

Figures covering the operations of retail chains are available for all years since 1930. In that year chain store companies transacted 17.7 p.c. of the total retail trade of the country. The proportion of the total business transacted by chains has varied only slightly since that date; in 1938 the percentage was 17.2.

The variety store of to-day is a typical chain store development, approximately 90 p.c. of all variety store sales being made by chains. Chains also play an important part in the distribution of groceries, meats, shoes, clothing, and drugs.

A significant development in chain store operation in the food retailing field during recent years is the shift towards larger stores, the proportion of total food chain business transacted by stores with annual sales of \$100,000 or more almost doubling since 1934. In that year there were 152 chain units with annual sales of \$100,000 or more and these transacted 21.7 p.c. of the annual food chain business. In 1935 there were 164 stores in this category and these transacted 23.9 p.c. of the total chain business; in 1936 there were 180 large stores with 26.3 p.c. of the sales; in 1937 there were 225 stores with 32.7 p.c. of the total business, while 1938 witnessed a continuation of the same trend. In the last named year there were 263 stores each with annual sales of \$100,000 or more; these accounted for 39.1 p.c. of the total food chain business. This transition has naturally been accompanied by a reduction in the proportion of the total business transacted by the smaller stores. Stores with annual sales of between \$20,000 and \$100,000 transacted 71.3 p.c. of the total food chain business in 1934; in 1938 the proportion for the same range had declined to 56.3 p.c. Nevertheless, a considerable number of relatively small chain units are still in operation. There were 445 chain units, with annual sales of less than \$20,000, in operation in 1938. However, included in this were a considerable number of stores that were opened in the year under review and that had less than a twelve-month period on which to report.

30.—Sales of Retail Chains for Selected Kinds of Business Compared with Total Sales, 1930, 1933, 1937, and 1938.

Kind of Business.	1930.	1933.	1937.	1938.
All Stores—				
Chains..... No.	518	461	447	457
Stores ¹ "	8,504	8,230	7,815	7,692
Chain Sales..... \$	487,336,000	328,902,600	414,133,300	414,448,300
Total Sales (all stores)..... \$	2,755,569,900	1,785,768,000	2,453,715,000	2,404,756,000
P.C. of Chain Sales to Total.....	17.7	18.4	16.9	17.2
Grocery and Combination Stores—				
Chains..... No.	66	75	75	77
Stores ¹ "	2,127	2,221	2,125	2,054
Chain sales..... \$	119,498,600	98,862,100	116,389,700	116,849,800
Total sales (all stores)..... \$	405,403,400	297,307,000	347,752,000	346,397,000
P.C. of chain sales to total.....	29.5	33.3	33.5	33.7
Variety Stores—				
Chains..... No.	15	14	14	16
Stores ¹ "	327	356	437	468
Chain sales..... \$	39,383,600	33,348,600	46,323,400	47,256,700
Total sales (all stores)..... \$	44,212,200	37,256,000	51,585,000	52,556,000
P.C. of chain sales to total.....	89.1	89.5	89.8	89.9

¹ Maximum in operation during the year.