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# Information on Your Participation in the Consumer Expenditure Survey

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*Helping You Make Informed Decisions*

U.S. Department of Commerce  
Economics and Statistics Administration  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU



# Frequently Asked Questions About the Consumer Expenditure Survey

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## What Is the Consumer Expenditure Survey?

The Consumer Expenditure (CE) Survey collects information on expenditures and income of individual households. We attempt to collect data from approximately 5,000 households per month. Your information is combined with responses from throughout the country. The combined information shows how the economy is affecting the various parts of the population such as the young, the old, the retired, and the disabled. The Office of Management and Budget has approved this survey and assigned the Control Number 1220-0050.

## Why Did You Choose Me for This Survey?

We selected your address, not you personally, as part of a sample throughout the country.

## What Guarantee Do I Have That the Information I Give to You is not Reported to Other Persons or Organizations?

Every Census Bureau employee takes an oath and is subject to a jail penalty, a fine, or both if he or she discloses any information that would identify you as an individual. We release the information for statistical purposes only, and we never release information that would disclose your identity. The information you give is confidential by law (Section 9 of Title 13, United States Code). We are conducting this survey for the Department of Labor under the authority of Title 29, United States Code.

## What Will You Ask Me?

Your cooperation will help us collect accu-

rate data. You will be asked questions about your expenditures, such as for housing, food, education, transportation, and health care, and about the types of income you receive. We expect the average interview to take about 70 minutes. However, your interview may be somewhat shorter or longer depending on your circumstances. There will be five interviews over a period of 13 months. Your participation in this survey, while voluntary, is extremely important. If you have any comments about this survey or recommendations for reducing its length, send them to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Division of Management Systems, Project 1220-0050, Washington, DC 20212.

## Who Uses the CE Data?

Your responses will help to update the Consumer Price Index, which is the primary tool used to measure inflation and directly affects wages, pensions, and the cost for goods and services. The Federal Government also uses the data in trying to understand how government policy affects different kinds of families. For example, the CE data show the effects of tax changes on various groups such as those of different ages, income levels, and marital status.

In addition, people in your community and the Nation use the information to make important decisions that can help to create jobs. Shopkeepers or persons wanting to expand or start a business use it to decide where to locate based on consumer spending habits. State governments also use CE data to estimate their revenue. For example, when states increase gasoline taxes, they can calculate the amount of additional funds they will receive by using CE data.