

Walmart, Dollar General pull back on self-checkout, but here's why the tech isn't going anywhere

Article

Retailers like Dollar General, [Walmart](#), and Target are rethinking the self-checkout experience, scaling back on kiosks or removing self-checkout from their locations altogether. But considering 55% of US adults prefer to get through their in-store grocery shopping as fast as possible (according to a November 2023 survey from Kearney) it's unlikely self-checkout will be leaving stores anytime soon.

Here are five stats on self-checkout, including how and why consumers like to use it, the reason some retailers are pulling back, and what the future holds for the technology.

1. Consumers prefer self-checkout over traditional checkout

The stat: 44% of US grocery shoppers prefer to pay via self-checkout, according to an April 2023 survey from Progressive Grocer and RIS News. Some 39% prefer a traditional checkout experience, while only 10% prefer a just walk out cashierless experience.

What it means: Self-checkout is table stakes for retailers who want to provide shoppers with a seamless, customizable experience. But stores shouldn't go completely cashierless—preserving the human element of checkout is important, too.

2. Shoppers appreciate self-checkout for its speed, though it may not always be the fastest option

The stat: Most consumers across all demographics prefer self-checkout is because it's faster, according to a November 2023 survey from NCR Voyix.

However, nearly a third of consumers say they prefer traditional checkout because they have many items when checking out and it's easier and less time consuming than scanning each item themselves.

What it means: Each retailer should approach self-checkout differently. Convenience stores, where shoppers tend to have smaller basket sizes, may support a larger self-checkout presence, while big-box retailers and supermarkets should provide plenty of traditional checkout lanes.

3. Younger consumers aren't the only ones interested in self-checkout

The stat: 61% of US baby boomers are happy to do self-checkout at the grocery store, according to an October 2023 survey from Razorfish. But over half (51%) say they prefer to

interact with a human in real life when buying a product and 39% say they always checkout at grocery stores with a human.

What it means: Retailers with an older customer base shouldn't be afraid to experiment with implementing self-checkout. But there's still a large portion of baby boomers who rely on traditional checkout, so be cautious about over-indexing on self-checkout kiosks.

4. Shoppers and retailers think self-checkout makes it easier to steal

The stat: Over two-thirds (69%) of US consumers think self-checkout systems make it easier to steal items, per an October 2023 survey by LendingTree.

- 15% of self-checkout users have purposely stolen an item when using the technology, though that number rises to 21% among [millennials](#) and 31% of [Gen Zers](#).
- The average self-reported value of stolen goods is \$60.

What it means: Some retailers, like Dollar General, have cited theft as a reason they are pulling back on self-checkout.

- While it's likely more than 15% of self-checkout users have stolen something and just not reported it, there's been mixed messages from retailers and news outlets on how big of a problem retail theft really is and what role self-checkout plays in it.
- Instead of getting rid of self-checkout altogether, retailers may want to invest in making it more theft-proof.

5. Retailers will continue to invest in self-checkout

The stat: 30% of retailers in the US and Canada plan to make major upgrades to their self-checkout systems within the next two years, according to a February 2024 report from RIS News in partnership with IHL Group. This is in addition to the 24% who say their checkout systems are up-to-date and currently in use.

What it means: Despite some retailers paring down on self-checkout in their stores, others are moving forward with their investments in the tech. Retailers building out self-checkout systems should focus on making the [customer experience](#) as seamless and quick as possible, while also ensuring plenty of staff are around to help with technical issues.

This was originally featured in the Retail Daily newsletter. For more retail insights, statistics, and trends, [subscribe here](#).