

cordance with Engle's law, the lower the income the larger the proportion that goes for food. With low-income families, this proportion may go to one-third, one-half, or even higher. This suggests the importance of careful spending to conserve the food dollar. In times when great emphasis is placed on increased wages, it may be less popular but equally significant to work at getting more for the money at hand.

Two other retail food price surveys are conducted within New York City (see appendix C), but neither reports on a neighborhood basis. And low-income families, in particular, shop in their own neighborhoods. The guideline approach provides valuable information to these neighborhood shoppers and can assist them in stretching their food dollars. Conducted with the assistance of some 35 Urban Corps workers, the survey covered all 58 planning districts of New York City. Usually, two or three districts were surveyed each day with 20 to 30 stores reported for each. During July well over 1,400 stores were checked; all but five of the planning districts were covered that month. Nearly as many more stores were surveyed in August, many for the second time. The results were tabulated, analyzed, and reported 5 days a week. The daily 5-minute radio program by Dr. Costello on WNYC provides the medium for early dissemination of this neighborhood information.

Few large stores in poor areas

Of 1,418 stores surveyed during the first 4 weeks in July (54 districts) the ratio of large stores to smaller ones was 1 to 4. In the poorer areas the proportion of large stores was much smaller—in some areas 1 to 7 or 8. This suggests that those living in poor neighborhoods enjoy neither the choice of foods nor the lower prices found in larger stores.

Prices were the sole basis of the survey. The reports reflected the prices shoppers found in the stores in which they shopped. They did not show the quality or condition of the foods nor the condition of the store. Nor were store services studied. Presumably, some smaller stores justify their higher prices on the basis of extra services. The fact that the small stores are there indicates a service to the neighborhood even though prices may be high.

Higher prices in smaller stores

Cursory observation suggests that prices are higher in small stores, regardless of area, even to the eyes of the uninformed. Survey results bear this out although there are always exceptions. By and large, the range of prices is greater among small stores but generally the low of the range is higher in small stores, as is the high of the range. Results are shown in detail in appendix D for one low-income area (Bushwick), surveyed on July 22. On the 26 grocery items surveyed, the prices averaged 7.1 percent higher in the 18 smaller stores than in the seven large ones.

In another low-income area (Central Harlem), checked on August 8, the food basket of 26 food staples in eight small stores averaged 10.1 percent more than the same basket in six large stores. The average cost of the basket in 11 medium-sized stores was slightly higher than in the eight small stores (1.1 percent) in this area.

Higher prices in poor areas

Overall food prices appear to be higher in poor areas bearing out the belief that the poor indeed do pay more. A comparison of the cost of a 20-item food basket in five areas on July 18 and 19 is reported in detail in appendix E. In brief, the prices were higher for the identical food basket in Astoria and Hunts Point (low-income areas) than in Sheepshead Bay, Bensonhurst or Jackson Heights. In Astoria (a poor area) the highest price of \$9.47 was reported, compared to Jackson Heights (a middle-income area) where the same basket cost \$8.97. This represents a 5½-percent differential.

This same relationship was reported several times over but for some areas the results were not that clear cut. It should be pointed out, too, that the list of items was limited, though comparable.

As reported earlier, there are fewer large stores in the poor areas and prices tend to be lower in large stores. Therefore, on a communitywide basis it follows that at least one reason why the poor pay more is that they buy their food in small stores.

No pattern for chainstore prices by area

It is generally believed that chains charge higher prices for identical commodities in their stores in poor areas. If this is true, it did not show up in this