

How Expensive Are Fruits and Vegetables?

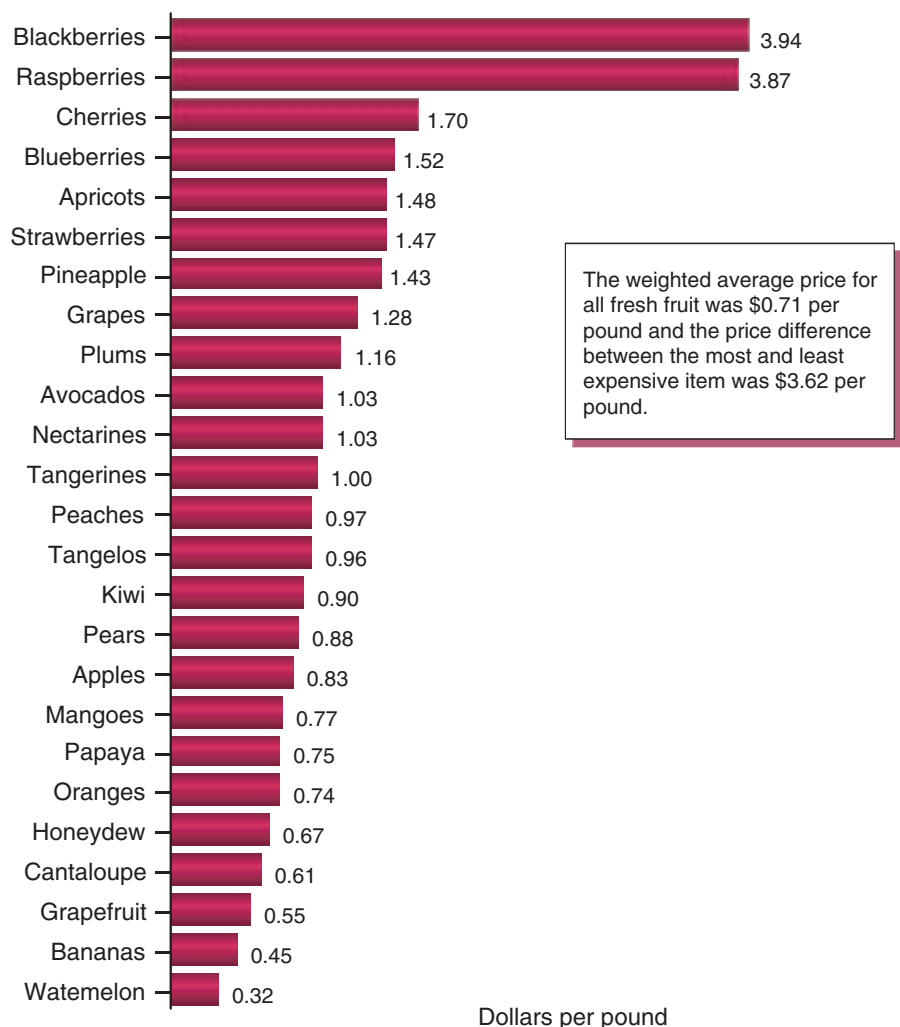
Prices for fruits and vegetables—in fresh and processed forms—vary widely. Fruit prices ranged from 32 cents per pound for fresh watermelon to \$4.00 per pound for prunes. Among vegetables, prices ranged from 31 cents per pound for fresh potatoes to \$4.57 per pound for frozen asparagus spears.

Purchase Price Versus Serving Price - Fruit

Among the 25 different types of **fresh** fruit, prices ranged from 32 cents per pound for watermelon to \$3.94 per pound for blackberries, with a weighted-average price of 71 cents per pound and a median price of 97 cents (fig. 1a). Only grapefruit, bananas, and the three types of melons cost less than the weighted-average price. However, these five fruits accounted for 56 percent of fresh fruit pounds purchased in 1999.

Figure 1a

How much does fresh fruit cost to buy?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan, 1999.

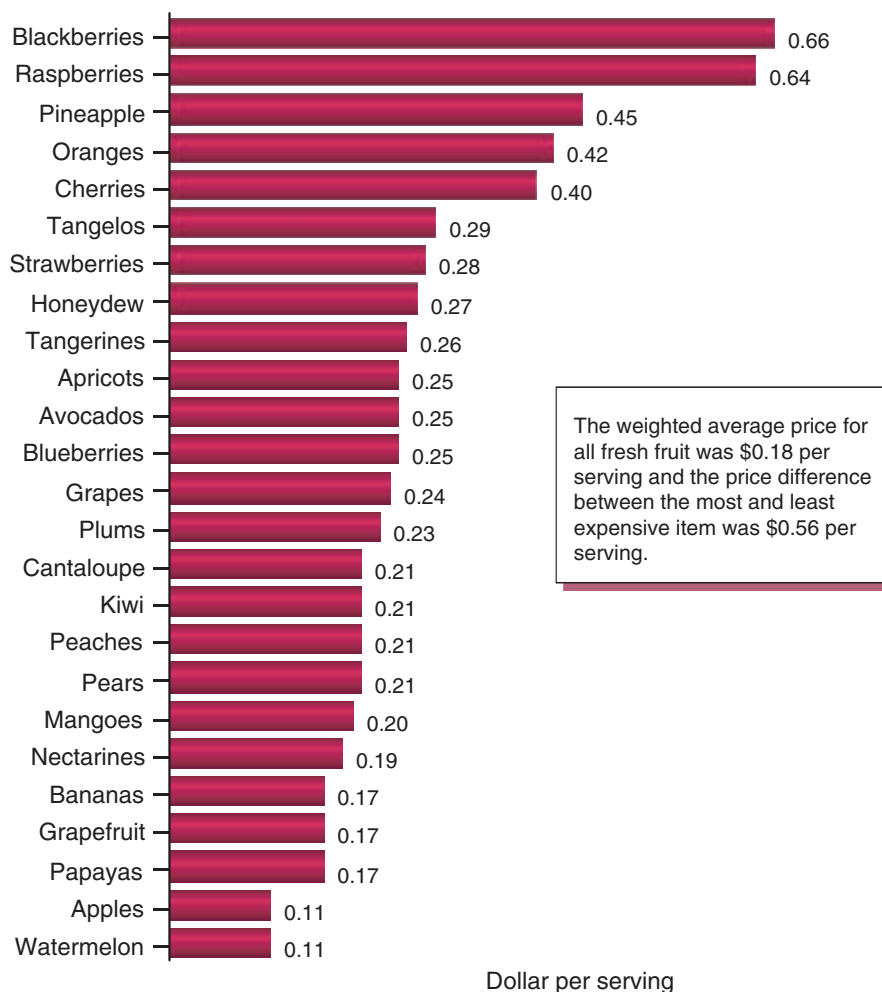
After adjusting for waste and serving size (because a pound provides anywhere from 2 to 14 servings), the price per serving for fresh fruits drops to a range of 11 cents a serving for apples and watermelon to 66 cents a serving for blackberries (fig. 1b). Almost two-thirds of the fresh fruits, 16 out of 25, cost 25 cents or less per serving, and only 2 of the 25 cost more than 50 cents per serving. The weighted-average price per serving for all fresh fruits was 18 cents per serving. Due to their very low serving yield per pound, oranges and honeydew were among the top 10 most expensive fruits per serving, despite being among the 10 least expensive fresh fruits at retail.

The sample included 16 different types and forms of **canned** fruit, including two types of canned cherries. Prices for canned fruit ranged from 66 cents for a pound of unsweetened applesauce to \$2.71 for a pound of canned blackberries, with a weighted-average price of 90 cents per pound (fig. 2a). As with fresh fruit, only three canned fruits cost less than the weighted-average price, but they accounted for over 70 percent of total canned purchases. Three-fourths of the canned fruits (12 out of 16) cost less than

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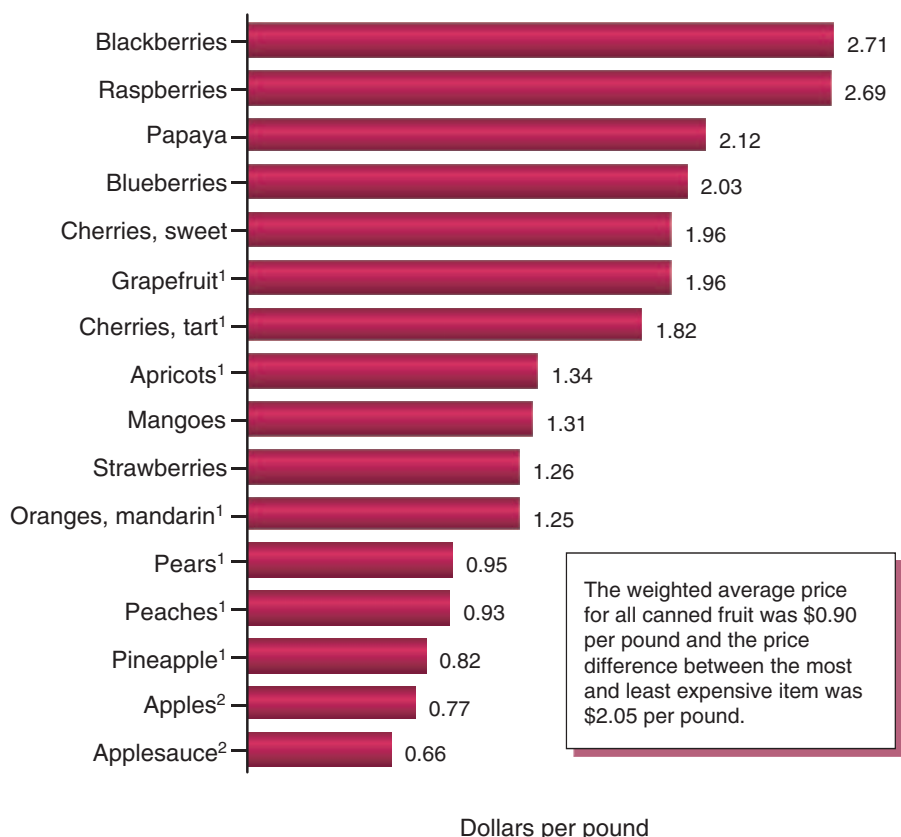
Figure 1b

How much does fresh fruit cost to eat?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan, 1999. Converted to servings using factors obtained from *The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, revised November 2001.

Figure 2a

How much does canned fruit cost to buy?

¹Packed in juice or water. ²Unsweetened/unflavored.

Source: ACNielsen Homescan, 1999.

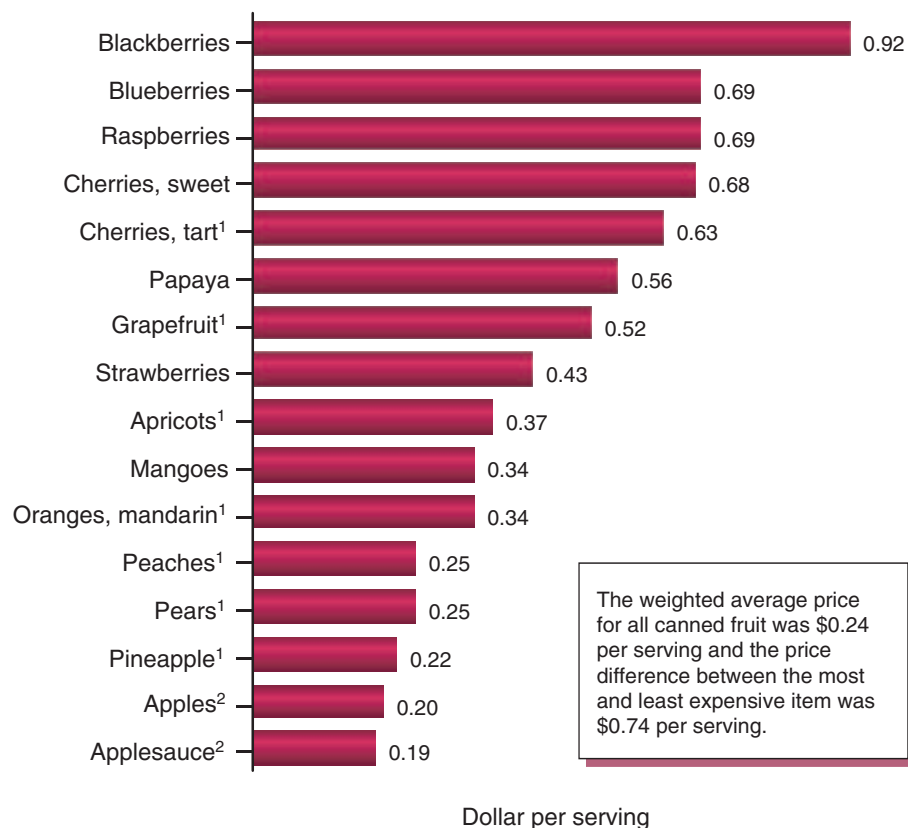
\$2.00 per pound. Canned fruits ranged in price from 19 cents per serving for unsweetened applesauce to 92 cents for canned blackberries (fig. 2b). Even though only 5 of the 16 canned fruits were priced at 25 cents or less per serving, the weighted-average price for all canned fruit was 24 cents per serving. This was due to the high volume of less expensive canned fruit (canned apples/applesauce, pineapples, peaches, and pears).

Our nine different types of **frozen** fruits ranged in price from \$1.24 for a pound of frozen papaya to \$3.39 for a pound of frozen raspberries, with a weighted-average price of \$2.04 per pound (fig. 3a). Four of the nine types of frozen fruit were below the weighted-average price and five were above. The four cheapest frozen fruits accounted for nearly three quarters of all frozen fruit purchased. Frozen fruit are the most expensive form of fruits by serving, with a weighted-average price of 51 cents per serving (fig. 3b). Interestingly, frozen raspberries, the most expensive frozen fruit to buy, dropped to fifth cheapest to eat, at 54 cents per serving.

Counting shelf-stable, refrigerated, and frozen versions for each of the seven fruit **juices** separately, prices for the 15 items ranged from 36 cents per pint for unsweetened, frozen apple juice to 74 cents per pint for shelf-stable cranberry juice, with a weighted-average price of 53 cents per pint (fig 4a). Price per serving varied little among the different fruit juices (fig. 4b), with

Figure 2b

How much does canned fruit cost to eat?

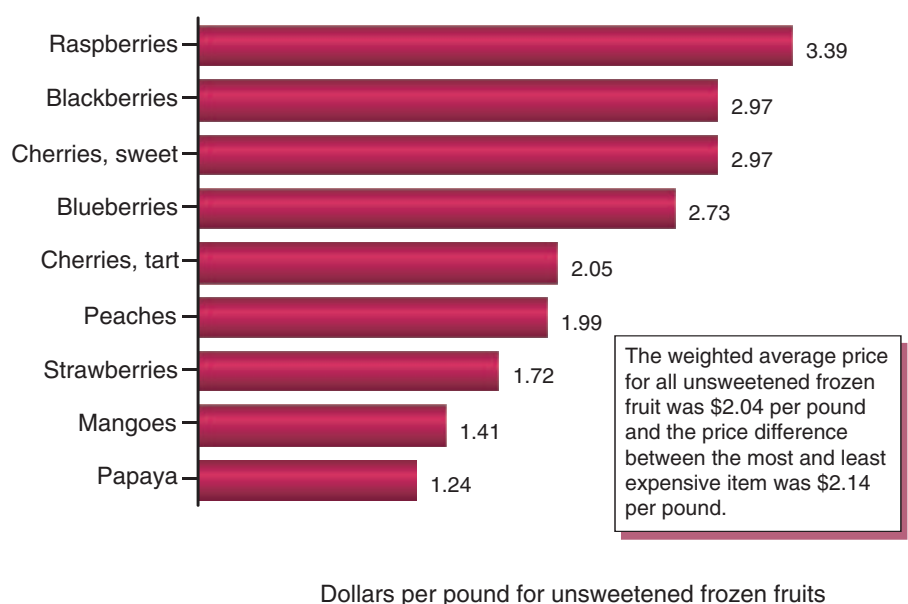


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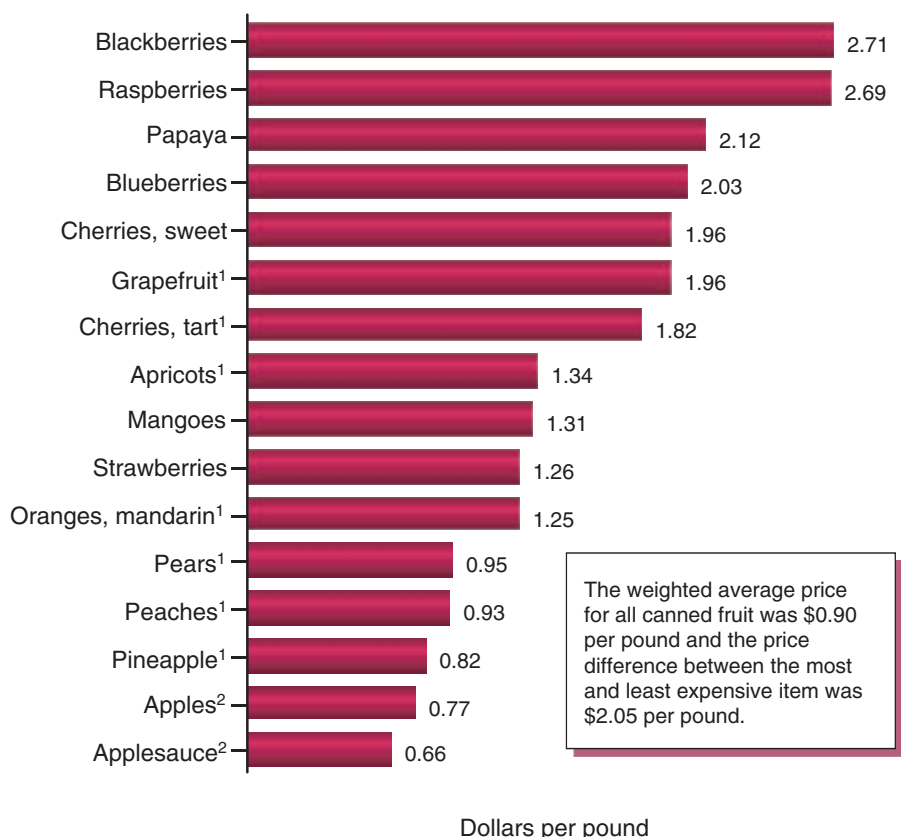
Figure 3a

How much does frozen fruit cost to buy?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan data, 1999.

Figure 2a

How much does canned fruit cost to buy?

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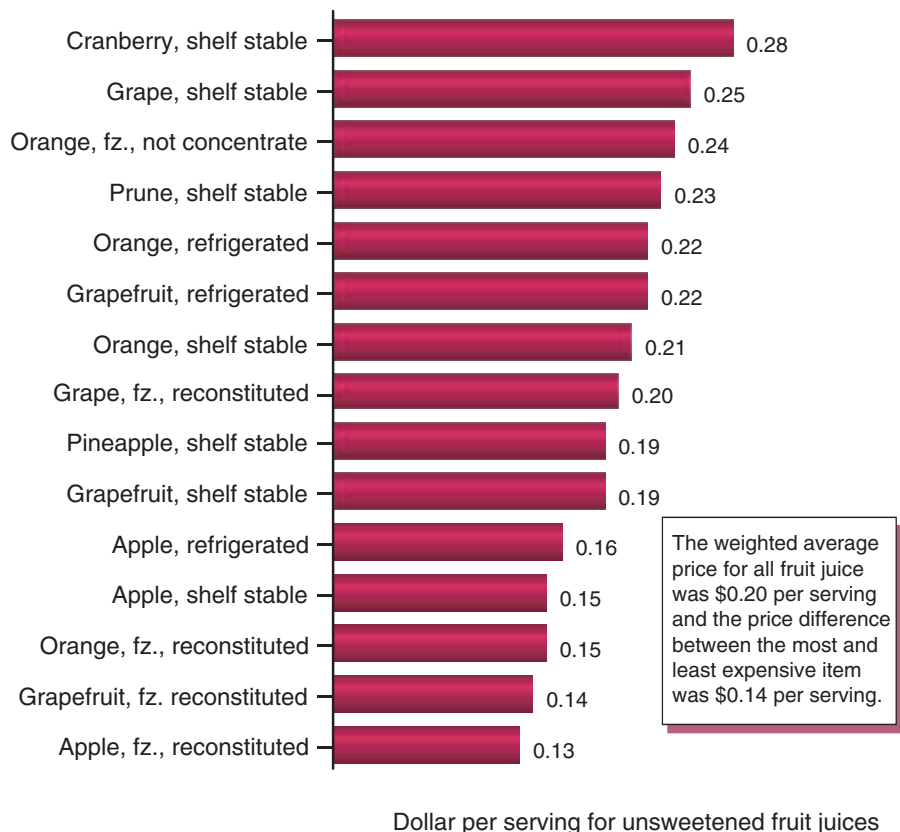
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Figure 4b

How much does juice cost to drink?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan, 1999. Converted to servings using factors obtained from *The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, revised November 2001.

frozen apple juice (13 cents a serving) the cheapest and cranberry juice (28 cents) the most expensive. The weighted-average price for all unsweetened fruit juice was 20 cents per serving.

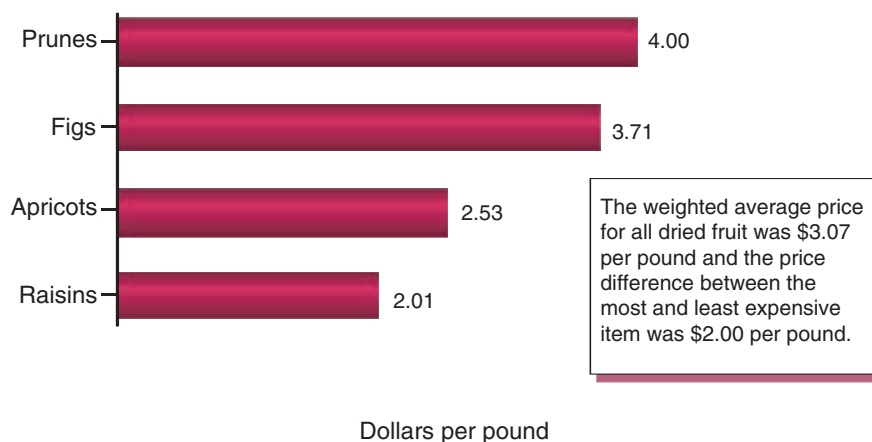
Retail prices for the four types of **dried** fruit included in our sample ranged from \$2.01 per pound for raisins to \$4.00 per pound for prunes, with a weighted-average price of \$3.07 (fig. 5a). However, retail prices for dried fruit are deceiving. Because the serving size for dried fruit is much smaller than the serving size for other fruits ($\frac{1}{4}$ cup versus $\frac{1}{2}$ cup for other fruit and $\frac{3}{4}$ cup for juice), the cost per serving becomes reasonable, ranging from 16 cents per serving for raisins to 38 cents for prunes (fig. 5b). This is cheaper than the price per serving for most canned and all frozen fruits.

In summary, although retail prices for fruits might appear high on a per-pound basis, few people may realize that a pound provides 3-5 servings for most fruits. Therefore, the price per serving is considerably lower. In 1999, it was possible to eat a serving of any of the 69 forms of fruits included in our analysis for less than a dollar. In fact, 37 of the fruit items cost 25 cents or less per serving, 54 items cost under 50 cents, and only 2 of the 69 fruit items cost more than 75 cents per serving.

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Figure 5a

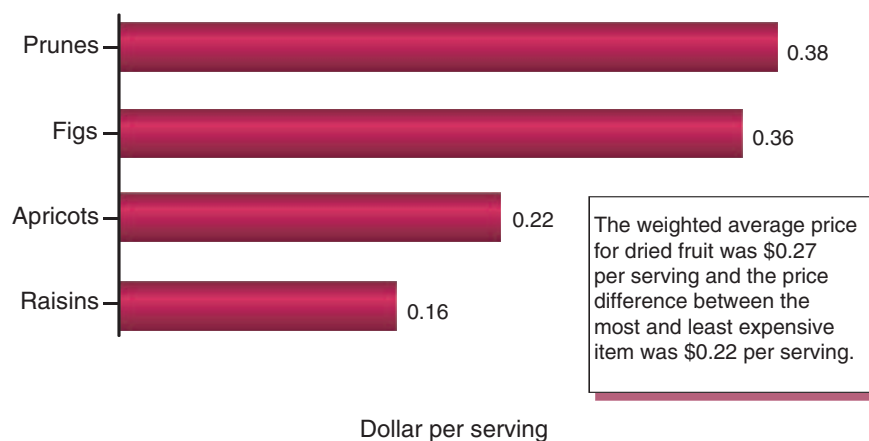
How much does dried fruit cost to buy?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan data, 1999.

Figure 5b

How much does dried fruit cost to eat?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan, 1999. Converted to servings using factors obtained from *The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, revised November 2001.

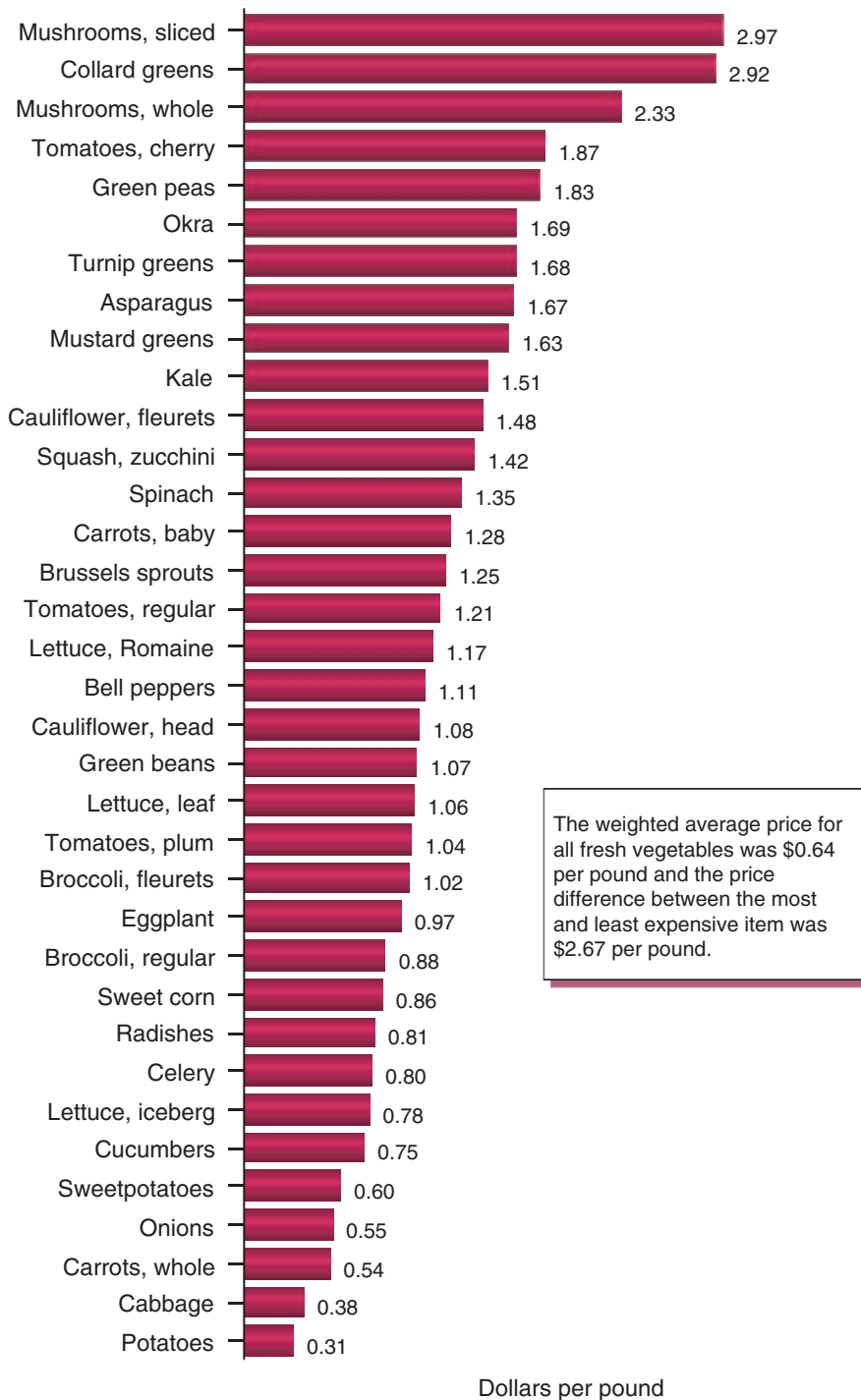
Purchase Price Versus Serving Price - Vegetables

Among the 35 **fresh** vegetable items included in the analysis, retail prices ranged from 31 cents per pound for potatoes to \$2.97 per pound for fresh, sliced mushrooms (fig. 6a). The weighted-average price for all fresh vegetables was 64 cents per pound. Only 5 of the 35 fresh vegetables were priced below the weighted-average price, 12 were priced below \$1.00 per pound, and all but 3 cost less than \$2.00 per pound. The five cheapest vegetables—potatoes, cabbage, whole carrots, onions, and sweet potatoes—accounted for 62 percent of all fresh vegetable purchases by weight.

Per serving, prices ranged from 4 cents for cabbage to 91 cents for shelled green peas, with a weighted-average price of 12 cents per serving (fig. 6b). More than two-thirds of the 35 fresh vegetables cost 25 cents or less per

Figure 6a

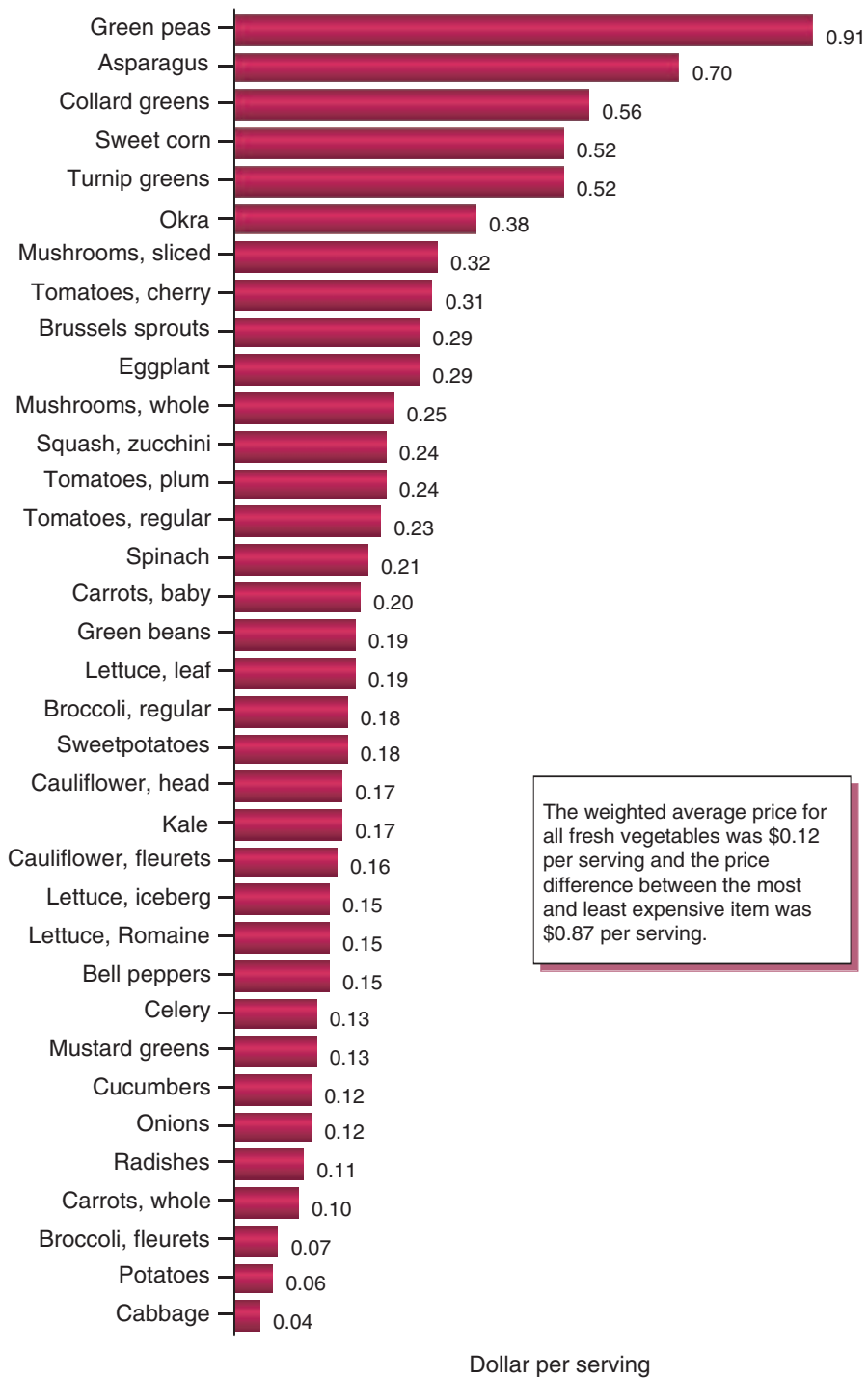
How much do fresh vegetables cost to buy?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan data, 1999.

Figure 6b

How much do fresh vegetables cost to eat?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan data, 1999. Converted to servings using factors obtained from *The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, revised November 2001.

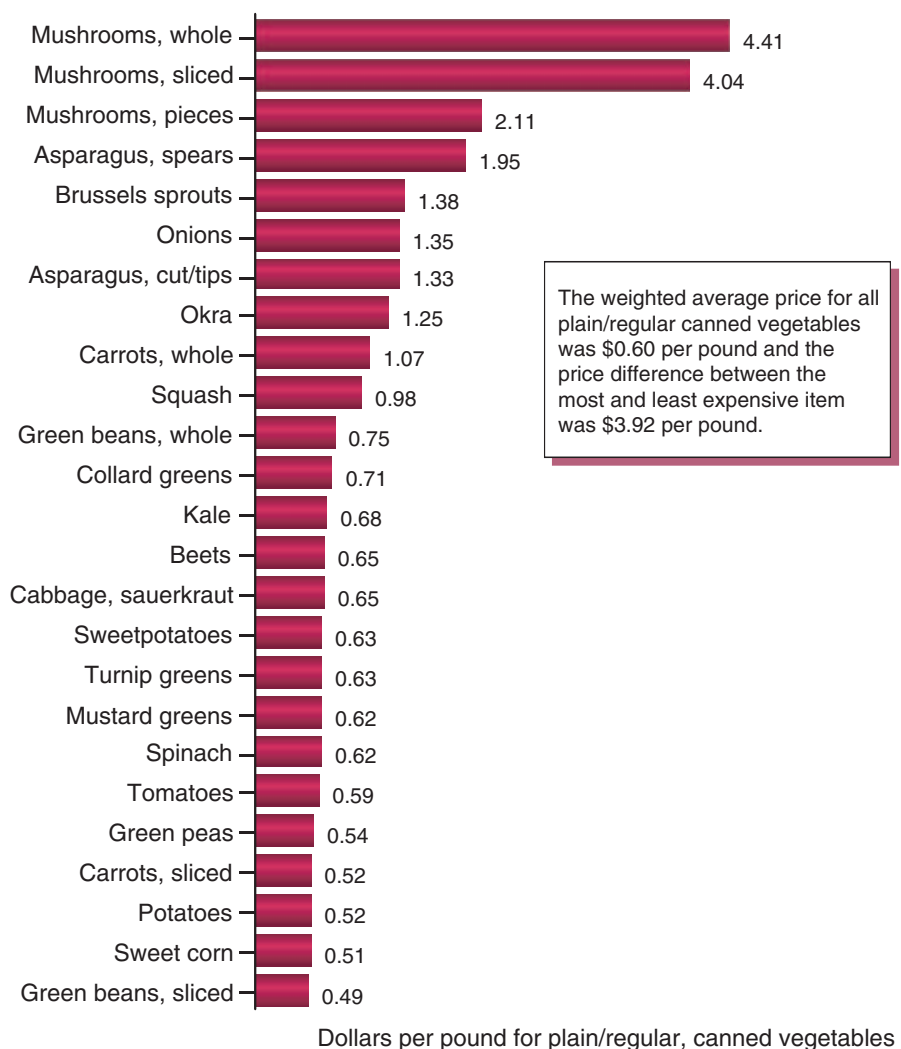
serving. A salad containing one cup of fresh Romaine lettuce leaves, ¼ cup of sliced onions, ½ cup of cucumbers, and ¼ cup of sliced carrots costs a total of 43 cents and provides 3 FGP servings. For an additional 50 cents, you could add a serving each of tomatoes and mushrooms.

Among the 25 plain/regular **canned** vegetable items, retail prices ranged from 49 cents per pound for canned, sliced green beans to \$4.41 per pound for canned, whole mushrooms (fig. 7a). The weighted-average price for all canned vegetable items was 60 cents per pound. Only 6 of the 25 canned vegetables priced below the weighted-average price, although 15 priced at or below 75 cents per pound. Only mushrooms (three types) were priced above \$2.00 per pound. As with fresh vegetables, the canned vegetables priced below the weighted-average price accounted for a majority of sold weight (85 percent).

Per serving, plain/regular canned vegetables ranged from 12 cents a serving for canned, sliced green beans to 76 cents for canned, whole mushrooms, with

Figure 7a

How much do canned vegetables cost to buy?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan data, 1999.

A salad containing one cup of fresh Romaine lettuce leaves, ¼ cup of sliced onions, ½ cup of cucumbers, and ¼ cup of sliced carrots costs a total of 43 cents and provides 3 FGP servings.

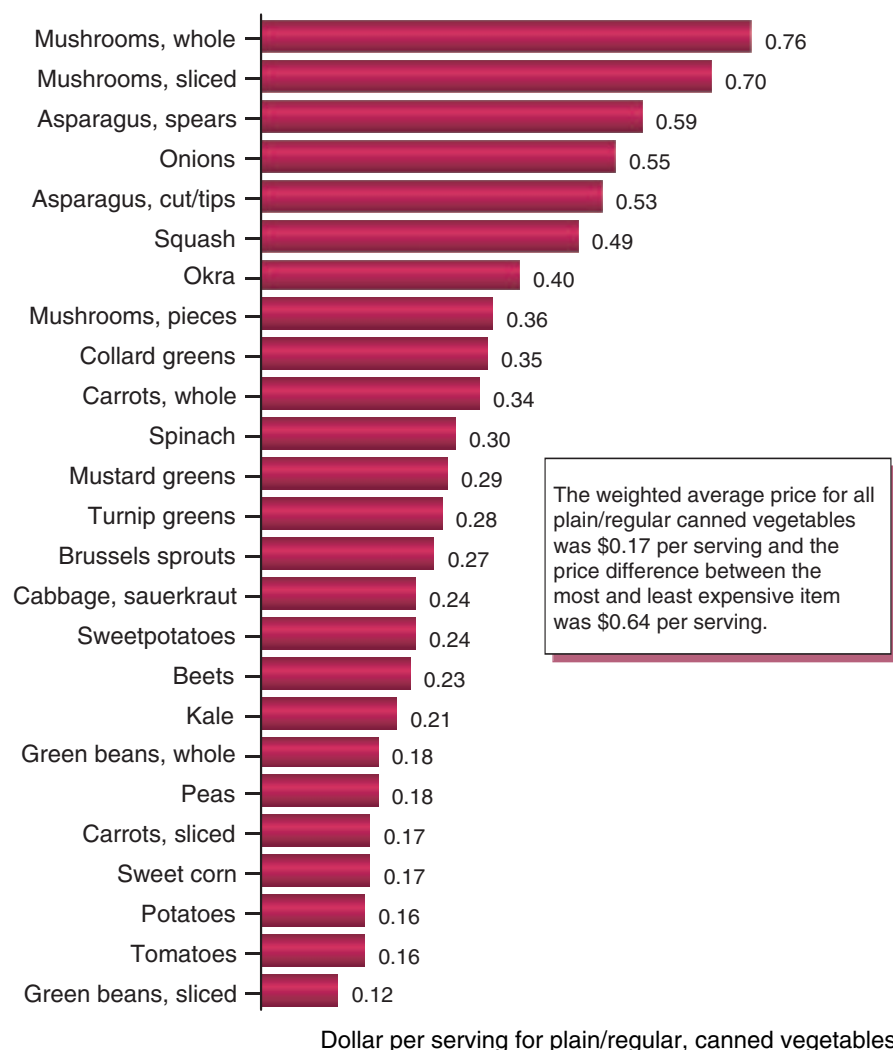
a weighted-average price of 17 cents per serving (fig. 7b). The cost per serving was less than 25 cents for 11 of the 25 canned vegetables and less than 50 cents for 20 of the 25 canned vegetables. Consumers who believe that canned vegetables are the best bargain might be surprised that they can save 81 cents on their homemade pizza by using a serving each of fresh onions and fresh, sliced mushrooms rather than a serving each of the canned equivalents.

Among the 23 plain/regular **frozen** vegetable items, prices ranged from 89 cents per pound for frozen onions (pearl onions) to \$4.57 per pound for whole, frozen asparagus, with a weighted-average price of \$1.11 (fig. 8a). Approximately one-third of the frozen vegetables were at or below the weighted-average price, and they accounted for almost three-quarters of frozen vegetables by sales volume.

Per serving, prices ranged from 17 cents for frozen, cut green beans to 85 cents for frozen, whole asparagus, with a weighted-average price of 22

Figure 7b

How much do canned vegetables cost to eat?

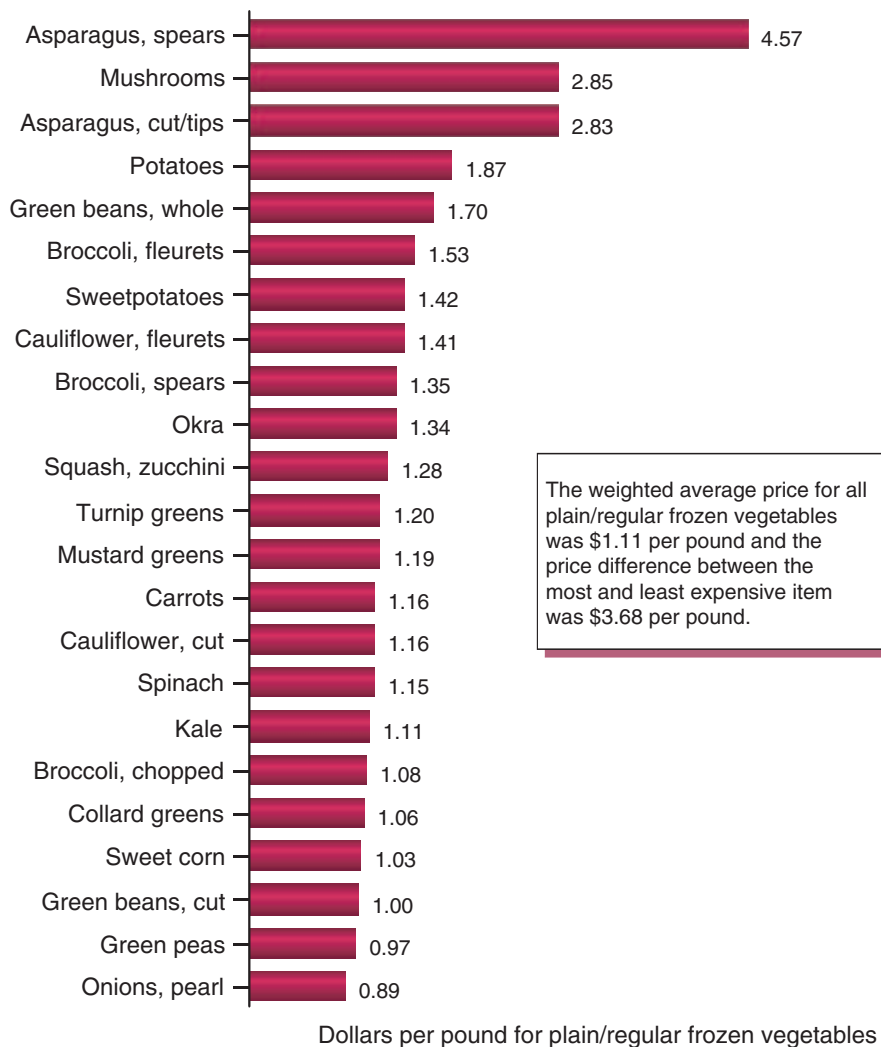


Source: ACNielsen Homescan data, 1999. Converted to servings using factors obtained from *The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, revised November 2001.

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Figure 8a

How much do frozen vegetables cost to buy?



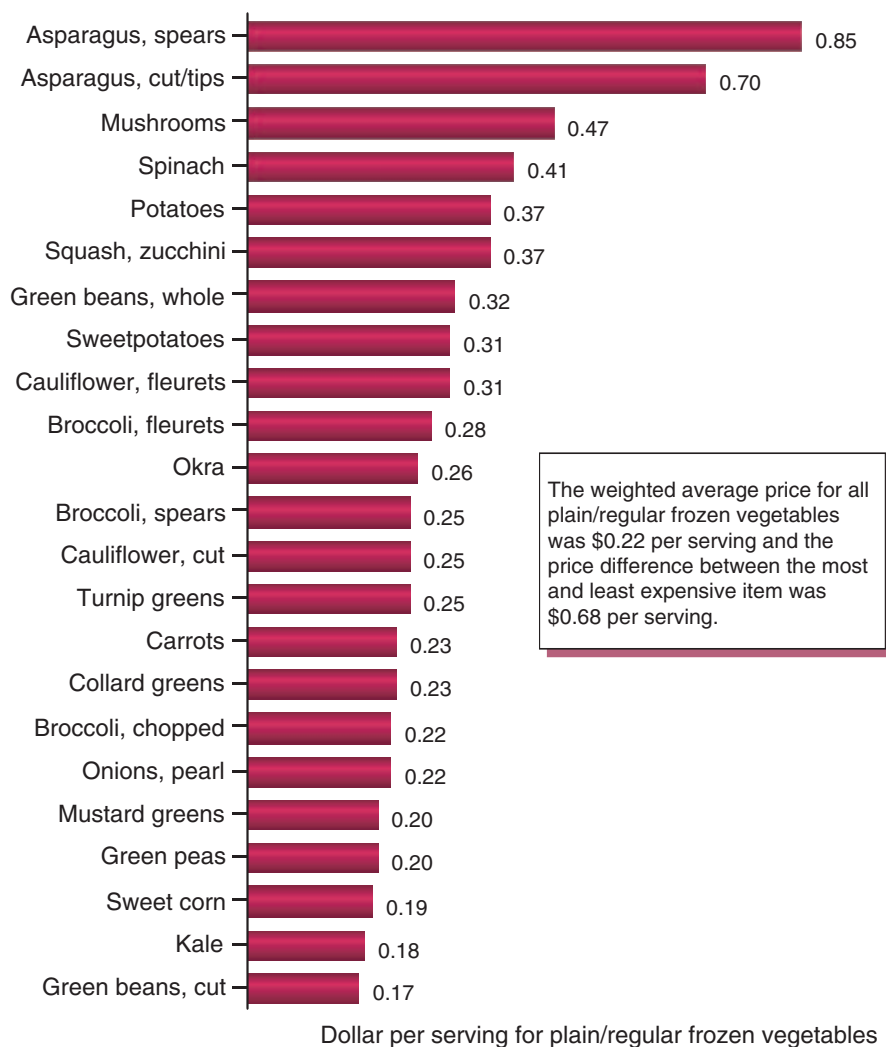
Source: ACNielsen Homescan data, 1999.

cents (fig. 8b). This was nearly twice the average cost of a serving of fresh vegetables, and a nickel more than a serving of canned vegetables. All frozen vegetables, except asparagus, cost less than 50 cents a serving. Without asparagus, there is only a 30-cent difference between the least and most expensive vegetable. A serving of frozen sweet corn was 33 cents cheaper per serving than fresh corn on the cob. On the other hand, a serving of frozen spinach was 20 cents more expensive than a serving of fresh spinach.

In summary, whether fresh, frozen, or canned, all 85 of the vegetables we priced were less than a dollar per serving, only three cost more than 75 cents a serving, and more than half were less than a quarter.

Figure 8b

How much do frozen vegetables cost to eat?



Source: ACNielsen Homescan data, 1999. Converted to servings using factors obtained from *The Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, revised November 2001.