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Technical information: 202-691-6900
Media information: 202-691-5902

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CONSUMER EXPENDITURES IN 2003

Average annual expenditures per consumer unit were essentially unchanged in 2003, up 0.3 percent, following increases of 2.9 percent in 2002 and 3.9 percent in 2001, according to results from the Consumer Expenditure Survey released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor. Whereas expenditures showed little change from 2002 to 2003, there was a 2.3 percent annual average rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over this period.

Among the major components of spending, the only statistically significant changes from 2002 to 2003 were a 6.2-percent decrease in spending on apparel and services and a 4.0-percent increase in personal insurance and pensions. Average expenditures on food and entertainment decreased over the period, 0.7 and 0.9 percent, respectively, whereas housing rose 1.1 percent, transportation rose 0.3 percent, and health care rose 2.8 percent.

Average annual expenditures and characteristics of all consumer units and percent changes, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2001-2003

Item	2001	2002	2003	Percent change	
				2001-2002	2002-2003
Number of consumer units (000's)	110,339	112,108	115,356		
Income before taxes ¹	\$47,507	\$49,430	\$51,128		
Average age of reference person	48.1	48.1	48.4		
Average number in consumer unit:					
Persons	2.5	2.5	2.5		
Earners	1.4	1.4	1.3		
Vehicles	1.9	2.0	1.9		
Percent homeowner	66	66	67		
Average annual expenditures	\$39,518	\$40,677	\$40,817	2.9	0.3
Food	5,321	5,375	5,340	1.0	-.7
At home	3,086	3,099	3,129	.4	1.0
Away from home	2,235	2,276	2,211	1.8	-2.9
Housing	13,011	13,283	13,432	2.1	1.1
Apparel and services	1,743	1,749	1,640	.3	-6.2
Transportation	7,633	7,759	7,781	1.7	.3
Health care	2,182	2,350	2,416	7.7	2.8
Entertainment	1,953	2,079	2,060	6.5	-.9
Personal insurance and pensions	3,737	3,899	4,055	4.3	4.0
Other expenditures	3,939	4,182	4,094	6.2	-2.1

¹ Income values are derived from "complete income reporters" only.

Consumer Expenditure Survey data include the expenditures and income of consumers, as well as the demographic characteristics of those consumers. Tables with more expenditure detail than is shown in this news release will be available on December 1, 2004 by accessing the BLS site (<http://www.bls.gov/cex>). Tables show the 2003 CE data by standard classifications that include income quintile, income class, age of reference person, size of consumer unit, number of earners, composition of consumer unit, region of residence, housing tenure, type of area (urban-rural), race, Hispanic origin, occupation, and education. Other tables available on the website include expenditures by income class, region or size, cross-tabulated by other demographic variables. Historical tables back to 1984 and tabulations by Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) are also available.

Other available data

A soon-to-be-published annual report will include a brief discussion of expenditure changes in 2003 and tables with data classified by the standard characteristics listed above. Detailed reports that include CE data are published at two-year intervals and include the standard tabulations and cross-tabulations at the same level of expenditure detail as shown on the website. MSA tables are also included. The next two-year report will include 2002 and 2003 data and will be published in 2005. All data published in the reports and posted to the website are integrated from the two CE components—the quarterly Interview survey and weekly Diary survey.

Other survey information available on the Internet includes answers to frequently asked questions, a glossary, order forms for survey products, and analytical articles that use CE data. Beginning with the 2000 data, standard error tables for integrated data are available on the BLS site.

The 2003 Diary and Interview microdata soon will be available on CD-ROM. The Interview files contain expenditure data in two different formats: MTAB files that present monthly values in an item-coding framework based on the CPI pricing scheme, and EXPN files that organize expenditures by the section of the Interview questionnaire in which they are collected. Expenditure values on EXPN files cover different time periods depending on the specific questions asked, and the files also contain relevant non-expenditure information not found on the MTAB files. The CE microdata files are available on CD-ROM back to 1990 and for selected earlier years. Beginning with the 1996 microdata on CD-ROM, files are available in a choice of either ASCII format or PC SAS datasets.

Changes in 2003

Questions on race and Hispanic origin were modified for 2003 to comply with new standards for Federal statistical agencies for maintaining, collecting, and presenting data on race and ethnicity. Other modifications were made in order to provide more information by publishing additional classes. For example, a new column showing information for Asians is included in the race table, and new columns showing those homeowners with, and those without, mortgages are included in the tenure table. A more detailed explanation of the table revisions is provided in a technical note on the website and will also appear in the upcoming annual report.

For further information, contact the Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Office of Prices and Living Conditions, Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2 Massachusetts Ave., N.E., Washington, DC 20212-0001 or call 202-691-6900. Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.