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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233-0001
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

A message from the Director, U.S. Census Bureau...

About three months ago, we contacted you to request your help with an important survey—the Consumer Expenditure Survey. Although you were not able to participate at that time, we are writing again to ask for your cooperation.

The U.S. Census Bureau is conducting this voluntary survey for the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Your responses help update the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI is the most important tool used to measure how fast prices are rising or declining and directly affects wages and pensions. Your response is a service to your community and the country.

Your participation in this survey is essential; however, you may choose to decline to answer any particular question. Federal law authorizes the collection of this information (Titles 13 and 29 of the United States Code), and Sections 9 and 214 of Title 13 require us to keep all information about you and your household strictly confidential, and to use that information for statistical purposes only.

Soon a field representative will contact you for an interview and show you an official identification card. Please welcome him or her.

Thank you for your cooperation in this important survey. We appreciate your help.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Census Bureau doing? I thought they only operated every ten years.

In addition to the decennial census, we collect data on a monthly basis. We collect these data to provide up-to-date information on topics such as unemployment, spending, family income, housing, manufacturing and business activities to track the country's economy.

What is this survey about?

The Consumer Expenditure Survey measures how people in the United States spend their money on items such as housing, food, education, transportation, and healthcare.

Why is this survey important?

The information you provide will affect wages, pensions, and the cost of goods and services. In addition, people in your community and throughout the country use the survey results for planning public services and addressing consumer needs. Your voluntary response is essential for ensuring that this survey's results are complete and accurate.

What kinds of questions will I be asked?

We will ask you to recall information about recent purchases you have made. We will also ask you questions about the people who live in your household, such as their ages and questions about things you already own like cars or property. A partial list includes:

- How much money do you spend on clothing?
- How much money do you spend on housing?
- What are your out-of-pocket costs for medical care?
- Do you spend more money on electricity or natural gas?

Why me? Why not interview someone else?

Through a scientific sampling process, we selected your address, not you personally. Your household represents hundreds of other households in your region, so it is important that we talk to you. Only you can accurately report how you spent your money.

What if I am retired, ill, unemployed, or just don't spend much money?

We are interested in how all Americans spend their money. We can only have a complete picture if we talk to people with different situations.

It is very important to know the purchasing habits of people of all ages and of all levels of spending. This is especially true for medical spending and spending on entertainment.

How long will the interview take?

The average interview takes about 55 minutes.

Where can I find out more about the survey?

You can learn more about the survey by writing to the Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Room 3985, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20212. The Consumer Expenditure Survey Web site also has information about the survey.
The address is *www.bls.gov/respondents/cex.*

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has approved this survey and assigned it Control Number 1220-0050.