

FACTSHEET

CONSUMER EXPENDITURE SURVEY (CE)

Bureau of Labor Statistics, CE Survey

www.bls.gov/cex
www.bls.gov/respondents/cex

U.S. Census Bureau

www.census.gov/programs-surveys/ce.html

Uses of CE Data

The CE is the only federal survey providing information on the full range of consumer spending. The CE:

- Allows the Department of Defense to determine cost-of-living allowances for U.S. military personnel.
- Provides information to entrepreneurs looking to start a business or allocate resources.
- Provides business and consumer groups with information to study consumer demand on a variety of items.
- Allows researchers to study the demand for goods and services and the shifts in spending patterns over time.

Who Uses CE Data?

- Business establishments
- Private researchers
- Market researchers
- Colleges and universities
- Local, state, and U.S. government agencies

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The CE contributes to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

The CPI:

- Affects interest rates, wages, pensions, Social Security benefits, dollar amount of tax exemptions, income tax brackets, etc.
- Measures changes in the prices of consumer goods and services.
- Is the only measure compiled by the U.S. government designed to assess change in the purchasing power of consumer dollars.
- Adds new items as spending patterns change, for example, streaming services and fitness trackers.
- Deletes items that become unimportant, e.g., record players and typewriters.
- Adjusts for changes in spending.

Changes to the CPI items are based on information collected in the CE.

CE data is used by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to estimate the cost of raising a child for various categories like health care, education, and transportation. Foster care and child support payments are based on CE data.

CE data is used by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to help estimate what Americans are spending on health care and who's paying for the care. The CE is one of the few sources in government or private industry to provide information on out-of-pocket health care expenses.

