

What are most popular grocery chains in Connecticut?

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As Big Y World Class Market pounces on vacant Amazon Fresh storefronts in Westport and Brookfield, new data shows the Massachusetts chain is outclassing many competitors across Connecticut on one major criterion — repeat visits by regulars.

Big Y led Connecticut in December for the average frequency at which individual shoppers returned to stores during the month, according to Placer.ai data on 265 stores statewide reviewed by Hearst Connecticut Media. In 15 of 26 cities and towns where Big Y faces competition from other chains tracked by Placer.ai, Big Y led those markets for the frequency of repeat visitors.

Big Y is now capitalizing in Connecticut with a new store planned for Middletown as well as the Westport and Brookfield locations in the works. It is one of several chains that have been expanding in Connecticut by purchasing stores or opening new ones, to include ShopRite, Whole Foods Market, Caraluzzi's, Food Bazaar and Aldi.

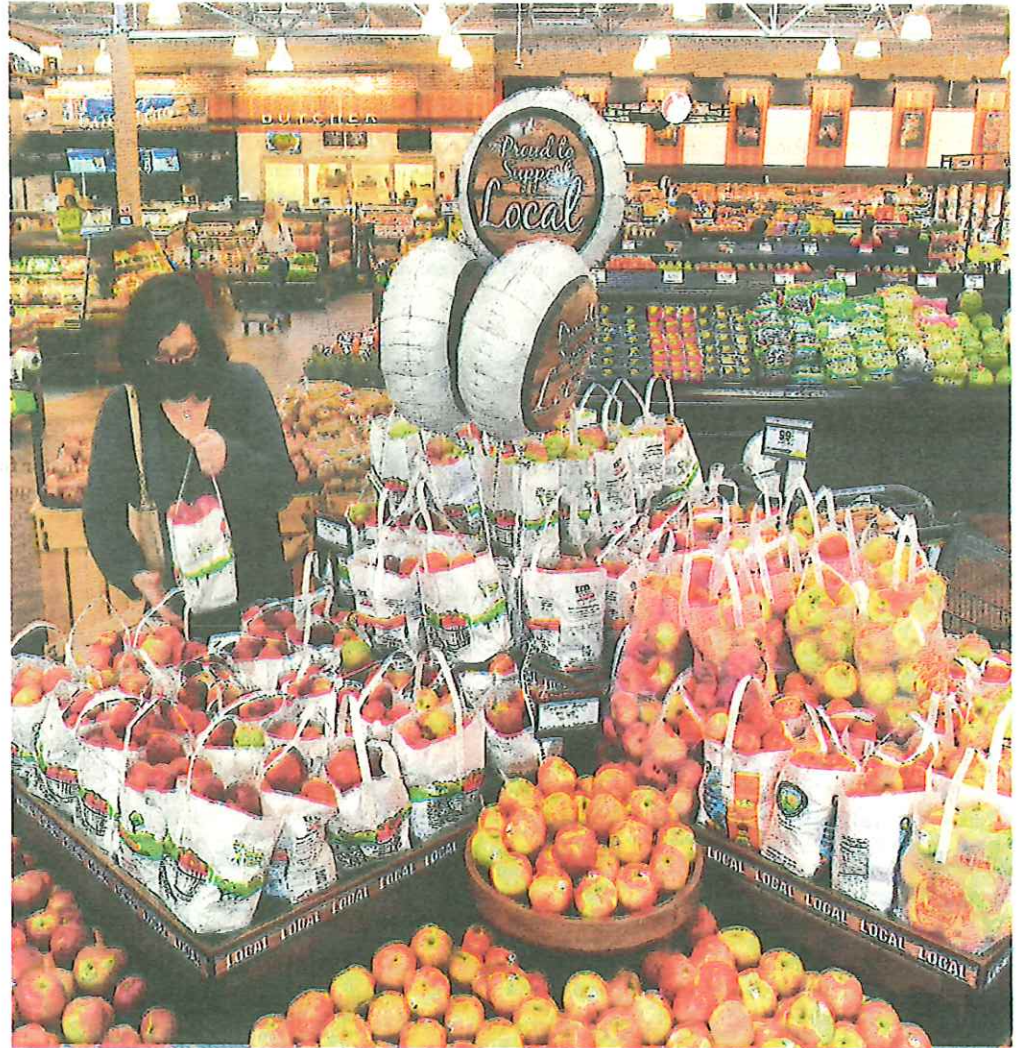
While having closed stores in Bridgeport and Greenwich of late, Stop & Shop remains the dominant chain in Connecticut with more than 85 locations. For December, Placer.ai tracked some 3.25 million people visiting Stop & Shop locations in Connecticut, some doing so from neighboring towns in New York, Massachusetts and Rhode Island where they live. In the aggregate across all its Connecticut stores, Stop & Shop drew more than

double the number the shoppers at the next two busiest chains in Connecticut in Big Y and ShopRite, which drew about 1.3 million people each.

While Stew Leonard's stores in Norwalk and Danbury led Connecticut for shoppers in December, ShopRite's Connecticut Avenue store in Norwalk was tops statewide for total visits, due to customers making more frequent trips there than those at the two Stew Leonard's. Placer.ai keeps data on Stew Leonard's Newington store behind a paywall, but a Stew Leonard's spokesperson told CT Insider that foot traffic at the Newington store is in line with the Danbury store.

Shoppers can be fickle and that applies as well to studies that attempt to gauge their loyalty. On the most recent American Customer Satisfaction Index for the grocery industry based on surveys in 2022, Trader Joe's garnered the top score with Whole Foods Market getting the biggest gain among chains with a footprint in the Northeast. On a quarterly grocery "fidelity" index published by the location-based ad company InMarket that gauges supermarkets' success in drawing customers to stores, the Wakefern cooperative that includes ShopRite and Price Rite Marketplace got the highest score among Northeast chains, ranking fourth overall nationally.

Placer.ai provides monthly snapshots of foot traffic at larger retail venues nationally by aggregating the locations of mobile phones, for people who bring them inside without disabling location tracking. Placer.ai data is not available free for all



Arnold Gold/Hearst Connecticut Media

A Big Y in Clinton. As the Massachusetts-based chain takes over Amazon Fresh storefronts in Westport and Brookfield, new data from Placer.ai shows Big Y as having the largest frequency of return shoppers on average of any chain statewide, including three of the top four individual stores.

venues, it provides a census of many retail centers frequented by shoppers.

Big Y stores has three of the top four stores in Connecticut for frequency of visits by the same individuals, in Monroe, Ellington and Stafford which led the state on that front. Of the 31 Connecticut supermarkets to average at least two visits by individual shoppers in December, Caraluzzi's

Georgetown Market in Wilton was the only store to crack that group besides Big Y, ShopRite and Stop & Shop.

While Big Y's Stafford store likely ranks high due to a relatively remote location, the Monroe and Ellington stores are in relative close proximity to competing options. And Big Y leads for shopper repeat visits in several highly competitive areas

to include Torrington, where Big Y is tops among a half-dozen stores tracked by Placer.ai, and in Clinton, Groton, Killingly, Newtown, Rocky Hill and Stratford where it bests two or three competitors in each locale.

But the company does not lead every town for frequency of visits, with ShopRite and Stop & Shop topping it in Shelton and Manchester, and both

Stop & Shop stores in Milford beating out Big Y for visit frequency.

The Westport foray marks the first in lower Fairfield County for Big Y, where competitors along the Post Road East will include Stop & Shop, Trader Joe's, The Fresh Market and Balducci's.

Includes prior reporting by Luther Turmelle and Jordan Nathaniel Fenster.