onset of COVID in 2020 caused changes in

"Kroger pays workers starvation wages, does not promote overtime, increases work load every month or every few months with no added help, hours or increase in pay."

A Department Manager at Ralphs in Southern California

"For the last year and a half, King Soopers has gone to awful to somehow even more awful. Despite my store getting busier than ever, our hours have been reduced to a sliver of what it used to be. Even when we're severely understaffed, hours are still awful. It's not fair or right. I'm so exhausted and miserable here."

A Deli Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

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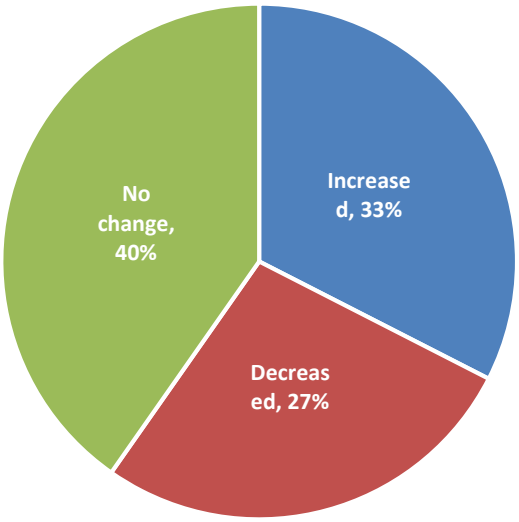
the number of hours for 60 percent of workers, with hours increasing for 33 percent of workers and decreasing for 27 percent of workers *(Figure 50)*. Among workers who were employed by Kroger in 2019, only 40 percent said that the number of hours they worked had not changed.

Linking responses from workers about changes in the number of hours they worked with responses about work schedule satisfaction shows that these schedule changes were unwanted and disruptive for most workers *(Figure 51)*:

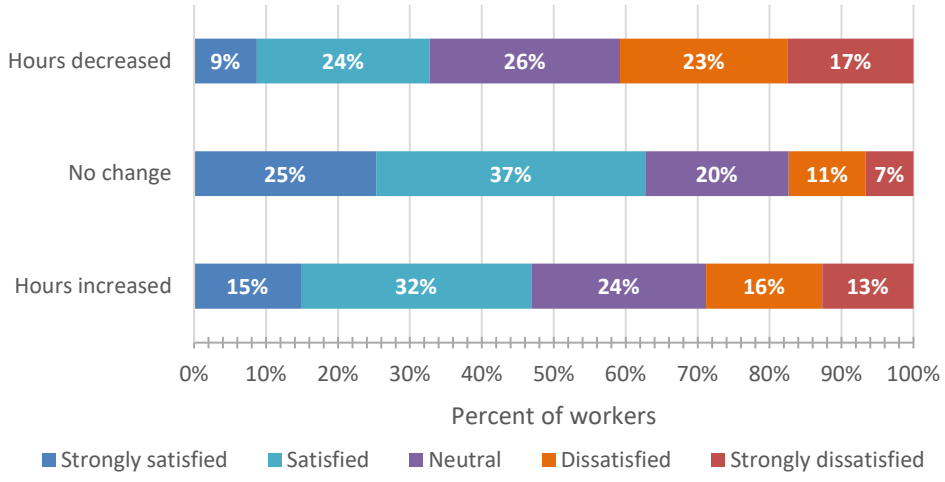
Figure 50: "Has the number of hours per week that you usually work your Kroger job changed since 2019?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

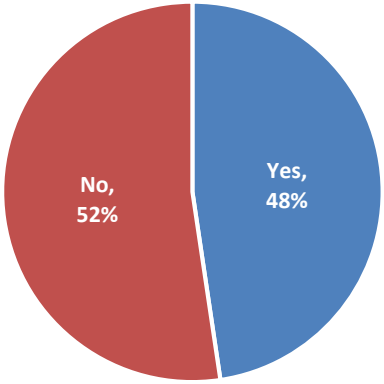
- 41 percent of workers whose hours decreased, causing a loss of earnings, are dissatisfied with their schedule
- 29 percent of workers whose hours increased, encroaching on family responsibilities and other obligations are dissatisfied
- 17 percent of workers whose schedules did not change are dissatisfied

Figure 51: "Has the number of hours per week that you usually work your Kroger job changed since 2019?" *AND* **"Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statement: 'I am satisfied with my current work schedule.'"**



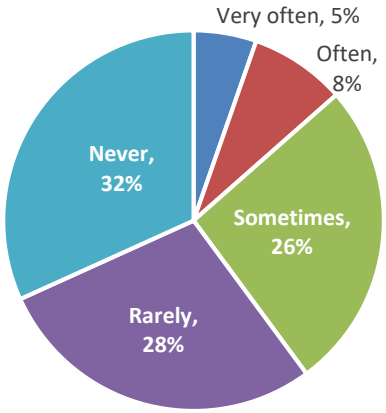
Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 52: "If you have children under the age of 12, do you pay for the care of these children while you work at Kroger?"



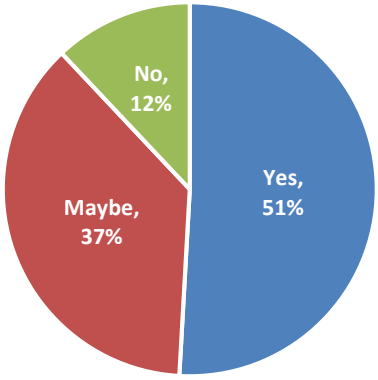
Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 53: "In the last year, how often have you missed a shift at Kroger because you could not find adequate child care?" *(Parents who pay for childcare shown)*



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 54: "Should Kroger help their workers pay for childcare?" *(Responses from all Kroger workers shown)*



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

More than one-quarter (27 percent) of Kroger workers report that their work schedule is a problem for them. This includes 9 percent who were dissatisfied because their hours increased, 7 percent who were dissatisfied because their hours did not change, and 11 percent who were dissatisfied because their hours decreased.

Children and Childcare

Thirty percent of Kroger workers have young children in their households. Half of these parents (48 percent) pay for childcare and the other half (52 percent) have a family member or friend who supports them by providing uncompensated childcare *(Figure 52)*.

Over two-thirds of parents who pay for childcare have missed a shift at Kroger because they could not find adequate childcare *(Figure 53)*. This is also true for 44 percent of parents who do not pay for childcare

Even through 70 percent of Kroger workers do not have young children in their households, a majority say that Kroger should help workers pay for childcare *(Figure 54)*. Only 12 percent of workers think this is not a good idea.

Two –thirds of parents with children say they would use the childcare subsidy if Kroger provided it *(Figure 55)*.

Kroger's labor force clearly recognizes that the unpredictable schedule and intense work demands

"It is a very hard job, very physical and demanding. It does not pay enough. Customers are rude and ungrateful. Management does not care about their employees."

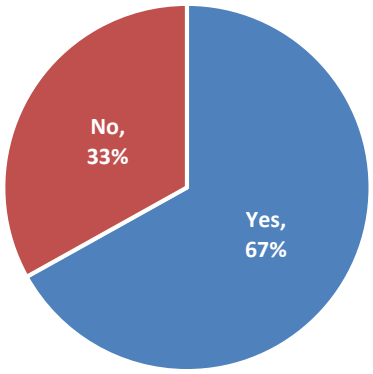
A Food Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"In the short time that I've been there they've already doubled the amount of production they want us to complete without giving us any extra hours in a day to do it. I'm working with a skeleton crew at half-staff and they expect us to deliver a high level of customer service that is not possible running two people ragged in the front end."

An Assistant Deli Manager at Fred Meyer in Washington

make it difficult for workers to fulfill their responsibilities as both parents and workers without support. Workers strongly back the idea of supporting their co-workers who are parents by subsidizing the cost of childcare.

Figure 55: "Should Kroger help their workers pay for childcare?" *(Responses from all Kroger workers shown)*



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Summary

Less than a quarter of Kroger workers think the company is headed in the right direction. The most senior workers who are the backbone of Kroger's workforce voice the strongest critical assessments.

Less than a quarter of workers say that they are fairly compensated by Kroger for their experience and the work that they do. Two-thirds of workers say that Kroger is a short-term job rather than a career opportunity.

Workers give two overriding reasons for why their colleagues quit working for Kroger - low wages and excessive workloads. Other reasons include irregular work schedules, part-time hours that do not provide enough earnings, and lack of fairness and respect from managers.

Two-thirds of workers report that Kroger has increased the amount of work that they have to complete during their shift. Over three quarters of workers say that there are not enough workers at their store to provide good customer service and that are not able to complete all of the assigned tasks at their store. Workers report that uncompleted work reduces the quality of food and services and jeopardize the health and safety of customers.

Over half of Kroger workers have work schedules that change at least every week, and 13 percent have schedules that change every day. A quarter of workers have are told the same day or only one day in advance about schedule changes. Another third get 2 to 5 days' notice of schedule changes. Only 16 percent of workers have schedules that do not change.

Kroger's labor force clearly recognizes that the unpredictable schedule and intense work demands makes it difficult for workers to fulfill their responsibilities as both parents and workers. Workers strongly back the idea of supporting their co-workers who are parents by subsidizing the cost of childcare.

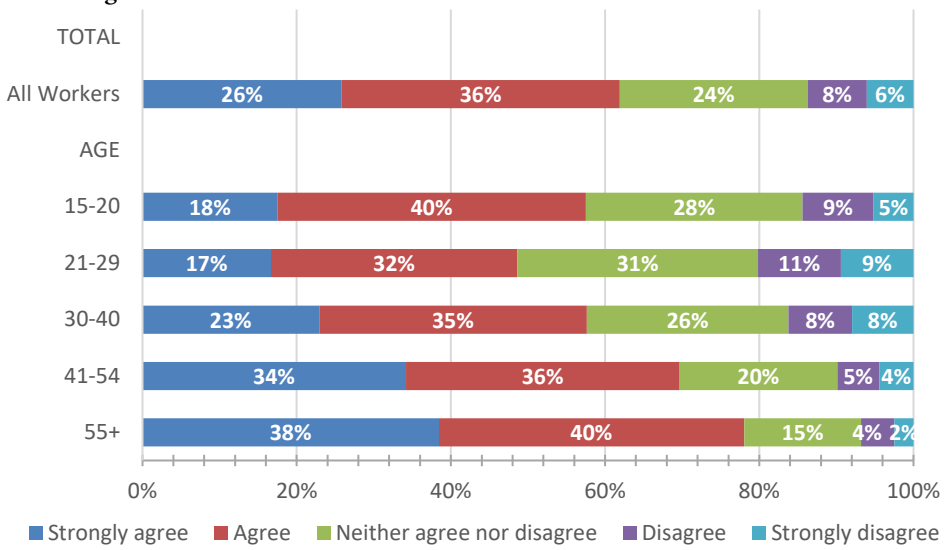
Photo credit:
Cincinnati Enquirer

7. Fairness and Respect

Pride in Work

Kroger workers are proud of the essential work they do for their communities. Nearly two-thirds (62 percent) affirm their pride in what

Figure 56: "How strongly do you agree with the statement, 'I am proud of the work I do at Kroger?'"

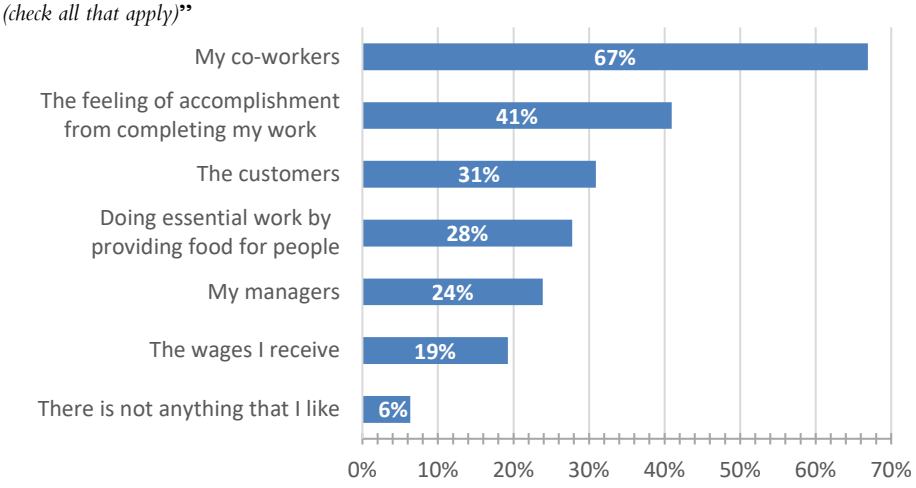


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

they accomplish, and this sense of pride increases with age and seniority *(Figure 56)*. The share of workers expressing pride in their work increases from 49 percent among 21 to 29 year olds to 78 percent among workers 55 and older. Kroger's most seasoned workers take their work seriously and are proud of it.

Two-thirds of Kroger workers (67 percent) say what they like best about the job at their store is their co-workers, as shown in *Figure 57*. The bond

Figure 57: "What do you like best about your job at the Kroger store where you work? *(check all that apply)*"

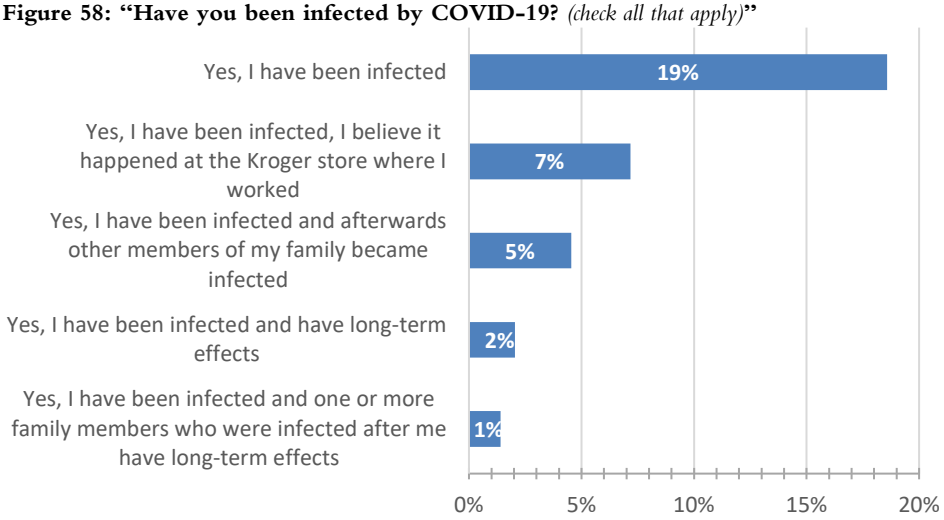


Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

"I overall enjoy my job working for Kroger, however, there are things that have made me value it less. The pay has not kept up with the cost of living and making only a few dollars over minimum wage after being employed there for more than 10 years is not a fair wage."

A Personal Shopper at Fred Meyer in Washington

Figure 58: "Have you been infected by COVID-19? *(check all that apply)*"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

that workers build among themselves as they cooperate to solve problems on the job and withstand economic adversity outside the job is a rewarding and sustaining outcome from working for Kroger.

Other aspects of their jobs that some workers say they value most are: their sense of accomplishment (41 percent), customers (31 percent), providing food for people (25 percent), store managers (24 percent), and the paycheck (19 percent).

COVID and Store Morale

The COVID pandemic has impacted frontline grocery workers through direct infection and through disruption of civility in grocery stores. Kroger workers feel physically unsafe. During the ongoing pandemic, workers must deal with angry and abusive customers and people with erratic

"Some people at my store tested positive for covid and not one manager has said anything to us including someone that we've been in close contact with."

An Apparel Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

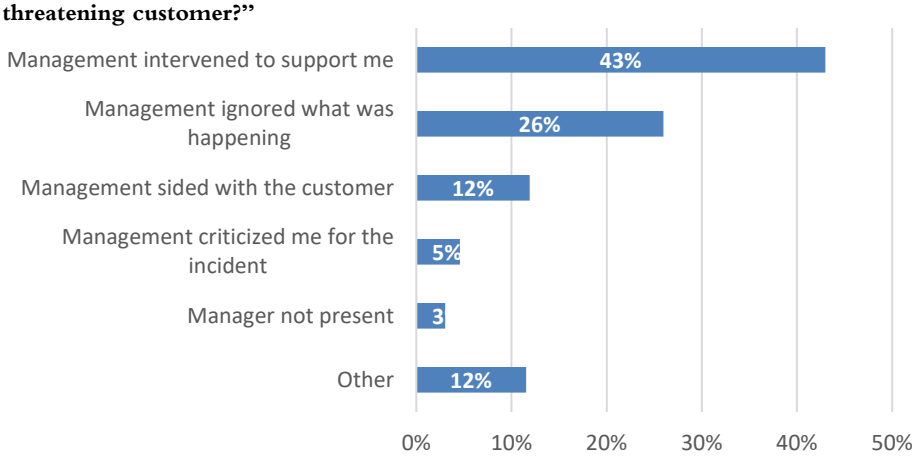
Figure 59: "In the past year, have you had any of the following difficult experiences while you were working at your store? *(check all that apply)*"

Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

"The store manager made clear to me he would not confront unmasked customers on behalf of associates. Assistant store managers routinely go without masks in enclosed spaces. In a staff meeting the store manager told us we did not merit a guard because our revenue wasn't meeting expectations."

A Cheese Shop Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Figure 60: "What did your store management do if you had a disrespectful or threatening customer?"



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

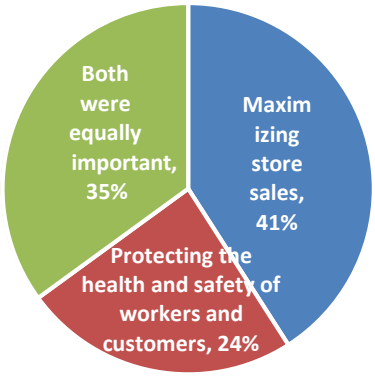
behavior within the store. This is partly due to Kroger's failure to provide adequate security in the stores.

They also feel vulnerable to getting COVID. Workers report that Kroger has failed to enforce well-recognized health standards, such as social distancing and mask-wearing among customers,

A fifth (19 percent) of workers say they have been infected with Covid, seven percent say this happened at work, 5 percent say the infection was passed on to family members *(Figure 58)*.

Over two-thirds of workers (68 percent) report having difficult experiences with customers during the pandemic *(Figure 59)*. The most frequent problem was customers who refused to wear masks (55 percent), followed by customers who were verbally abusive (49 percent), followed by customers who refused to maintain social distance (46 percent).

Figure 61: "What was the highest priority at your store during the COVID pandemic?"



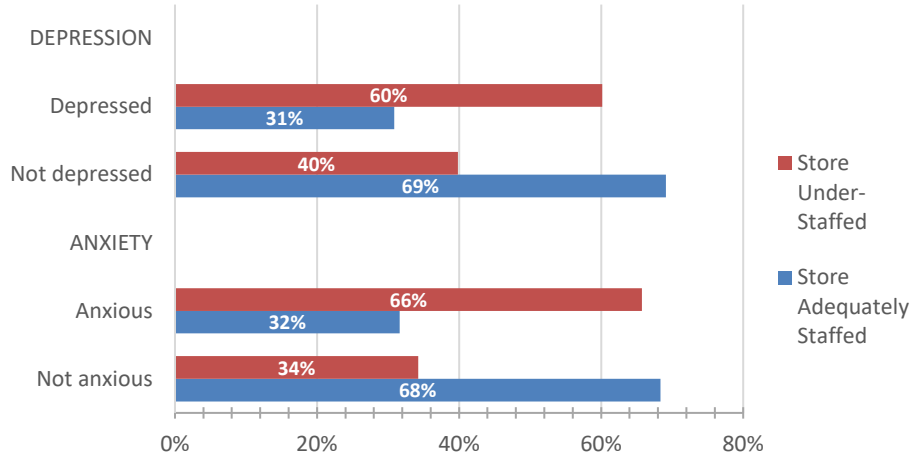
Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

A quarter of workers (23 percent) were confronted by customers who threatened violence, and over a fifth (22 percent) had violent incidents in their stores.

In short, workers bore the brunt of customers who refused to wear masks, got in their face, were abusive, threatened violence, and perpetrated violence.

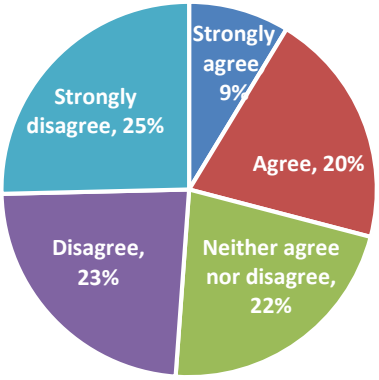
Store managers did not support workers in a majority (57 percent) of the cases where workers were confronted by abusive or violent customers *(Figure 60)*. Most

Figure 62: "Are there enough workers at your store to provide good customer service?" *AND* "Over the last 7 days, how often have you been bothered by feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge? Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless? "



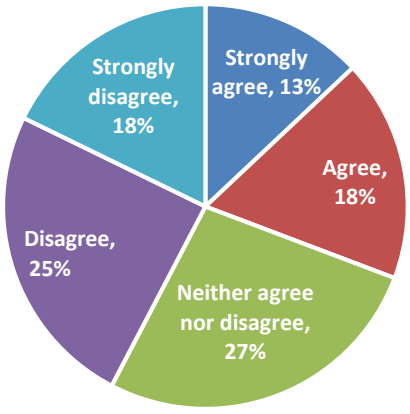
Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 63: "Morale is high and workers and managers feel like they are working together as a team."



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 64: "Store managers change work schedules to retaliate against workers who they do not like."



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

frequently (26 percent of cases) managers ignored what was happening. More unfairly, managers sided with the aggressive customer in 12 percent of cases, blamed the worker in 5 percent of cases, and was absent from the scene in 3 percent of cases.

Workers (41 percent) report that the overriding management priority during the Covid pandemic has been to maximize store sales *(Figure 61)*. Roughly half as many workers (24 percent) said the health and safety of workers and customers was a priority, and 35 percent said both were priorities.

Workplace stress has a direct impact on the emotional wellbeing of workers, as can be seen in *Figure 62*. As discussed earlier, 77 percent of workers report that their stores are understaffed and that employees are overworked and unable to finish their work.

Among workers who report that their stores are understaffed, 60 percent report being depressed and

"Managers can be found sitting in the office for a majority of the day. No compassion or empathy for the employees. They expect employees to do all this work knowing we are short staffed but don't offer to help."

A Manager at City Market in Colorado

"I've watched managers mistreat employees, I've watched as employees were assaulted by customers and then punished, as if they caused it. I've watched managers flippantly ignore mask mandates. The company is a very toxic, understaffed workplace and near all employees have spoken about quitting."

A Courtesy Clerk at City Market in Colorado

66 percent report being anxious. In contrast, among the minority of workers who say that their stores are adequately staffed, only 31 percent report being depressed and 32 percent report being anxious.

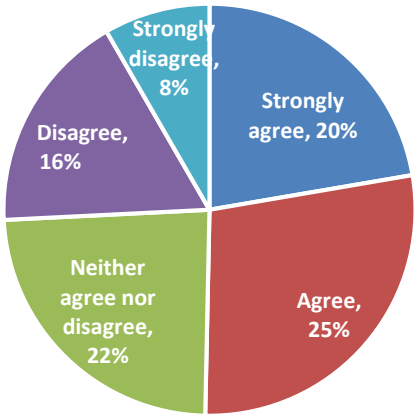
The workplace stress that is reported by over three-quarters of workers follows them home in the form of ongoing depression and anxiety.

Fairness

Only 29 percent of workers believe that morale is high and workers and managers feel like they are working together as a team *(Figure 63)*. Twice as many workers (57 percent) disagree with this premise. Workers' experience of being in an unfair workplace helps explain why they feel low morale and see low morale around them.

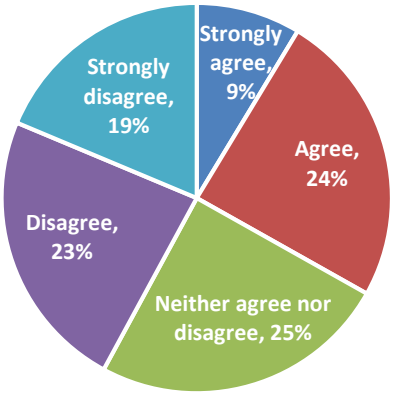
Nearly a third of workers (31 percent) say that managers change work schedules to retaliate against workers who they do not like *(Figure 64)*.

Figure 65: "Managers at Kroger unfairly treat some workers better than others."



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 66: "Managers are held accountable if they do something wrong or treat people unfairly."



Source: Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

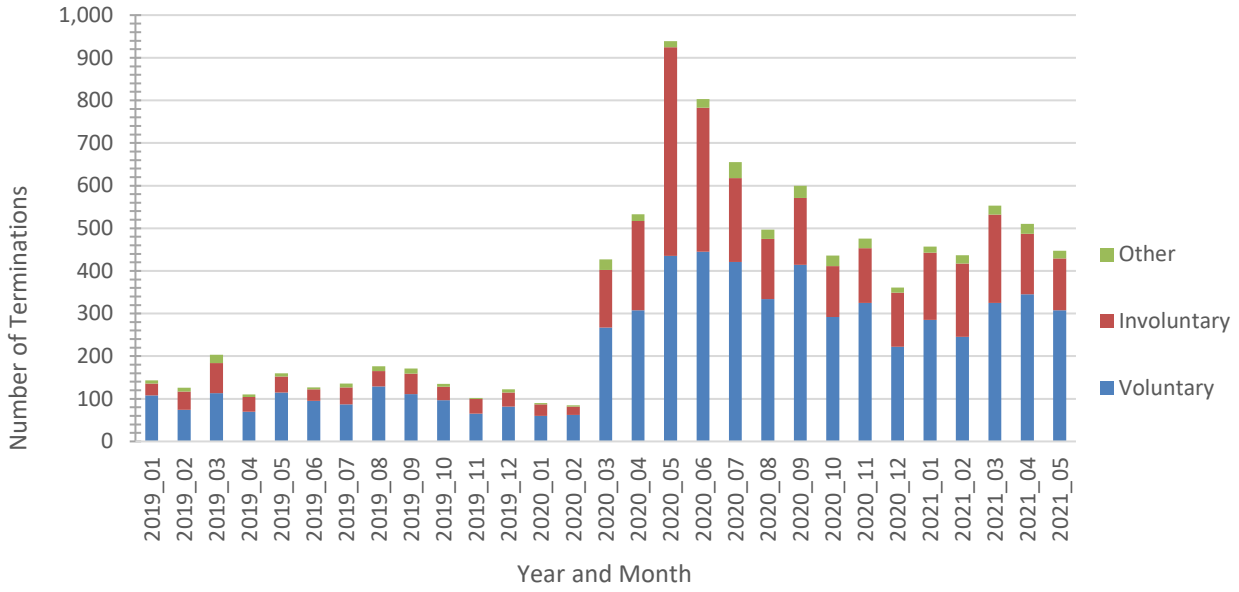
Favoritism is reported by 45 percent of workers who say that managers unfairly treat some workers better than others *(Figure 65)*. This assessment is refuted by only 24 percent of workers.

Only a third of workers (33 percent) say that managers are held accountable if they do something wrong or treat people unfairly *(Figure 66)*. A larger share of workers (42 percent) say this is not true and that managers are not held accountable for wrongdoing and unfairness.

Leaving Kroger

Kroger has a high rate of employee turnover. The number of workers parting ways with Kroger each month has been four times larger after the onset of the COVID pandemic than it was before. UFCW locals 324 and 770 in Southern California provided monthly termination data for 10,017

Figure 67: Monthly Number of Workers Leaving Kroger Voluntarily and Involuntarily in Southern California

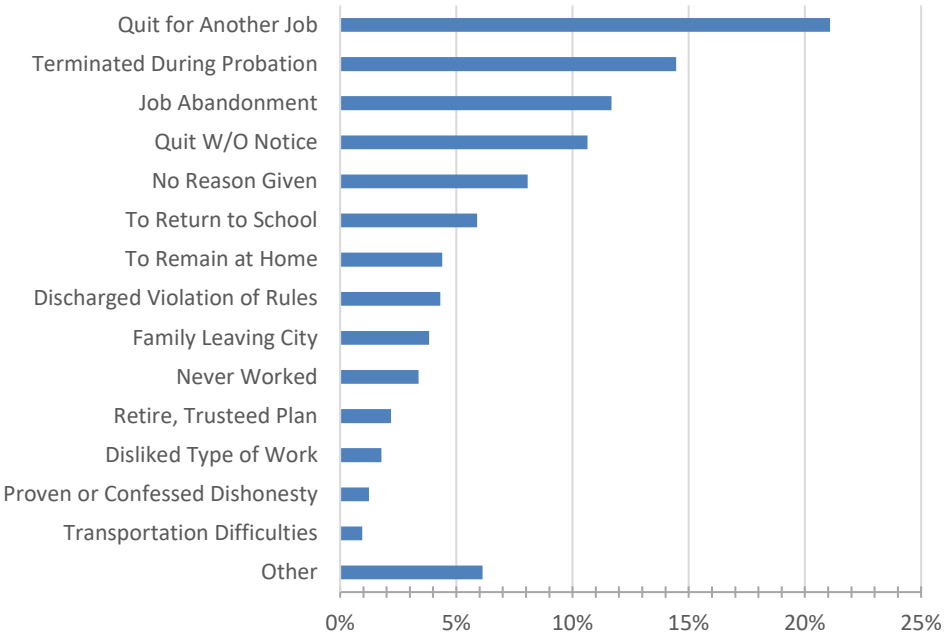


Source: Monthly termination reports from Kroger Company.

workers who left Kroger from January 2019 through May 2021. An average of 134 workers left Kroger each month through February 2020. With the onset of COVID in March 2020, an average of 542 workers have left Kroger each month. These monthly trends are shown in *Figure 67*.

The jobs of frontline workers in grocery stores was taxing and often thankless before the onset of COVID. As the responses to this survey

Figure 68: Reason for Leaving Kroger



Source: Monthly termination reports from Kroger Company.

"A woman was stabbed in our parking lot and I cleaned up the blood."

A Courtesy Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

"A young man got killed in front of my store."

A Food Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"Customer threatened to rape me because I did not move out of his way."

A General Merchandise Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"I was threatened with a gun on 3 different occasions."

A Home Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

show, the pandemic has made the harrowing, distressing and under-rewarding aspects of grocery work much worse.

Over two-thirds (67 percent) of workers who leave Kroger do it voluntarily, 29 percent leave involuntarily, and 4 percent leave to retire or because of disabilities. This ratio of voluntary-to-involuntary departures has been the same before and after COVID. What has changed is the dramatic increase in the number of departures.

The reasons why workers leave are shown in *Figure 68*. Over a fifth leave for another job. Another fifth walk away or leave without giving a reason. Ten percent leave to return to school or simply to stay home. This suggest that Kroger is failing to nurture loyalty and a sense of opportunity among many of its workers, and that the problem is growing worse.

Summary

Two-thirds of Kroger workers say they are proud of the work they do and this sense of pride increases with age and seniority. Two-thirds of workers also say what they like best about the job at their store is their co-workers. The bond that workers build among themselves as they cooperate to solve problems on the job and withstand economic adversity outside the job is a rewarding and sustaining outcome from working for Kroger.

Kroger workers feel unsafe both physically and in terms of protection from disease. The COVID pandemic has impacted frontline grocery workers through direct infection and through disruption of civility in grocery stores. A fifth of workers say they have been infected with COVID. Over two-thirds of workers report having difficult experiences with customers during the pandemic. They do not believe their safety is a priority for the company.

The most frequent problem was customers who refused to wear masks, followed by customers who were verbally abusive, followed by customers who refused to maintain social distance. A quarter of workers were confronted by customers who threatened violence, and over a fifth had violent incidents in their stores.

Store managers did not support workers in a majority of the cases where workers were confronted by abusive or violent customers. Workers report that the overriding management priority during the COVID pandemic has been to maximize store sale.

Workplace stress has a direct impact on the emotional wellbeing of workers. The workplace stress that is reported by over three-quarters of workers follows them home in the form of ongoing depression and anxiety.

A third of workers say that managers change work schedules to retaliate against workers who they do not like. Favoritism is reported by nearly half of workers who say that managers unfairly treat some workers better than others. Workers say that managers are not held accountable for wrongdoing and unfairness.

The number of workers leaving their job at Kroger every month has increased four-fold since the onset of COVID. These departures are primarily to pursue better opportunities elsewhere.

"Boulder store shot up and a guy came less than a week after it happened and threatened to shoot up the store because mashed potatoes weren't available in the deli."

A Meat Cutter at King Soopers in Colorado

"I have been attacked, had my vehicle damaged, and fear for the safety of my customers and myself."

A Meat Cutter at Quality Food Centers in Washington

On one occasion I had a customer hit me with their car while backing up during a grocery drop-off. The customer even said they were going to hit me because we didn't provide the correct milk. I had another experience when a customer ripped off his mask and grasped our glass window and screamed he would shoot us for the wrong coffee drink shortly after Boulder shooting.

A Coffee Bar Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

I was once verbally abused by 4 scary women who followed me after my department was closed and I was off the clock.

A General Merchandise Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"I am a struggling single mother. I can't afford to pay for bills and I got evicted from my apartment. I asked for help from Kroger and they said that wasn't their problem. I have been having to sleep in my car with my 2 year old because I can't afford anything. I live in constant fear that something will happen to my baby. I stay up most nights to insure she is okay in my car. I hope Kroger sees how much lots of employees are struggling to meet basic needs. It is horrible and needs to be fixed if they truly care about employees. I pray to god every day that I live to see another day. Please Kroger hear us the people who's risking their life everyday struggling to survive through this pandemic. Show some light and appreciation to us and help us with a better working environment and give us hazard pay."

A Deli Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

"Food health and safety equipment should be investigated as in the Bakery and Deli there is a major amount of mold and bugs. The management is just being horrible all around. Something needs to be done for the health and safety of all my customers as well as workers."

A Deli Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"We had fist fights over mask wearing. Women spitting on another for not wearing a mask."

A Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

"I was suspended for three days even tho the guy backed into me on purpose. In their opinion I didn't walk away soon enough?!."

A Checkout Clerk Fred Meyer in Washington

Photo credit:
Los Angeles City College

8. Economic Impacts of a Living Wage for Kroger Workers

Economic Impacts from Increased Spending by Grocery Workers

A living wage for Kroger workers in Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California will create $1.2 billion in economic ripple effects and support over 6,500 new jobs.

Raising the wages for Kroger workers is good for the economies in communities where shoppers live. When the wages of 36,795 grocery workers in Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California are increased to levels that will sustain them and their families, their increased households spending will create $1.2 billion in economic ripple effects and support over 6,500 new jobs. This projection is based on the expectation that wages of grocery workers, together with the wages of other workers in their families, will meet their families' costs for minimum food, housing, health insurance, childcare, transportation, and other basic necessities – a *Living Wage*.[7]

The average Kroger grocery worker in the regions covered in this study is paid $29,655 a year by Kroger. There is small variation across the regions served by the four UFCW locals:

- Colorado, UFCW 7 $30,794
- Puget Sound region of Washington, UFCW 21 $27,454
- Orange County, Long Beach, UFCW 324 $32,316
- Los Angeles, Ventura, Santa Barbara, UFCW 770 $29,636

The average living wage for Kroger grocery workers across these regions is $22.00 an hour if employed full-time. This average is weighted by geography and household structure.[8] Annualized by 2,080 full-time work hours, the annual earnings needed to attain a living wage is $45,760. Raising wages to this *living wage* level will require an aggregate payroll increase of $623.7 million, achieved through a higher wage rate or a combination of higher wages and increased hours.

This boost to grocery workers' household spending power will support added jobs and added sales in the communities where they shop. *Table 1* shows the economic ripple effects of that $623.7 million in added household spending, broken out by geographic regions (and UFCW Locals) where workers are employed.

Table 1: Economic Impacts of a $22 Living Wage for Grocery Workers, by Annual Earnings Range

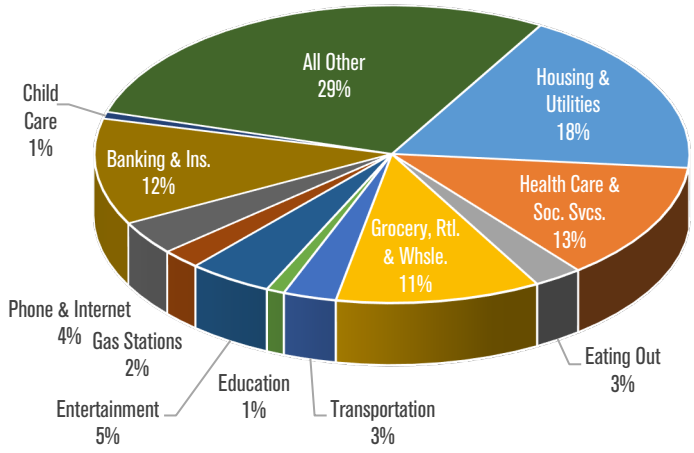
UFCW Local	Current Average Hourly Wage Rate	Current Average Annual Earnings from Grocery Job	Aggregate Added Earnings to Reach $45,760 / year	Induced Employment Supported	Induced Labor Income Supported	Induced Value Added Supported	Induced Sales (Output) Supported
Colorado (Local 7)	$16.99	$30,794	$176,429,534	1,859	$107,741,225	$192,872,049	$345,002,284
NW WA State (Local 21)	$18.29	$27,454	$204,545,466	2,156	$124,910,940	$223,608,270	$399,982,083
SoCal (Local 324)	$18.40	$32,316	$76,131,509	802	$46,491,661	$83,226,656	$148,872,719
SoCal (Local 770)	$18.20	$29,636	$166,640,592	1,756	$101,763,356	$182,170,816	$325,860,321
All Workers	$17.89	$29,655	$623,747,101	6,573	$380,907,181	$681,877,791	$1,219,717,406

Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers and membership data about 36,795 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.; Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc., IMPLAN System 2019 data ("U.S. Package") and 2021 software. Note: "Induced Jobs" are person-years of employment, and include full-time and part-time jobs in ratios present in the national economy.

When Kroger grocery workers in Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California take these added earnings home, the economic multipliers induced by their increased household spending will support the equivalent of 6,880 new, year-round jobs and $1.219 billion in added sales at local (and online) businesses. These added sales will generate $380.9 million of new income for other workers who provide the goods and services purchased by grocery workers[9] and $681.9 million of new value added in the U.S. economy.[10]

The businesses and industries that will be the beneficiaries of these added jobs and sales are shown in *Figure 69*. The impacts of grocery workers' added household spending will touch almost all sectors of the economy.[11] The share of increased household spending that will flow to different industries, increasing their economic output and employment, is as follows.

Figure 69: Worker Household Spending Patterns



Source: Economic Roundtable illustration based on the IMPLAN input/output model and national household survey data. Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc., IMPLAN System 2019 data and 2021 software.

- Housing, in the form of rent and mortgage payments 18 percent
- Health services at hospitals, doctor's office and clinics 13 percent
- Banking and insurance services 12 percent
- Grocery, retail and wholesale goods 11 percent
- Entertainment 5 percent
- Eating out: Food and beverages at restaurants and bars 3 percent
- Phone and internet 4 percent
- Gas for private vehicles 2 percent
- Education and childcare services 2 percent

Earnings Bump for Workers above the Living Wage

When Kroger workers earn a living wage – $45,760 per year – there will also be a "bump" in wages for Kroger workers who are already above the living wage level. This bump, or "ripple effect," occurs because when the wage floor is raised, employers need to maintain a wage ladder as an

There will be a "bump" in wages for Kroger workers who are already above the living wage level.

incentive for the additional responsibilities that supervisors take on and to differentiate the value of workers with higher skill levels or professional credentials. Prior research has found that this bump increases payroll growth by 20.4 percent.[12]

Across Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California, this ripple effect would increase the earnings of Kroger workers who already earn a living wage by $127.2 million. This bump to earnings of grocery workers already above the Living Wage will support even more added jobs and added sales in their communities. The additional $127.2 million in added household spending is broken out by geographic regions and UFCW locals in *Table 2*.

Table 2: Economic Impacts of a 20 Percent Wage Bump for Grocery Workers Already Above the Living Wage, by Region

Current Annual Earnings Range from Grocery Job	Aggregate Added Earnings	Induced Employment Supported	Induced Labor Income Supported	Induced Value Added Supported	Induced Sales (Output) Supported
Colorado (Local 7)	$28,420,099	299	$17,355,463	$31,068,736	$55,574,589
NW WA State (Local 21)	$23,224,373	245	$14,182,559	$25,388,790	$45,414,514
SoCal (Local 324)	$30,164,562	318	$18,420,764	$32,975,776	$58,985,831
SoCal (Local 770)	$45,435,372	479	$27,746,277	$49,669,764	$88,847,410
All Workers	$127,244,409	1,341	$77,705,065	$139,103,069	$248,822,351

Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers and membership data about 36,795 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.; Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc., IMPLAN System 2019 data ("U.S. Package") and 2021 software. Note: "Induced Jobs" are person-years of employment, and include full-time and part-time jobs in rations present in the national economy.

When Kroger grocery workers in Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California who already earn a living wage get a wage bump, their added earnings will induce household spending to support the equivalent of 1,341 new, year-round jobs and $248.8 million in added sales at local (and online) businesses. These added sales will generate $77.7 million in new income for other workers who provide the goods and services purchased by these higher-paid employees and $139.1 million in new value added to the U.S. economy.

A Living Wage will add $84.6 million to federal tax revenue and $63.8 million to state and local revenue

Tax Revenue Effects

An additional benefit when Kroger grocery workers earn a living wage will be the increased federal, state and local tax revenues that will result from their increased household spending. These added federal, state and local tax revenues are summarized in *Table 3*.

A living wage at all Kroger stores in Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California will generate over $84.6 million in new federal tax revenue. The largest component of this – 35 percent of the total – will be $29.7 million of additional federal income tax collected by the Internal Revenue Service.

Table 3: Additional Public Tax Revenue Generated by Increased Earnings from a Living Wage for all Kroger Grocery Workers, by Source and Type of Taxes

Description of Federal Taxes	Employee Compensation	Proprietor Income	Tax on Prod. and Imports	Households	Corporations	Total
Social Ins Tax- Employee Contribution	$19,954,294	$2,024,059				$21,978,353
Social Ins Tax- Employer Contribution	$18,302,611					$18,302,611
Tax on Production & Imports: Excise Taxes			$3,676,365			$3,676,365
Tax on Production & Imports: Custom Duty			$2,979,640			$2,979,640
Tax on Production & Imports: Non-Tax			$324,348			$324,348
Corporate Profits Tax					$7,653,377	$7,653,377
Personal Tax: Income Tax				$29,727,787		$29,727,787
Total Federal Tax	$38,256,905	$2,024,059	$6,980,354	$29,727,787	$7,653,377	$84,642,482

Description of Federal Taxes						
Dividends					$231,410	$231,410
Social Ins. Tax- Employee Contribution	$247,628					$247,628
Social Ins. Tax- Employer Contribution	$378,614					$378,614
Sales Tax			$24,652,357			$24,652,357
Property Tax			$21,615,956			$21,615,956
Motor Vehicle License			$471,553			$471,553
Severance Tax			$591,936			$591,936
Other Taxes			$2,734,507			$2,734,507
State and Local Non-Taxes			$435,999			$435,999
Corporate Profits Tax					$2,448,207	$2,448,207
Personal Tax: Income Tax				$7,826,779		$7,826,779
Personal Tax: Non-Taxes (Fines- Fees				$1,523,190		$1,523,190
Personal Tax: Motor Vehicle License				$372,377		$372,377
Personal Tax: Property Taxes				$177,768		$177,768
Personal Tax: Other Tax (Fish/Hunt)				$124,126		$124,126
Total State and Local Tax	$625,618		$50,502,308	$10,024,240	$2,679,618	$63,831,783

Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers and membership data about 36,795 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770; Minnesota IMPLAN Group, Inc., IMPLAN System 2019 data ("U.S. Package") and 2021 software.

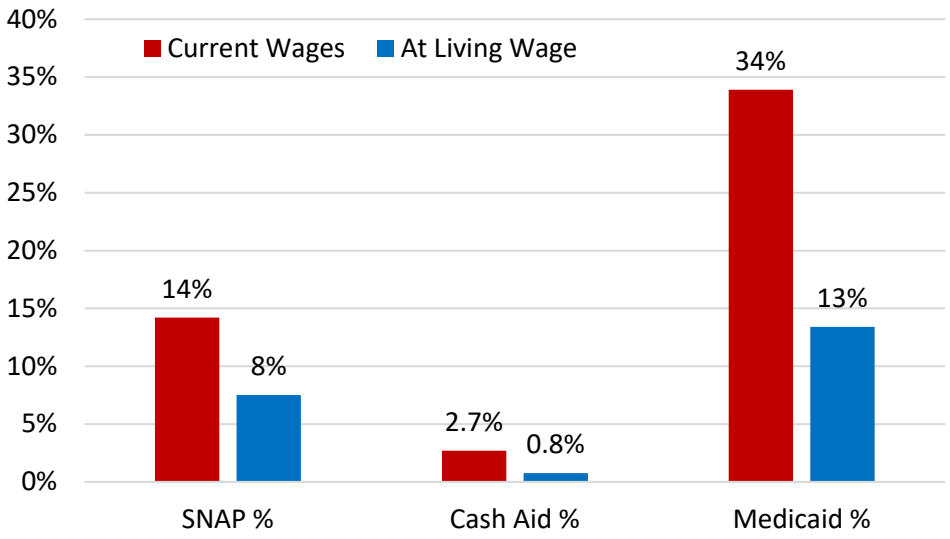
State and local tax revenue will increase by over $63.8 million. The largest contributors to this added state and local tax revenue – 39 percent, or $24.7 million – will be sales taxes, followed closely by added property tax revenues (34 percent, or $21.6 million). Twelve percent of this added state and local tax revenue will come from personal income taxes.

These added tax revenues benefit workers, their families, and their communities by supporting public roads and infrastructure, public schools and public colleges, social services, hospitals, public assistance programs, and public safety.

Reductions in Public Assistance Enrollment and Spending

A humane society provides public services such as schools, libraries, and roads, and a social safety net with supports such as Social Security, health care, food stamps, rental assistance, help for becoming a homeowner, and

Figure 70: Estimated Reduction in Public Assistance Participation for Kroger Grocery Workers in Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California



Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. American Community Survey, 5-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2015-2019; Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers and membership data about 36,795 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

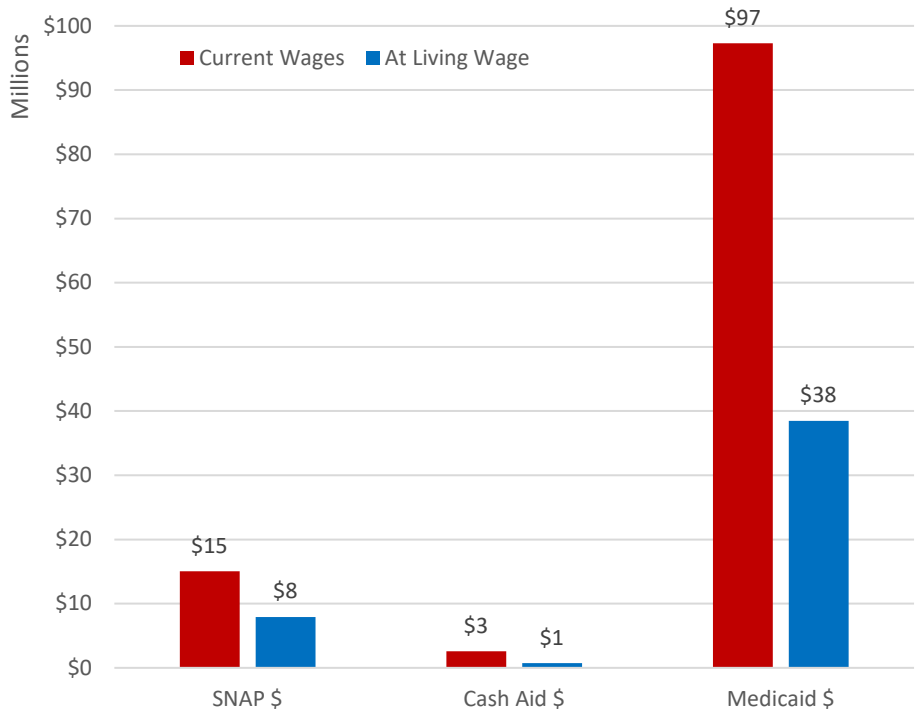
financial aid for college students so that individuals and families can live decent lives. In the U.S., most assistance is tied to household income. Programs like SNAP (food stamps) and Medicaid are targeted to lower-income households. As their income increases, they are either no longer eligible for certain programs or receive smaller levels of benefits.

A living wage will reduce public outlays for SNAP, Medicaid and cash welfare received by grocery workers by $70.9 million

A living wage of $45,760 a year for Kroger grocery workers will boost their income, food and housing security and reduce their need to rely on social safety net programs. The estimated average annual reduction in public assistance enrollment for SNAP (formerly known as food stamps), Medicaid and cash aid programs for grocery workers are shown in *Figure 70*. SNAP participation rates will drop from 14 to 8 percent, a reduction of just under 2,500 Kroger worker households in the Colorado, Southern California, and northwest Washington regions who currently receive SNAP benefits. Medicaid benefit rates are estimated to drop from 34 to 13 percent—a decrease of 7,500 Kroger worker households. The lowest impact will be on cash aid programs, which are estimated to decline from 2.7 to 0.8 percent—a decrease of 710 Kroger worker households.

The estimated annual reduction in public assistance expenditures for SNAP, Medicaid and cash aid programs for Kroger workers appears in *Figure 71*. SNAP expenditures will drop from almost $15 million to $7.9 million, a $7.1 million reduction. Medicaid benefit expenditures will drop from $97.3 million to $38.5 million, a $58.8 million reduction. The impact on cash aid expenditures will be modest; with roughly $1.86 million saved. The overall estimated annual reduction in public assistance expenditures will be $67.7 million.

Figure 71: Estimated Reduction in Public Assistance Payments for Kroger Grocery Workers in Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California



Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; U.S. Census Bureau. 2019. American Community Survey, 5-Year Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS), 2015-2019; Survey responses by 10,287 Kroger workers and membership data about 36,795 Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

The reduction in public assistance enrollment and expenditures shown by our analysis is a result of grocery workers earning a living wage of at least $45,760 a year. However, changes in the labor market as a result of this wage boost may be more complex.[13] The increase to a living wage is likely to positively affect jobs and economic output as workers increase their consumer spending.

Summary

The aggregate raise of $623.7 million resulting from a $45,760 per year living wage for Kroger grocery workers in Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California will support the equivalent of 6,573 new local, year-round jobs and $1.219 billion in added local sales.

Payroll will increase by $380.9 million for the new jobs created by the additional goods and services purchased by grocery workers, which in turn will create over $681.9 million of new value in the economy.

Grocery workers who already earn above $45,760 per year are also expected to see a wage bump as Kroger adjusts pay levels to maintain a wage ladder that provides progressive rewards for supervisors and individuals with specialized skills or professional credentials. Their

aggregate raise of $127.2 million will support an additional 1,341 new local, year-round jobs and $248.8 million in added local sales.

The added economic activity will also generate over $84.6 million in new federal tax revenue, over a third of which will be added federal income taxes.

State and local tax revenue will increase by over $63.8 million, with 39 percent coming from additional sales taxes and 34 percent from property taxes.

Public assistance enrollment and outlays will decrease with a $22 Living Wage, with an overall estimated annual reduction of $67.7 million. This includes federal-funded, locally-administered SNAP, Medicaid and cash aid benefits.

Photo credit: Nicholas Eckhart, Flickr

9. Food Scarcity and Public Actions to Ensure Food Security

Food Insecurity and Affordability

Lower-income households spend a much larger share of their income for food.

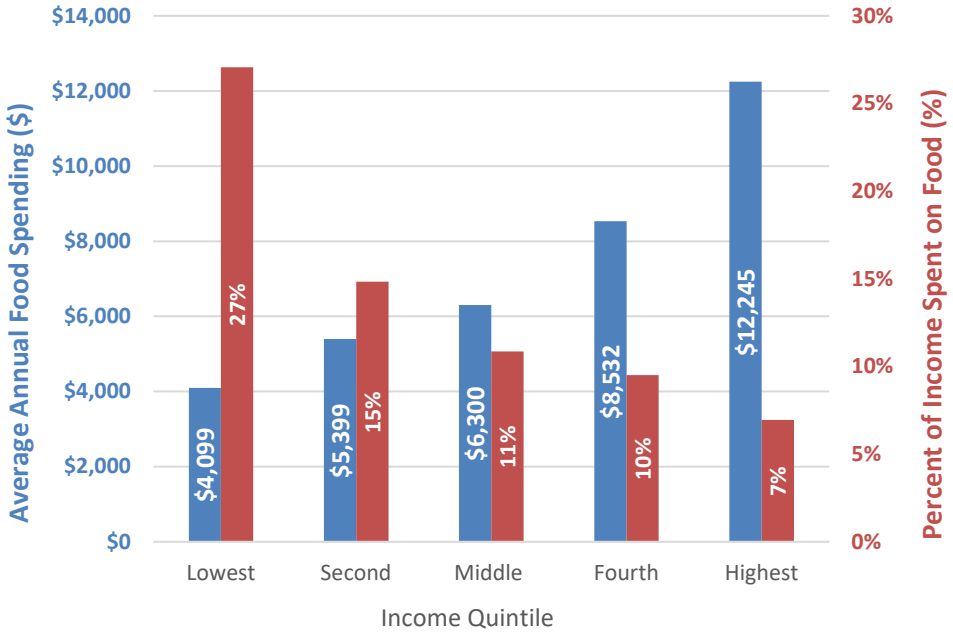
Across the country, 11.5 percent of households were food insecure throughout the year 2020.[14] Unfortunately, 78 percent of Kroger grocery workers experience some level of food insecurity while making fresh produce and groceries available to shoppers at the stores where they work.

The share of their income that households in the lowest-income quintile spent on groceries was three times greater than the share spent by the highest quintile, through 2019.

In 2020, the nation's lower-income households, including those of a majority of Kroger grocery workers, paid the highest share of their income on food (27 percent), even though food expenditures added up to an average of just over $4,000 annually (about $79 per week), as shown in *Figure 72*.

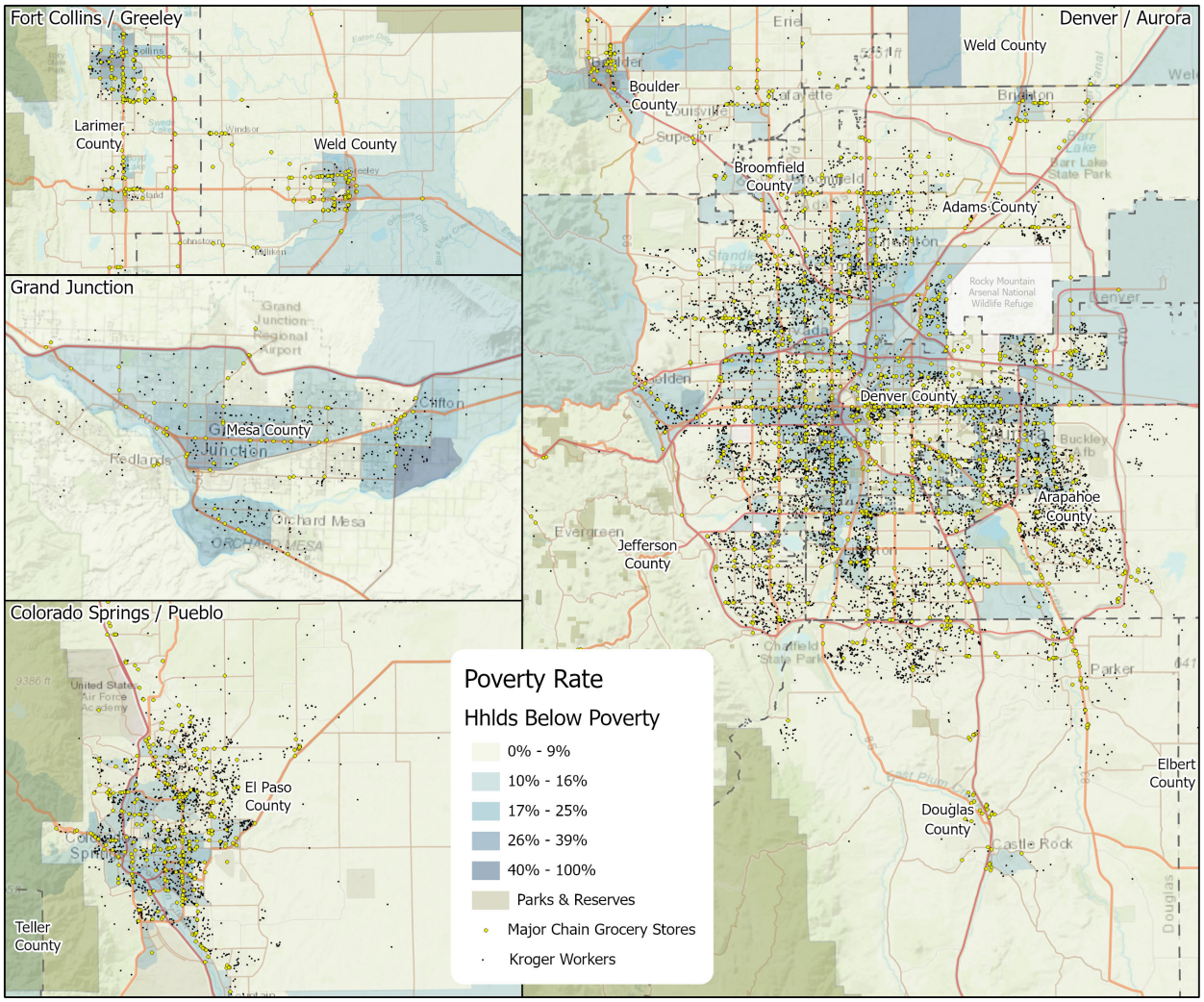
Public assistance, SNAP, discounted food from work, and other strategies still leave many grocery workers, including those who work for Kroger, food insecure. U.S. households in the highest income quintile, with an average 2020 after-tax income of $176,094, spent an average of $12,245 on food (about $235 a week). Spending three times as much on food, the highest quintile households select more expensive (and often more nutritious) food options and dine out more often with their greater disposable incomes. Despite their greater spending on food at home and outside, their share of income spent on food is much lower – seven percent.[15]

Figure 72: Food Spending and Share of Disposable Income Spent on Food, 2020



Source: Chart by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. Using data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2020.

Figure 73: Colorado Grocery Stores and Working Poor Households



Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "SNAP Retailer Locator Data" 2021 (https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator); UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770 membership database of 36,795 Kroger grocery workers; U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables: Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Table ID: S2201. Mapped: Percent of households per census tract receiving SNAP benefit and with 1+ employed workers.

Food Accessibility and Grocery Store Locations

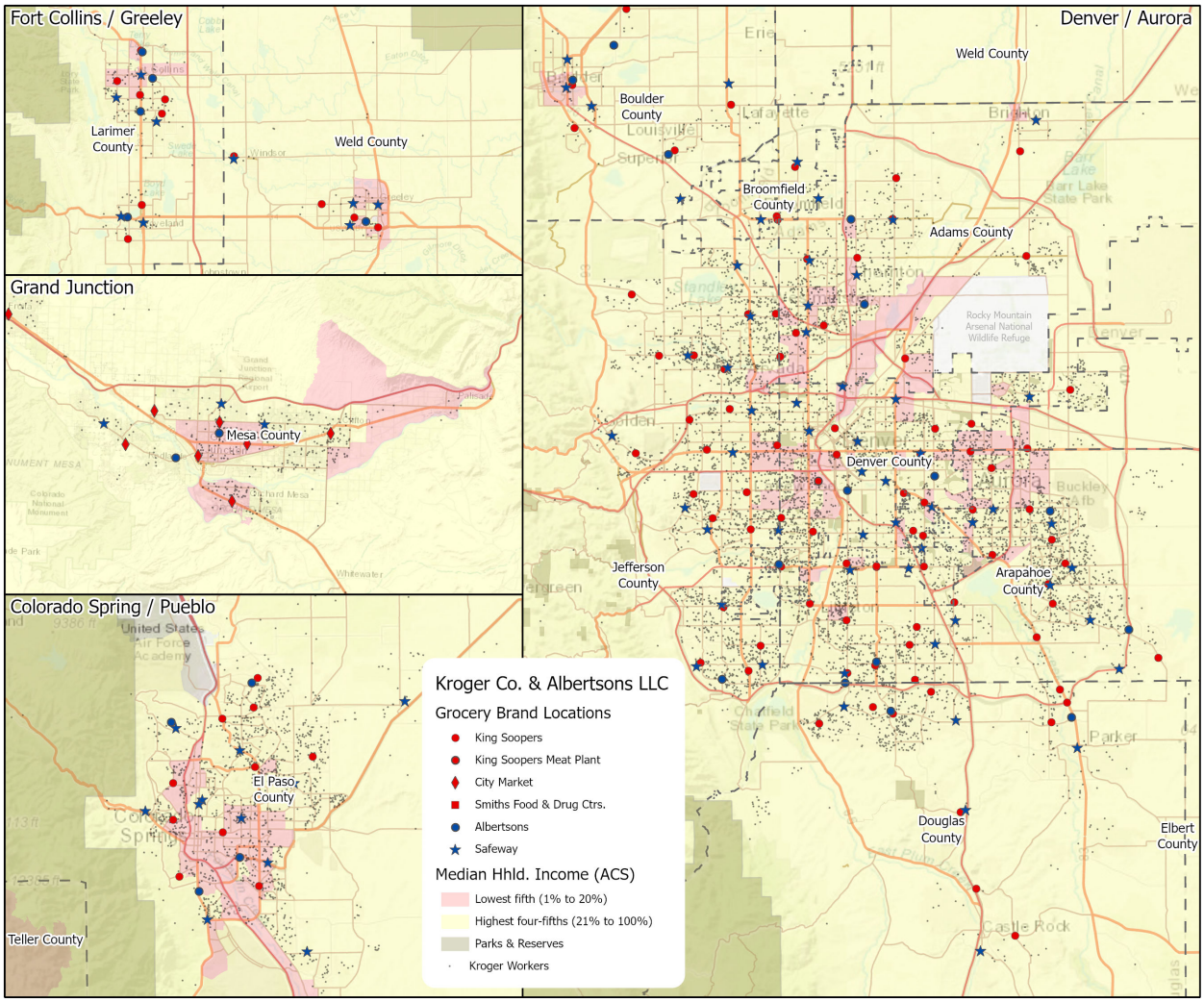
This section examines the geographic distribution of grocery stores, in the context of the income and demographic characteristics of the communities where they are located. The analysis includes all major grocery store chains in Colorado, Puget Sound region of Washington, and Southern California.

Colorado

Statewide, Colorado has over 560 grocery stores. This includes the following numbers of Kroger Stores represented by UFCW Local 7:

- 5 City Markets stores

Figure 74: Colorado Kroger Co., Albertsons LLC Grocery Stores and Median Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019 Table ID: S1903. Database of chain grocery store locations and square feet compiled by Economic Roundtable.

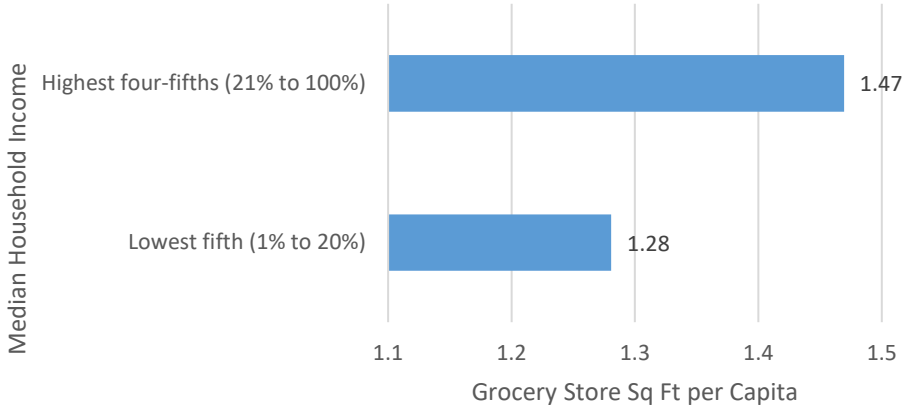
- 102 King Soopers stores
- 1 Smiths store (in Southern Wyoming)

The locations of all major chain grocery stores in the region are shown against a backdrop of households living at or below the poverty threshold in the map in *Figure 73*. The residential location of Kroger grocery workers is shown by the black dot. Many live in neighborhoods where higher percentages of households are in poverty, including many people with low-wage jobs.

The Wheat Ridge, Edgewater, Lakeside and Thornton neighborhoods of Denver, the Fruitvale neighborhood of Grand Junction, and the rural communities East of Colorado Springs are underserved by grocery stores.

Colorado's lowest-income urban neighborhoods and all Kroger and Albertsons[16] grocery stores are mapped in *Figure 74*. A number of Colorado neighborhoods have limited chain grocery store options. Kroger

Figure 75: Grocery Store Square Feet per Capita in Colorado, by Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019 Table ID: S1903. Database of chain grocery store locations and square feet compiled by Economic Roundtable.

and Albertsons grocery stores are less present in some low-income neighborhoods. Kroger's King Soopers and City Market grocery stores, as well as the Albertsons and Safeway grocery stores, are clustered in higher-income urban areas, less so in rural areas.

Colorado's low-income residents have fewer grocery stores near them, based upon an analysis of the square feet of grocery store floor area per resident, broken out by household income quintiles, shown in *Figure 75*.

Residents in households in the highest four income quintiles (the richest 80 percent) have greater than 1.4 square feet of grocery store footprint nearby.

However, residents in the lowest-income households (lowest quintile or poorest 20 percent) averaged only 1.28 square feet of grocery store footprint per capita.

Lower-income households have less access to food.

Puget Sound

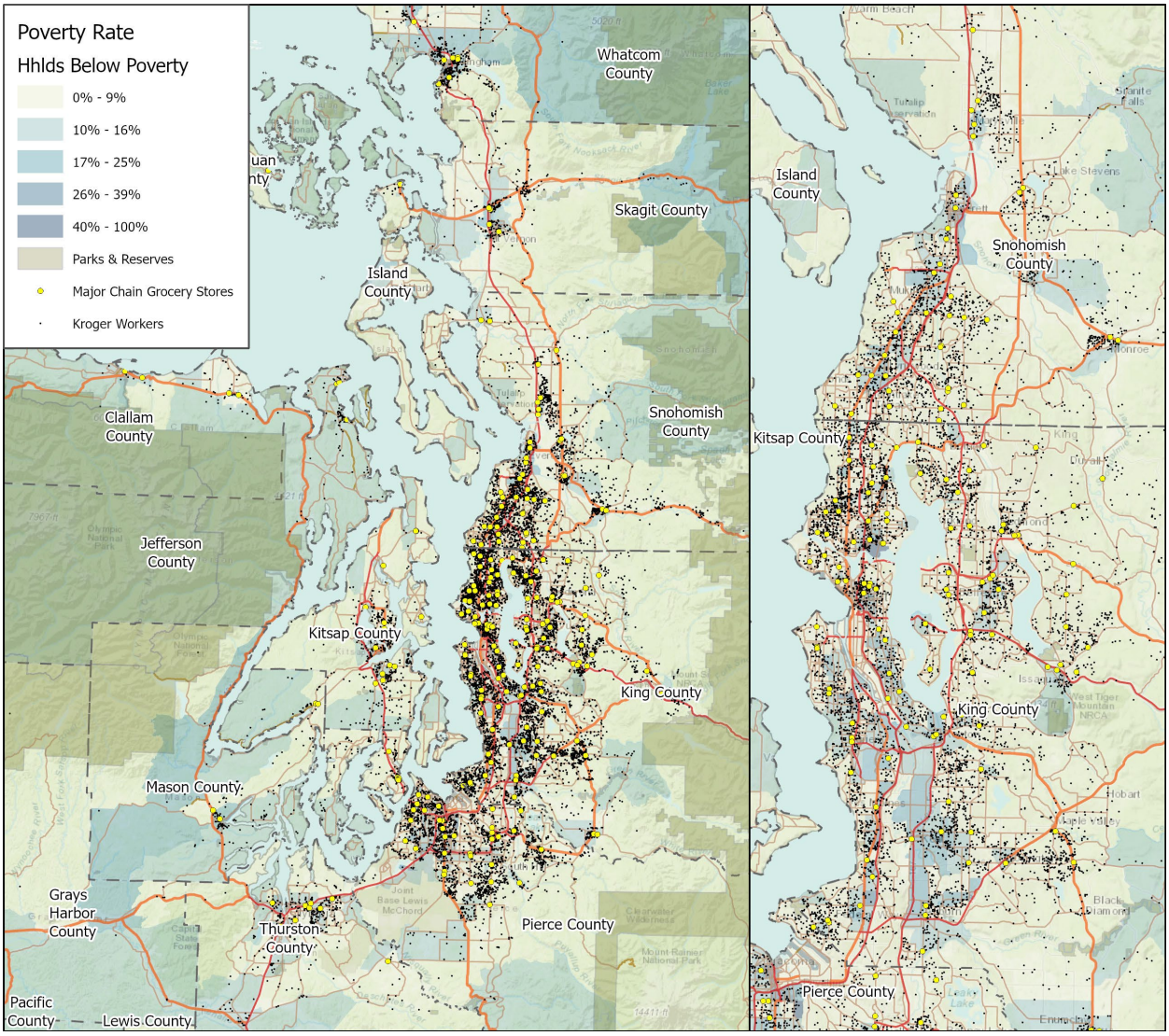
The Puget Sound region of Washington has over 900 grocery stores. This includes the following number of Kroger stores represented by Local 21:

- 33 Fred Meyers
- 54 Quality Food Centers

The locations of all major chain grocery stores in the Puget Sound region are mapped against a backdrop of households living at or below the poverty threshold, as seen in *Figure 76*.

The black dots representing the homes of Kroger grocery workers show that show many of them live in lower-income neighborhoods.

Figure 76: Northwest Washington Grocery Stores and Households Living in Poverty



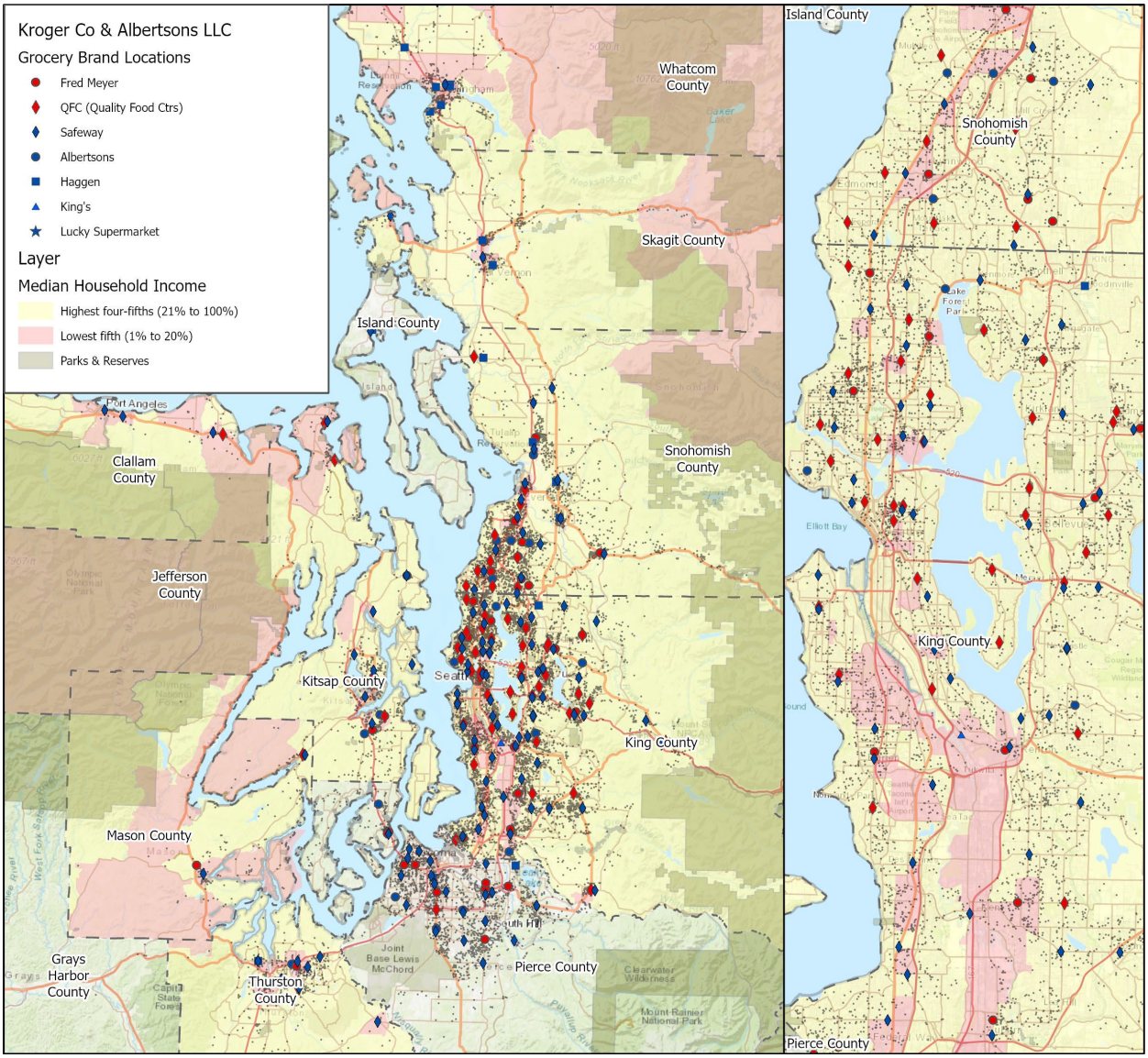
Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "SNAP Retailer Locator Data" 2021 (https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator); UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770 membership database of 36,795 Kroger grocery workers; U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables: Poverty Status Last 12 Months, Table ID: S1701. Mapped: Percent of households per census tract living at or below the poverty threshold.

Northwest Washington's lowest income neighborhoods – those in the lowest quintile of household income – and all Kroger Co. and Albertsons LLC grocery stores in the region are mapped in *Figure* 77.

A number of these low income neighborhoods have limited chain grocery store options. Kroger and Albertsons grocery stores are less present in some low-income neighborhoods, such as Delridge and around SeaTac.

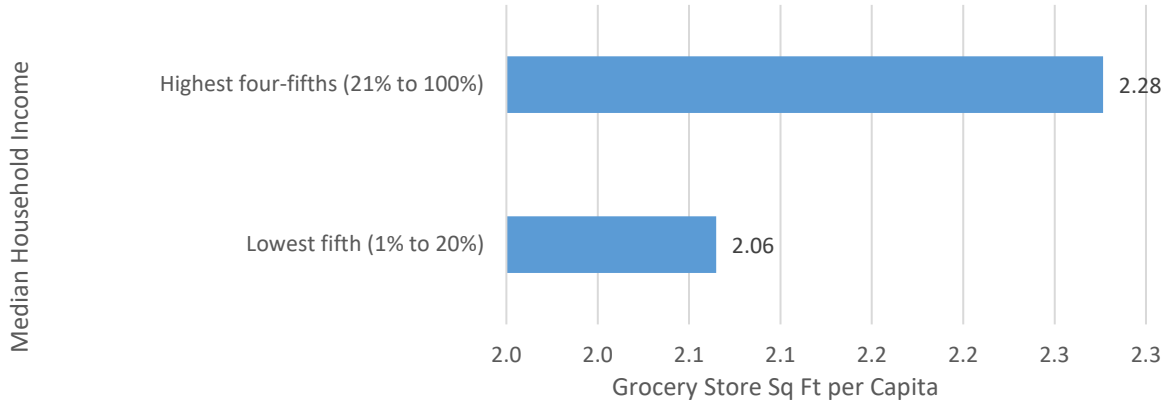
Kroger's Fred Meyer and QFC stores, as well as their rival Safeway and Albertsons stores, clustered in areas of higher incomes.

Figure 77: Northwest Washington Kroger Co., Albertsons LLC Grocery Stores and Median Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019 Table ID: S1903. Database of chain grocery store locations and square feet compiled by Economic Roundtable.

Figure 78: Grocery Store Square Feet per Capita in NW Washington by Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019 Table ID: S1903. Database of chain grocery store locations and square feet compiled by Economic Roundtable.

The lowest-income residents of Washington's Puget Sound region have fewer grocery stores near them, based upon our analysis of grocery store square feet per resident, broken out by household income quintiles, shown in *Figure 78*.

Residents in households with income in the highest four quintiles have greater than 2.28 square feet of grocery stores nearby. However, residents

Figure 79: Southern California Grocery Stores and Households Living in Poverty

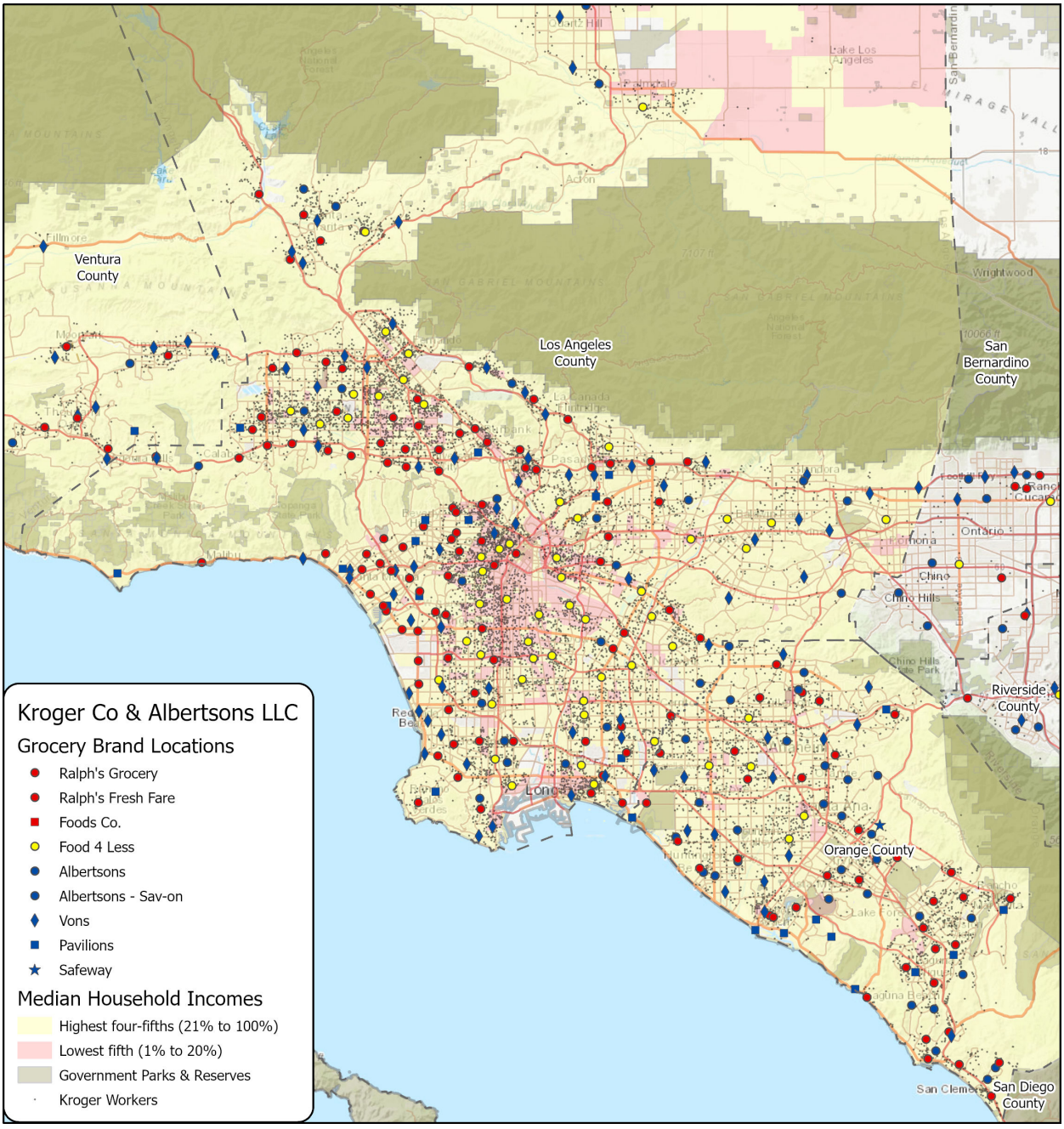
Source: Economic Roundtable analysis; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, "SNAP Retailer Locator Data" 2021 (https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator); UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770 membership database of 36,795 Kroger grocery workers; U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables: Poverty Status Last 12 Months, Table ID: S1701. Mapped: Percent of households per census tract living at or below the poverty threshold.

in the lowest-income households ("lowest fifth") averaged only 2.06 square feet of grocery stores per capita.[17]

Southern California

Southern California has over 800 grocery stores in Los Angeles and over 300 in Orange County *(Figure 79)*. This includes the following number of Kroger stores represented by Locals 324 and 770:

Figure 80: Southern California Kroger Co., Albertsons LLC Grocery Stores and Median Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019 Table ID: S1903. Database of chain grocery store locations and square feet compiled by Economic Roundtable.

- 17 and 38 Food 4 Less stores, respectively
- 49 and 102 Ralphs stores, respectively

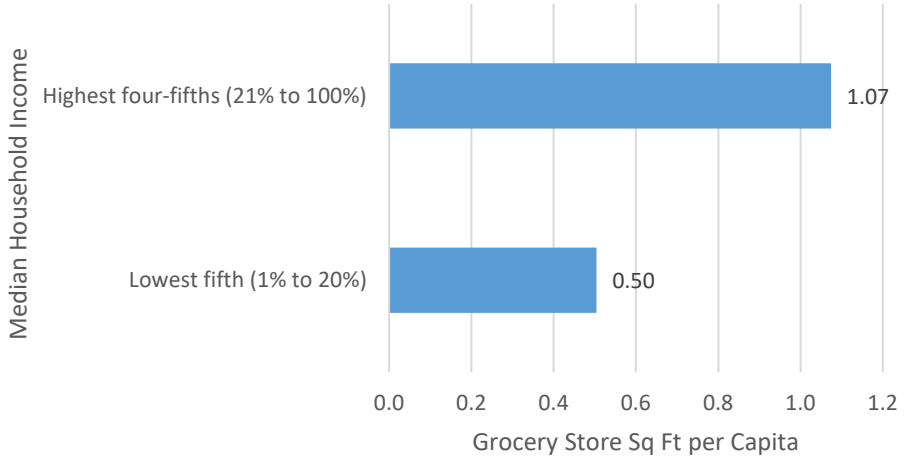
Southern California's lowest income neighborhoods and all Kroger and Albertsons grocery stores are mapped in *Figure 80*. A number of neighborhoods have limited chain grocery store options. Kroger and Albertsons grocery stores are less present in low-income neighborhoods. Their Ralphs, Albertsons and Pavilions brand grocery stores are clustered in higher incomes neighborhoods, while Kroger's Food 4 Less brand is most common in poor neighborhoods.

Limited access to groceries is most clearly seen in South Los Angeles, a neighborhood of over 250,000 residents where large numbers of Kroger workers live, but where they and their neighbors have only Food 4 Less locations. Further, *Figures 79* and *80* illustrate that these grocery stores are spread thin, further apart than observed in Southern California's coastal cities, in the higher-income neighborhoods stretching from Santa Monica to Downtown Los Angeles, as well as in higher-income neighborhoods of the San Fernando Valley. The Wilmington neighborhood of Los Angeles also appears underserved.

Low-income Southern California residents have fewer grocery stores near them, based upon our analysis of grocery store square feet per resident, broken out by household income quintiles, as shown in *Figure 81*.

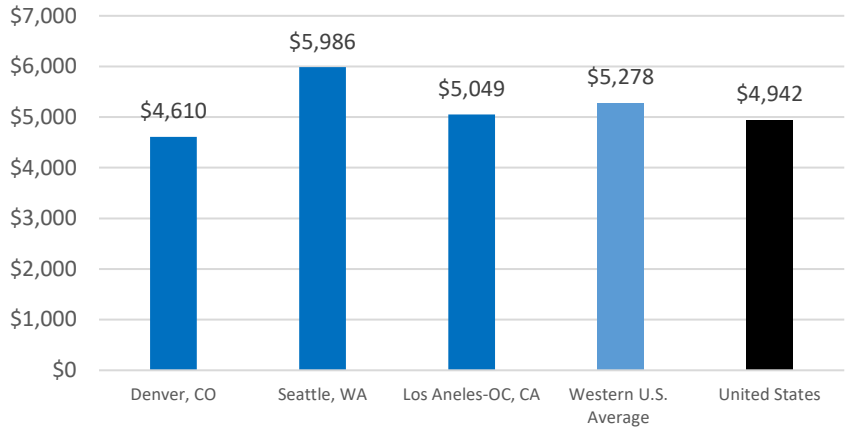
Residents in households with income in the highest four quintiles (80 percent) have greater than 1.0 square feet of grocery store floor area per capita that is nearby. However, residents in the lowest-income households (lowest fifth or poorest 20 percent) averaged just half a square foot (0.50) of grocery store per capita. These rates are lower than we find in Colorado

Figure 81: Grocery Store Sq. Feet per Capita in Southern California, by Household Income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. American Community Survey: 2019: ACS 5-Year Estimates Subject Tables Median Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2019 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars) Table ID: S1903. Database of chain grocery store locations, employees and square feet compiled by Economic Roundtable with UFCW data. Data compiled based upon Kroger and Albertsons grocery store closest to each 2020 Census Tabulation Block.b

Figure 82: Average Annual Consumer Expenditures: Food at Home



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Expenditure Surveys, September, 2021. Table 3033. "Selected western metropolitan statistical areas: Average annual expenditures and characteristics, Food at Home 2019-20. https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxgeography.htm

and Northwestern Washington, possibly due to the higher number of ethnic-specialty grocers, and other smaller markets. *Figure 83* includes data for areas represented by UFCW Locals 324 and 770, including Los Angeles, Orange and Ventura Counties; Santa Barbara County was excluded due to its large number of residents in rural communities.

Food Affordability

Grocery store workers studied in this report – living in Colorado, the Puget Sound region of Washington, and Southern California – live in places where food is expensive. *Figure 82* illustrates how workers in the Seattle Metropolitan Area (consisting of King, Snohomish, and Pierce Counties) have among the higher average annual consumer costs for food eaten at home. The Los Angeles Metropolitan Area (consisting of Los Angeles and Orange Counties) has slightly higher average costs for these groceries than the national average, $5,049 per year, while the Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metropolitan Area (consisting of: Adams, Arapahoe, Broomfield, Clear Creek, Denver, Douglas, Elbert, Gilpin, Jefferson, Park Counties) is slightly lower, $4,610 per year, among regions in this study.[18] Combined with low wages and part-time hours highlighted earlier in this report, and limited food accessibility in some neighborhoods, the high costs of food for consumers – grocery workers as well as their neighbors – we should not be surprised that they experience a high rate of food insecurity.

Public Actions to Ensure Food Security

The current state of food insecurity for grocery workers and their neighbors in low-income communities where many live signals the need

Food insecurity for grocery workers and their neighbors in low-income communities where many live signals the need for public policy interventions and public investments.

for public policy interventions and public investments. As documented by the U.S. Department of Agriculture[19], several local, state and federal programs have been implemented to offset limited access to affordable and nutritious food, including:

1. **Public/Private Loan and Grant Incentives**: Paid to private grocery companies, these can support new grocery stores in under-served or poorly served neighborhood s and communities, or else renovate existing stores. Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) make loans and grants available to offset higher costs of grocery companies starting stores in underserved areas.[20] Although CDFI's recognize the impact of employee wages on the communities where they spend their money, they often accept the prevalence of part-time grocery jobs as given. CDFI's that offer subsidies to grocery chains should include requirements for sustainable employment standards for grocery workers.

2. **Community-Level Interventions**: The USDA identifies community-level programs, including farmers' markets, community gardens, mobile carts/trucks selling fruits and vegetables, Community Supported Agriculture (delivered produce box subscriptions) as alternative interventions that can help increase the availability of healthy foods.[21] These alternative food distribution programs are well established in U.S. metropolitan regions, but improving access to them in lower-income neighborhoods, and improving affordability to low-income households, is still needed.

3. **Other Food Policy Strategies**:

   Removing Distance Barriers: Enabling under-served communities to access distant stores, either using public transportation programs for in-person shopping, or supporting online grocery shopping with delivery to homes.

   SNAP Retailer Policy: Enabling greater purchasing power among qualified low-income residents to buy fresh and nutritious foods also creates a positive multiplier effect in communities where food is purchased.[22] The U.S. Department of Agriculture oversees SNAP, with a vast majority of its benefits redeemed at supermarkets and superstores.[23] However, not all eligible households participate in the SNAP;[24] if greater numbers of eligible households participate and spend these benefits, it will help address unmet food needs and also free up more of their disposable income for purchasing taxable non-food consumer items, thereby increasing state and local tax revenue.[25]

Public actions can help achieve the twin, interrelated community needs for grocery stores to 1) offer workers higher wages with more hours and 2)

provide shoppers with high quality, affordable food, in safe stores to help ensure food security.

Food Cooperatives with Public Subsidies

Food cooperatives (also known as co-ops) are grocery stores owned by consumers, employees, or community members[26] rather than being owned by an individual grocer, a privately held company or public corporation (like Kroger) that sells shares to the public. Food cooperatives are not a new idea, with some started over a hundred years ago, and expanded during a surge of U.S.-based food cooperatives in the 1960s and 1970s.[27]

There are currently about 5,000 food co-operatives in the United States that serve over 3 million Americans. They vary widely in size, from small grocery stores to large supermarkets. Some specialize in "natural" or "organic" food while others are full-service supermarkets that provide a wide variety of food items. Food co-operatives in the U.S. reach about $2 million in sales and are located in urban, suburban and rural areas. [28]

When corporate grocery store chains such as Kroger leave community food and nutrition needs unmet in underserved, low-income areas, a food cooperative model, scaled to meet public needs, is a feasible public policy response. Given the large scale of public need, municipal, county and state funding could support a new "chain" of food cooperatives.

Another type of cooperative food initiative emerged during the pandemic after stay-at-home orders were issued. Local governments across the country collaborated with starved-for-business restaurants to cook and deliver meals to vulnerable residents.[29] Food security innovations from the pandemic, such as the "High Road Kitchens" initiative in California,[30] can be extended and expanded.

Public-private partnerships with grocery business owners, with sustainable employment conditions for grocery workers, are a third policy option. For example, the city of Baldwin, Florida opened the publicly-owned and publicly-operated "Baldwin Market" in a former grocery store property where it owned the land and building.[31] This model has been documented by Kansas State University's Center for Engagement and Community Development through studies of how rural communities facing food scarcity have turned to city-owned cooperatives when private grocery stores close.[32]

Large grocery chains, including Kroger receive subsidies and tax breaks from state and local governments, as we will discuss in the Kroger company profile. Governments also incentivize grocery chains to locate in particular areas through zoning approvals. On a local, county, and regional level, governments can establish "community benefit agreements" with Kroger

and other supermarket chains as a condition of providing such subsidies, tax breaks, and zoning approvals. These agreements – which are already widespread in cities around the country for other forms of developments – could require supermarket chains to either local stores in under-served or contribute a set amount of financial assistance to food co-operatives that serve low-income areas.

Food cooperatives with public support are an important tool for communities to increase food security as well as living wage jobs.

City and county governments have a responsibility to safeguard food cooperatives from unfair price competition by large chain grocery stores that under-pay grocery workers.[33] Food cooperatives with public support are an important tool for communities to increase food security as well as living wage jobs.

Food Policy Councils

Food policy councils are a potential platform for food access equity and advocacy by bringing together stakeholders from the entire food system – from farms to dinner tables – to study and recommend policy to improve all residents' wellbeing through food.[34] Food policy councils usually have a city or county geographic focus.[35] They are – or should be – central to addressing food scarcity and quality concerns, as well as the labor equity issues highlighted for grocery workers in this study. Food policy councils can be a "big tent" for addressing crosscutting issues of food integrity, bringing together organized labor, food and nutrition advocates for low-income communities, large institutional food preparers (such as school districts and hospitals), food and restaurant enthusiasts, and slow food and environmental advocates.

The Rhode Island Food Policy Council addressed the economic and family needs of workers in Spring 2020 when it sent an open letter to Governor Raimondo to support food sector workers, including grocery clerks and stockers, by designating them as "Tier 2 emergency workers." This would provide access to free childcare, and also designate the caretakers of those workers' children as emergency personnel.[36] Prioritizing grocery workers as "essential" – during the pandemic and beyond – is an important food policy evolution.

The Minnesota Food Charter is a "big tent" of stakeholders that is supported by the Minnesota Department of Health and the University of Minnesota's Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute. Their charter calls for improved "*enforcement, training, and dissemination of federal and state labor laws and workplace and food safety regulations.*"[37] Concerns about labor conditions start at the source of foods, on farms and fisheries, but must extend to grocery workers.

Summary

U.S. households spend more money on food as their incomes rise, but the amount spent represents a smaller share of those higher income households' overall budgets. Low-income households spend 27 percent of their income on food, while household sin the top quintile spend just 7 percent.

Colorado's lowest-income households have an average of 1.28 square feet of grocery stores per capita, while households in higher-income neighborhoods average greater than 1.4 square feet of grocery stores per capita.

The Puget Sound regions' lowest-income households average 2.06 square feet of grocery stores per capita, while all other households live near greater than 2.28 square feet of grocery stores per capita.

In Southern California, the lowest-income residents have fewer grocery stores near them, average just half a square foot (0.50) of grocery store per capita. Its poorest neighborhoods – South Los Angeles most notably –have very limited grocery store options.

Public actions to promote greater access to healthy foods, especially for low-income households, have been implemented for decades, but tend to subsidize existing grocery chain businesses through loans and grants, plus SNAP benefits to some shoppers. The vision for these programs needs to expand to include sustainable terms of employment for grocery workers.

Food cooperatives offer an alternative model for distributing fresh food, and have succeeded in urban and rural settings for decades. With public support, food cooperatives can offer a better standard for grocery worker jobs, as well.

Food Policy Councils are hubs for the healthy food systems advocacy, and sometimes organized under the auspices of local government. They are often the best "big tent" for unifying food diverse regional constituents, such as social justice advocates and organized labor, food and nutrition advocates, public agencies, large institutions (such as school districts and hospitals), and environmental advocates. This unity is needed in order to improve regional food systems, which includes making grocery store jobs more sustainable.

"Lack of training is a major issue. Lack of respect from management is a major issue. High turnover rate in the department I work in is a major issue. Different pay scales based on different departments is a major issue. Being overworked and stressed due to lack of staff is a major issue. Not enough PPE is a major issue. The fact that higher up management talks badly about employees is a major issue. Equal and fair treatment in general is a major issue."

A Home Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

"I thoroughly enjoy my job and consider it a privilege to provide customers who may be compromised or have a large family, or just don't have the time to shop, with the highest quality groceries and the best customer service I can provide. All in all, I just have to say that our store does not in any way live up to the Kroger promise. Thank you for this survey, I sure hope it gets to the correct people."

A Clerk at Quality Food Centers in Washington

"I've been working for the company the better part of a decade now. This company has lost my trust, my respect, and my loyalty. I just want the company to do right by their associates. Record profits, huge bonuses for upper management, stock buyback programs, and nothing for the people that make it possible. I understand the way a business works, the cost and risk involved, I love the free market but Kroger's greed this last year has been revolting."

A Food Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

Photo credit: [Sounder Bruce, Wikimedia]

10. Occupation and Skill Change in the Grocery Industry

Overview

Understanding the past and seeing the present clearly provides the best foundation for anticipating the future. Ten-year projections of changes in the size and occupational composition of the grocery industry labor force by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics show slow, ongoing, incremental change in how grocery stores operate.

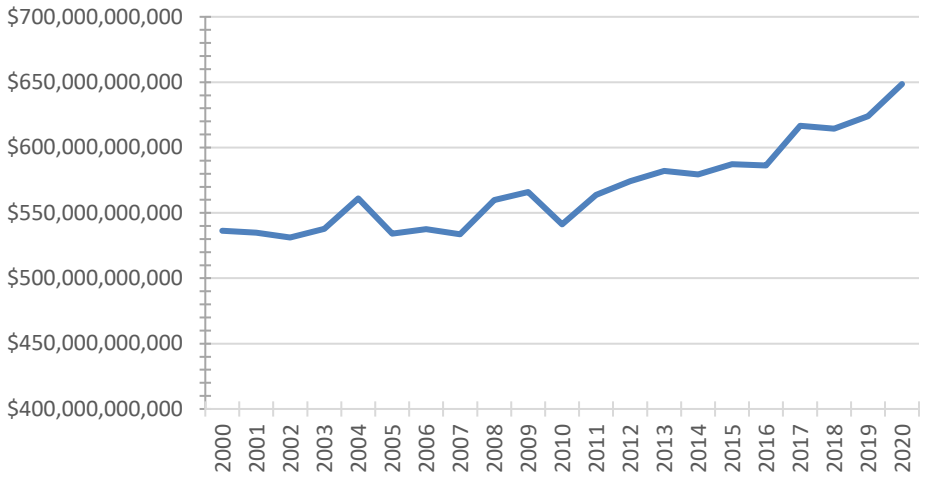
There are examples of e-commerce companies introducing disruptive technologies in brick-and-mortar stores. For example, Amazon's "just walk out" technology that eliminates cashiers. The evidence to-date does not demonstrate that these capital-intensive technologies will become industry-wide models. These showcase retail sites appear designed to produce synergy between online and store experiences. This synergy is needed because physical stores are a cost-effective way to attract new shoppers. Digital customer acquisition costs, which include Google and Facebook ads and paid search and content creation, are up nearly 50 percent over the past five years.[38]

U.S. households spent $649 billion for food that they ate at home in 2020.

The most important trend shaping the grocery industry over the past 20 years has been the amount of food that U.S. residents buy to eat at home - groceries. U.S. households spent $649 billion for food that they ate at home in 2020, as shown in *Figure 83*. Expenditures for groceries, measured in constant dollars, increased 21 percent from 2000 to 2020.

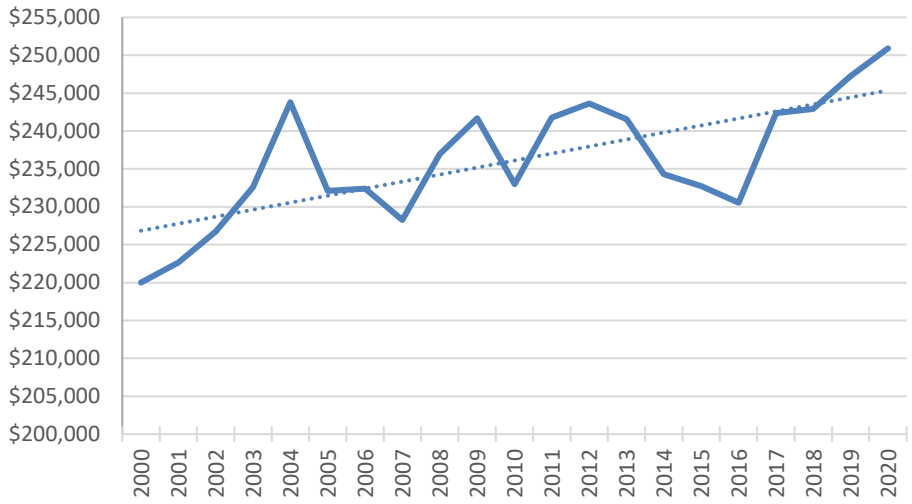
The second most important trend has been an increase of about $1,400 a year in the productivity of each grocery worker. This productivity growth is the result of incremental rather than transformative technology changes. In 2020, U.S. households brought $250,914 in groceries for each worker employed in a grocery store, as shown in *Figure 84*. This is an increase of $28,257 in grocery sales per worker over the past 20 years, when measured

Figure 83: U.S. Annual Expenditures for Food Eaten at Home



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, dollars adjusted to 2020 value.

Figure 84: Annual Sales Per Grocery Store Employee in the United States



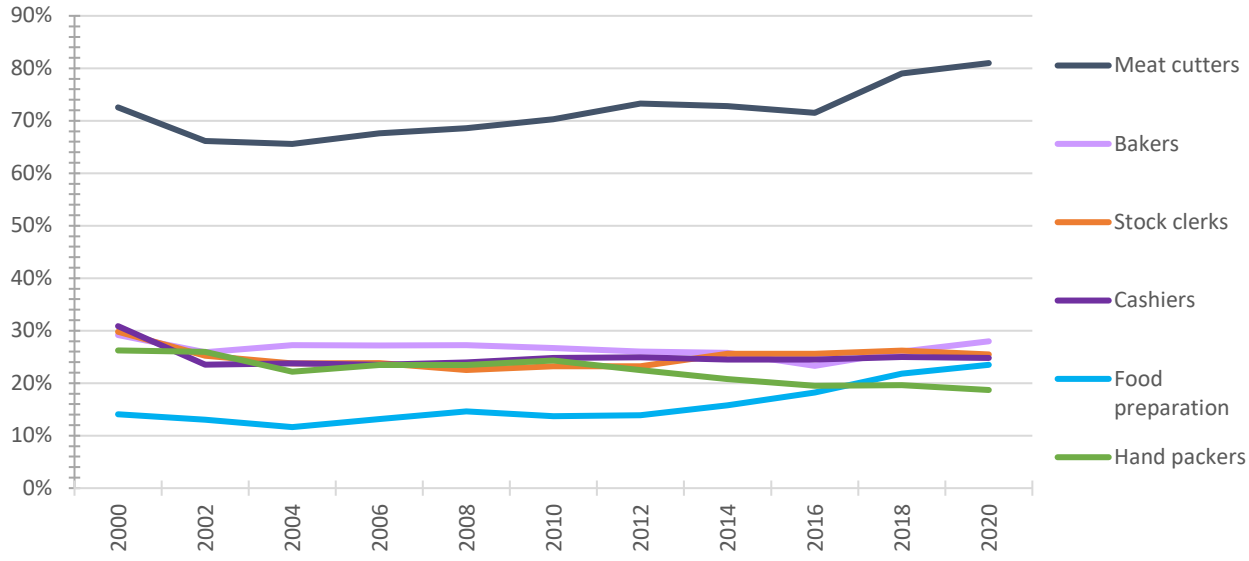
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, dollars adjusted to 2020 value.

in constant dollars. Grocery workers are becoming steadily more productive. Their work makes the increasing profits of the grocery industry, including Kroger, possible.

Employment in Grocery Industry Occupations

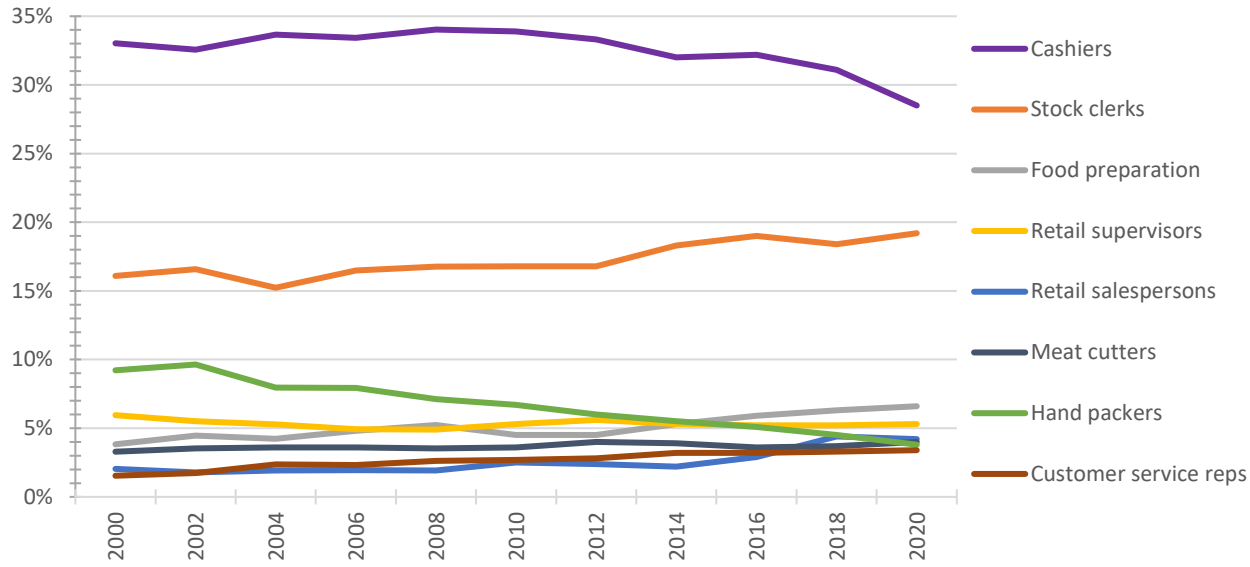
The grocery industry is an important national employer of many of the occupations that make up its labor force, as shown in *Figure 85*. The grocery industry accounts for one-fifth to three-quarters of all U.S.

Figure 85: Percent of All U.S. Workers in Six Occupations Employed by Grocery Stores



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Figure 86: Percent of U.S. Grocery Industry Employment Accounted for by the Eight Largest Occupations



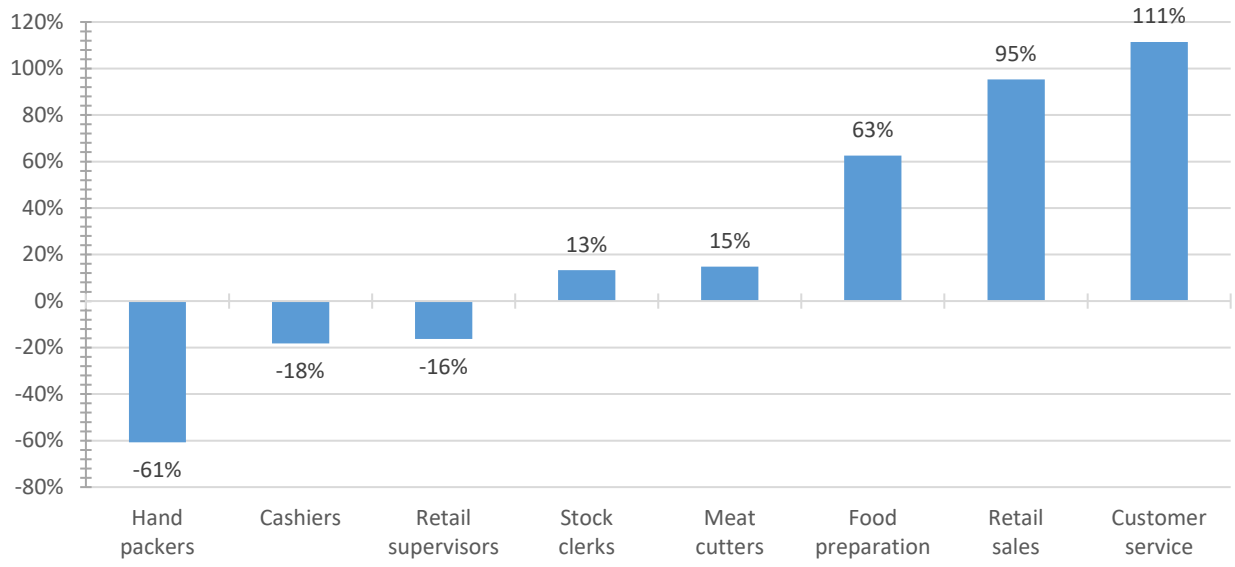
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

employment in six occupations. Most notably, grocery stores employ 81 percent of all *meat cutters*.

Grocery stores also employ a significant share of all U.S. *bakers* (28 percent), *stock clerks* (26 percent), *cashiers* (25 percent), *food preparation workers* (24 percent), and *hand packers* (19 percent).

Within the grocery industry, eight occupations provide three-quarters of grocery industry jobs. The comparative size of these eight primary occupations and annual employment trends is shown in *Figure 86*.

Figure 87: Change in Grocery Industry Occupational Employment 2000 to 2020



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

The number of *customer service representatives* in grocery stores has grown 111 percent over the past 20 years *(Figure 87)*, the greatest rate of change of any occupation, although they account for only three percent of grocery store workers

Retail salespersons account for only four percent of grocery store employment, but this occupation has grown 95 percent as grocery stores have expanded to carry more general merchandise.

Food preparation workers have grown 63 percent as the offerings of ready-to-eat food have expanded. They account for seven percent of grocery store workers.

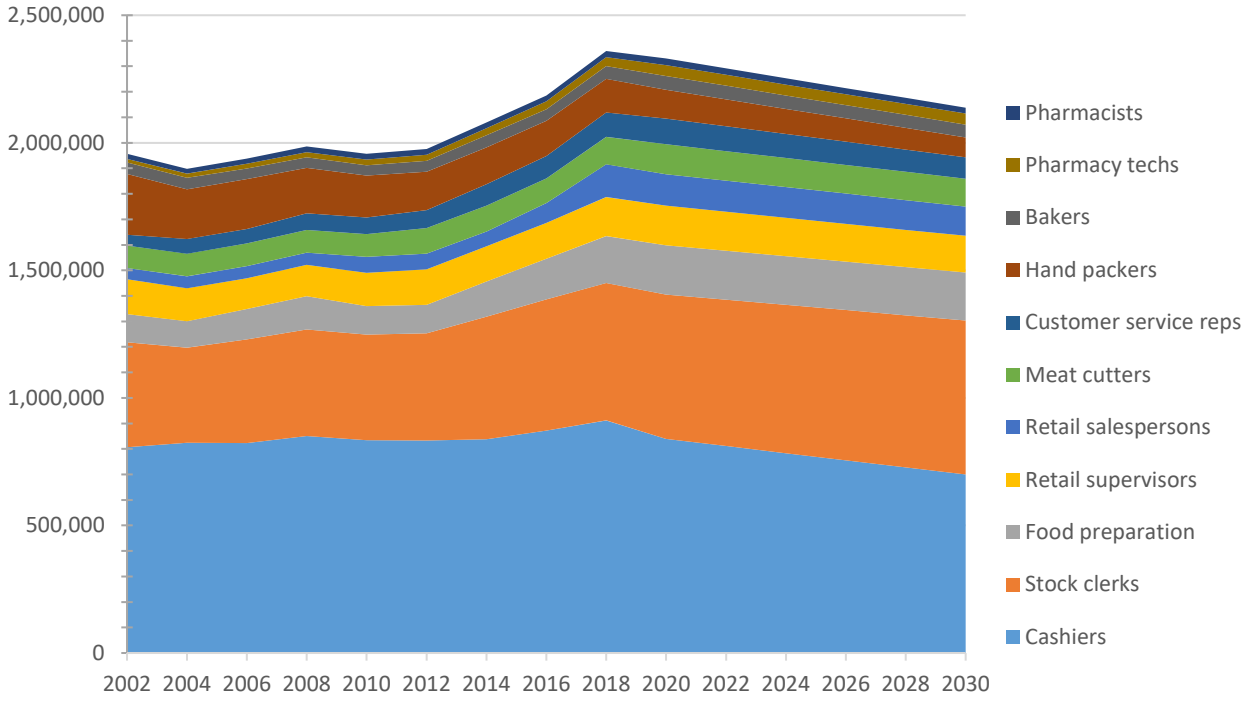
Hand packers, who manually box, wrap, bag, and package products to make them ready for transport, have decreased 61 percent as work has been automated as well as displaced by customers bagging their own groceries. They now account for four percent of grocery store workers.

Overall, these changes indicate that grocery stores are:

- Relying less on personal salesmanship and more on merchandising, with customer service representatives handling problems.
- Steadily increasing the offerings of ready-to-eat food that is prepared on site.
- Reducing the amount of manual labor required to pack merchandise.

Grocery stores are relying less on personal salesmanship and more on merchandising.

Figure 88: U.S. Employment in the 11 Largest Grocery Occupations Projected to 2030



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Employment Projections for the Next Decade

Grocery store employment is projected to decline 8% over the next decade.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that in 2030, grocery store will employ 228,000 fewer workers than they did in 2020 *(Figure 88)*, a decline of eight percent.

The projected change in the number of jobs in the 11 largest grocery occupations, listed by size, from 2020 to 2030 is:

- Cashiers -17 percent
- Stock clerks 7 percent
- Food preparation -3 percent
- Retail supervisors -7 percent
- Retail salespersons -7 percent
- Meat cutters -7 percent
- Customer service representatives -17 percent
- Hand packers -31 percent
- Bakers -7 percent
- Pharmacy technicians 2 percent
- Pharmacists -12 percent

Only two occupations are projected to grow – *pharmacy technicians* and *stock clerks*.

The greatest projected numeric decline is in *cashiers*, with a projected loss of 139,000 jobs, a 17 percent decline. The greatest projected rate of decline is the loss of 31 percent of *hand packer* jobs, the elimination of 34,000 jobs.

Changing Skill Requirements

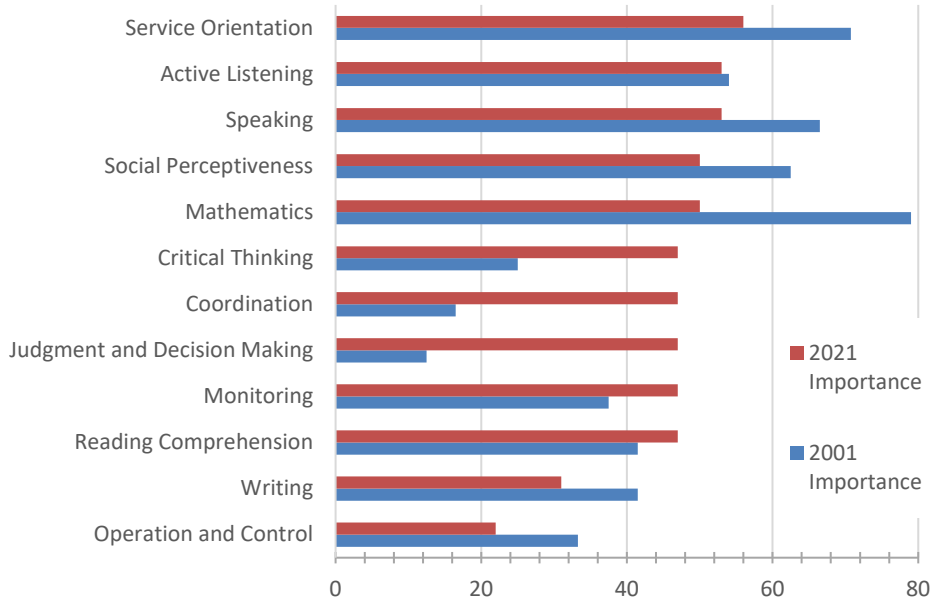
Changes in the skills required for three largest grocery occupations can be assessed by comparing the importance assigned to skills in 2001 to the importance assigned to the same skills in 2021. The three occupations are *cashiers*, *stock clerks* and *food preparation workers*.

This information comes from the U.S. Department of Labor's O*NET database of occupational characteristics and worker requirements. Ongoing surveys of workers in each occupation, supplemented sometimes by occupation experts, provide the information.[39] Importantly, it represents how workers see them themselves and the work they do.

Cashiers

The importance that *cashiers* attached to 12 skills in 2001 and 20 years later, in 2021, can be seen in *Figure 89*. This rating represents the *importance*

Figure 89: Importance of Skills for Cashiers, 2001 and 2021



*Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, O*NET database.*

rather than the *level* of the skill. Six skills declined in importance and five skills increased in importance.

Skills that *cashiers* now see as *less* important are: service orientation, speaking, social perceptiveness, mathematics, writing, and operation and control.

Skills that *cashiers* now see as *more* important are: critical thinking, coordination, judgement and decision-making, monitoring, and reading comprehension.

These shifts suggest that *cashiers* see their jobs moving *away* from stand-alone personal interaction with customers and away from individual cognitive tasks that are now performed electronically, for example, computing customers' bills or operating and controlling machines.

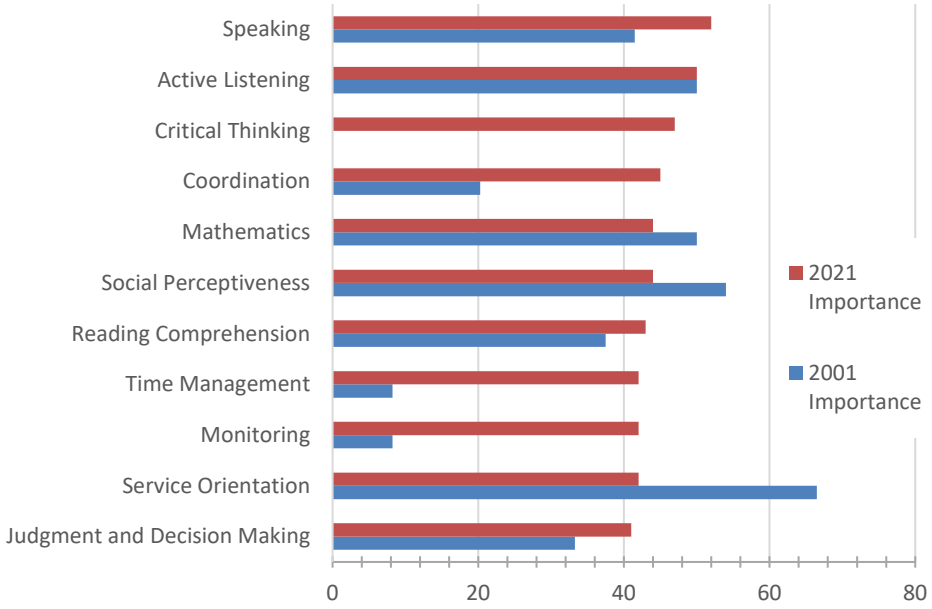
Stock Clerks

The importance that *stock clerks* attached to eleven skills in 2001 and in 2021 can be seen in *Figure 90*. Three skills declined in importance and seven skills increased in importance.

Skills that *stock clerks* now see as *less* important are: mathematics, social perceptiveness and service orientation.

Skills that stock clerks now see as *more* important are: speaking, critical thinking, coordination, reading comprehension, time management, monitoring, and judgement and decision making.

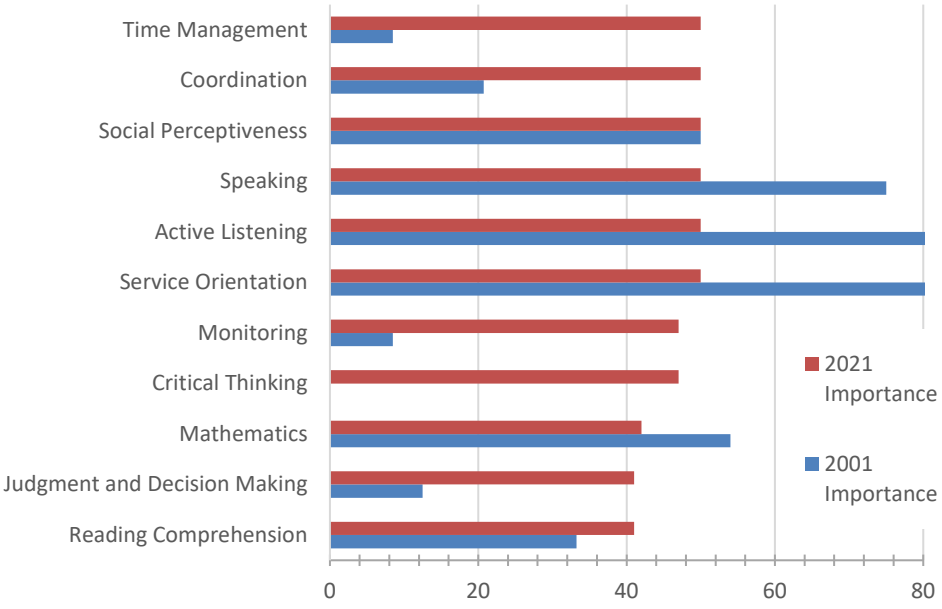
Figure 90: Importance of Skills for Stock Clerks, 2001 and 2021



*Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, O*NET database.*

These shifts are similar to those of *cashiers* and indicate that *stock clerks* also see themselves moving *away* from stand-along social interaction and cognitive tasks and *toward* functioning as part of complex systems that require coordination with others, timeliness, monitoring system input and output, and making judgements and decisions about tasks in relation to systems.

Figure 91: Importance of Skills for Food Preparation Workers, 2001 and 2021



*Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, O*NET database.*

Food Preparation Workers

The importance that *food preparation workers* attached to eleven skills in 2001 and in 2021 can be seen in *Figure 91.* Four skills declined in importance and six skills increased in importance.

Skills that *food preparation workers* now see as *less* important are: speaking, active listening service orientation and mathematics.

Skills that *food preparation workers* now see as *more* important are: time management, coordination, monitoring, critical thinking, judgement and decision-making, and reading comprehension.

Implication

In the three largest grocery industry occupations, workers appear to see their jobs moving increasingly *toward* functioning within complex systems that require critical thinking, coordination with other workers, budgeting time, system monitoring, comprehending written information, and forming judgements and making decisions about the effective action to take.

Summary

Expenditures for groceries in the United States have grown one percentage point a year over the past 20 years. These increased sales have been supported by increased productivity. A quarter of a million dollars of groceries are now sold annually for every grocery worker.

The number of grocery store cashiers has declined 18 percent in the past 20 years. This decline has been offset by growth in food preparation, retail sales and customer service jobs.

Grocery industry employment is projected to decline eight percent over the next decade. A significant part of this decline will be loss of cashier jobs, which are projected to shrink by 17 percent.

Changes in the occupational composition of the grocery industry indicate that stores are relying less on personal salesmanship and more on merchandising, with customer service representatives handling problems, increasing the offerings of ready-to-eat food that is prepared on site, and reducing the amount of manual labor required to pack merchandise.

In the three largest grocery industry occupations, grocery workers appear to see their jobs moving increasingly toward functioning within complex systems that require critical thinking, coordination with other workers, budgeting time, system monitoring, comprehending written information, and forming judgements and making decisions.

Grocery workers are increasingly required to function within complex systems that require critical thinking, coordination with other workers, budgeting time, system monitoring, comprehending written information, and forming judgements and making decisions about the effective action to take.

"When I started with fred meyer it was a fun place to work. I really liked working everyone got along, managers would help you and let they had your back. But, over the years that has all changed. Managers play favorites and they don't help you. They talk bad about employees to other employees. Managers are not at all professional at all. Lately all they do is threaten you make sure you know they have the upper hand."

A Grocery Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

"Working at Kroger started off so great! But, as I have gained more years working for Ralph's it has DESTROYED my mental health and well-being. I have witnessed and experienced the degradation of being a retail employee from upper management and customers. I know I am not alone when I dread getting out of bed, it is the hardest part of everyday. All of my dept is ready to quit because we know our boss and our team are being mistreated."

A Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"It's gone far downhill. They give less hours and way more work. They treat us badly and unless you're on the up and up with management you can kiss anything goodbye especially a future in this company."

A Meat Clerk at Food 4 Less in Southern California

"I really enjoy my job and really like my team but I'm gonna be a dad and $15.10 just isn't enough to provide."

A Clerk's Helper at Food 4 Less in Southern California

Photo credit: *Reddit*

11. Kroger Company

"Over the year I worked for Kroger, it got more and more stressful. I often felt like I was floating on a raft and just waiting for sharks to attack. Sometimes it felt like the shark was COVID, angry and impatient customers, a never ending workload, angry store managers, or all the above at once. It just felt unrelenting. All while I heard "We are all in this together" over and over again."

A Starbucks Barista at Ralphs in Southern California

Industry Concentration

In 2019, the country's 115,526 food stores sold $717 billion of retail food and nonfood products. Grocery stores — including supermarkets and smaller grocery stores (except convenience stores) — accounted for 92 percent of store sales, followed by convenience stores (5 percent). Specialized food stores—including meat and seafood markets, produce markets, retail bakeries, and candy and nut stores—accounted for the remaining 3 percent of total sales. Between 2010 and 2019, grocery store sales growth (in current dollars) surpassed the rate of inflation. Inflation-adjusted sales growth during that period averaged 1.3 percent per year.

Over the past decade, the largest food retailers have increased their market share.[40]

In 2019, the top 20 grocery chains accounted for two-thirds of all sales. The five largest food retailers -- Walmart, Kroger, Albertsons, Ahold-Delhaize, and Publix – had 46 percent of the nation's American grocery market. Walmart alone commanded 26 percent of all grocery sales. Kroger accounted for 9 percent of all sales, followed by Albertsons (5 percent), Ahold Delhaize (4 percent), and Publix (3 percent).[41]

Kroger: Basic Facts

Kroger is the 17th largest company in the United States, with $132.5 billion in sales in 2020, an 8 percent increase over 2019.[42] It earned over $4 billion in operating profits in 2020.[43] It is the nation's largest supermarket chain and second only to Walmart as the country's largest retailer.[44] Its 2,800 stores in 35 states operate under a number of banners, including Kroger, Ralphs, Dillons, Smith's, King Soopers, Fry's, QFC, City Market, Owen's, Jay C, Pay Less, Baker's, Gerbes, Harris Teeter, Pick 'n Save, Metro Market, Mariano's, and Fred Meyer.

The Fred Meyer stores are operated as multi-department stores that in addition to food sell clothing, accessories, garden supplies, home electronics, and paint and hardware supplies. But other Kroger stores are moving in that direction. In 2020, 2,250 of its supermarkets also operated pharmacies. Kroger also operates fuel centers (i.e. gas stations) at 1,423 of its supermarkets and 142 jewelry stores.[45]

The company also operates 35 food manufacturing facilities that make thousands of products such as dairy products, bakery goods, deli items, and other grocery products.

With 465,000 employees in 2020, Kroger ranked fourth, behind Walmart (2.3 million), Amazon (1.29 million), and Home Depot (504,800) among Fortune 500 corporations.[46]

During the pandemic, the retail supermarket industry's sales of food has skyrocketed. Grocery chains have experienced some of the largest increases in same store sales, and profits, ever recorded. The industry has tried to obscure this. For example, an article in the industry publication *Supermarket*

News quoted Leslie Sarasin, the head of the Food Industry Association, saying that "Despite these strong sales numbers, net income for 2020 was only 3%. The dramatic increase in pandemic-related costs ensured that profits did not increase by the same level of sales." In fact, net income rates (return on sales) tripled while sales increased 15.8 percent. The article acknowledges that payroll and benefits shrank as a percentage of sales.[47]

Since the pandemic hit, more consumers have been ordering their food on-line. In November 2021, almost 69 million U.S. households purchased groceries via e-commerce. E-commerce sales in the supermarket industry grew by 6 percent between November 2020 and November 2021. But more consumers are picking up their groceries in-person than having them delivered to their homes. During that period, pick-up sales grew by 29 percent while delivery grew at only a 6 percent rate.[48]

"This is the greediest company I've ever worked for. Management is awful. The manager is one huge reason I'm quitting. I will tell everyone I see to not work here."

A Produce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Revenues, Profits, Executive Compensation and Frontline Workers' Wages

Kroger is the largest supermarket chain in the country and second only to Walmart in its sales of food. As described below in the company history, Kroger has expanded and increased its revenues by expanding the size of its stores and diversifying the merchandise it sells, purchasing other chains and reducing competition in specific regions of the country. Over the past few decades, it has changed its labor practices by keeping wages relatively low for its front-line employees, increasing the number of part-time employees, and investing in new technologies designed to replace workers with machines.

In the past few years Kroger has expanded its on-line presence, a strategy it accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. A growing number of customers now order items on-line and have them delivered by drivers, many of whom are not Kroger employees but who work for third party contractors, such as Instacart and Shipt.

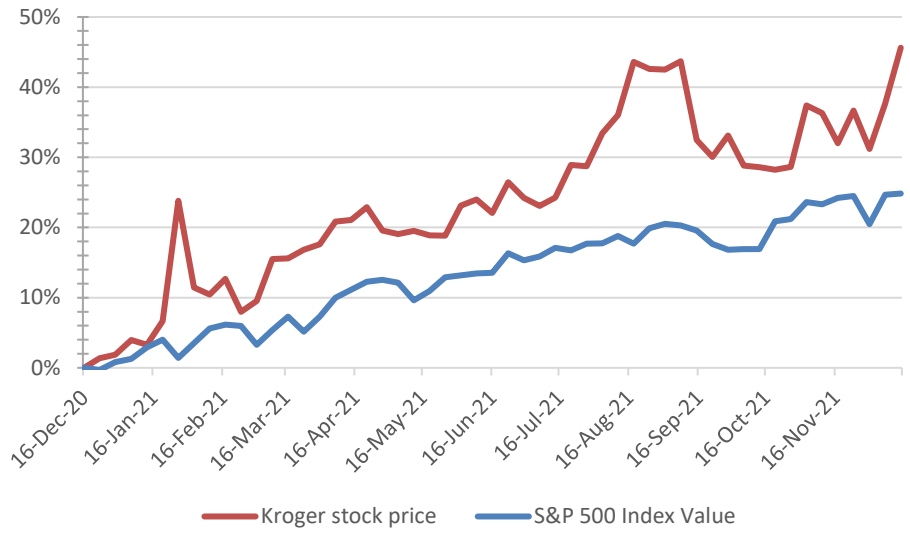
Over the past half century -- since 1970 -- the company's revenues have increased from $3.7 billion to $132.5 billion – an increase of 3,481 percent (a 513 percent increase after adjusting for inflation). During that period, the number of employees grew from 83,000 to 465,000 – an increase of 460 percent. The number of grocery stores increased from 1,522 to 2,742 *(Table 4)*.

Table 4: Kroger Sales and Employees 2010-2020 (from annual reports)[49]

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Sales ($ billions)	$82.2	$90.2	$96.6	$98.3	$108.4	$109.8	$115.3	$122.6	$121.1	$122.2	$132.5
Employees (thousands)	338	339	343	375	400	431	443	449	453	435	465

During that 50-year period, it shed its stand-alone drug stores, convenience stores, and jewelry stores that it inherited when it purchased other chains, but, starting in the 1990s, increased the number of fuel centers (gas stations)

Figure 92: Change in the Price of Kroger Stock and the S&P 500 in 2021



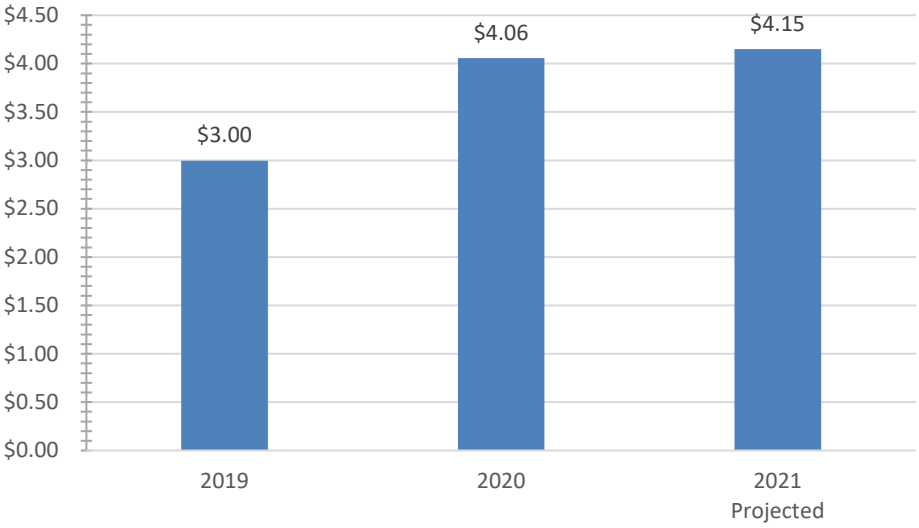
Source: Google Finance.

it operates adjacent to its supermarkets, from 77 fuel centers in 2000 to 1,596 fuel centers today. They now generate about $9.5 billion in sales.

As revealed in *Figure 92*, in 2021 the Kroger stock price increased by 46 percent, and performed better than expected, considerably outpacing the 500 large corporations included in the S&P 500, which increased by 25 percent.[50]

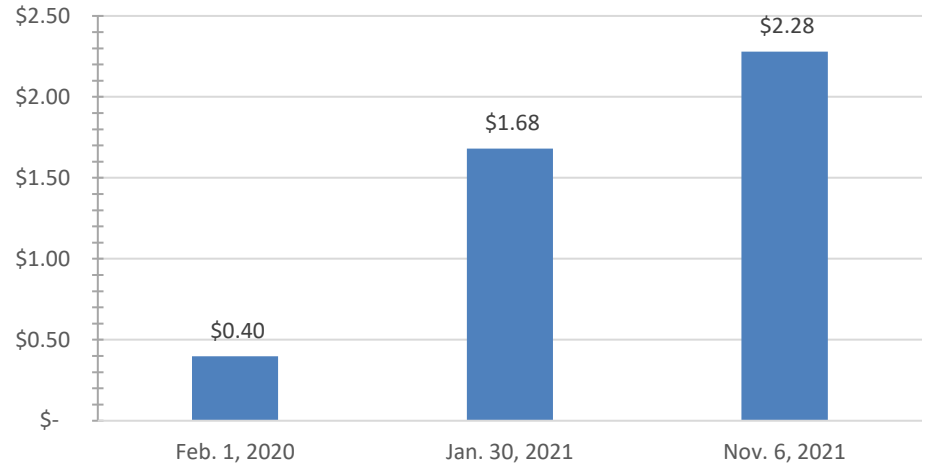
Between 2010 and 2020, Kroger revenues increased from $82.2 billion to $132.5 billion. That is an increase of 61.2 percent (a 36 percent increase after adjusting for inflation). In those years, Kroger's net income increased

Figure 93: Kroger Adjusted Operating Profits (in Billions)



Source: Kroger 10K and 8K reports.

Figure 94 Kroger Company Cash on Hand (in Billions)



Source: Kroger's 8-K statement released on December 2, 2021.

from $1.1 billion to $2.6 billion – an increase of 136 percent (a 116 percent increase after adjusting for inflation).

As show in *Figure 93*, Kroger's operating profits increased from $2.995 billion in 2019 to $4.056 billion in 2020 to a projected (by the company) $4.15 billion in 2021.

Despite the additional costs of dealing with the COVID pandemic, Kroger not only earned historic operating profits, but also had accumulated record levels of cash on hand. As can be seen in *Figure 94*, between February 1, 2020 and January 30, 2021, Kroger's cash on hand grew from $399 million to $1.66 billion – a fourfold increase.[51] By November 6, 2021 - the end of the third quarter -- Kroger had $2.28 billion in cash on hand.[52]

Kroger has not proportionately shared its prosperity with its front-line workers, particularly those who work in its grocery stores. This can be seen in several ways.

On a day-to-day basis, Kroger is run by its top executives, who are ultimately accountable to its board of directors. The top echelon of Kroger's executives work out of the headquarters building in Cincinnati (although the pandemic led to more remote work). Kroger's organizational chart also includes executives who run its stores and other facilities in different regions of the country and executives responsible for its different divisions, such as Kroger, Ralphs, Fred Meyer, and Food 4 Less. The vast majority of Kroger employees are the front-line workers at its stores.

Meanwhile, as *Table 5* reveals, Kroger's board of directors gave its top executives a hefty pay increase over the past decade – far exceeding revenue growth.

"Kroger is more worried about their shareholders then they are their people. The put incompetent people in charge of departments they have no business running. They don't know what's going on or how stuff works."

A Produce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Table 5: Kroger Top Executive Compensation 2010-2020

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
CEO	7,551,340	12,024,543	11,146, 290	8,885,821	12,987,582	11,746,391	13,217,392	11,534,860	12,037,872	21,129,648	22,373,574
Senior VP and CFO)	1,815,685	3,435,530	2,989,759	3,851,772	5,896,878	5,910,839	5,815,076	5,235,971	5,772,122	4,142,280	5,167,689
President (or Executive VP) and COO	3,396,139	6,091,639	5,007,967	3,082,387	4,389,970			5,292,096	5,693,293	10,329,684	10,094,507

The CEO compensation increased by 296 percent – from $7.55 million to $22.37 million (a 150 percent increase after adjusting for inflation). David Dillon held the job until he retired in 2014, when the board elevated Rodney McMullen to the post.

In 2010, when Mr. McMullen was the company's President and Chief Operating officer – the second in command – he made $3.39 million. Since then, his pay has increased 656 percent (a 456 percent increase after adjusting for inflation).

"The living wage in this area is over $30/HR. I receive a little more than half that. This is a problem. Our department has been starved of labor and resources to maximize profit. This is a problem for the workers and customers."

A Personal Shopper at Fred Meyer in Washington

The Kroger board decided to increase the pay of the Chief Operating Officer from $3.4 million to $10.1 million – a 197 percent boost in salary, adjusted for inflation. Mr. McMullen held that position from 2010 to 2013, followed by Michael Ellis starting in 2014, and Michael Donnelly beginning in 2016.

The Kroger board also raised the pay of the company's Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer (CFO) – the position held by Michael Schlotman from 2010 to 2018 and by Gary Millerchip starting in 2019 – from $1.81 million to $5.16 million – a 184 percent increase, adjusted for inflation.

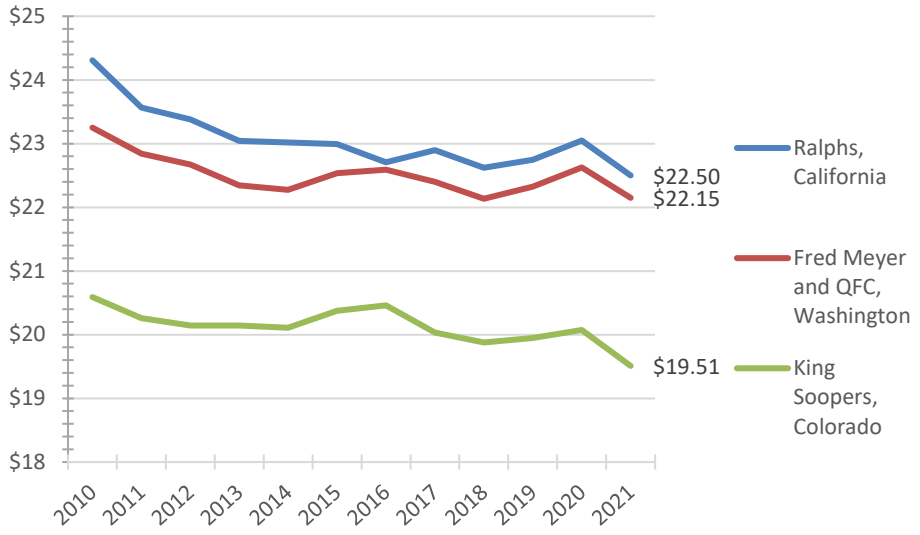
Stuart Aitken became Kroger's Group VP in 2017, its Senior VP for Alternative Business in 2019, and its Senior VP and Chief Merchandising and Marketing Officer in 2020. During that four-year period, his annual compensation grew from $2.52 million to $6.48 million. Yael Cosset has been Kroger's Senior VP and Chief Information Office since 2019. That year he earned $3.64 million. The following year he received a large pay raise to $6 million.

In contrast, Kroger's front line workers have not shared in the corporation's growing revenues.

Not too long ago, getting a job at a Kroger supermarket was an entry into the middle class. Most workers worked full-time. A job at Kroger meant that one could make ends meet, afford decent housing, provide adequate meals for one's family, and even take a vacation and save some money for a rainy day. That is no longer the case, as this report documents. *Kroger has adopted a low-wage, high-turnover, part-time workforce strategy.*

One of the largest categories of Kroger employees is food clerks. They stock the shelves and check out the customers when they're done shopping. Most food clerks at Kroger stores start at or near the minimum wage, which varies from state to state and city to city. After working for

Figure 95: Top Hourly Wage for Food Clerks 2010 to 2021 (adjusted to 2021 dollars)



Source: Wage agreements between Kroger Company and UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Kroger for five, six or more years, food clerks reach their highest pay rate. In some union contracts, these food clerks are called "journeymen."

In 1990, the highest paid food clerk at a Kroger store in Colorado made $11.76 an hour – the equivalent of $24.40 today, adjusting for inflation. The same job in Southern California paid $13.65 in 1990 – equal to $28.32 today. In the Seattle-Tacoma area, the top-paid food clerk earned $11.70 in 1990, which would be $24.27 today.

Today, the top paid, most experienced Kroger food clerks earn $19.16 an hour in Colorado, $22 an hour in Southern California, and $21.60 an hour in the Seattle-Tacoma area. That's a decline in real wages of 20 percent, 22 percent, and 11 percent, respectively, in the past 31 years. Moreover, Kroger now relies on part-time workers, so few of even the best-paid front-line employees make middle-class incomes.

The maximum hourly pay rate, for food clerks at the top of the wage scale, in the Seattle (Washington) area, Los Angeles and Orange Counties (California) and the Denver (Colorado) area for every year since 2010 is shown in *Figure 95*. The hourly wage is adjusted to constant 2021 dollars, which shows that the value of food clerk's wages has declined six percent since 2010.

"Kroger has been on a steady decline in the recent years. The last year has made it clear that upper management simply does not care about the well-being of their employees."

A Produce Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

Table 6: Kroger Sales, Net Income, CEO Pay, and Food Clerk Pay, 2010 and 2020[53]

	2010	2020	% Increase	% Increase Adjusted for Inflation
Total sales in billions	$82.20	$132.50	61%	36%
Net income in billions	$1.10	$2.58	135%	102%
CEO annual pay	$7,551,340	$22,373,574	296%	150%
Food clerk highest hourly wage, Washington	$18.70	$21.60	16%	-3%
Food clerk highest hourly wage, Colorado	$16.56	$19.16	16%	-3%
Food clerk highest hourly wage, Southern California	$19.55	$22.00	13%	-5%

"I love the pharmacy and the pharmacists that work here. The upper management does not support us at all and make up their own rules each day. It feels like they only care about the bottom dollar and not about the employees. They've recently cut everyone's hours yet at the same time hired three new people."

A Pharmacy Technician at King Soopers in Colorado

The decline in top food clerks' pay is compared with the significant increase of the company's total sales and the dramatic increase in CEO pay between 2010 and 2020

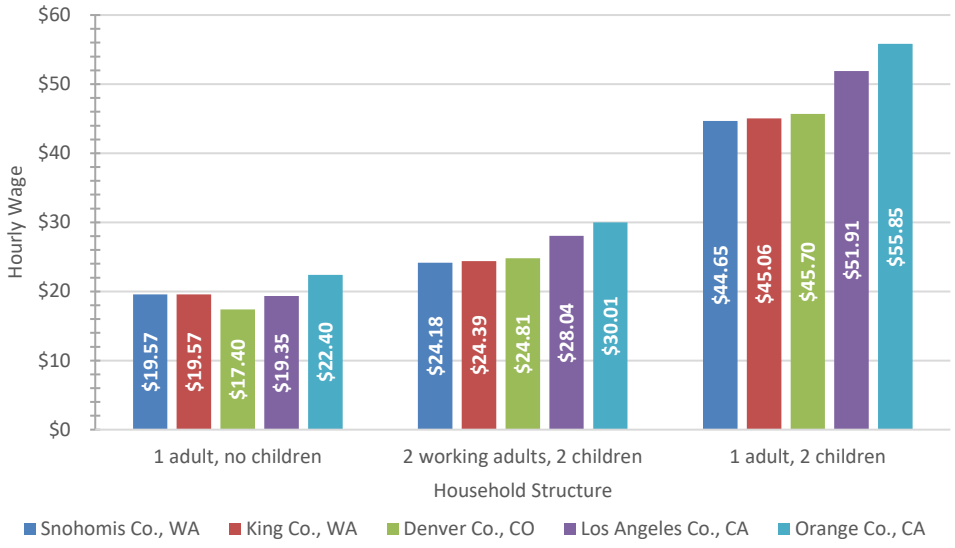
As shown in *Table 6*, after adjusting to constant 2020 dollars, Kroger's total sales increased 36 percent, net income increased 102 percent, and CEO compensation increased 455 percent. However, hourly wages for food clerks continued to decline. They declined three percent in Colorado and Washington and five percent in California. These comparisons are based on 2020 figures because that is the most recent year for which Kroger revenue and CEO compensation are available. Those wages declined ever more in 2021, as *Figure 95* shows.

At least since 1990, the highest pay level for food clerks has been eroded by inflation and is below what's needed for families to make ends meet, often called a "living wage," even for the minority of workers who have full-time jobs. The living wage for workers with full-time jobs in households with different numbers of workers and children is shown in *Figure 96*.

Most Kroger food clerks work part-time. Many want a full-time job but Kroger refuses to employ most of them on a full-time basis. During the decade of 2010 to 2020, while these food clerks were scraping by having a hard time feeding their families, Kroger's revenues grew 61.2 percent – from $82.2 billion to $132.5 billion, or 36 percent after adjusting for inflation.

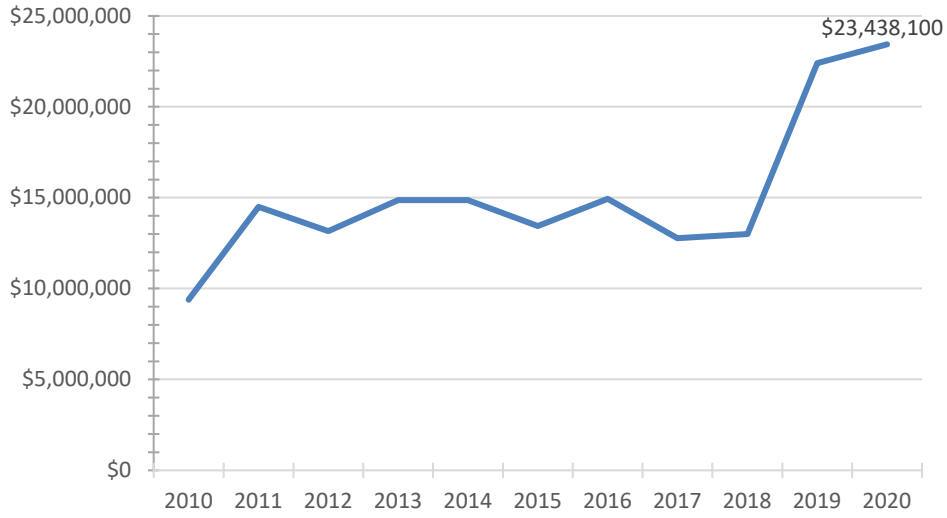
Another way to demonstrate which Kroger employees benefited from the company's overall prosperity is to compare the CEO compensation with the company's median-paid employee – the person whose salary is smack in the middle, with half of employees earning more and half earning less.

Figure 96: Living Wage for Full-time Workers based on Household Structure in 2021



Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator.

Figure 97: Kroger CEO Compensation (adjusted to 2021 dollars)



Source: Kroger Company annual proxy statements.

The annual compensation for Kroger's CEO from 2010 to 2020, adjusted to 2021 dollars, is shown in *Figure 97*.

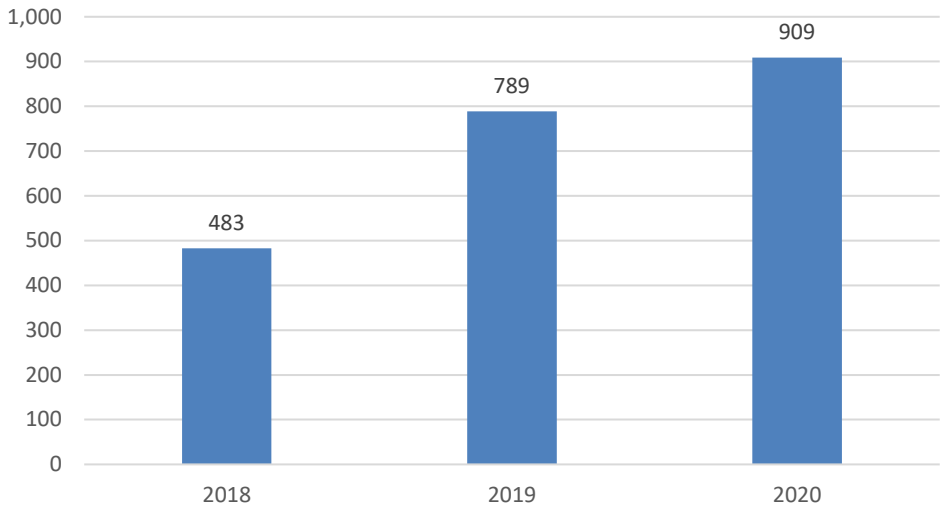
When Congress passed the Dodd-Frank bill in 2010, designed to reign in the predatory business practices of big corporations, particularly the financial industry, it required all publicly-traded companies (those that sell stock to the public) to calculate the CEO-median worker pay ratio and include it in its annual reports submitted to the federal Securities and Exchange Commission.

The SEC did not begin enforcing this provision until 2018. Thus, we can see Kroger's CEO-median worker pay gap for 2018, 2019, and 2020. We can also see how Kroger compares to the average CEO-media worker pay

"It's a hot mess now. That's why Kroger can't keep any people."

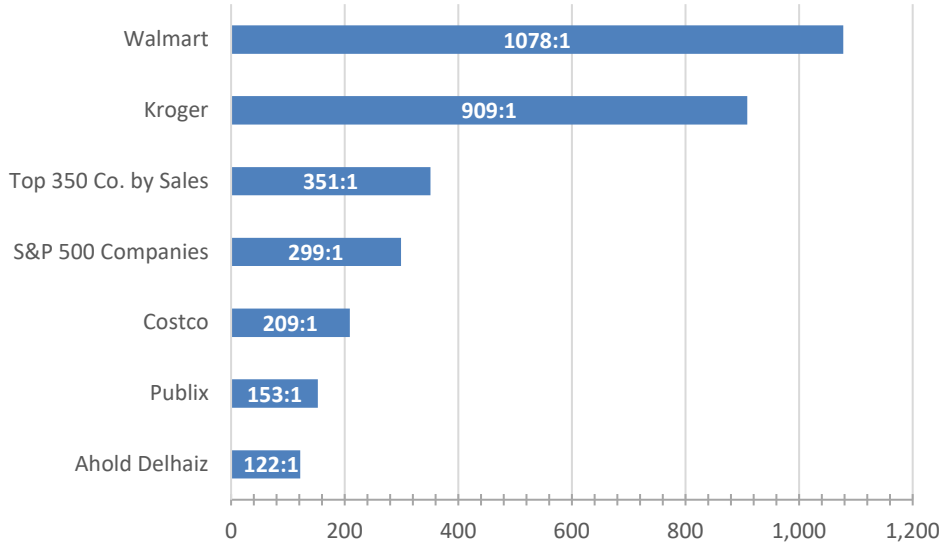
A Produce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Figure 98: Ratio of Kroger CEO Pay to Median Employee Pay



Sources: U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and Kroger Company annual reports.

Figure 99: CEO-to-Worker Pay Ratio in 2020



Sources: U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission; Economic Policy Institute; AFL-CIO; Company Annual Reports.

"The company itself is declining. There is no morale no teamwork. It all about themselves and sticking it to the lower people. Whatever they can do to push over everyone else and screw them in the process they don't care!!"

A Bakery Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

ratio for the 500 giant corporations identified by Standard & Poor's. We can also look at how Kroger compares with its rival companies in the retail grocery industry.

The gap grew between the Kroger CEO's pay and the pay of Kroger's median worker. In 2018, Kroger CEO Rodney McMullin earned 483 times the pay of the typical (median) Kroger employee - $12 million compared with $24,912. By the next year, the gap had grown wider to 789 times the pay of the typical worker - $21.1 million compared with $26,790. By 2020, the gap had ballooned to 909 times the median worker's pay - $22.2 billion compared with $24,617 *(Figure 98)*. (Notice, the CEO's pay increased while the median worker's pay fell).

The CEO-to-worker pay ratio for Kroger and other major companies in 2020 is shown in *Figure 99*. Kroger's CEO-to-worker pay ratio is much larger than most other large U.S. corporations and its rival grocery chains.[54]

In 2020, the average CEO-worker pay gap for the S&P 500 companies was 299 to 1 compared with Kroger's 909 to 1. Among Kroger's major rivals, only Walmart had a wider CEO-worker pay gap: 1,078 to 1. Costco's was 209 to 1. Publix was 153 to 1. Ahold Delhaize was 122 to 1.[55]

Different Worlds: Hazard Pay and Stock Buybacks

Kroger CEO Rodney McMullen started as a "stock boy" at Kroger in Lexington, Kentucky in 1978.[56] When he visits grocery stores he sometimes put on the apron worn by the front-line employees. However, Mr. McMullen, along with Kroger's other top executives and its board of

Photo credit: Kroger Co.

directors, live in a very different world – economically and socially – from almost all of the company's employees. This reality has been demonstrated in dramatic relief during the pandemic, as the survey of Kroger employees reveals.

During the COVID pandemic, Mr. McMullen "found himself in a hailstorm of criticism over hazard pay to frontline workers," according to *Bloomberg News*. "In early 2020, as the coronavirus swept across the U.S., Mr. McMullen announced a $2 hourly hazard increase, or 'Hero Bonus,' for store and warehouse workers. Two months later, the company ended the raise – even as critics pointed out that the hazard remained."

Around the same time, the Kroger board of directors raised Mr. McMullen's pay package for 2020 to $22.4 million – an increase of 6 percent from the prior year, when it was $21.1 million. And the previous year he received a 75 percent pay increase – from $12 million to $21.1 million. In fact, the entire top tier of Kroger executives received large pay raises.

As we've seen, Kroger's front-line grocery workers face a difficult time making ends meet. They have faced even greater problems during the COVID-19 pandemic. A study by the Brookings Institution identified Kroger as a "laggard" among the largest retail companies in terms of providing employees with additional pay and benefits during the pandemic.[57] The company's "hero bonus" pay began at the end of March 2020 and stopped by mid-May, ending just as the pandemic came into full swing.[58]

When it became clear that Kroger and other supermarket chains would not continue providing their workers with this additional pay on a voluntarily basis, a growing number of cities around the country proposed adopting mandated "hazard pay" ordinances. In January 2021, for example, the Long Beach City, California Council passed a hazard pay ordinance of $4 an

"My biggest gripe is about hero/hazard pay. I can't express how disappointed I am in this company for not willingly participating in hazard pay for all it's employees working in their stores. Focusing on stock buy backs instead of their employees is shameful."

A Front End Courtesy Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"Kroger is a very crappy company to work for. I don't feel accepted for being a woman or for being a lesbian. They make us do modules for harassment and discrimination but when the actual harassment and discrimination happens, they absolutely do nothing about it. They punish YOU for coming to them and bringing it to their attention. I worry every week that I'll make my bills on time."

A Wine Steward at Ralphs in Southern California

hour for grocery store employees. It went into effect for 120 days and targeted companies with more than 300 employees and more than 15 employees per store. Soon thereafter, other California cities – including San Jose, Los Angeles, Calabasas, Oxnard, Irvine, Oakland, and Montebello – passed similar laws. So did Seattle, Bellingham, Olympia, and other cities in Washington. King County in Washington approved hazard pay for grocery workers in unincorporated areas. The Pierce County Council (Washington) passed a hazard pay law for grocery workers, but County Executive vetoed it.

On its own and through industry lobby groups like the California Grocers Association (CGA) and the Northwest Grocery Association (NWGA), Kroger sued to overturn local hazard pay laws[59] and used its considerable resources to lobby elected officials to defeat these ordinances. The NWGA has been a leading opponent of grocery worker hazard pay mandates in Washington state, offering public comment and formal testimony, and joining with the Washington Food Industry Association on unsuccessful lawsuits to overturn local hazard pay mandates. Chris Albi, president of local Kroger subsidiary QFC, sits on the board of the NWGA.[60] The NWGA was one of the plaintiffs in unsuccessful lawsuits seeking to overturn grocery worker hazard pay mandates in Seattle and Burien, Washington.[61]

Kroger and its industry allies succeeded in overturning "hazard pay" laws in a number of cities but were unsuccessful elsewhere. In April 2021, for example, the NWGA and Charles Brown, representing the Fred Meyer chain (owned by Kroger), testified against a $4 an hour hazard pay ordinance that was subsequently approved by the Bellingham City Council.

But Kroger went further. It closed several stores, and threatened to close others, if the wave of "hazard pay" laws continued. In early February 2021, Kroger announced the closure and permanent termination of the "entirety of the operations" of some of their stores [in April 2021], including a Ralphs store and a Food4Less store in Long Beach—"for economic reasons including the economic cost mandated by the Long Beach ordinance requiring an increase in employee wages, four dollars an hour."[62] The next month, after Los Angeles adopted a similar hazard pay law, Kroger announced it was shutting down three additional stores in that city.[63] QFC, a Kroger subsidiary, publicly blamed its decision to close two Seattle stores on the cost of hazard pay.[64]

As one former supermarket executive wrote in *Forbes, a business* magazine, "Like other large retailers, Kroger has done very well during the pandemic. They have earned record profits of $2.5 billion, on sales of $132 billion and comparative store sales of 8 percent in an industry where 1 or 2 percent is considered strong. Despite this windfall, the closures put hundreds of

employees out of work and left community members looking for a new place to buy groceries."[65]

Kroger's apparent goal was to warn elected officials that their efforts to improve conditions for front-line grocery workers would backfire. As a scare tactic, it was modestly successful. Elected officials in some cities did not adopt the hazard pay law. But in many places, the general public and elected officials viewed Kroger's behavior as a bullying scare tactic.[66] One business publication summarized the controversy in a headline: "Kroger Closed Grocery Stores Rather Than Give Workers A $4 Raise. Now It's Padding Shareholders' Pockets With A $1 Billion Stock-Buyback Scheme."[67]

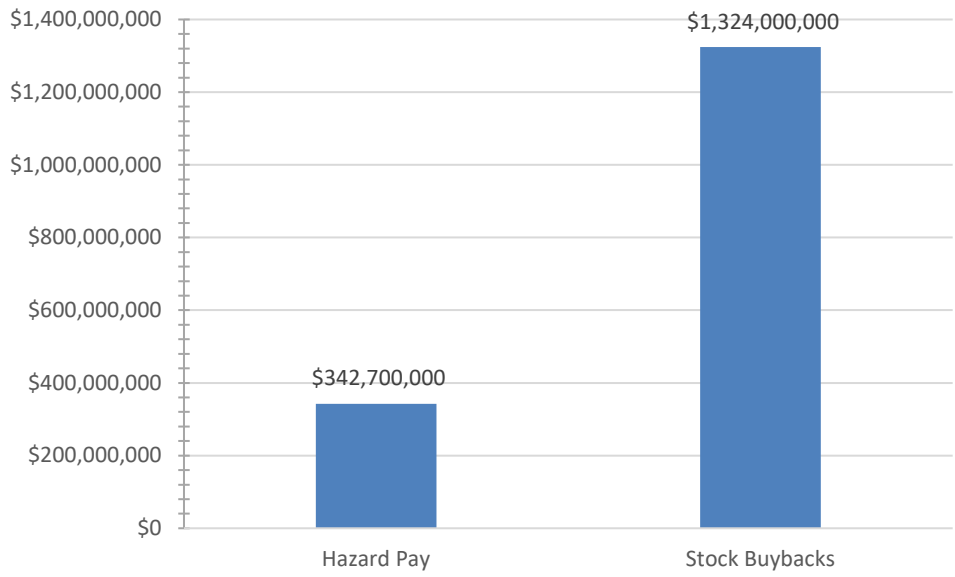
In 2020, Kroger spent about $342.7 million in hazard pay for front line employees. During that same time, however, it funneled $1.32 billion to its shareholders in the form of stock buybacks, as shown in *Figure 100*.[68] In 2021, Kroger continued this pace, repurchasing $402 million of stocks in the first quarter, $349 million in the second quarter and $298 million in the third quarter.

In a 2014 article in *Harvard Business Review*, economist William Lazonick revealed that the total of buybacks by S&P 500 corporations during the preceding decade exceeded the sum total of their profits. In subsequent research, he found that the size of corporate stock buybacks reached an all-time high of $806 billion in 2018 alone. American corporations have likely increased their stock buybacks since then. Shareholders benefit from buybacks because they increase stock prices by making shares scarcer. Buybacks solely benefit shareholders. Those with the most shares benefit

"Kroger has never cared when it comes to their employees. You got a President making 20 million a year and they have fought when it come to the employees making a wage they can live on."

A Courtesy Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Figure 100: Kroger Expenditures for Hazard Pay versus Stock Buybacks in Fiscal Year 2020



Source: Kroger Company press releases.

"Working at Kroger has been somewhat of a prison for the past two years that I have worked here. It is the only stable job that I could find during the pandemic, but it does not pay enough for me to support myself fully or save to go to school and find the career I want. The workload is astronomical and management is more focused on getting raises than improving conditions."

A Produce Clerk at Quality Food Centers in Washington

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the most. Stock buybacks are essentially a transfer of wealth upward. By buying back their own stock, companies prioritize enriching their largest shareholders over investing in their employees or facilities.[69]

Kroger's actions were in sync with those of various industry and business lobby groups with which Kroger and its top executives and board members are associated. These include the California Grocers Association, the Retail Industry Leaders Association, the Business Roundtable, the Chamber of Commerce, the Food Marketing Institute, and others. Objectives include opposing proposals by government at the local, state and federal levels to raise minimum wages, require overtime pay, improve health and safety protections, reform labor law, and adopt other worker-friendly and family-friendly public policies. In 2020 alone, Kroger spent $790,000 to lobby members of Congress and federal agencies.[70]

Corporate Welfare

Kroger uses its political influence to attract subsidies from state and local governments as incentives to locate or expand its facilities. In roughly the past two decades, local and state governments have provided Kroger with more than $48.9 million in taxpayer subsidies – a conservative estimate.[71]

In December 2021, for example, North Carolina announced that the state would provide Kroger with a $7.2 million subsidy to build a high-tech warehouse in Concord, North Carolina to help the company deliver orders to customers who purchase products on-line. The governor's press release stated – and local news media echoed – that the new facility would generate 700 jobs.

But none of the news media examined whether the subsidy was really necessary – whether Kroger would have built one of its new warehouses in North Carolina without the state grant.[72] (The company plans to build at least 20 high-tech "fulfilment centers" around the country). None of the news stories mentioned that Kroger had closed down several of its North Carolina stores a few years earlier or questioned Kroger's promises about the number of jobs created, the pay scale, or the warehouse's impact on the state economy.

Kroger gets subsidies from state and local governments while, at the same time, failing to pay its employees a living wage and provide adequate health insurance. In other words, taxpayers are subsidizing Kroger while its employees can't make ends meet.

In fact, Kroger consistently ranks among the private sector employers with the most employees who rely on a variety of government assistance programs. For example, an investigation by the Springfield (Ohio) *News-Sun* found that between 2008 and 2013, the number of Kroger employees in Ohio grew by almost 7 percent, while the number of Kroger employees and their families relying on food stamps and Medicaid increased by 72

percent and 85 percent, respectively. Kroger ranked right behind Walmart and McDonald's in terms of employees who relied on government assistance.[73]

A 2018 study reported that "Kroger Co. is among the biggest employers of workers on food stamps in Ohio and at least three other states." In Ohio, Kroger ranked third behind Walmart and McDonald's.[74]

An October 2020 study in 9 states by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that Kroger had one of the highest incidences of employees utilizing government assistance programs, including Medicaid and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, often referred to a food stamps).

The study found that "Most working adults in the programs worked for private sector employers concentrated in certain industries, including restaurants, department stores, and grocery stores." Walmart and McDonalds had the largest proportion of workers utilizing government assistance, but Kroger was not far behind.[75]

Since 2000, Kroger has also paid at least $116 million in fines for violating a variety of federal laws. These include violations of environmental, health care, and safety laws, competition offenses, and employment-related offenses.[76]

Kroger has recently faced other controversies, including questions about the security at its stores. In the survey for this report, Kroger workers expressed concern about the company's support for protecting employees from health and safety dangers as well as threats to their physical safety.

These concerns have been exacerbated by highly publicized incidents of violence, such as the shootings that occurred on March 22, 2021, at a King Soopers supermarket in Boulder, Colorado where 10 people were killed, and another shooting on September 23, 2021 at a Kroger store in Collierville, Tennessee, where one person was killed and 13 others were injured. Although Kroger employs its own security staff, incidents like these require the intervention of local police departments, thus utilizing more taxpayer-funded resources to keep Kroger's customers and employees safe.

Grocery workers are increasingly required to function within complex systems that require critical thinking, coordination with other workers, budgeting time, system monitoring, comprehending written information, and forming judgements and making decisions about the effective action to take.

A Coffee Bar Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Kroger's Board of Directors

Except for CEO Rodney McMullen, the other members of Kroger's board of directors do not work for the company on a full-time basis. They are "outside" directors, elected by the stockholders. Stock ownership is concentrated among institutional investors (such as BlackRock and Vanguard Group), who own over 80 percent of Kroger's common stock. Board members and top executives also own Kroger stock, which is part of

their compensation packages. The board of directors is drawn entirely from leaders of other major corporations and elite institutions that, in total, form a web of affiliations often described as a national and regional "power elite" or "power structure."

Many of the directors live in a world where economic, political, and social networks ease their ability to exercise influence. It is not surprising that the experiences and worldview of Kroger's governing body has inured them to the realities facing the company's workers trying to make ends meet on poverty or near-poverty-level wages.

Table 7: Kroger Board of Directors 2020-2021

Name	Joined Kroger Board	Primary Job Affiliation	Compensation from primary job	Compensation from service on other corporate boards	2020 Compensation for Kroger board service
Nora Aufreiter	2014	Retired. Former director and senior partner, McKinsey & Company	Not available	$225,000 (Scotia Bank, 2020)	$270,807
Kevin M. Brown	2021	Executive VP, Dell Technologies	Not available		$95,562
Elaine Chao	2021	Former U.S. Secretary of Labor (2001-2009) and former U.S. Secretary of Transportation (2017-2021)	Not available	$312,002 (Wells Fargo, 2016) $285,034 (Ingersoll-Rand, 2016) $263,145 (Vulcan Corporation, 2016) $295,250 (News Corporation, 2016) $166,000 (Dole Food, 2012)	$0
Anne Gates	2015	Retired. Former President, MGA Entertainment and Senior VP, Walt Disney Company	Not available	$250,027 (Tapestry, 2020)	$296,903
Karen M. Hoguet	2019	Retired. Former CEO, Macy's,	$4.9 million (Macy's, 2018)	$249,250 (Nielsen Holdings, 2020)	$280,748
Rodney McMullen	2003	CEO, Kroger		$260,827 (VF Corporation, 2020)	CEO does not receive additional compensation for serving on the board
Clyde R. Moore	1997	Retired. Former CEO of First Service Networks	Not available		$293,136 ($431,550 in 2019)
Ronald L. Sargent	2006	Retired. Former CEO of Staples	$12.4 million (Staples, 2014)	$382,004 (Wells Fargo, 2020)	$328,674
J. Amanda Sourry	2021	Retired. Former President of Unilever for North America	Not available	235,983 (PVH Corporation, 2020)	$94,756
Mark S. Sutton	2017	CEO, International Paper	$18.3 million (International Paper, 2020)		$266,234
Ashok Vemuri	2019	Retired. Former CEO of Conduent Incorporated and former Executive VP of Xerox	$11.8 million (Conduent Incorporated, 2017)		$262,097
Susan Kropf	2007	Retired. Former President and COO of Avon Products	$3.8 million (Avon Products, 2005)	$308,695 (Tapestry, 2020)	$262,097
Jorge Montoya	2007	Retired. Former President of Proctor & Gamble Latin America and Proctor & Gamble Global Snacks and Beverages divisions	Not available	$245,996 (The Gap, 2020)	$43,448
James Runde	2006	Retired. Former vice chairman, Morgan Stanley	Not available		$43,448
Bobby Shackouls	1999	Retired. Former CEO of Chairman of the Board of Burlington Resources	$20.8 million (Burlington Resources, 2004)	$328,929 (Oasis Petroleum, 2020)	$272,042

There are no directors who directly represent the interests of Kroger's employees, its customers, or the communities in which Kroger facilities are located. In addition to the income they earn from their primary occupations and investments, Kroger board members typically receive $200,000 to $400,000 a year for serving on its board, which requires them to attend several meetings a year and serve on various committees. As shown in *Table 7*, their annual compensation totaled over $2.8 million.[77]

Rodney McMullen

Kroger chairman and CEO Rodney McMullen has been with the company for 40 years. A former Kroger executive noted that Mr. McMullen "was a key player on every major decision after 1987, when he was just a kid."[78]

Mr. McMullen received a bachelor's degree in accounting in 1981 and a master's degree in 1982 from the University of Kentucky. He went to work full-time for Kroger as an accounting supervisor. In 1989 he was named Vice President for Planning and Capital Management and became Chief Financial Officer in 1995. He joined Kroger's board in 2003, became President and Chief Operating Officer in 2009, and CEO in 2014.[79]

Mr. McMullen is a key part of the corporate power elite on both the national level and in greater Cincinnati, where Kroger has its headquarters.

- From 2001 to 2020, he served on the board of Cincinnati Financial, a $7.5 billion property and casualty insurance corporation which ranks as the 20 largest insurance company in the U.S. in terms of market share.[80]
- In 2010, he was named chair of the board of US GS1, the U.S. standards group that oversees the UPC bar code and other standards. He was also chair of the board of a related organization, 1WorldSync.[81]
- He was on the board of Dunnhumby, a global customer data science company.
- In 2016, he was elected to the board of apparel and accessory company VF Corporation, whose brands include Vans, The North Face, Timberland, and Dickies.[82]
- He serves on the executive committee of the board of the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation, designed to revitalize the city's downtown center on behalf of the business community.[83] He has been a board member since 2014.
- In August 2021 he was named one of four Cincinnati CEOs to co-chair the committee to organize the city's bid for the 2026 FIFA

"Working for Kroger has been a blessing and a curse. Most of the employees are great but management needs a lot of help. Lots of favoritism and retaliation. We can't come to work sick but get in trouble if we call out due to a medical issue (doctors notes included) or being sick."

An Espresso Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

"As soon as I decided to have a family I was treated like less of a worker because I had to cut back my hours. Also, when I had to homeschool my kids last year, and again needed to cut hours to be able to give them the best learning experience I was treated like I was letting the company down rather than being the best mom I could be. Kroger does not care about helping its employees, they are truly about sales."

A Grocery Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

World Cup, along with David Taylor (CEO of Procter & Gamble), Barbara Turner (CEO of Ohio National Financial Services), and Carl Lindner III (CEO of American Financial Group).

- He sits on the board of trustees of Xavier University.[84]
- He served on the board of the Business Partnership Foundation of the University of Kentucky's business school.[85] In May 2017, Kroger, along with the University of Kentucky and UK Athletics, and campus marketing partner JMI Sports, announced a 12-year, $1.85 million per year campus marketing agreement. Included in the agreement is renaming Commonwealth Stadium, the university's football stadium, to Kroger Field. This agreement made the University of Kentucky the first school in the Southeastern Conference to enter into a corporate partnership for the naming rights to their football stadium.[51]

- He serves on the board of directors of the Retail Industry Leaders Association, a national industry lobby group whose board includes the CEO of major retailers including Best Buy, Lowes, Target, The Gap, VF Corporation, Home Depot, Kohl's, Foot Locker, Levi Strauss, CVS, and other corporations. [86] Among other issues, the RILA lobbies against any increase in the federal minimum wage (currently $7.25 an hour), which Congress has not increased since 2009.[87]

The McMullens live in an 8,600 square foot house in Cincinnati. They also own 1.3 acres of vacant land in Hamilton County Ohio, and additional agricultural properties in Ohio and Kentucky through EB Stamping Ground LLC, EB Harrods Creek LLC, and EB Elkhorn Holdings LLC.

Mr. McMullen is a registered Republican and primarily donates to Republican candidates for the U.S. House and Senate. In 2020, he was appointed to President Trump's Great American Economic Revival retail group.[88] Also in 2020, Mr. McMullen raised eyebrows when, according to a story in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, he took off his mask before the start of a food industry event in Iowa featuring Vice President Mike Pence – just hours after a Pence staffer was revealed to have tested positive for the new coronavirus.[89]

Nora Aufreiter

Nora Anne Aufreiter joined the Kroger board in 2014, the same year she retired as Managing Director of the Toronto office McKinsey Consulting, a global business consulting firm. She received 2020 compensation of $270,807 for serving on Kroger's board.[90]

She attended the University of Western Ontario, where she received a bachelor's degree in business administration (with honors) from the Ivey Business School in 1981. She then spent several years working in corporate finance and investment banking before receiving her MBA from Harvard Business School in 1986.

She joined McKinsey's Toronto office in 1986 and also worked in the company's New York and Boston offices. She was elected Principal in 1994. In 2011, the *Financial Post* included Ms. Aufreiter on a list of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women.[91]

- Since 2014, she has served on the board of Scotiabank (Bank of Nova Scotia), one of Canada's largest banks. [92]
- From 2014 to 2019, she served on the board of retailer Neiman Marcus Group.
- She has served on the board of Cadillac Fairview since February 2014.[93] Cadillac Fairview is a commercial real estate developer, which claims some $36 billion in assets, including "landmark" retail and office buildings.
- She serves as vice-chair of the board of Unity Health Toronto, which calls itself "one of Canada's largest Catholic healthcare networks," with three hospitals.[94]
- She serves on the board of the Canadian Opera Company.[95]
- She serves on the executive committee of the Dean's Advisory Board for the Ivey Business School at Western University (formerly called the University of Western Ontario).[96]
- Since 2018, she has been an advisor to Toronto-based fintech firm Drop. According to Tech Crunch, "Drop is a mobile app that scans your credit card purchases and then proceeds to give you offers on things you might want to spend money on."[97]

Kevin Brown

Kevin Maurice Brown joined the Kroger board in January 2021. For serving on the board part of the year, he received compensation of $95,562.[98]

He is a supply chain executive who has risen to become an Executive Vice President at Dell Technologies, overseeing approximately 7,700 staff in 23 countries and a procurement budget of $67 billion.[99]

Mr. Brown received a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and a M.S. in Engineering Management from

"Management has steadily gotten worse over my time with Kroger. They are more and more focused on profits and less and less focused on the wellbeing of their employees and customers. What every family man or woman needs in their life is stability. Stability of pay, in work schedule, in work location, in job expectations, in job duties, and in work environment."

A Head Deli Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

"Customers and management don't care about our safety with covid and other difficult situations. People are quitting their jobs because Kroger does not offer a decent living wage. If we are front line workers then please compensate and show us the respect and money we merit. Ineffective managers often get promoted because of who they know not performance."

An e-Commerce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

George Washington University. He then spent ten years in the shipbuilding industry, directing U.S. Department of Defense projects.

He joined Dell in 1998. Prior to his current role as EVP and Chief Supply Chain Officer, he served in leadership roles for the company's Product Group and Worldwide Procurement organizations. He also helped lead manufacturing operations at Dell's facilities in Malaysia, Nashville, and Austin.

- Since 2018 he has been a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and serves on its National Program Committee.[100]
- He is past board member of the Boys & Girls Club of the Capital Area.
- Since 2013, he has served on the Board of Directors of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation.[101]
- He serves on the Advisory Board of the Howard University Center for Excellence in Supply Chain Management.
- He is a member of the Executive Leadership Council, a nonprofit dedicated to increasing Black corporate leadership.
- According to a filing with the Texas Secretary of State, Mr. Brown formed Waller Ventures LLC in September 2020. He is listed as both the principal and the registered agent

The Browns live in a 6,000 square foot house in Austin, Texas.

Most of Mr. Brown's political donations have gone to Democrats, including to Obama in 2012, Biden in 2020, and members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Elaine Chao

Elaine Chao was elected to the Kroger board in August 2021, soon after she left the Trump administration, where she served as Secretary of Transportation. For nearly 40 years, Ms. Chao has been active in public service, corporate boards, and Republican politics.

Born in Taiwan, she immigrated to the U.S. with her family when she was eight years old. She earned a B.A. in economics from Mount Holyoke College and an MBA from the Harvard Business School in 1979. Her father, James Chao, founded the family-owned ocean shipping company Foremost Maritime Group, which in 2019 *Forbes* called "an international giant worth hundreds of millions of dollars."

For several years in the 1980s, Ms. Chao worked in banking at Citicorp and BankAmerica Capital Markets group in New York and San Francisco.

She served in several appointed positions in the Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, including Deputy Administrator of Maritime Administration (in the Department of Transportation), Chair of the Federal Maritime Commission, Deputy Secretary of Transportation, and Director of the Peace Corps.

In 1993, she married Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell. Estimates of the couple's wealth range from $20 million to $35 million, with most of that attributed to a Chao family inheritance.[102]

- From 1992 to 1996 she served as CEO of the United Way.
- From 2001 to 2009, she served as Secretary of Labor in the George W. Bush administration.
- Before and after that position, she served two stints as a Distinguished Fellow at the conservative Heritage Foundation. While working there, she was also affiliated with other conservative organizations, including the Hudson Institute and the Independent Women's Forum.
- She also served on the boards of a number of major corporations, including Wells Fargo, the News Corporation (owner of Fox News and other media companies), Dole Foods, Northwest Airlines, Ingersoll-Rand, Protective Life Corporation (an insurance company), and Vulcan Materials, as well as on the board of New York-Presbyterian Hospital.[103] She had also served on the board of the Bloomberg Foundation until 2015, when she resigned in protest of the organization's "Beyond Coal" campaign.[104]
- Trump appointed her as Secretary of Transportation in 2017. She served in that capacity for four years. Since then, she has joined several corporate boards, including Charge Point Holdings, Hyliion (which makes electric powertrains for cars and trucks[105]), Embark Trucks (which makes software for autonomous trucks and the company[106]), and Kroger. She also joined the board of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation.

In early 2021, the inspector general (IG) of the Department of Transportation issued a report concluding that Ms. Chao had abused her position to benefit her family's business. [107] Previously, Ms. Chao had come under fire as Transportation Secretary for improperly steering funds to projects in Kentucky, which her husband represents in the U.S. Senate.[108]

"My direct manager chooses favorites. And if you do anything to disrupt everything from being perfect she treats you like an outcast. Will cut off communication and talk behind your back to other coworkers that she likes."

A Coffee Bar Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Anne Gates

Anne Therese Gates joined the Kroger board in 2015. In 2020 she earned $296,903 for serving on the board.

She received a bachelor's degree in mathematics from the University of California, Berkeley in 1981, and a master's degree in operations research from Columbia University in 1982.

In her early career, she worked in the U.S. and Europe for PepsiCo, Bear Stearns, and AT&T. She joined the Walt Disney company in 1991 and rose to become Senior Vice President of operations, planning and analysis. She joined MGA Entertainment, the largest privately-owned toy company in the U.S., as President in 2014, retiring in 2017.

"My experience with working for Kroger has not been the best. I believe management favors those they like personally rather than work ethic."

A General Merchandise Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

- Since retiring from MGA she has joined several corporate boards in addition to Kroger. These include Tapestry, Inc. (a holding company for fashion industry brands Coach, Kate Spade, and Stuart Weitzman), the finance firm Raymond James, and Cynosure (which develops and manufactures lasers used in hair removal and other aesthetic procedures). She previously served on the board of Super RTL, a German entertainment company.
- In 2019 she created Willow Glen Partners and is listed as principal and registered agent with the California Secretary of State.
- She is president of the board Cadre, a nonprofit advocacy organization for African American and Latino parents of students in the Los Angeles public school system.
- She is on the board of the Salzburg Global Seminar, an organization of leaders from around the world in business, politics, arts, and academia.
- She serves on the board of the University of California, Berkeley Foundation, and on the board of visitors of the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science at Columbia University.
- She is vice chair of the board of PBS SoCal, a public television station.
- She is a board member of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.
- She previously served as chair of the board of Big Sunday, a Southern California nonprofit
- She previously served as a board member of the Oakwood School (a private school in Los Angeles), the Country School (another private school in Los Angeles), Crystal Stairs, and Junior Statesman of America.

She and her family live in a 3,500 square foot home in Los Angeles.

Her political contributions primarily support Democratic candidates, including Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Jon Ossoff in 2020.

Karen Hoguet

Karen Meisel Hoguet joined the Kroger board in 2019. In 2020 Kroger paid her $280,748 for her service on its board.

She grew up in Cincinnati, received her bachelor's degree in applied mathematics from Brown University in 1978, and an MBA from Harvard in 1980. She worked for Boston Consulting for about two years before joining Federated Department Stores in 1982. In 2019 she retired after nearly 40 years with Macy's, including more than 20 as the company's Chief Financial Officer. In 2014, the *Wall Street Journal* named Ms. Hoguet the top CFO among S&P 500 companies.[109]

"It's a mill of human misery no matter which store you go into. The old ones just stay and do what they can bare because they are still on good contracts, while the new bright eyed hires get burned out twice as fast for half the incentives."

A Coffee Bar Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

- In addition to serving on the Kroger board, she has served on the board of Nielsen Holdings, a market research firm, since 2010.[110]
- She served on the board of Chubb Corporation, an insurance company, from 2013 until 2016.
- She serves as vice-chair of the board of UC Health, a medical system affiliated with the University of Cincinnati.[111]
- She has served on the board of governors of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion since 2010.[112]
- She has been actively involved in raising funds for Cincinnati arts nonprofits, including the Cincinnati Fine Arts Fund, the Children's Theatre of Cincinnati, the Greater Cincinnati Arts and Education Center, the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, WCET Public Radio, and others. She has also been a supporter of nonprofit service provider Talbert House and nonprofit "food business incubator" Findlay Kitchen, as well as the Jewish Community Center and the Plum Street Temple Historic Preservation Foundation.

She and her husband live in a 6,700 square foot home in Cincinnati.

Most of her political donations have gone to Republicans, including George W. Bush, Mitt Romney, Senator Rob Portman, and the Ohio Republican Party.

"I get treated like garbage, yet I'm the best worker they have. I'm always on time, and show up. Yet the double standards!!! I am constantly being watched like a hawk and I follow all proper procedures. I'm there teaching those higher up than me the proper way to do things. Then when I fix everything, no credit is given to me. Mangers don't give a shit!!!!!!"

A Deli Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Clyde Moore

Clyde Moore joined the Kroger board in 1997. In 2020, Kroger paid him $293,136 for his service on its board.

He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and an MBA from Arizona State University. He began working at the Memphis-based American Electric in 1985 and worked his way up to president. In 1992, Thomas & Betts and moved its headquarters to Memphis. Mr. Moore became head of the company's electrical division, before becoming President and COO in 1994, and ultimately CEO in 1997. He resigned as Chairman and CEO in 2000. From 2000 to 2014, he was Chairman and CEO of Scottsdale, AZ-based First Service Network, a national provider of facility and maintenance repair services. He is currently CEO of Gliocas, "a management consulting firm serving small businesses and nonprofits."[113]

- He served on the board of the National Association of Manufacturers, a powerful lobbying group.
- He was also one-time chairman of the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, an industry lobby group.

Mr. Moore and his wife live in a 6,500 square foot house in Paradise Valley, Arizona.

He and his wife have been financial supporters of the Mayo Clinic in Arizona.[114]

In the late 1990s, Mr. Moore donated to the Tennessee Republican Party, and in 2000 he donated to Republican Lamar Alexander's campaign for President.

Ronald Sargent

Ronald Sargent joined the Kroger board in 2006. In 2020 he was paid $328,674 for serving on Kroger's board.

As a high school student in Cincinnati, he worked as a cashier at a local Kroger store.[115] He graduated from Harvard in 1977 and received an MBA in 1979 from Harvard School of Business. He then returned to Kroger, where he spent a decade climbing the ladder in different management positions. In 1989 he joined Staples, then a small company, became head of all U.S. operations in 1997 and became CEO of the office supplies company in 2002. Mr. Sargent tried to engineer a merger with rival Office Depot, but the deal fell apart in 2016 in the wake of opposition from the Federal Trade Commission. He retired in 2017 and received a severance payment of approximately $4 million.[116]

- Mr. Sargent previously served on the boards of Home Depot (2011-2012),[117] Mattel (2004-2011),[118] Aramark (2002-2007), and Yankee Candle (1999-2007). He joined the boards of discount retailer Five Below in 2004[119] and Wells Fargo in 2017.[120] He is a part owner of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team.[121]
- Mr. Sargent and his wife Jill operate a range of investment vehicles, likely for property ownership, including Edgewood Investment, LLC; Sargent Partners, LLC; Sargent Family Investment, LLC; and Kentucky Investment, LP.
- Mr. Sargent has served on board of the John F. Kennedy Library Foundation since 2010 and has been chair of the board since 2017.[122]
- He is vice chair of the board of the Boys & Girls Clubs of America.[123]
- He is a board member of Northeastern University
- He is a board member of the City of Hope.[124]
- He is also a donor and supporter of the Martha's Vineyard Museum[125] and the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Pops Orchestra,[126] and a longtime fundraiser for the Boston Catholic Schools Foundation.[127]

The Sargents own a 10,000 square foot, 14-room house in Cincinnati, a 1,900 square foot condominium in Boston, a house in Edgartown, Massachusetts on Martha's Vineyard (valued at $10.8 million), and three separate parcels in Edgartown that have an assessed value over $16 million. In 2017, Mr. Sargent sold a 3,400 square foot house on Martha's Vineyard for $5.6 million.[128]

Mr. Sargent and his wife primarily donate to Republican candidates, although in 2004 he contributed to both Republican George W. Bush and Democrat John Kerry in their presidential campaigns. He had also donated to Mitt Romney, a former Staples investor.

"Kroger has taken advantage of my good work ethic and turned it against me. I do my managers jobs for them with the promise of promotion and haven't been acknowledged or compensated for my work at all. Pretty much done with Kroger."

A Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Amanda Sourry

Amanda Sourry joined the Kroger board in 2021. She was paid $94,756 for partial service on the board, a figure that will increase when she serves for a full year.

She was born in the United Kingdom. Immediately after receiving a master's degree in Modern and Medieval Languages from Cambridge in 1985, she joined Unilever, a British-based global consumer good company whose products include food, condiments, ice cream, wellbeing vitamins,

minerals and supplements, tea, coffee, breakfast cereal, cleaning agents, water and air purifiers, pet food, toothpaste, and beauty and personal care products. It is the world's largest producer of soap. [3]

"I used to come to work, and was excited about coming in for my shift. That was 2016. Since than my anxiety has gone up tremendously. Not only that but I live with my mom, grandma, and brother. I'm 27. It would be nice of Kroger, raised wages so one could move out on there own. Signed, a burnt out employee."

A Bakery Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Ms. Sourry remained with the company for nearly 35 years in both Europe and the U.S. From 2015 to 2017, she served as president of the global foods division. She was president of Unilever North America from 2018 to 2019, when she announced her retirement.[129]

- In 2016, she joined the board of PVH (formerly called Phillips-Van Heusen), a clothing company that owns or licenses brands including Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Kenneth Cole New York, and Michael Kors.
- In 2020 she joined the Supervisory Board of Trivium Packaging, a privately-held company specializing in metal packaging, especially used for food and consumer goods.[130]
- In 2020 she became an advisor to Temasek, a Singapore-based investment company, and to the Boston Consulting Group.
- She has financially supported the Dwight-Englewood School (a private school in New Jersey) and the American School in England (also a private school).[131]

She had not contributed to candidates for president or Congress.

Mark Sutton

Mark Sutton joined the Kroger board in 2017. In 2020 he was paid $266,234 for serving on the board.

He has spent almost 40 years at International Paper (IP), the world's largest paper company, with some 50,000 employees. He became CEO in 2014. The company has seen a significant increase in demand over the past two years.[132] Mr. Sutton is also active in the civic life of Memphis, where IP is based.

Mr. Sutton grew up in New Orleans and attended Louisiana State University, where he received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1984.[133] He joined IP immediately after college. He rose in the company, eventually moving to Europe to run IP's corrugated packaging business throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East. He moved to Memphis in 2005 as vice president of corporate strategic planning.[134] In 2007 he took over responsibility for the company's global supply chain.[135] In 2011, Mr. Sutton oversaw the key $4 billion acquisition of Temple Island. By 2015 he was President, CEO, and chair of the board.[136]

In 2017, the *Memphis Business Journal* noted that Mr. Sutton was "the highest paid executive in Memphis."[137] In 2020, his compensation from IP exceeded $18 million, a 15 percent increase from the previous year.[138]

- Mr. Sutton is a member of two powerful organizations of major corporate CEOs – the Business Council and the Business Roundtable.[139]
- He is the immediate past chair of the American Forest & Paper Association, the industry's lobby group. [140]
- He serves on the board of the New Memphis Institute, a business-oriented leadership development program.[141]
- He serves on the board of Memphis Tomorrow, an organization of the CEOs of Memphis' largest businesses.[142]

Because of IP's global business operations, he is very involved in international business organizations.

- He sits on the board of the Brazil-US CEO Forum.
- He was chair of the U.S.-Russia Business Council in 2016 and 2017. [143]
- He serves on the International Advisory Board of the Moscow School of Management – Skolkovo.[144]

President Trump appointed Mr. Sutton to his manufacturing advisory panel in 2017. As the group became controversial, other CEOs resigned in protest, but Mr. Sutton remained. [145] (Eventually Trump dissolved the panel.) In 2018, Mr. Sutton was part of a group of corporate executives who dined with Trump at his club in Bedminster, New Jersey.[146]

Mr. Sutton and his family live in an 8,400 square foot house in the Memphis suburb of Collierville.

Mr. Sutton is an active donor to Political Action Committees run by IP and by the American Forest & Paper Association as well as to the Republican Party and Republican candidates, including Mitt Romney and U.S. Senators Marsha Blackburn and Lamar Alexander from Tennessee.

"Working as a Starbucks barista I have been threatened so many times by customers. Management does nothing. Can't even refuse service to customers who don't wear a mask according to Fred Meyers policy."

An Espresso Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

Ashok Vemuri

Ashok Vemuri joined the Kroger board in 2019. In 2020, Kroger paid him $262,097 for his board service.

He grew up in India and received a Bachelor of Science degree in physics from St. Stephen's College, Delhi in 1990, and an MBA from the Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad in 1992. He spent his early career

"I am face to face with 1,000 people each week. Only when the city mandated hazard pay, did QFC give it to us. Upper Mgmt has enjoyed bonuses, while the workers take all the risk. Furthermore, the company has cut labor and every corner possible, and we do not have the resources to properly grow sales. Our products are not as good, but we are charging the same as before. Our customers have noticed."

A Meat Cutter at Quality Food Centers in Washington

working in investment banking with Deutsche Bank and Bank of America.[147]

In 1999, he joined Infosys, an Indian consulting and IT services company with global operations. During his 14 years at Infosys, Mr. Vemuri rose through leadership and joined the board in 2011. He left the company in 2013.[148]

He then joined New Jersey-based IT services firm iGate as CEO.[149] He engineered iGate's sale to France's Capgemini for $4 billion.[150] His 0.49 percent ownership stake in iGate earned him a $20 million payout from the sale — an amount far greater than his CEO salary.[151] He resigned in 2015, a few months after the merger was completed.

In 2016, Xerox hired Mr. Vemuri to run its business services division, which it was in the process of spinning off into a separate company to be called Conduent Incorporated. Mr. Vemuri became its first CEO. The company quickly ran into high-profile challenges and controversies. [152] Conduent, which contracted with state governments to track COVID cases and to support the collection of tolls on state highways and bridges, faced a number of lawsuits.[153] In California, where the company managed the tolls on the Gold Gate Bridge, the state dumped a $140 million contract with Conduent. Senator Bill Nelson of Florida called for a Federal Trade Commission probe into the company, but before the inquiry could go anywhere, Rick Scott, the then sitting governor of Florida, unseated Nelson as senator. Lobbyists and key shareholders for Conduent had donated to Scott's senatorial campaign and hosted fundraisers for him. In Texas – where the tolling systems had a troubled history as well – Conduent was embroiled in a Medicaid fraud lawsuit that settled for a $236 million in 2019. A few months after the settlement, Mr. Vemuri resigned as CEO. Some shareholders filed suits against Mr. Vemuri and the company early in 2021

- In 2014 he joined the Board of IT Governors at the World Economic Forum.[154]
- In December 2020, became chairman of the board of Output Services Group (OSG), a global provider of leading customer engagement and payment solutions.[155]
- He is a member of Tapestry Network's Cyber Risk Director Network, sharing best practices related to cyber security and corporate governance.[156]
- He previously served on the board of visitors of the Fuqua Business School at Duke University.

He owns three homes in New Jersey: A 7,500 square foot house in Basking Ridge, a 4,000 square foot house in Green Brook, and a 1,364 square foot townhouse in Bridgewater.

Other than contributing to Conduent's own Political Action Committee (to which he gave approximately $500 each month while working there), his only political donation to candidates for federal office is a $5,000 contribution to Senator Cory Booker, a Democrat, in 2018.

Newly Retired Board members

Four members of Kroger's board – Susan Kropf, Jorge Montoya, James Runde, and Bobby Shackouls -- retired at the end of 2020.

Susan Kropf joined the Kroger board in 2007. In 2020 she was paid $262, 097 for serving on the board.

She holds a B.A. from St. John's University and an MBA in finance from New York University." She joined Avon, a manufacturer and marketer of beauty care products, in 1970. She became the company's President and Chief Operating Officer in 2001, serving until her retirement in 2007. She was a member of Avon's board of directors from 1998 to 2006.

Since 2006 she joined the board of Coach, which later changed its name to Tapestry. It owns several clothing and accessories brands, including Coach and Kate Spade. She served as chair of Tapestry's board. She retired from the board in 2021 and was succeeded as chair by Anne Gates, another Kroger board member. She also serves on the boards of MeadWestvaco Corporation and Sherwin Williams Company. She was on the Wallace Foundation board from 2002 to 2014.

She had made just four political contributions to candidate for federal office - $1,500 to Republicans, $1,000 to Democrats, and $2000 to Avon Products political action committee.

Jorge Montoya also joined the Kroger board in 2007. For his service during part of 2020, he was paid $43,448.

He received an MBA from the University of California, Berkeley. He joined the Procter & Gamble Company in 1971 and spent 33 years with the firm. He was an Executive Vice President of Procter & Gamble from 1995 to 1999. From 1999 to his retirement in 2004, he was president of Procter & Gamble's Global Snacks & Beverage Division, and President of the company's Latin America division.

He has served on the board of The Gap since 2004. He was on the board of Rohm & Haas Co from 1996 to 2007. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley. He served on the board of the Council of the Americas, a corporate-sponsored policy organization that promotes "free trade and open markets throughout the

"My experience at Kroger was good in the beginning, but after some months the schedule affected the care of daughter. I requested Thursday's, Friday's and Saturdays mornings off. The person who makes the schedule did not respond to my request. That's why I had to quite like 5 days ago."

A Services Worker at Ralphs in Southern California

Americas." He is currently on the board of the Youth Orchestra of the Americas.

James Runde joined the Kroger board in 2006. For his partial service on the board in 2020, he was paid $43,448

He earned an engineering degree from Marquette University in 1969 and, while serving in the Navy, earned a master's degree in finance from George Washington University. Runde joined Morgan Stanley in 1974 as an Associate and spent 40 years with the investment banking firm. He was promoted through the ranks, ultimately achieving the position of Vice Chairman.

He also served on the board of directors of Burlington Resources, a major U.S. oil and gas company, prior to its acquisition by ConocoPhillips in 2006. in 2000 he was elected to the Board of Trustees of Marquette University and is currently a trustee emeritus. He is a life trustee of the Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum. He served on the Business Advisory Committee of the Northwestern University Transportation Center. Mr. Runde is a member of the Economic Club of New York, whose members include the top executives of major businesses. He currently lives in Boca Rotan, Florida. He has donated to Republicans John McCain, Mitt Romney, and Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker and Democratic Charles Schumer.

"People are mad at long lines, about not having plastic bags, about digital coupons, and about being out of everything. And they take it out on us, People are mad about everything and we have to take their verbal abuse every day for the last 19 months."

A Checkout Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

Bobby Shackouls joined the Kroger board in 1999. In 2020 he was paid $272,042 for his service on the board.

He graduated from Mississippi State University in 1972 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering. He began his career with Exxon Company, where he held several engineering positions, and joined Burlington Resources/Meridian Oil Inc. in 1993 as Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, and became its CEO in 1995, serving in that position until its merger with ConocoPhillips in 2006. He remained on the board of ConocoPhillips until his retirement in 2011. He is a director of PNGS GP LLC, the general partner of PAA Natural Gas Storage, L.P., and Oasis Petroleum.

He is a former board member of Quintana Energy Services. He is a past chairman of the National Petroleum Council, the industry's major lobby group, and served on the board of US Oil and Gas Association and the Mid Continent Oil and Gas Association.

He has served on the boards of the Sam Houston Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the Texas Heart Institute, the Children's Assessment Center for Abused Children, and is currently on the board of the Mississippi State University Foundation.

Kroger's Top Executives

On a day-to-day basis, Kroger is run by its top executives, led by CEO Rod McMullen. Some of Kroger's top executives have worked for the company for many years and climbed the executive ladder. Others were recruited from outside the company. In addition to Mr. McMullen, the top executives include the following:

Stuart W. Aitken served as Kroger's group vice president from June 2015 to February 2019. He was appointed senior vice president in February 2019, and named Chief Merchant & Marketing Officer in August 2020. He is responsible for sales, pricing, promotionals, and planning merchandise. He also leads Kroger's analytics, e-commerce and digital merchandising, brand management, and marketing. His total compensation from Kroger in 2020 was valued at $6,487,271, an increase of $2,899,897 from 2019.

From 2015 to 2020, Mr. Aitken also served as chief executive officer of Kroger subsidiary 84.51, a retail data science, insights and media firm that works with Kroger, consumer packaged goods companies, publishers and other affiliated partners to target shoppers and design customer experiences.[157]

Prior to joining Kroger, he worked as a consultant for Australian firm Platinum Technology from 1998 to 1999, worked at Michaels Stores and Safeway, and served as the chief executive officer of Dunnhumby USA, LLC from 2010 to 2015. (Mr. McMullen served on the Dunnhumby board). Mr. Aitken is on the board of the Food Marketing Institute, the lobbying arm of the nation's major grocery chains.

Mr. Aitken has been a member of Inventrust Properties Corporation's Board of Directors since 2017.[158] Inventrust is a Chicago-based REIT that acquires and manages grocery-anchored neighborhood commercial centers.

He is a member of the Cincinnati Business Advisory Council of the US Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland. From 2012 to 2017, he sat on the boards of the Cincinnati Regional Chamber of Commerce and the Cincinnati Regional Council.

Mr. Aitken earned an MS in Information Management from the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow (1993-1995) and BA in Information Management from Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh (1989-1991).

He owns a 6,848 square foot house in Cincinnati.

His only political contributions to candidates for federal office are $1,500 to Democrats in 2014 and 2015.

Gary Millerchip has been Kroger's senior vice president and chief financial officer since April 2019. He joined the company in 2008. His

"I never see management except when they cruise by asking why lines are so long - dare they be bothered to help .?.!. But they noticed we are swamped. Those bonuses must be nice when you are sheltering upstairs in your office."

A Customer Service Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

2020 compensation was $5,167,689, an increase of $1,025,409 from the previous year.

Before joining Kroger he worked for the Royal Bank of Scotland in the United Kingdom starting in 1987, holding several leadership positions, including head of the personal credit card division.

He earned a B.A. in financial services from Birmingham City University in England in 1996 and a post-graduate diploma in business administration from the University of Warwick in 1997. He has served on the Advisory Board of the Salvation Army of Greater Cincinnati since 2015.

His only political donation at the federal level is a $400 contribution to Kroger's political action committee in 2015.

Mr. Millerchip owns a 4,991 square foot house in Montgomery, Ohio.

Yael Cosset became Kroger's Senior Vice President and Chief Information Office in 2019. He is responsible for leading Kroger's digital strategy, focused on building Kroger's online presence and e-commerce. In 2020 he also assumed responsibility for Kroger's non-grocery business lines, including its data analytics subsidiary, 84.51 LLC and Kroger Personal Finance, which is responsible for Kroger's own credit card and associated rewards program.[159] In 2020, Kroger paid Mr. Cosset $6,000,282 in total compensation. an increase of $2,354,470 from the previous year.

Prior to Joining Kroger, he served in various management and leadership roles at MicroStrategy (2001 to 2009) and at Dunnhumby USA, (2009 to 2015), then served as Group Vice President and Chief Digital Officer and Chief Information Officer of 84.51 LLC (from 2015 to 2019).

In 2020 he joined the board of Kohl's, the largest department store chain in the United States.[160] Kohl's paid him $354,164 in 2020 to serve as a director.[161]

A native of France, Mr. Cosset earned an MS in Business Administration and Management at the Ecole Superieure de Commerce de Chambery in 1997.

He owns a 5,065 square foot home in Fort Mitchell, Kentucky.

Michael Donnelly, Kroger's Executive vice president and Chief Operating Officer, retired in March 2021 after spending 42 years with the company.[162] Mr. Donnelly was named president of the Ralphs division in 2007 and promoted to senior vice president of merchandising for Kroger in 2011 until 2017, when he was named COO, overseeing operations, merchandising, marketing, supply chain, manufacturing and the company's services arm.

In 2020, he was paid $10,094,507 by Kroger. That is an increase of $4,401,214 over his 2018 pay.

"I have created the best friendships and have met friendly and nice people but get extreme anxiety and stressed out because I'm unable to finish my tasks because my hours got cut and cannot stay overtime. Also my pay is not at all enough for the work that I do and having to deal with covid."

A General Merchandise Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

Between 2011 and 2020 he donated $17,530 in campaign contributions, all of it to Kroger's corporate political action committee.

Company History

For more than a century, Kroger has grown primarily by buying smaller grocery chains and then incorporating them into the Kroger system and culture. Typically, Kroger maintains the names of the chains and stores it has purchased to maintain consumer identification and loyalty. But assimilating the consumers, managers, and employees of these chains into the Kroger system has often posed problems.

Bernard Kroger founded the company in 1883. The fifth of ten children born to German immigrants. Mr. Kroger left school to go to work at age 13 when his father lost the family dry goods store in the panic of 1873. At 16, he sold coffee and tea door-to-door. At 20, he had great success managing a Cincinnati grocery store, but the two owners refused to make him a partner. So in 1883, he invested his life savings -- $372 (roughly $10,000 in 2020 dollars) -- to open a grocery store at 66 Pearl Street in downtown Cincinnati, which he called the Great Western Tea Company.[163]

Mr. Kroger opened his second store in 1884 and by the next year he owned four stores. By 1902, when the company was incorporated as Kroger Grocery and Baking Company, it had grown to 40 stores and sold $1.7 million worth of merchandise a year.[164] In 1904, Mr. Kroger bought Nagel Meat Markets and Packing House, making his grocery stores the first to include its own meat department. In addition, Kroger became the first grocery chain to have its own bakery.[165] Kroger was the first food chain to include groceries, fresh vegetables, meat, and a baker under one roof, so that consumers would not have to shop at different stores. This eventually became called a "supermarket."

During the nineteenth century, customers would come into a store, order the food that they wanted, and the grocers would deliver the order to their customers' homes. Kroger adopted this policy. In 1913, it began delivering its groceries with Model T trucks instead of with horse-drawn wagons. In 1916 the company introduced the idea of self-service shopping. Before that, the stores kept their merchandise behind counters. Customers had to ask for them. That year, the stores began allowing customers to find the goods they wanted on shelves, bring them to the counter, and take them home themselves.

The idea of a chain of stores was a relatively new phenomenon. In the grocery business, the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (known as A&P) pioneered the concern, but Kroger wasn't far behind. Mr. Kroger began expanding his empire beyond Cincinnati, adding stores in Hamilton, Dayton, Columbus, and Toledo (in Ohio) as well as Detroit and

"My schedule is completely random. There is no making future plans for my off time. My meat department is dangerously understaffed. The corporate folks say it is up to individual stores to hire help. Store management says we can't hire help because corporate won't approve the extra hours. This puts us in danger."

A Meat Wrapper at Quality Food Centers in Washington

"We have a turnover rate higher than any other department simply due to the fact that no one can handle the amount of work that is expected. Our schedules change constantly because people quit left and right, and then we are the ones tasked with picking up the slack."

An e-Commerce Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

Indianapolis. In 1912, he bought 25 existing stores in St. Louis, Missouri, a strategy that the company has followed ever since. When the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, Mr. Kroger was prominent enough to be invited to serve on President Woodrow's Wilson's national war food board and on the governor of Ohio's food board. After the war, Mr. Kroger continued the company's expansion, buying smaller, financially unstable chains in areas adjacent to Kroger's existing stores. By 1921, Kroger operated 992 stores and warehouses in Cincinnati, St. Louis, Detroit, Columbus, and Dayton.[166]

In the 1920s, Americans began to rebel against the growing phenomenon of chain stores. Many viewed the rapid growth of large chains as a violation of the spirit of business competition, fearing that a few companies could exert too much power over a particular industry, set high prices, exploit employees, and make it difficult for new businesses to enter the market. Politicians and the media warned about the "chain store menace."[167]

Because most Americans went grocery shopping at least a few times a week, the supermarket chains bore much of the brunt of public concern. The owners and executives of the nation's major chains recognized that they needed to organize themselves in order to thwart anti-chain legislation. In 1927 they formed the National Chain Stores Association and elected Kroger's William Albers as its president.

In 1928, a year before the stock market crashed, Mr. Kroger sold his shares in the company for more than $28 million. Mr. Albers became president. When Mr. Albers resigned as president of Kroger and the NCSA in 1930, Albert H. Morrill – who was Kroger's general counsel – replaced him in both positions. In 1935, Mr. Morrill and C.O. Sherrill, Kroger's vice-president, became leaders of the American Retail Association, a broader lobby group for the growing retail industry. This lead to more public fears of a "super lobby" that would stifle competition, prompting a Congressional investigation. In 1938, Congress debated legislation to impose a punitive tax on chain stores that would force them out of business. The bill was defeated, but it raised an early concern about industry concentration.

By 1927, Kroger owned 3,749 stores. Under Mr. Albers and then Mr. Morrill's leadership, Kroger began a more aggressive strategy of purchasing existing chains. During the last eight months of 1928, Kroger purchased 19 grocery chains that owned 1,301 stores, while opening 210 new stores under the Kroger banner. During the first eight months of 1929, Kroger bought nine additional chains with 537, entering the South for the first time. By the end of the year, Kroger had leapfrogged to own 5,575 stores. That was the company's peak in terms of the number of stores.

The Great Depression, which began in October 1929, devastated the nation's economy. It brought havoc to many business, including Kroger,

but because it sold a basic necessity – food – it was not hurt as badly as other companies and industries that sold more discretionary consumer goods. In 1929, Kroger had $286 million in sales; four years later, as the Depression deepened, its sales had dropped to $205 million. The decline in sales was due, in part, to its decision to aggressively close unprofitable and less profitable stores. Between 1929 and 1934, the number of stores fell from 5,575 to 4,352 – a net loss of 1,223 stores.[168] Many of these were in areas where Kroger stores were competing with each other, including many stores previously owned by chains that Kroger had recently purchased.

The Depression exacerbated a problem that the company had been slow to address – integrating stores previously owned by many different chains under one management roof. Most of the previous owners and top managers of those chains did not want to work for a large company and many consumers resented a large chain gobbling up their local stores. Kroger had difficulty attracting the loyalty of employees and customers.[169]

Starting in the 1930s, as the company began shedding its stores, it also sought to find ways to maintain consumer loyalty. It was the first grocery chain to monitor product quality and to test foods offered to customers. It was also the first food chain to have a store surrounded on all four sides by parking lots. It began to open new stores or expand old ones into "super stores," that separate departments for groceries, fruits and vegetables, candy, baked goods, meats, tobacco, dairy products, and a soda fountain. By 1940, the company was down to 3727 grocery stores but had $258 million in sales. The number of what it described as "full-time employees" in its 1940 annual report increased from 20,872 in 1933 to 22,358 in 1940.[170]

The post-World War 2 economic boom – which included a growing middle class and a major government-subsidized population shift (via government-backed highways and mortgages) to suburbs – was particularly profitable for retail chains. The grocery chains benefitted from the growing number of families with freezers and refrigerators to stock food. Kroger's sales increased from $573 million in 1946 to $861 million in 1950, while the number of employees during that period grew from 22,349 to 25,775. The number of stores, however, declined from 2611 to 2054.[171] Although the company opened new stores in areas of population growth, it closed more stores than it opened. The newer stores were larger, offered more diverse merchandise, and had big parking lots. The sales-per-employee increased from $25,638 in 1946 to $33,404, a trend that some management experts call "efficiency," but which many employees experience as "speed up."

Since the 1950s, Kroger has opened its own stores, but its major growth strategy has been an even more aggressive effort to acquire other supermarket chains, allowing it to reduce competition and expand into

"Would be nice if that $22mil bonus our CEO got last year would've been evenly distributed to us lowly workers who've been suffering during the pandemic...*sigh*"

A Bakery Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

"If it weren't for family and friends feeding me and allowing me to have a place to sleep, I don't know where I would be today. The amount of income that I make doesn't cover rent, food, gas, insurance and any medical costs. I can't even afford my own place. My attitude for the future is concerned and scared. I'm worried I may have to struggle like this my entire future just to make ends meet."

A Front End Cashier at Ralphs in Southern California

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new markets. When Kroger has purchased a supermarket chain where it already operated stores, it typically closed stores in order to increasing Kroger's local market share and profits, but by doing so reducing the number of stores available to consumers in the area. As Kroger grew in sales (if not in the number of stores) during the second half of the 20th century and into the 21st century, its markets included delis, wine sections, household goods, and other kinds of merchandise besides food staples.

Some highlights of that strategy include the following:

- 1955: Kroger purchased the Houston-based 26-store chain Henke & Pillot, Krambo Food Stores in Wisconsin, and Child's Food Stores in Texas
- 1956: Kroger purchased Chain Stores (seven stores based in Louisiana)
- 1957: Kroger sold its 16 stores in the Wichita, Kansas area to J.S. Dillon and Sons.
- 1960: Kroger opened 80 new (larger) stores, closed 111 (smaller) stores, acquired 10 stores from the Food Town chain in the Washington, D.C. area and acquired Sav-On Drugs, a seven-store chain in New Jersey.[172]
- 1960: By the end of the year Kroger had 1,372 food stores, annual sales of $1.8 billion, and 39,691 employees. Sales-per-employee increased to $47,121. Sales per store almost tripled from $493,119 in 1951 to $1.35 million in 1960.[173]
- 1963: Kroger purchased the 56-store Market Basket chain in Southern California. (Before this, Kroger had no stores west of Kansas).
- 1960s: Kroger opened stores in Florida under the names SupeRx and Florida Choice. By 1973, SupeRx was the second largest chain of drug stores in terms of stores (483) and fourth largest in terms of sales.[174]
- 1970s: Kroger closed its stores in the Birmingham (Alabama) area because of stiff competition from Winn-Dixie, Bruno's, and Western Supermarkets chain.
- 1970: Kroger left the Chicago area, selling its distribution warehouse in Northlake, Illinois and 24 stores to the Dominick's Finer Foods chain.
- 1970: Kroger sales reached $3.73 billion among 1522 food stores and 431 drug stores. The company had what its annual report called 53,811 "regular" employees.[175]
- 1972: Kroger left Milwaukee, selling several stores to the Jewel chain.

- 1977: Kroger entered the Charlotte (N.C.) market and expanded its operations during the 1980s when it purchased some stores from the Bi-Lo chain.
- 1980: Kroger entered the San Antonio (Texas) market, but closed its 15 stores in the area 13 years later.
- 1980: Kroger sold several Michigan stores to a Flint-based chain, Hamady Brothers.
- 1980: Kroger sales reached $10.3 billion. Between 1970 and 1980, the number of food stores declined from 1522 to 1245, while the number of drug stores rose from 431 to 514.
- 1981: Kroger closed several stores around Flint, Michigan to Kessell Food Markets. It bought most of them back in 1999.
- 1982: Kroger sold the 65-store Market Basket chain it had run for several years in southern California.
- 1983: Kroger acquired the Dillon Companies, a grocery chain in Kansas along with its subsidiaries (King Soopers, City Market, Fry's, and Gerbes), and a convenience store chain Kwik Shop. As part of that deal, David Dillon – a fourth-generation descendant of founder J. S. Dillon -- became Kroger's CEO. He served in that position until 2013, but remained Chairman of the Board for several years thereafter.
- 1980s: Kroger sold all its Florida stores.
- 1980s: Kroger sold its stores in Western Pennsylvania to Wetterau.
- 1980s: Kroger closed its stores in the Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown areas of northeastern Ohio. Some of those stores were taken over by other chains.
- 1986: Kroger closed about 50 stores in St. Louis, most of which were purchased by other chains.
- 1987: Kroger divested from the last of its 837 stand-alone last drug stores, the SupeRx and Hook chains, while expanding the number of pharmacies located within the supermarkets.
- 1988: Facing serious financial problems Kroger was threatened by the prospect of takeover. Companies like the Herbert Haft family and Kohlberg Kravis Roberts were buying shares of other companies and selling off their assets. The United Food and Commercial Workers Union, which represented more 100,000 Kroger employees at the time, was concerned about a possible takeover of Kroger by what journalists called corporate predators. "UFCW members are sick and tired of seeing their jobs and their standard of living being placed on the line in the corporate crap shoot known as a hostile takeover, and

"When I actually have the opportunity to help customers and to provide good service I enjoy it."

A Bakery Clerk at Ralphs in Southern California

they are damned mad about their government's failure to stop the high-stakes gamblers from using dice loaded against workers," said UFCW president William Wynn. In response to this threat, the Kroger board of directors approved a $3.77 billion restructuring plan involving bank loans, paying shareholders $48 in cash and securities per share, and allowing them to keep their stock. That encouraged stockholders to hang onto their shares and increased the stock price, which fended off a takeover.[176]

"Some of the customers they tell me how they appreciate me and they see me all through the pandemic always smiling to make sure that they have hot meal. That makes me smile when I feel appreciated."

An All Purpose Clerk at Food 4 Less in Southern California

- 1989: Kroger withdrew from Chattanooga (Tennessee), selling its stores to a local chain, Red Food, which was purchased by Bi-Lo in 1994.
- 1988: Kroger sold its 20 stores in the Charlotte area back to Bi-Lo, pulling out of the area. Ahold bought Kroger's remaining stores in the Charlotte area and converted them to Bi-Lo. Kroger laid off about 1,200 workers in the Charlotte area and said that it could not guarantee that Bi-Lo would hire them.[177]
- 1990: Kroger purchased the Great Scott chain in the Detroit area, increasing its market share from 12 percent to 21 percent .[178]
- 1990: Kroger sales reached $20.2 billion. Between 1980 and 1990, the number of supermarkets increased from 1,245 to 1,255. It also operated 959 convenience stores that were part of the Dillons chain it purchased in 1983.
- 1990s: Kroger purchased Pay Less Food Markets, Owen's Market, JayC Food Stores, and Hilander Foods chains.
- 1994: Kroger bought several stores in the Houston area from AppleTree Markets.
- 1990s: Kroger acquired most of the A&P chain's stores in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.
- 1998: Kroger merged with the fifth largest grocery chain, Fred Meyer, as well as its subsidiaries – Ralphs, QFC, and Smith's. This turned Kroger into the nation's largest supermarket chain, combining Fred Meyer's 800 food and general merchandise stores with Kroger's 1,398 food stores and 802 convenience stores, along with its 34 manufacturing plants.[179]
- 1999: Kroger swapped all ten of its stores in the Greensboro (N.C.) area to the Harris Teeter chain in exchange for 11 of that company's stores in central and western Virginia.
- 1999: Kroger purchased 74 supermarkets in Texas and Oklahoma from Winn-Dixie, mostly in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

- 2000: Kroger purchased 20 stores owned by the Hannaford chain in the Richmond and Hampton Roads areas of Virginia.
- 2001: Kroger acquired 15 Baker's Supermarkets stores and one Food 4 Less store in the Omaha, Nebraska area from Fleming Companies.[180]
- 2002: Kroger purchased stores in the San Antonio and Houston areas from Albertsons.
- 2004: After Winn-Dixie left the Cincinnati area, Kroger bought most of the former Thriftway stores in the region and reopened them as Kroger stores.
- 2007: Kroger acquired 18 Scott's Food & Pharmacy stores in Indiana from SuperValu, then closed four of them in July along with a Kroger store in Ft. Wayne. (At the time, Kroger owned 141 stores in Indiana).
- 2007: Kroger purchased 20 former Michigan Farmer Jack stores from A&P after that chain left the Michigan market.
- 2013: Kroger purchased all 212 Harris Teeter stores in eight southeastern and Mid-Atlantic states (including the Charlotte and Asheville, N.C. markets) plus Washington, D.C. for $2.4 billion.[181]
- 2015: Kroger acquired the seven-store Hiller's Market chain in Southeast Michigan and 166 Roundy's stores, mostly in Wisconsin.
- 2016: Kroger announced a "strategic partnership" with Lucky's Market, a Boulder-Colorado based chain of organic food supermarkets with 17 stores in 13 states in the Midwest and Southeastern regions of the country.
- 2018: Kroger sold 762 of its convenience stores to EG Group, a British gas station operator, for $2.15 billion. (They operate under the Turkey Hill, Loaf 'N Jug, Kwik Shop, Tom Thumb and Quik Stop names). Kroger retained 20 convenience stores but eventually sold them off, too. Kroger used the cash from that sale to buy back stock rather than invest in its employees and its stores.
- 2018: Kroger announced it was closing and selling its 14 stores in the Raleigh-Durham (N.C.) area.
- 2018: Kroger purchased the pharmacy records of 42 drug stores in Wisconsin, Utah, Nebraska, Idaho, Washington, and Montana owned by Shopko (which was closing its stores) and transferred the prescriptions to the pharmacies inside Kroger grocery stores.
- 2018: Kroger announced a deal to sell food inside Walgreens drugstores, an entity called Kroger Express.

"I do the best job i possibly can HOWEVER I do feel we are all disposable."

A Head Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

"My biggest concern is covid. It has never been handled properly and still is not. With mask mandates back in effect our store still disobeys and ignores state regulations. I have compromised family members and that is very scary and very sad. My store simply doesn't care. Retaliation fear keeps most employees quiet so lots of things go unreported. King Soopers is just in a sad state."

A Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

In the 1970s, Kroger became the first grocer in the United States to test an electronic scanner. The first real-life test of a scanner took place at the Kroger Kenwood Plaza store in Cincinnati.[182] By 1980, 192 of its stores were equipped with scanning equipment, a number that would expand dramatically over the next two decades.[183] Kroger has recently invested heavily in technology to expand self-checkout and reduce the number of cashiers. It is shifting toward creating self-checkout smartphone apps in order to replace cashiers with automation. In early 2021 it opened a store in Dallas designed for all customers to self-checkout.[184]

During the past decade, Kroger has accelerated its efforts to expand its online presence in order to compete with Walmart and Amazon. When it purchased the Harris Teeter chain in 2013, it acquired the company's "click and collect" program which allowed consumers to purchase groceries on line. Industry observers noted that this move was intended to compete with Amazon's growing online food sales. On May 17, 2018, Kroger announced a partnership with Ocado, a British-based online supermarket. The partnership is designed to improve Kroger's e-commerce program, including online ordering, automated fulfillment, and home delivery via the construction of 20 new, automated fulfillment centers. As of October 2021, Kroger had already built two fulfillment centers in Groveland, Florida and Monroe, Ohio and had announced the location of five additional facilities in Dallas, Phoenix, Forest Park, Georgia, Frederick, Maryland, Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, Romulus, Michigan. In October 2018, Kroger announced online wine delivery to 14 states in partnership with DRINKS; it is now available in 19 states plus Washington, D.C.[185]

The COVID pandemic accelerated Kroger's online efforts. In October 2021, the company announced an expansion into South Florida with its online delivery service, 'Kroger Delivery'. Kroger Delivery is also set to launch operations in the Northeast regions, expand its operations in California, and then to expand into Texas, Georgia, Maryland, Wisconsin, Michigan, and Arizona.[186]

Conclusion

Kroger is one of the largest corporations in the United States in terms of revenues ($132.5 billion - #17) and employees (465,000 - #4). It earned $4.05 billion in operating profits in 2020. Unlike many other American businesses, Kroger has prospered during the COVID-19 pandemic as consumers spent more money buying food in grocery stores (in-person and on-line) and less money in restaurants.

Kroger has not shared the corporation's prosperity with its front-line employees. As seen in *Table 6*, since 2010, food clerks with the most seniority and at the top of their wage scale have seen a significant decrease in their real wages. A similar pattern of wage stagnation and decline has been the reality for other Kroger front-line workers.

Meanwhile, Kroger has given its top executives huge pay increases. Moreover, the gap between Kroger's CEO compensation and pay for the median employee has been growing wider. In fact, the gap between Kroger's CEO compensation and its median worker pay is three times wider than the average for America's largest corporations. With the exception of Walmart, Kroger's CEO-worker pay gap is much wider than those of its major supermarket chain rivals that have reported this information to the federal Securities and Exchange Commission, as required by law.

For two months at the start of the pandemic in 2020, Kroger provided its front-line grocery store employees with additional pay, but quickly withdrew that extra pay just as the pandemic conditions were getting worse. When many local governments proposed mandating such "hazard pay" to reflect the harmful and arduous conditions facing grocery workers, Kroger vehemently opposed these laws, lobbying elected officials to vote against them, just as Kroger has fought efforts by local and state governments to raise the minimum wage.

At the same time, however, Kroger enriched its shareholders with a stock-buyback program worth over $1 billion and has continued to enrich its shareholders through stock buybacks in 2021 rather than investing in the company's front-line employees.

Such business practices contribute to the nation's widening inequalities of wealth and income, a trend that many believe is undermining the nation's social fabric, Americans' faith in the promise of equal opportunity, and their trust in America's big corporations and its leaders. A poll conducted by Gallup in June and July of 2021 found that only nine percent of Americans had a "great deal" of confidence in big business, and only another nine percent had "quite a lot" of confidence in big business. In contrast, 38 percent of Americans said they had "very little" confidence and three percent reporting have no confidence in big business.[187] These trends also translate into growing support for labor unions. Another Gallup survey in 2021 found that 68 percent of Americans approve of labor unions – the highest it has been since 1965. The poll reported that 90 percent of Democrats and 47 percent of Republicans approve of unions.[188]

The taxpayers subsidize Kroger in several ways – through local and state tax breaks and through assistance to its low-wage workers. Some economists describe this as "corporate welfare."

The public is generally sympathetic with grocery store employees. Consumers who shop at the same store get to know these employees as people who try to help them with their shopping experience. They recognize how hard they work, often under difficult conditions. A poll conducted in January 2021 by the UC Berkeley Institute of Government Studies found that 77 percent of Californians supported the idea of hazard pay.[189] A public opinion poll conducted in the Boston area in 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, found that 88 percent of the public had a favorable opinion of grocery store employees. This was much higher than

"Working for Kroger is like stubbing your toe and having to keep a smile. No matter how disrespectful, infuriating, or offensive a customer is you must always have a smile on your face while dealing with them. Throughout the pandemic we were surrounded by maskless customers who would ramble on about their conspiracy theories while we had to check out their groceries and smile."

A Checkout Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

the favorability ratings of the Stop & Shop grocery chain (65 percent), football star Tom Brady (56 percent), or Instacart (26 percent).[190]

"The quality of food has dropped tremendously. Fresh items are unimportant. Salads that come in create an amazing amount of waste and 'Click List' is a black hole of money loss. That department creates entirely too much work for every other department and doesn't generate money on its own."

A Head Culinary Clerk at King Soopers in Colorado

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a number of long-festering issues into more dramatic relief. As the survey showed, Kroger's front-line grocery store workers feel frustrated, alienated, overworked, disrespected and underpaid. They said that Kroger doesn't pay them enough to make ends meet. As a result, they have a hard time paying rent and utilities and constantly fear being evicted. After spending their work time surrounding by a variety of foods, many go home and cannot put a nutrition meal on the table. Many Kroger workers work part-time because the company will not provide full-time jobs with benefits like health insurance. But their schedules at Kroger stores make it difficult for them to find a second job. This is particularly a problem for Kroger workers who have young children and have to juggle work and child care. Not surprisingly, the longer workers are employed at Kroger stores, the more frustrated and angry they are about their working conditions.

Kroger complains that it cannot find enough staff. In the survey, Kroger workers complained about being overworked, because store managers do not hire enough employees to carry out the tasks required to run a supermarket. The company heavily relies on part-time workers and refuses to provide full-time jobs to part-time workers who want to work more hours. This allows Kroger to avoid paying health insurance and to rely on less-experienced and lower-paid part-timers. The workers expressed concern that many store managers are pressured by company higher-ups to reduce the overall number of employees.

Given those business practices, it is not surprising that Kroger has had a difficult time recruiting and retaining its front-line grocery store workers. The company has a high rate of employee turnover.

Grocery stores are part of the service sector of the economy. Consumers develop loyalties to particular companies, in part because of their shopping experiences. Kroger workers said they enjoy interacting with customers but that the company's staffing policies make it difficult to adequately serve their stores' consumers.

A national survey of consumers in 2020 found that Kroger ranked fourteenth among supermarket chains in consumer satisfaction. Trader Joe's, Cosco, Wegmans, H-E-B, Publix, Sam's Club, Aldi, B.J.'s Wholesale Club, Hy-Vee, Whole Foods, Target, ShopRite, and Meijer were all ranked higher than Kroger by consumers. Kroger's rankings have steadily declined since 2017.[191]

Consumers can often be disgruntled and disrespectful – a problem that was exacerbated by the pandemic. In the survey, employees reported that store managers did little to support them when consumers' behavior crossed the line – even, on occasion, to resorting to physical confrontations with employees.

It is not surprising that employees who feel that they are overworked, underpaid, and disrespected by Kroger will not want to work there for

very long – or, if they do work there for years, will feel alienated from the company and suffer from anxiety and depression.

During the pandemic, an unprecedented number of American employees have quit their jobs. Journalists and academics have described this as the "great resignation." According to a July 2021 survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management, 41 percent of U.S. workers were either actively searching for a new job, or planning to do so in the subsequent few months. The three top reasons are the desire for better compensation (53%), better work-life balance (42%), and better benefits (36%). Those who remain in their job have their own concerns. More than half (52 percent) of those who stay say that they've had to take on more work and responsibilities. Many report that they struggle to get the necessary work done, feel less loyalty toward their employer, feel more isolated and lonely, and think they are underpaid.[192] A survey of job seekers by Bankrate conducted in July 2021 found that 55 percent of the workforce said they would likely look for another job in the next year.[193] The level of job-related frustration, and turnover, is highest among low-paid workers, such as those who work for Kroger.

It is easy in retrospect to see major shifts in attitudes, culture, and institutions, but it is more difficult to recognize these changes as they are occurring. The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly been a major turning point in America's economy and culture, but it is difficult to assess now what the long-term ramifications will be. But it is reasonable to project that Kroger's current business practices – which alienate and frustrate its front-line employees and thus undermine the personal ties between workers and consumers – is not sustainable in the long run. Kroger clearly has the resources to do better. It can become a more responsible employer by investing in its employees and its communities.

"The environment has gotten toxic and oppressive over the last year. This is causing large groups of employees to quit, which makes the cycle even worse. Upper management needs to come up with a plan to fix it or be replaced, in my opinion, otherwise I will not work here much longer."

A Checkout Clerk at Fred Meyer in Washington

Image credit: 123RF.com

12. Recommendations

Recommendations

Findings in this report about the condition of workers at Kroger grocery stores in Southern California, Northern Washington and Colorado support 10 actions by the company, local and state government, and labor unions to create fair, safe and sustainable employment conditions for grocery workers.

1. Increase the minimum pay for Kroger workers to $45,760 a year through labor negotiations or action by state and local governments.
2. Provide immediate housing assistance for Kroger employees who are experiencing homelessness or face the threat of eviction.
3. Double the share of Kroger workers who have full-time jobs from 30 percent to 60 percent.
4. Provide a 50 percent discount on all groceries for Kroger workers.
5. Provide childcare subsidies for Kroger employees' who have children younger than 12 years of age.
6. Provide at least one weeks' notice of schedule changes for part-time Kroger workers. If this advance notice is not given, provide overtime pay for the hours worked on short notice
7. Add two positions to Kroger's Board of Directors for Kroger's unionized employees, elected by workers. In addition, create regional worker representative committees, with members selected by the unions that represent the largest share of front-line Kroger employees. These committees will collect data from represented workers, anecdotally and through an annual survey that is reported to Kroger's Board of Directors and at the annual shareholder meeting.
8. Amend guidelines for the SNAP program (food stamps) to require a living wage for grocery workers at stores that accept SNAP benefits.
9. Provide public support for food cooperatives that pay living wages in neighborhoods that are under-served by grocery chains. Public support for Kroger through tax breaks, subsidies, and zoning changes should be linked to requirements for Kroger to invest in low-income areas or contribute to a fund to support nonprofit food cooperatives in those areas.
10. Promote food policy councils as "big tent" venues for addressing food integrity issues and unifying food diverse regional constituents, including social justice advocates and organized labor, food and nutrition advocates, public agencies, large institutions (such as school districts and hospitals), and environmental advocates.

Photo credit: [Reddit]

13. Appendix

- Survey Questionnaires – English and Spanish
- Profile of UFCW Membership, Survey Respondents
- Methodology for Weighting Survey Responses

Kroger Worker Survey - English

You are invited to participate in a research survey of grocery stores owned by the Kroger Company. The survey is being done by the Economic Roundtable and is completely voluntary. This survey is **not** sponsored by Kroger.

The purpose of this survey is to provide clear and accurate information about the economic condition of Kroger workers.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete this online survey. This survey will ask about the work you do, your family, your housing, and your ability to pay for basic costs. The survey will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

To the best of our ability your answers in this survey will remain confidential. We will minimize any risks by preserving the anonymity of your response and storing data on a secure computer. No one who is not part of the Economic Roundtable research team will ever be allowed to see the survey records. After the research project is completed, all survey records will be destroyed.

If you have questions about this survey or if you have a research-related problem, you may contact Dr. Daniel Flaming, who is president of the Economic Roundtable at 213-892-8104 or danflaming@economicrt.org

Please answer this first question: Do you understand the purpose of the survey and that your answers will be kept confidential, and do you wish to continue answering the survey.

- Yes
- No

##################

In the questions below we ask for your Kroger worker identification number and your union membership in order to verify that you are a Kroger employee and a union member.

If you come to any questions you don't want to answer, just go on to the next question.

Work Profile

1. **PLEASE ENTER YOUR KROGER EMPLOYEE ID NUMBER (EUID) IN THE TEXT BOX BELOW.**
   This number is found on your ID badge (please include all zeros): _____

2. Which UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers) local represents you?
   - Local 7 - Colorado
   - Local 21 – Puget Sound and Western Washington
   - Local 324 – Orange County and South Los Angeles County, California
   - Local 770 – Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties, California

- I am a member of the UFCW, but not one of the four locals listed above
- I am a member of a different union
- I do not belong to a union
- I don't know

3. Which Kroger company do you work for and what is the store number?
   - City Market
   - Food 4 Less
   - Fred Meyer
   - King Soopers
   - QFC (Quality Food Centers)
   - Ralphs
   - Another company: _____

   3b. What is the store number? _____

4. What is the job title for the work you do most frequently?
   - All Purpose Clerk (APC)
   - Apparel Clerk
   - Assistant Department Manager
   - Bakery Clerk
   - C-Store
   - Clerk's Helper
   - Coffee Bar Clerk
   - Combo Clerk
   - Courtesy Clerk
   - Deli Clerk
   - Department Manager
   - e-Commerce or Clicklist Clerk
   - Food Clerk
   - Fuel Center Clerk
   - General Merchandise Clerk
   - Head Clerk
   - Meat Clerk
   - Meat Cutter
   - Meat Wrapper
   - Night Crew Clerk
   - Personal Shopper
   - Pharmacy Technician
   - Produce Clerk
   - Specialty Cheese Department
   - Utility Clerk
   - Warehouse Clerk
   - Other _____

5. What is your birth date? (month/day/year)

6. What is your gender identity?
   - o Male
   - o Female
   - o Trans-Male
   - o Trans-Female
   - o Non-Binary
   - o Other

7. Which racial or ethnic group do you identify with?
   - o African American or Black
   - o Asian
   - o Latino or Hispanic
   - o Native American
   - o Two or More
   - o White
   - o Other

8. Overall, do you think that Kroger is headed in the right direction?
   - o Yes
   - o No
   - o I don't know

Work Schedule

9. During the PAST 12 MONTHS (52 weeks), how many WEEKS did you work at your Kroger job? *Include* ***paid time off and include weeks when you only worked for a few hours.***
   - o 50 to 52 weeks worked during past 12 months
   - o 48 to 49 weeks worked during past 12 months
   - o 40 to 47 weeks worked during past 12 months
   - o 27 to 39 weeks worked during past 12 month
   - o 14 to 26 weeks worked during past 12 months
   - o 14 weeks or less worked during past 12 months

10. How many *HOURS* per week do you *USUALLY* work at your *Kroger* job? _____

11. Has the number of hours per week that you usually work your Kroger job changed since 2019?
   - o The number of hours has increased
   - o The number of hours has decreased
   - o The number of hours has not changed
   - o No applicable because I did not work for Kroger in 2019
   - o I don't know

12. How many hours per week do you usually work at your *OTHER* job(s)? _____

Please skip this question or enter 0 if you do not have other jobs.

13. Including your work at Kroger, altogether, how many part-time or full-time jobs do you have?
    - o 1 job
    - o 2 jobs
    - o 3 jobs
    - o 4 jobs
    - o 5 or more jobs

Schedule Changes

14. Which of the following describe your Kroger work schedule?
    *Please check **ALL that apply**.*
    - o Same schedule every week
    - o Different schedule from week to week
    - o Different schedule from day to day
    - o Schedule changes once in a while
    - o I don't know

15. How many days in advance are you USUALLY told about changes in your final work schedule?
    - o Same day
    - o 1 day
    - o 2 to 3 days
    - o 4 to 5 days
    - o 6 to 9 days
    - o 10 to 13 days
    - o At least 2 weeks
    - o My schedule does not change
    - o Not sure

16. In the last year, how often have you missed a shift at Kroger because you could not find adequate child care?
    - o Very often
    - o Often
    - o Sometimes
    - o Rarely
    - o Never
    - o Does not apply/I do not have children

Health and Safety

17. Have you been infected by COVID-19? (check all that apply)
    - o No, I have not been infected
    - o Yes, I have been infected
    - o Yes, I have been infected, I believe it happened at the Kroger store where I worked

- Yes, I have been infected and afterwards other members of my family became infected
- Yes, I have been infected and have long-term effects
- Yes, I have been infected and one or more family members who were infected after me have long-term effects
- I don't know

18. In the **past year**, have you had any of the following difficult experiences while you were working at your store? (check all that apply)
    - I have not had any difficult or traumatic experiences in the past year
    - A customer who refused to maintain social distance during the Covid pandemic
    - A customer who refused to wear a mask during the Covid pandemic
    - A customer who was verbally abusive
    - A customer who threatened violence
    - Violent incidents at your store
    - Other difficult experience: _____

19. What did your store management do if you had a disrespectful or threatening customer?
    - This has not happened to me
    - Management intervened to support me
    - Management ignored what was happening
    - Management sided with the customer
    - Management criticized me for the incident
    - Other: _____

20. What was the highest priority at your store during the Covid pandemic?
    - Maximizing store sales
    - Protecting the health and safety of workers and customers
    - Both were equally important
    - I don't know

21. Does your store have procedures for dealing with emergencies?
    - Yes, the store has a plan for protecting workers and customers if different types of emergencies occur
    - We have been told to run or hide if an emergency occurs
    - There is no plan
    - Other: _____
    - I don't know

22. How safe do you feel at the store where you work?
    - Very safe
    - Somewhat safe
    - Not sure
    - Somewhat unsafe
    - Very unsafe

23. What is the primary purpose of the security guards at your store?
    - To ensure the safety of customers and employees
    - To protect the store against theft by customers
    - To protect the store against theft by employees
    - There are no security guards at the store
    - Other: _____
    - I don't know

24. Over the **last 7 days**, how often have you been bothered by feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge?
    - Not at all
    - Several days
    - More than half the days
    - Nearly every day
    - Decline to answer

25. Over the **last 7 days**, how often have you been bothered by feeling down, depressed, or hopeless?
    - Not at all
    - Several days
    - More than half the days
    - Nearly every day
    - Decline to answer

Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements:

26. "I am satisfied with my current work schedule."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

27. "My requests for time off for vacation, sick leave, or personal appointments are treated fairly by my managers."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

28. "I would like to work more hours than I am currently offered at Kroger."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

29. "Store managers change work schedules to retaliate against workers who they do not like."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

30. "My work schedule at Kroger makes it difficult to hold a second job or attend school."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

31. "I am proud of the work I do at Kroger."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

32. "My managers treat me with respect on the job."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

33. "Morale is high and workers and managers feel like they are working together as a team."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

34. "I have a fair opportunity to be promoted when higher paying jobs open up."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know

35. "Most workers see Kroger as a short-term job rather than a career opportunity."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

36. "My race or ethnic group does not affect the way my Kroger managers treat me."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

37. "My gender does not affect the way my Kroger managers treat me."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

38. "Managers at Kroger unfairly treat some workers better than others."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - I don't know

39. "Age discrimination is a problem at my workplace."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree

- o I don't know

40. "Sexual harassment is a problem at my workplace."
    - o Strongly agree
    - o Agree
    - o Neither agree nor disagree
    - o Disagree m
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o I don't know

41. "Kroger managers are held accountable if they do something wrong or treat people unfairly."
    - o Strongly agree
    - o Agree
    - o Neither agree nor disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o I don't know

42. "Kroger policies result in high quality food and good shopping experiences for customers."
    - o Strongly agree
    - o Agree
    - o Neither agree nor disagree
    - o Disagree
    - o Strongly disagree
    - o I don't know

What I Like About Work

43. What do you like best about your job at the Kroger store where you work? (check all that apply)
    - o My co-workers
    - o The customers
    - o My managers
    - o The feeling of accomplishment from completing my work
    - o Doing essential work by providing food for people
    - o The wages I receive
    - o Other: _____
    - o There is not anything that I like
    - o I don't know

Workload

44. Has Kroger increased the amount of work that you have to complete during your shift?
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o I don't know

45. Are there enough workers at your store to provide good customer service?
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o I don't know

46. Are workers able to complete all of their assigned tasks at your store (check all that apply)?
    - o Yes
    - o No, but the uncompleted work is not important
    - o No and the uncompleted work reduces the quality of food or services for customers
    - o No and the uncompleted work jeopardizes the health or safety of customers
    - o I don't know

47. Why do workers quit their jobs at your store? (check all that apply)
    - o Low wages
    - o Excessive workload
    - o Lack of hours to work
    - o Irregular work schedule
    - o Work schedule conflicts with other obligations
    - o Lack of respect and fairness from managers
    - o Other: _____
    - o I don't know

Income and Cost of Living

48. Do your wage and benefits from Kroger fairly compensate you for your experience and the work you do?
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o I don't know

49. Do you earn enough money to pay for basic expenses every month?
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o I don't know

50. During the past 12 months, was there any time when you or members of your family needed any of the following but didn't get it because you couldn't afford it? (check all that apply)
    - o Telephone service
    - o Vehicle payment
    - o Vehicle maintenance and insurance
    - o Bus pass
    - o Medical procedures
    - o Child care
    - o Groceries

- Clothing
- Shoes
- Utility bill
- Rent
- Other _____

51. In the past year, have you had to borrow money from your family or friends to pay for basic expenses?
    - Yes
    - No
    - I don't know

52. Have your wages at Kroger increased as much as basic expenses such as food and housing have increased?
    - Yes
    - No
    - I don't know

53. Will you have enough money to support yourself after you retire based on the wages and benefits that you receive from Kroger?
    - Yes
    - No
    - I don't know

Housing Expenses

54. Please tell us about where you live.
    - I pay rent
    - I own my home free and clear
    - I own my own home with a mortgage or loan (including home equity loan)
    - I live with family members or friends, but do not pay them rent or help with housing payments
    - Other: _____

55. Did you pay your last month's rent or mortgage on time?
    - Yes
    - No
    - Payment was deferred

56. How confident are you that your household will be able to pay your next rent or mortgage payment on time?
    - No confidence
    - Slight confidence
    - Moderate confidence
    - High confidence
    - Payment is/will be deferred

57. How often do you personally worry about being evicted from your residence?
    - o Very often
    - o Somewhat often
    - o Worry from time to time
    - o Almost never worry
    - o Does not apply

58. Thinking back over the past year, was there ever a time when you did not have a place of your own to sleep and had to sleep in the home of a friend or relative, in your vehicle, at a homeless shelter, or in a place that is not meant for people to sleep?
    - o Yes
    - o No
    - o Decline to answer

59. Where have you spent the night in the past year?
    *Please check **ALL that apply.** Do NOT include times when you were on vacation and away from home.*
    - o My apartment or home
    - o The apartment or home of an acquaintance, friend or relative who provided basic accommodation at no cost
    - o Workplace
    - o Car, truck, van, RV, or camper
    - o Hotel or motel
    - o Outdoors
    - o Emergency shelter
    - o Train, or train/metro station
    - o On a bus or train
    - o Tent or makeshift shelter
    - o Other

Food and Nutrition

60. In the past 12 months, did you receive food through a Food Stamp Program, SNAP, food banks, or other food donation programs?
    - o Yes
    - o No

61. During the last 7 days, did you or anyone in your household get free groceries or a free meal?
    - o Yes
    - o No

62. If you answered YES, where did you get free groceries or free meals? (Check all that apply)
    - o Co-workers
    - o The store where I work
    - o My union
    - o Food pantry or food bank

- Free meals through the school or other programs aimed at children
- Church, synagogue, temple, mosque or other religious organization
- Shelter or soup kitchen
- Family, friends, or neighbors
- Other community program

63. "The food that I bought just didn't last, and I didn't have enough money to buy more."
    Was that sometimes, often, or never true for your household in the last 12 months?
    - Sometimes true
    - Often true
    - Never true

64. "I couldn't afford to eat balanced and healthy meals"
    Was that often, sometimes, or never true for your household in the last 12 months?
    - Sometimes true
    - Often true
    - Never true

65. In the last 12 months, did you ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
    - Yes
    - No

66. If YES, how often did this happen?
    - Almost every month
    - Some months but not every month
    - Only 1 or 2 months

67. In the last 12 months, did you ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money for food?
    - Yes
    - No

68. In the last 12 months, were you ever hungry but didn't eat because there wasn't enough money for food?
    - Yes
    - No

Children and Childcare

69. Which best describes your household:
    - Just me (not married/not living with partner, no children)
    - Single parent
    - Married or living with partner, no children
    - Married or living with partner, with children

- Other _____

70. If you have children under the age of 12, do you pay for the care of these children while you work at Kroger?
    - Yes
    - No
    - I do not have children under the age of 12

71. If you have children under the age of 18, tell us if you agree or disagree with the following statement: "The scheduling of my work at Kroger makes it difficult to care for family and children."
    - Strongly agree
    - Agree
    - Neither agree nor disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly disagree
    - Don't know
    - Does not apply/I do not have children

72. Should Kroger help their workers pay for childcare?
    - Yes
    - Maybe
    - No

73. Would you use a childcare subsidy if Kroger provided it?
    - Yes
    - No
    - I don't have children/plan to have children

Your Opinion

74. Thank you for your responses. This final question invites you to share your experience working for Kroger. Please reflect on how working for Kroger has changed since you began working there. Please also tell us anything you'd like to tell us about what it is like working at Kroger. (There is no word limit)

Please remember that your responses will be confidential. We will not attribute your comments to you and will not share any details that may be used to identify you.

Encuesta para Trabajadores de Kroger

Usted está invitado a participar en una encuesta de investigación de las tiendas de supermercado propiedad de la Compañía Kroger. La encuesta es llevada a cabo por Economic Roundtable y es totalmente voluntaria. Esta encuesta **no** está patrocinada por Kroger.

El propósito de esta encuesta es proporcionar información clara y precisa sobre la situación económica de los trabajadores de Kroger.

Si acepta participar, se le pedirá que complete la encuesta en línea. La encuesta le preguntará sobre el trabajo que desempeña, sobre su familia, su vivienda y su capacidad para pagar los gastos básicos. La encuesta tardará aproximadamente de 15 a 20 minutos en completarse.

En la medida de nuestras posibilidades, sus respuestas en esta encuesta permanecerán confidenciales. Minimizaremos cualquier riesgo preservando el anonimato de sus respuestas y guardando los datos en una computadora segura. A nadie que no forme parte del equipo de investigación de Economic Roundtable se le permitirá ver los registros de la encuesta. Una vez completado el proyecto de investigación, se destruirán todos los registros de la encuesta.

Si tiene preguntas sobre esta encuesta o si tiene algún problema relacionado con la investigación, puede comunicarse con el Dr. Daniel Flaming, presidente de Economic Roundtable al 213-892-8104 o danflaming@economicrt.org

Por favor, responda a esta primera pregunta: ¿Entiende el propósito de la encuesta y que sus respuestas se mantendrán confidenciales, y usted desea continuar respondiendo la encuesta?

- Sí
- No

##################

En las preguntas a continuación le pedimos su número de identificación de empleado de Kroger y su afiliación sindical con el fin de verificar que usted es un empleado de Kroger y un miembro del sindicato.

Si hay alguna pregunta que no quiera responder, simplemente continúe con la siguiente pregunta.

Perfil de Trabajo

1. **PONGA SU NÚMERO DE IDENTIFICACIÓN DE EMPLEADO (UEID por sus siglas en inglés) DE KROGER EN EL CUADRO DE TEXTO QUE APARECE A CONTINUACIÓN.**
   Este número se encuentra en su tarjeta de identificación (por favor incluya todos los ceros). A veces comienza con dos letras seguidas de números. Para otras tiendas, pueden ser todos números. A veces se refiere como su "Enterprise ID #". _____

2. ¿Qué Local de la Unión UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers) lo representa?

- Local 7 - Colorado
- Local 21 – Puget Sound y Western Washington
- Local 324 – Condado de Orange y Sur del Condado de Los Ángeles, California
- Local 770 – Condados de Los Ángeles, Ventura y Santa Bárbara, California
- Soy miembro de la UFCW, pero no de alguno de los cuatro sindicatos mencionados anteriormente
- Soy miembro de un sindicato diferente
- No pertenezco a un sindicato
- No sé

3. ¿Para qué empresa de Kroger trabaja y cuál es el número de tienda?
   - City Market
   - Food 4 Less
   - Fred Meyer
   - King Soopers
   - QFC (Quality Food Centers)
   - Ralphs
   - Otra empresa: _____

   3b. ¿Cuál es el número de la tienda? _____

4. ¿Qué puesto de trabajo desempeña con más frecuencia?
   - Empleado Multiusos (APC)/All Purpose Clerk (APC)
   - Empleado de Indumentaria/Apparel Clerk
   - Subgerente de Departamento/Assistant Department Manager
   - Empleado de Panadería/Bakery Clerk
   - Tienda-C/C-Store
   - Empleado Ayudante/Clerk's Helper
   - Empleado de Cafetería/Coffee Bar Clerk
   - Empleado Combo/Combo Clerk
   - Empleado de Cortesía/Courtesy Clerk
   - Empleado del Deli/ Deli Clerk
   - Gerente de Departamento/Department Manager
   - Empleado de Comercio Electrónico o Clicklist/e-Commerce or Clicklist Clerk
   - Empleado de alimentos/Food Clerk
   - Empleado de Centro de Combustibles/Fuel Center Clerk
   - Empleado de Mercadería General/General Merchandise Clerk
   - Empleado principal/Head Clerk
   - Empleado de Carnicería/Meat Clerk
   - Cortador de Carnes (Carnicero)/Meat Cutter
   - Envolvedor de Carne/Meat Wrapper
   - Empleado Turno de Noche/Night Crew Clerk
   - Comprador Personal /Personal Shopper
   - Técnico en Farmacia/Pharmacy Technician
   - Empleado de Frutas y Verduras/Produce Clerk

- Empleado de Especialidad en Quesos/Specialty Cheese Department
- Empleado de Utilería/Utility Clerk
- Empleado de Bodega (Almacén)/Warehouse Clerk
- Otro _____

5. ¿Cuál es su fecha de nacimiento? (mes/día/año)

6. ¿Cuál es su identidad de género?
   - Masculino
   - Femenino
   - Trans-Masculino
   - Trans-Femenino
   - No Binario
   - Otro

7. ¿Con qué grupo racial o étnico se identifica?
   - Afroamericano o Negro
   - Asiático
   - Latino o Hispano
   - Indígena Americano
   - Dos o Más
   - Blanco
   - Otro

8. ¿En general, cree que Kroger va en la dirección correcta?
   - Sí
   - No
   - No Sé

Horario de Trabajo

9. Durante los ÚLTIMOS 12 MESES (52 semanas), ¿Cuántas SEMANAS trabajó en su empleo de Kroger?
Incluya el tiempo libre pagado e incluya semanas en las que solo trabajó unas pocas horas.
   - 50 a 52 semanas trabajadas durante los últimos 12 meses
   - 48 a 49 semanas trabajadas durante los últimos 12 meses
   - 40 a 47 semanas trabajadas durante los últimos 12 meses
   - 27 a 39 semanas trabajadas durante los últimos 12 meses
   - 14 a 26 semanas trabajadas durante los últimos 12 meses
   - 14 semanas trabajadas durante los últimos 12 meses

10. ¿Cuántas *HORAS* trabaja por semana *GENERALMENTE* en su trabajo de *Kroger*? _____

11. ¿Desde el 2019, ha cambiado el número de horas por semana que generalmente trabaja en Kroger?
   - El número de horas ha aumentado

- El número de horas ha disminuido
- El número de horas no ha cambiado
- No aplica porque no trabajé para Kroger en 2019
- No sé

12. ¿Cuántas horas por semana generalmente trabaja en su(s) OTRO(S) trabajo(s)? _____
Omita esta pregunta o escriba '0' si no tiene otros trabajos.

13. ¿Incluyendo su trabajo en Kroger, en total, cuántos trabajos de tiempo parcial o tiempo completo tiene?
- 1 trabajo
- 2 trabajos
- 3 trabajos
- 4 trabajos
- 5 o más trabajos

Cambios de Horario

14. ¿Cuál de los siguientes describe su horario de trabajo con Kroger?
Por favor marque ***TODOS los que apliquen.***
- Mismo horario cada semana
- Horario diferente de una semana a otra
- Horario diferente de un día para otro
- Cambios de horario de vez en cuando
- No sé

15. ¿Con cuántos días de anticipación GENERALMENTE se le avisa acerca de cambios en su horario de trabajo final?
- El mismo día
- 1 día
- 2 a 3 días
- 4 a 5 días
- 6 a 9 días
- 10 a 13 días
- Al menos 2 semanas
- Mi horario no cambia
- No sé

16. ¿En el último año con qué frecuencia ha perdido un turno de trabajo con Kroger porque no pudo encontrar cuidado de niños adecuado?
- Muy a menudo
- Frecuentemente
- A veces
- Raramente
- Nunca

- No aplica/No tengo hijos(as)

Salud y Seguridad

17. ¿Se ha contagiado con COVID-19?
(Marque todo lo que aplica)
    - No, no me he contagiado
    - Sí, me he contagiado
    - Sí, me he contagiado, creo que sucedió en la tienda Kroger donde trabajaba
    - Sí, me contagié y después otros miembros de mi familia se contagiaron
    - Sí, me contagié y tengo efectos a largo plazo
    - Sí, me contagie y uno o más miembros de la familia que se contagiaron después de mi tienen efectos a largo plazo
    - No sé

18. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿Ha tenido alguna de las siguientes experiencias difíciles (traumáticas) mientras trabajaba en su tienda? (marque todo lo que aplica)
    - No he tenido ninguna experiencia difícil o traumática en el último año
    - Un cliente que se negó a mantener la distancia social durante la Pandemia de COVID
    - Un cliente que se negó a usar cubreboca durante la Pandemia de COVID
    - Un cliente que fue verbalmente abusivo
    - Un cliente que amenazó con violencia
    - Incidentes violentos en su tienda
    - Otras experiencias difíciles: _____

19. ¿Qué hizo la gerencia de su tienda si tenía un cliente irrespetuoso o amenazante?
    - Esto no me ha pasado
    - La gerencia intervino para apoyarme
    - La gerencia ignoró lo que estaba sucediendo
    - La gerencia se puso del lado del cliente
    - La gerencia me criticó por el incidente
    - Otro: _____

20. ¿Cuál fue la prioridad principal en su tienda durante la Pandemia de COVID?
    - Maximizar las ventas en las tiendas
    - Protección de la salud y seguridad de los trabajadores y clientes
    - Ambos fueron igualmente importantes

21. ¿Su tienda tiene procedimientos sobre qué hacer en emergencias?
    - Sí, la tienda tiene un plan para proteger a los trabajadores y clientes si ocurren diferentes tipos de emergencias
    - Nos han dicho que corramos o nos escondamos si ocurre una emergencia
    - No hay ningún plan
    - No sé
    - Otro: _____

22. ¿Qué tan seguro se siente en la tienda donde trabaja?
    - o Muy seguro
    - o Algo seguro
    - o No estoy seguro
    - o Algo seguro
    - o Muy inseguro

23. ¿Cual es el propósito principal de los guardias de seguridad en su tienda?
    - o Garantizar la seguridad de clientes y empleados
    - o Proteger la tienda contra el robo por parte de los clientes
    - o Proteger la tienda contra el robo por parte de los empleados
    - o No hay guardias de seguridad en la tienda
    - o No sé
    - o Otro: _____

24. En los últimos **7 días**, ¿Con qué frecuencia se ha sentido nervioso, ansioso o al borde?
    - o Para nada
    - o Varios días
    - o Más de la mitad de los días
    - o Casi todos los días
    - o Declino responder

25. En los últimos **7 días**, ¿Con qué frecuencia se ha sentido decaído, deprimido o desesperado (sin esperanza)?
    - o Para nada
    - o Varios días
    - o Más de la mitad de los días
    - o Casi todos los días
    - o Declino responder

Por favor, indique hasta qué punto está de acuerdo con las siguientes afirmaciones:

26. "Estoy satisfecho con mi horario de trabajo actual."
    - o Totalmente de acuerdo
    - o De acuerdo
    - o Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - o No estoy de acuerdo
    - o Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - o No sé

27. "Mis solicitudes de tiempo libre para vacaciones, permiso por enfermedad o citas personales son tratados de manera justa por mis gerentes."
    - o Totalmente de acuerdo
    - o De acuerdo

- Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
- No estoy de acuerdo
- Totalmente en desacuerdo
- No sé

28. “Me gustaría trabajar más horas de las que actualmente me ofrecen en Kroger.”
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

29. "Los gerentes de las tiendas cambian los horarios de trabajo para tomar represalias contra los trabajadores que no les caen bien."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

30. “Mi horario de trabajo en Kroger hace que sea difícil tener un segundo trabajo o asistir a la escuela. "
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

31. “Me siento orgulloso del trabajo que desempeño en Kroger."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

32. “Mis gerentes me tratan con respeto en el trabajo."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo

- No sé

33. "La moral es alta, los trabajadores y gerentes sienten que están trabajando juntos en equipo."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

34. "Tengo una oportunidad justa de ser ascendido cuando se abren posiciones de empleo mejor pagadas."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

35. "La mayoría de los empleados ven a Kroger como un trabajo a corto plazo en lugar de una oportunidad profesional."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

36. "Mi raza o grupo étnico no afecta la forma en que los gerentes de Kroger me tratan."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No se

37. "Mi género no afecta la forma en que los gerentes de Kroger me tratan."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No se

38. "Los gerentes de Kroger tratan injustamente a algunos trabajadores mejor que a otros."

- Totalmente de acuerdo
- De acuerdo
- Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
- No estoy de acuerdo
- Totalmente en desacuerdo
- No sé

39. "La discriminación por edad es un problema en mi lugar de trabajo."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

40. "El acoso sexual es un problema en mi lugar de trabajo."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

41. "Los gerentes de Kroger son responsabilizados si hacen algo mal o tratan a las personas injustamente."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

42. "Las pólizas de Kroger dan como resultado alimentos de alta calidad y buenas experiencias de compra para los clientes."
    - Totalmente de acuerdo
    - De acuerdo
    - Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - No estoy de acuerdo
    - Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - No sé

Lo que me gusta del trabajo

43. ¿Qué es lo que más le gusta de su trabajo en la tienda Kroger donde trabaja?
    (Marque todo lo que aplica)

- Mis compañeros de trabajo
- Los clientes
- Los gerentes
- La sensación de logro de completar mi trabajo
- Hacer un trabajo esencial proporcionando alimentos a las personas
- Los salarios que recibo
- No hay nada que me guste
- No sé
- Otro: _____

Carga de Trabajo

44. ¿Kroger ha aumentado la cantidad de trabajo que tiene que completar durante su turno?
    - Sí
    - No
    - No sé

45. ¿Hay suficientes trabajadores en su tienda para proporcionar un buen servicio al cliente?
    - Sí
    - No
    - No sé

46. ¿Los trabajadores pueden completar todo el trabajo que se les asigna en su tienda?
    (Marque todo lo que aplica)
    - Sí
    - No, no pero el trabajo incompleto no es importante
    - No y el trabajo incompleto reduce la calidad de los alimentos o servicios a los clientes
    - No y el trabajo incompleto pone en peligro la salud o la seguridad de los clientes
    - No sé

47. ¿Por qué los empleados renuncian a sus trabajos en su tienda?
    (Marque todo lo que aplica)
    - Salarios bajos
    - Carga de trabajo excesiva
    - Falta de horas para trabajar
    - Horario de trabajo irregular
    - El horario de trabajo entra en conflicto con otras obligaciones
    - Falta de respeto y equidad por parte de los gerentes
    - No sé
    - Otro: _____

Ingresos y Costo de Vida

48. ¿Su salario y beneficios de Kroger lo compensan justamente por su experiencia y el trabajo que hace?

- Sí
- No
- No sé

49. ¿Gana suficiente dinero para pagar sus gastos básicos cada mes?
    - Sí
    - No
    - No sé

50. Durante los últimos 12 meses, ¿Hubo algún momento en que usted o los miembros de su familia necesitaron algunos de los siguientes, pero no lo conseguían porque no podían pagarlo? (Marque todo lo que aplica)
    - Servicio telefónico
    - Pago del auto
    - Mantenimiento y Seguro de auto
    - Pases de autobús
    - Procedimiento médico
    - Cuidado de niños
    - Despensa (Comida)
    - Ropa
    - Zapatos
    - Factura de servicios públicos (Electricidad, Agua, Gas)
    - Renta
    - Otro: _____

51. En el último año, ¿Ha tenido que pedir dinero prestado a su familia o amigos para pagar los gastos básicos?
    - Sí
    - No
    - No sé

52. ¿Sus salarios de Kroger han aumentado tanto como han aumentado los gastos básicos como comida y vivienda?
    - Sí
    - No
    - No sé

53. ¿Tendrá suficiente dinero para mantenerse después de jubilarse basado en el salario y beneficios que recibe de Kroger?
    - Sí
    - No
    - No sé

Gastos de Vivienda

54. Por favor, díganos dónde vive
- o Pago renta
- o Soy dueño(a) de mi casa sin pago de hipoteca
- o Soy dueño(a) de mi casa con una hipoteca o préstamo (incluyendo préstamo con garantía hipotecaria)
- o Vivo con familiares o amigos, pero no les pago renta ni les ayudo con los pagos de vivienda
- o Otro: _____

55. ¿Pagó a tiempo la renta o hipoteca el mes pasado?
- o Sí
- o No
- o El pago fue aplazado

56. ¿Qué tan seguro(a) está de que su familia podrá pagar el próximo pago de la renta o hipoteca a tiempo?
- o Sin seguridad
- o Poca seguridad
- o Seguridad moderada
- o Alta seguridad
- o El pago está/será aplazado

57. ¿Con qué frecuencia se preocupa personalmente por ser desalojado de su residencia?
- o Muy a menudo
- o Algo a menudo
- o Preocupación de vez en cuando
- o Casi nunca se preocupa
- o No aplica

58. Pensando en el año pasado, ¿Hubo algún momento en que no tenía un lugar propio para dormir y tuvo que dormir en la casa de un amigo o familiar, en su auto, en un refugio para indigentes o en un lugar que no está destinado para dormir?
- o Sí
- o No
- o Declino contestar

59. ¿Dónde ha pasado la noche en el último año?
Por favor, marque ***todo lo que aplica.*** *NO incluya los momentos que estuvo de vacaciones y lejos de casa.*
- o Mi departamento (apartamento) u hogar
- o En el departamento (apartamento) o la casa de un conocido, amigo o familiar que me proporcionó alojamiento básico sin costo alguno
- o Lugar de trabajo
- o En el auto, camión, Van, RV o camper
- o Hotel o motel
- o Al aire libre (en la calle)

- Refugio de emergencia
- En el tren, estación de tren/metro
- En el autobús o tren
- En una tienda de campaña o refugio improvisado
- Otro

Alimentación y Nutrición

60. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿Recibió alimentos a través de un Programa de Cupones para Alimentos, SNAP (Programa de Suplementos de Asistencia Nutricional), bancos de alimentos u otros programas de donación de alimentos?
    - Sí
    - No

61. Durante los últimos 7 días, ¿Usted o alguien en su hogar recibió comestibles o comida gratis?
    - Sí
    - No

62. Si contestó Sí, ¿De dónde recibió comestibles o comida gratis?
    (Marque todo lo que aplique)
    - Compañeros de trabajo
    - La tienda donde trabajo
    - Mi sindicato
    - Despensa de alimentos o banco de alimentos
    - Comidas gratuitas a través de la escuela u otros programas dirigidos a los niños
    - Iglesia, sinagoga, templo, mezquita u otra organización religiosa
    - Refugio o comedor social
    - Familia, amigos o vecinos
    - Otro programa comunitario

63. "La comida que compré no fue suficiente y no tenía dinero para comprar más"
    ¿Eso fue a veces, a menudo o nunca cierto para su hogar en los últimos 12 meses?
    - A veces cierto
    - A menudo cierto
    - Nunca cierto

64. "No podía permitirme el lujo de comer comidas balanceadas y saludables"
    ¿Eso fue a veces, a menudo o nunca cierto para su hogar en los últimos 12 meses?
    - A veces cierto
    - A menudo cierto
    - Nunca cierto

65. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿Alguna tuvo que reducir la porción de comidas u omitió comidas porque no había suficiente dinero para la comida?
    - Sí
    - No

66. Si fue así, ¿Con qué frecuencia sucedió eso?
    - o Casi todos los meses
    - o Algunos meses, pero no todos los meses
    - o Sólo 1 o 2 meses

67. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿Alguna vez comió menos de lo que sentía que debería, porque no había suficiente dinero para la comida?
    - o Sí
    - o No

68. En los últimos 12 meses, ¿Alguna vez tuvo hambre, pero no comió porque no había suficiente dinero para la comida?
    - o Sí
    - o No

Niños(as) y el cuidado de los niños(as)

69. Cuál describe mejor su hogar:
    - o Sólo yo (soltero(a)/vivo sin pareja, sin hijos(as)
    - o Padre soltero/madre soltera
    - o Casado(a) o viviendo con una pareja, sin hijos(as)
    - o Casado(a) o viviendo con una pareja, con hijos(as)
    - o Otro: _____

70. Si tiene hijos(as) menores de 12 años, ¿Paga por el cuidado de sus hijos(as) mientras trabaja en Kroger?
    - o Sí
    - o No
    - o No tengo hijos(as) menores de 12 años

71. Si tiene hijos(as) menores de 18 años, díganos si está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con la siguiente afirmación. "Los horarios de mi trabajo en Kroger hacen difícil cuidar a la familia y a los hijos(as)."
    - o Totalmente de acuerdo
    - o De acuerdo
    - o Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
    - o No estoy de acuerdo
    - o Totalmente en desacuerdo
    - o No sé
    - o No aplica/No tengo hijos

72. ¿Debería Kroger ayudar a sus trabajadores o pagar el cuidado de niños(as)?
    - o Sí
    - o Quizá
    - o No

73. ¿Utilizaría un subsidio para cuidado de niños(as) si Kroger lo proporcionara?
- o Sí
- o No
- o No tengo hijos/planeo tener hijos

Su opinión

74. Gracias por sus respuestas. La última pregunta le invita a compartir su experiencia trabajando para Kroger. Por favor, reflexione sobre cómo ha cambiado trabajar para Kroger desde que comenzó a trabajar allí. Por favor, también díganos cualquier cosa que le gustaría decirnos acerca de lo que es trabajar en Kroger. (No hay límite de palabras)

Por favor, recuerde que sus respuestas serán confidenciales. No le atribuiremos sus comentarios y no compartiremos ningún detalle que pueda utilizarse para identificarlo.

Profile of UFCW Membership and Survey Respondents

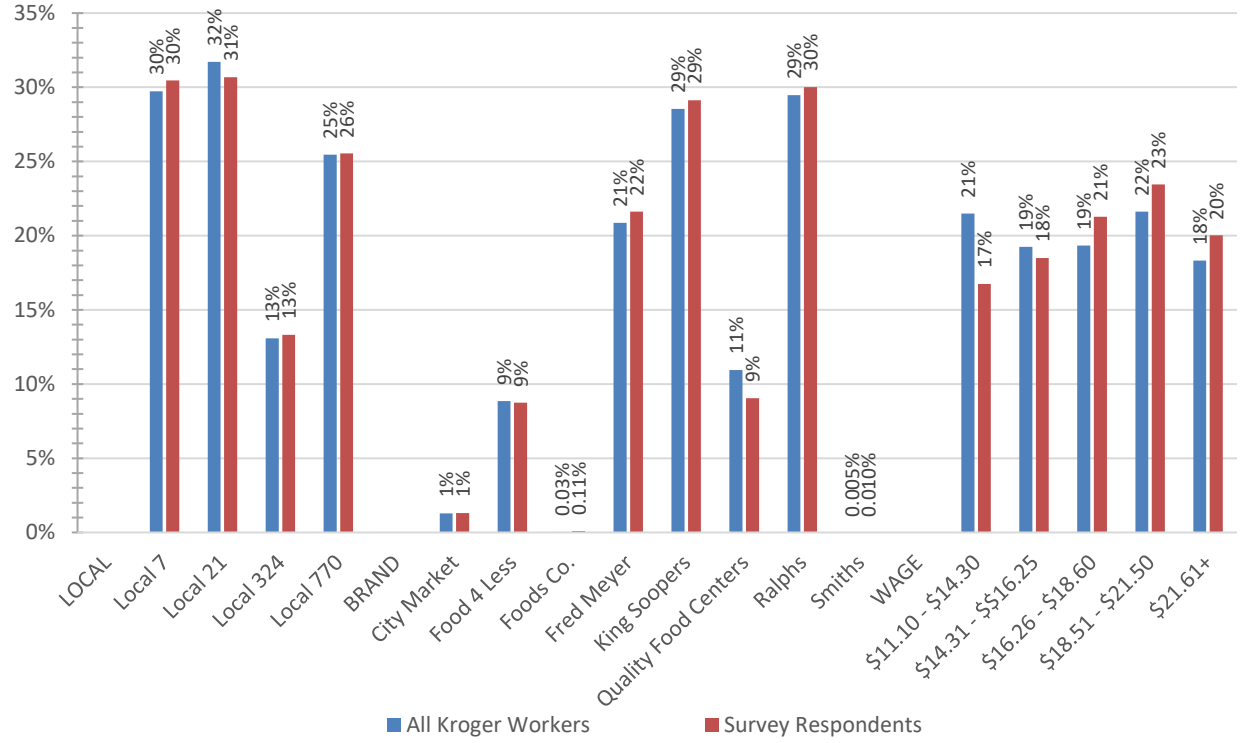
The composition of survey respondents closely matches the composition of the total Kroger workforce that was surveyed based on the UFCW union local that represents them and the store brand that employs them, as shown in *Figure 101.*

However, survey respondents skew toward higher paid workers. Workers in the lowest wage group that earns $11.10 to $14.30 an hour are under-represented by four percentage points among survey respondents. Workers in the highest three wage groups, earning $16.26 an hour or more are over-represented among survey respondents by two percentage points in each of the three groups.

This is explained by the fact that lower-wage workers are more likely to be new workers and part-time workers who are more tenuously connected to their jobs, making it more difficult to engage them in responding to the survey.

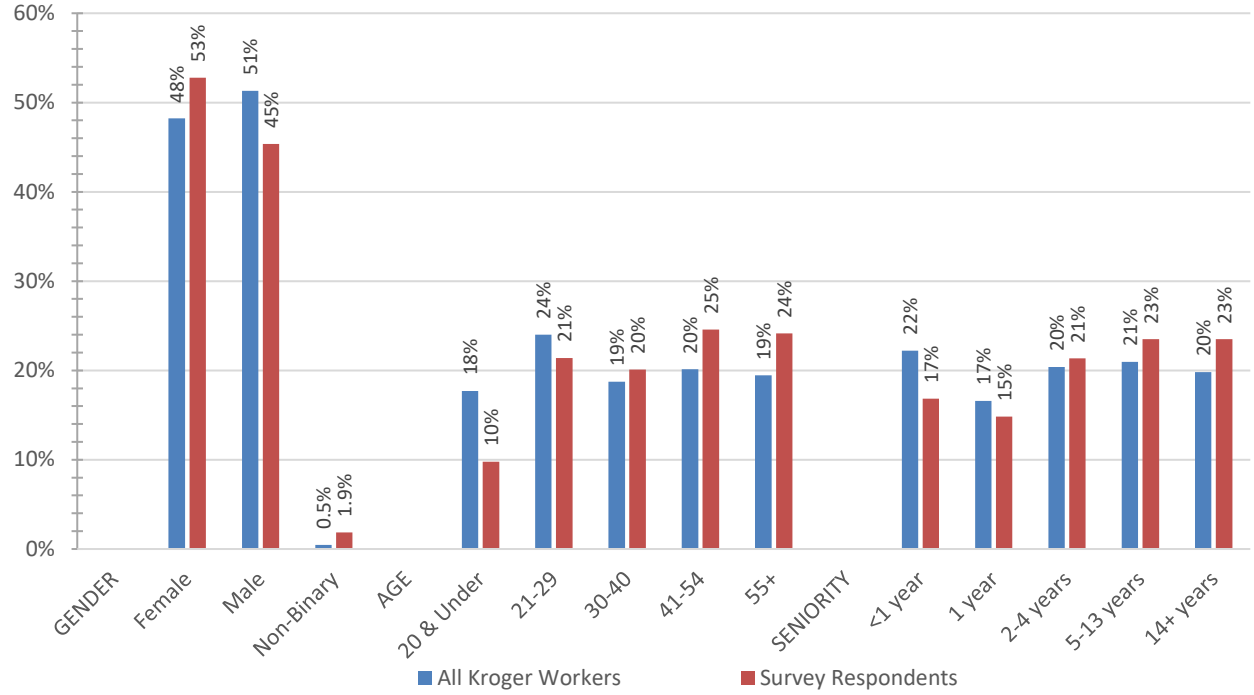
Survey respondents skew toward women by five percentage points, as shown in *Figure 102.* The largest gap between the total labor force and survey respondents is among workers who are not legally of age – workers 20 and under – who are under-represented by eight percentage points among survey respondents. Similarly, workers with less than one year on the job are under-represented by five percentage points.

Figure 101: Comparison of UFCW Members and Survey Respondents based on UFCW Local, Kroger Brand, and Wage Level



Source: Membership records and survey responses of Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Figure 102: Comparison of UFCW Members and Survey Respondents based on Gender, Age and Seniority



Source: Membership records and survey responses of Kroger workers represented by UFCW Locals 7, 21, 324, 770.

Survey respondents in each of the two age groups over 40 years of age are over-represented by five percentage points, and workers in the two seniority groups with the longest employment tenure are over-represented by two to three percentage points

These representation gaps are all center on young, lower-wage workers who are newly employed. Although not unexpected, these gaps make it necessary to weight survey respondents to make them representative of the overall Kroger workforce. The methodology for weighting survey respondents is explained in the next section.

The survey weights have the net effect of giving slightly more importance to the survey responses of young, lower-paid and newly employed workers. This in turn has a small but noticeable effect on survey results. For example, the rate of homelessness among workers increases from 13 percent using unweighted responses to 14 percent using weighted responses.

Methodology for Weighting Survey Responses

Survey weights were created by using the information available in the union membership records to construct a probability model for survey response. This included information about age, wage, seniority, geographic location, job title, gender, UFCW union local, and Kroger brand that was available for entire UFCW membership that was invited to respond to the survey.

In a small number of records, data from the eight fields of information used to construct the probability model for survey responses was missing, which made it necessary to impute the

missing data. The percent of total union membership records in which data was missing is as follows: age 6.3 percent, wage 7.3 percent, seniority 2.2 percent, geographic location 0.3 percent, job title 0.02 percent, UFCW local 0.0 percent, and Kroger brand 0.3 percent.

We used the missing forest methodology to impute this missing information. Then gradient boosted trees were used to compute the probability of response for each UFCW member, both those who did and those who did not respond to the survey. A different model was fit for each of the eight fields of information for which missing data was imputed. Then the models were averaged to 'average out' the uncertainty associated with the imputations.

After computing the probability of responding to the survey for each record, the weight for the record was computed as the inverse of the response probability, that is, 1 divided by the probability of responding to the survey for each record. These weights make the 28 percent of UFCW members who responded to the survey representative of the entire membership of the four UFCW locals that were surveyed and were used to compute responses to the survey.

We evaluated whether the weighted survey responses matched the profile of the total UFCW membership based on age, wage, seniority, geographic location, job title, gender, UFCW union local, and Kroger brand. These comparisons confirmed a close match between the profile of survey respondents computed using weights and the total UFCW membership.

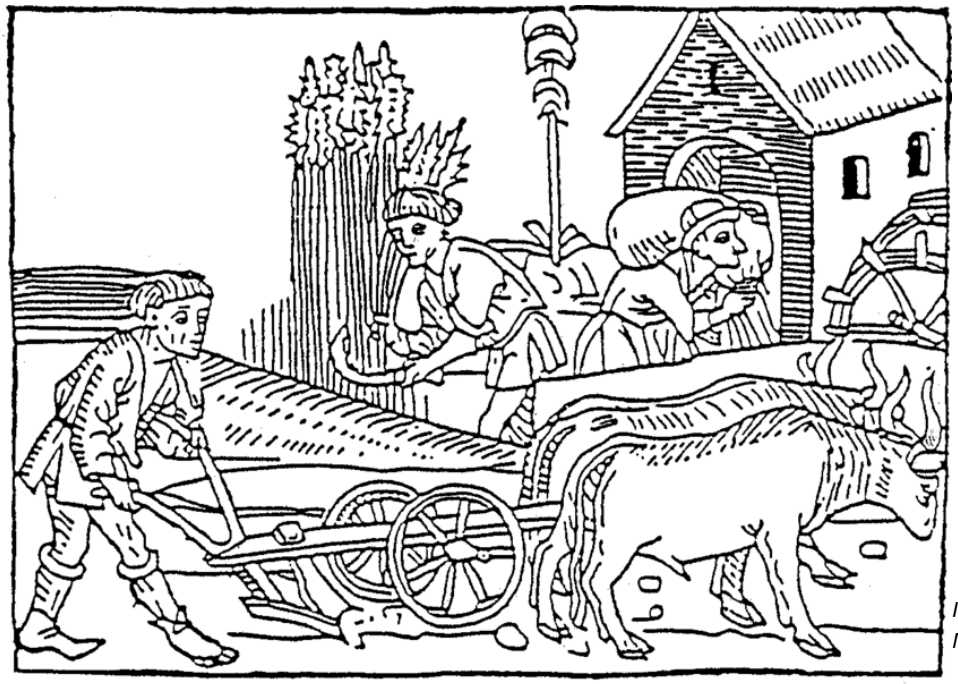


Image credit: Medieval Woodcut

14. Endnotes

[1] Glasmeier, Amy K. Living Wage Calculator. 2020. Massachusetts Institute of Technology. livingwage.mit.edu.

[2] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "2021 Poverty Guidelines," https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2021-poverty-guidelines.

[3] Alisha Coleman-Jensen, Matthew P. Rabbitt, Christian A. Gregory, and Anita Singh. 2021. Household Food Security in the United States in 2020, ERR-298, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/102076/err-298.pdf?v=6499.7

[4] To evaluate a household's level of food security or insecurity, the sum of affirmative responses is used to generate a raw score, with a range of 0 to 6. This score is based on questions 63 to 68 in the survey, which are reproduced from the USDA survey instrument.

[5] Kroger Company, Our Purpose (June 15, 2021). https://www.thekrogerco.com/about-kroger/

[6] Question 58 of the survey asked about homelessness. Responses were validated with responses to questions 50, 54, 59, and 69, which also provide information about homelessness, both in question options and open-ended text entries.

[7] Glasmeier, Amy K. 2021. *Living Wage Calculator.* Massachusetts Institute of Technology. livingwage.mit.edu. The definition of the living wage is enough to meet "*... a family's likely minimum food, childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other basic necessities (e.g. clothing, personal care items, etc.) costs. The living wage draws on these cost elements and the rough effects of income and payroll taxes to determine the minimum employment earnings necessary to meet a family's basic needs while also maintaining self-sufficiency*." From "*About the Living Wage Calculator*"

[8] The Economic Roundtable used the M.I.T. *Living Wage Calculator* to determine a weighted average Living Wage for the combined regions of Colorado, Northwest Washington and Southern California, where the Kroger grocery workers in this report live and work (https://livingwage.mit.edu/). The table below shows the number of grocery workers employed and the living wage for each county in the three regions studied, adjusted to match the typical family size and structure for Kroger grocery workers. Statewide living wage data was used for counties with fewer than 120 Kroger workers (*)instead. The number of Kroger employees in each county and the average living wage for those workers based on the cost of necessities in the county is shown below.

County	Employees	Living Wage
Adams, CO	808	$20.57
Arapahoe, CO	912	$20.63
Boulder, CO	296	$22.04
Broomfield, CO*	111	$19.63
Clallam, WA*	70	$19.63
Denver, CO	1,727	$20.77
Douglas, CO	2,707	$20.87
El Paso, CO	1,576	$18.09
Jefferson, CO	2,234	$20.80
Jefferson, WA*	147	$18.80
King, WA	7,955	$21.82
Kitsap, WA	456	$17.10
Larimer, CO*	156	$19.63
Los Angeles, CA	8,721	$23.48
Mason, WA*	107	$18.80
Mesa, CO*	493	$19.63
Orange, CA	3,403	$26.02
Pueblo, CO*	261	$19.63
San Luis Obispo, CA*	55	$22.58
Santa Barbara, CA	294	$26.34
Skagit, WA*	331	$18.80
Snohomish, WA	2,393	$21.74
Thurston, WA*	29	$18.80
Ventura, CA	768	$23.38
Weld, CO*	101	$19.63
Whatcom, WA	683	$17.14
All Workers	**36,795**	**$22.00**

[9] Labor Income in IMPLAN's input-output modeling software is defined "*All forms of employment income, including Employee Compensation (wages and benefits) and Proprietor Income.*" Source: Olson, Doug and Scott Lindall. 2010. *IMPLAN Version 3.0 User's Guide*. MIG, Inc., 1725 Tower Drive west, Suite 140, Stillwater, MN 55082, www.implan.com.

[10] Value added in IMPLAN's input-output modeling software is "*[t]he difference between an industry's (or an establishment's) total sales (output) and the cost of its intermediate inputs ... (consumption of goods and services purchased from other industries or imported). Value added consists of compensation of employees, taxes on production and imports less subsidies (formerly indirect business taxes and nontax payments), and gross operating surplus.*" Source: Olson, Doug and Scott Lindall. 2010. *IMPLAN Version 3.0 User's Guide*. MIG, Inc., 1725 Tower Drive west, Suite 140, Stillwater, MN 55082, www.implan.com.

[11] In addition to the household spending patterns shown in the figure (derived from national surveys), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics conducts a survey to estimate the average annual expenditures and characteristics of all consumers:

Consumer Items	**2020**	**Percent**
Total Average Annual Expenditures	$61,334	100%
Food	$7,316	12%
Food at home	$4,942	8%
Food away from home	$2,375	4%
Alcoholic beverages	$478	1%
Housing	$21,409	35%
Apparel and services	$1,434	2%
Transportation	$9,826	16%
Healthcare	$5,177	8%
Entertainment	$2,912	5%
Personal care products, services	$646	1%
Reading	$114	0%
Education	$1,271	2%
Tobacco and smoking supplies	$315	1%
Miscellaneous	$907	1%
Cash contributions	$2,283	4%
Personal ins. and pensions	$7,246	12%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 2021. *Economic New Release: Consumer Expenditures—2020 (USDL-21-1617)*, Retrieved from: *Table A. Average income and expenditures of all consumer units, 2018-20* http://www.bls.gov/news.release/cesan.nr0.htm

[12] Reich, Michael, Ken Jacobs, Annette Bernhardt and Ian Perry. 2015. *Policy Brief: The Proposed Minimum Wage Law for Los Angeles: Economic Impacts and Policy Options, A Report to the Los Angeles City Council*. Center on Wage and Employment Dynamics and Institute for Research on Labor and Employment, University of California, Berkeley.

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[14] "*In 2020, 89.5 percent of U.S. households were food secure throughout the year. The remaining 10.5 percent of households were food insecure at least some time during the year, including 3.9 percent (5.1 million households) that had very low food security. Food insecurity was unchanged from 10.5 percent in 2019. Food insecurity increased from 10.7 percent in 2001 to nearly 12 percent in 2004, declined to 11 percent in 2005–07, then increased to 14.6 percent in 2008. Food insecurity peaked at 14.9 percent in 2011 and has declined since.*" Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements, U.S. Census Bureau. Accessed: https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-security-and-nutrition-assistance/

[15] This chart appears in the *Food Prices and Spending* section of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service's *Ag and Food Statistics: Charting the Essentials* data product. The data analysis draws upon t_, accessed on December 11, 2021 here: https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery/gallery/chart-detail/?chartId=99760 Thanks to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service Economist Carolyn Chelius for sharing the most recent data.

[16] Albertsons LLC grocery stores – which include store brands *Acme Markets, Albertsons, Amigos, Carrs, Jewel-Osco, Lucky, Market Street, Pavilions, Randalls, Safeway, Shaw's and Star Market,*

Super Saver, Tom Thumb, United Supermarkets, and *Vons* – are mapped because it is the next largest employer of grocery workers.

[17] These data cover most of Northwest Washington State: Whatcom, Skagit, Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, Thurston, Mason, King, Snohomish counties.

[18] Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Consumer Expenditure Surveys, September, 2021*. Table 3033. "Selected western metropolitan statistical areas: Average annual expenditures and characteristics, Food at Home 2019-20." CE Geographic Data obtained online: https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxgeography.htm

[19] Ver Ploeg, M. et al. 2009. *Access to Affordable and Nutritious Food: Measuring and Understanding Food Deserts and Their Consequences: Report to Congress*. United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (ERS), the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), June 2009. https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=42729

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[21] California Department of Food and Agriculture. 2012. *Improving Food Access in California: Report to the California Legislature*. https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/exec/public_affairs/pdf/ImprovingFoodAccessInCalifornia.pdf

[22] Hanson, K. 2010. *The Food Assistance National Input-Output Multiplier (FANIOM) Model and Stimulus Effects of SNAP* (ERR #103), U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Washington, DC. Available at: https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=44749
See also, Hecht, K; Sharp, M (2018). *Fact Sheets: How CalFresh Benefits California's Counties* (one report for each county). http://npi.ucanr.edu/calfresh/

[23] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Benefit Redemption Division. *2019 Annual Report*. Data obtained from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities' *SNAP Retailers Database*. Washington, DC. https://www.cbpp.org/snap-retailers-database

[24] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. 2020. *SNAP Participation Rates by State, All Eligible People*, Washington, DC. Available at: https://www.fns.usda.gov/usamap# In Colorado, 79 percent of eligible residents receive SNAP benefits. In the state of Washington, 99 percent. In California, just 70 percent. Nationally, 82 percent.

[25] Call, J. and T. Shimada. 2016. *Lost Dollars, Empty Plates: The Impact of CalFresh (SNAP) on State and Local Economies*. California Food Policy Advocates / Nourish California, Los Angeles, CA. Updated periodically, and available at: https://nourishca.org/

[26] Cooperatives are defined as organizations "*created by people who have a specific need and who are willing to work together to operate and organize a company that will meet that need*." Source: National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International (NCBA CLUSA) "What is a Co-Op: What is a Cooperative," Washington, DC. Accessed: https://ncbaclusa.coop/resources/what-is-a-co-op/

[27] Greenberg, Brian; Watts, Linda S. (2009). *Social History of the United States, Volume 1*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO. p. 157. Accessed via Google Books: https://www.google.com/books/edition/Social_History_of_the_United_States_10_v/xypn4djxVD4C?hl=en&gbpv=1&bsq=food+cooperatives+history&pg=RA7-PA157&printsec=frontcover

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COVID-19 crisis, HRK provides jobs for restaurant workers and a subsidy for responsible restaurant owners who commit to paying a living wage and following equitable employment practices." Information available at: https://highroadkitchens.com/

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- https://d18rn0p25nwr6d.cloudfront.net/CIK-0000056873/95e0e5a0-7cbd-484b-a584-ff427af86a48.html
- https://d18rn0p25nwr6d.cloudfront.net/CIK-0000056873/95e0e5a0-7cbd-484b-a584-ff427af86a48.html
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