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U.S. Convenience Store Industry Count Dominated by Small Operators

Additionally, while the store count overall dipped slightly, the number of stores selling fuel increased.

By CSNews.com

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The U.S. convenience store industry count now stands at 151,975 stores — a slight decrease of 280 stores, or 0.2%, compared to last year, according to the 2026 NACS/NIQ TDLinx Convenience Industry Store Count.

While the overall store count dipped slightly, the number of convenience stores selling fuel increased by 768 stores,

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or 0.6%, to 122,620, the highest number in eight years. Convenience stores sell an estimated 80% of the fuel purchased by consumers in the United States. Overall, 80.7% of c-stores sell fuel, NACS reported.

With the U.S. population at an estimated 343 million according to the U.S. Census Bureau, there is one convenience store per every 2,257 people in the United States.

The industry continues to be dominated by smaller operators. Overall, 95,672 stores are owned by a company that has 10 or fewer stores, or 63% of the total store count. Companies operating 500-plus stores own 33,810 stores, or 22.2% of the overall total.

Texas continues to have the most convenience stores (16,504 stores), or more than one in 10 stores in the U.S. Alaska has the fewest stores (185), the same as last year.

The top 10 states by store count are:

1. Texas (16,504 stores)
2. California (12,143)
3. Florida (9,730)
4. New York (7,561)
5. Georgia (7,092)
6. Ohio (5,833)
7. North Carolina (5,799)
8. Michigan (4,957)
9. Pennsylvania (4,784)
10. Illinois (4,708)

Store count increases were recorded in 22 states. Texas takes the lead, increasing by 88 stores, followed by Georgia (up 39 stores) and Ohio (up 38 stores). New York's count shrunk the most (down 143 stores), followed by Massachusetts (down 77 stores) and New Jersey (down 61 stores).

The 2026 NACS/NIQ TDLinx Convenience Industry Store Count is based on stores in operation as of Dec. 31, 2025.

NielsenIQ is a leading consumer intelligence company, delivering the most complete understanding of consumer buying behavior and revealing new pathways to growth. NIQ combined with GfK in 2023. Its global reach spans more than 90 countries covering approximately 85% of the world's population and more than \$ 7.2 trillion in global consumer spend.

Headquartered in Alexandria, NACS has 1,000 retail member companies that cumulatively represent more than 400,000 stores in 50-plus countries, including 45,000 stores in the United States. The U.S. convenience store industry, with nearly 152,000 stores nationwide selling fuel, food and merchandise, conducts 160 million transactions daily and had sales of \$837 billion in 2024. ■



Generational Shifts in Wellness Redefine Consumer Behavior

Circana research says convenience, indulgence still drive shoppers, despite a growing number of health-minded customers.

By CSPDailyNews.com

The way consumers view wellness is shifting, reshaping purchasing decisions across all age groups, and challenging brands and retailers, like c-stores, to adapt their strategies.

These are findings from Chicago-based market research firm Circana's new research on how generational shifts are redefining the wellness economy.

The definition of a healthy lifestyle varies dramatically by life stage, Circana said. Younger consumers prioritize functional, convenient options, while older households focus on preventative care.

This creates a divergence in shopping behaviors—Generation Z and millennials explore varied channels, like e-commerce, while baby boomers and Gen Xers have more established patterns, Circana found. Baby boomers still drive the largest share of food and beverage dollars.

“To succeed in today's market, brands must recognize that healthy eating is no longer a one-size-fits-all concept,” said Sally Lyons Wyatt, global executive vice president and chief advisor at Circana. “From the functional needs of younger consumers to the preventive focus of mature households, understanding these generational shifts is critical for manufacturers and retailers aiming to meet evolving wellness priorities.”

How Social Media Affects Purchasing Decisions

Social media is a primary engine for wellness discovery,

especially for younger demographics, Circana said.

Its study found 48% of Americans have purchased a product they saw in creator-generated content. This trend is largely driven by Gen Z and millennials and has fueled the rise of functional beverages and personalized hydration solutions.

Convenience, Indulgence Remain Key Drivers for Foodservice Decisions

The health-minded consumer segment is expanding, now accounting for 40% of all food and beverage sales, Circana said. But the influence of wellness varies by occasion.

Convenience and indulgence remain key drivers for foodservice decisions, Circana said, even as they also want nutritious foods to support their health.

Consumers want products to offer multiple benefits—like energy, immunity support and stress relief in a single item, according to the report.

A recent report from CSP's sister research firm Technomic said c-stores for years were the go-to spot for indulgent foodservice items, like doughnuts and frozen beverages. But c-stores have recognized the growing demand for better-for-you products, with 74% now agreeing that better-for-you foodservice offerings boost their ability to compete with other c-stores and quick-service restaurants, Technomic said. ■



PepsiCo Lowers Snack Prices by Up to 15%

C-store supplier is rolling out new suggested retail prices this week.

By CSPDailyNews.com

PepsiCo is lowering snack prices by up to 15% for brands including Lay's, Doritos, Cheetos, Tostitos and more. This pricing change is part of PepsiCo's broader strategy to increase accessibility for consumers.

The new suggested retail prices begin rolling out in the United States this week. "And because retailers ultimately set their retail prices, shoppers may see even greater savings depending on the store," the company said.

"We've spent the past year listening closely to consumers, and they've told us they're feeling the strain," said Rachel Ferdinando, CEO of PepsiCo Foods U.S. "Lowering the suggested retail price reflects our commitment to help reduce the pressure where we can. Because people shouldn't have to choose between great taste and staying within their budget."

The snacks themselves remain the same, the company said, but Pepsi is continuing to refine its portfolio, from recipe enhancements, like the removal of artificial flavors and colors from Lay's and Tostitos, to packaging updates aligned with evolving consumer preferences.

Snack price and size influenced both consumer behavior and manufacturer strategies in 2025, Jacob Jordan, category insights manager for Temple, Texas-based McLane, said in August.

"We're seeing growth in standard-sized bags and multipack

meat sticks, with the latter performing well across all channels due to their portability and perceived value," Jordan said. "Larger bags are showing positive momentum when supported by strong promotional activity, while smaller bag sizes are gaining traction as consumers look to trade down and manage costs. Manufacturers are adapting by shifting their focus toward these smaller, more affordable pack formats to align with shopper preferences."

Convenience stores continue to expand private label lines with lower prices.

Kwik Trip rolled out two candy bars, Kwikz! and WannaBe!, under its Urge! Branded snack line in January. The candy bars were initially priced at 99 cents in January.

Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores introduced six new products to its private-label line in December, including Chocolate Peanut Butter Caramel Popcorn, Dark Chocolate Salted Caramels and more. Love's offered 10% off a customer's first purchase of these treats through its Love's Connect App in December.

PepsiCo's pricing adjustments also coincide with projections that Gen Z will be a leading force in consumer spending. This generation is expected to contribute \$9 trillion to global spending by 2034 and will have the highest per capita spending power by 2030, Anna Kjerrumgaard of RaceTrac Inc., said at NACS. ■