

INTRODUCING THE CONSUMER EXPENDITURE SURVEYS (CE):

A TOOL FOR
ECONOMIC ANALYSES

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CE Microdata Users' Symposium

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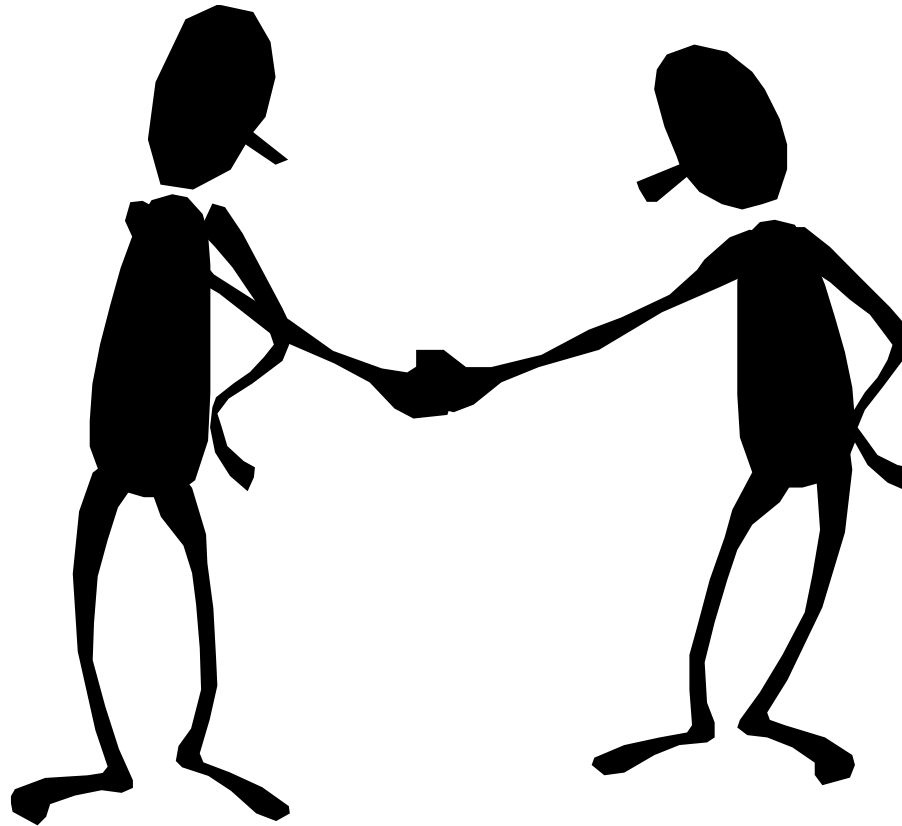
Virtual Event

DISCLAIMER:

This presentation provides a summary of research results. The information is being released for statistical purposes, to inform interested parties, and to encourage discussion of work in progress. The presentation does not represent an existing, or a forthcoming new, official BLS statistical data product or production series.



Introduction To The Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE):



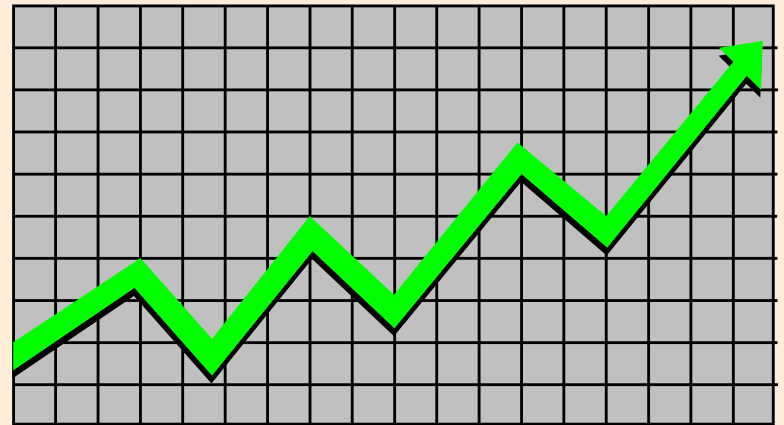
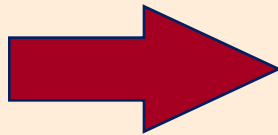
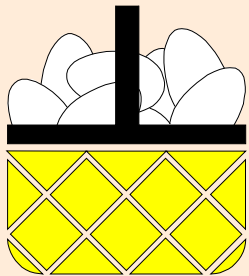
Mission, Survey Methods, and Data Provided for Public Use

The Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE):

- Are the most detailed source of expenditures collected directly from consumers by the Federal government.
- Include information on demographics and income, as well as expenditures.
- Results are published annually in various formats, including tables and microdata files.



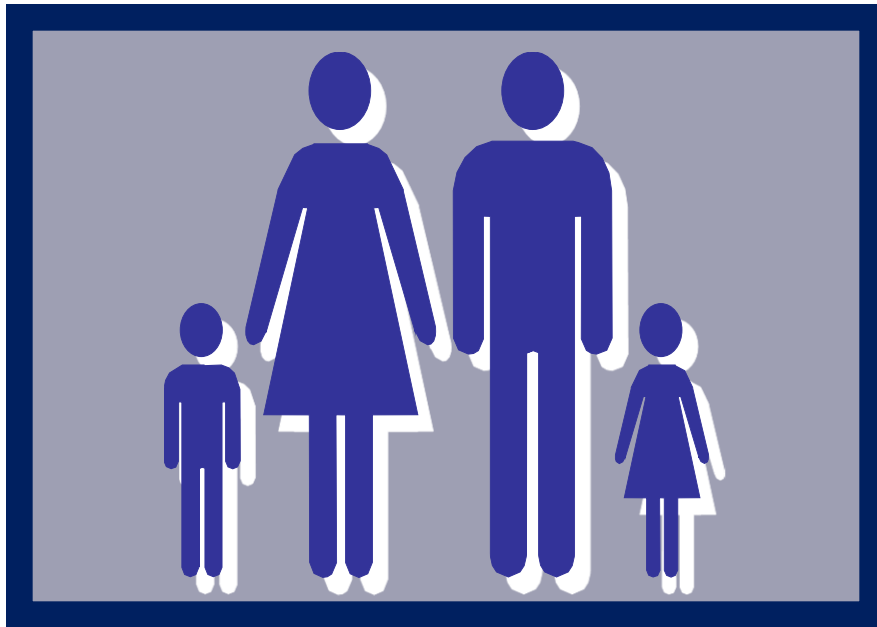
The CE data are used to obtain the “market basket” of goods and services needed to estimate the Consumer Price Index (CPI).



Data in the survey are collected from “consumer units...”

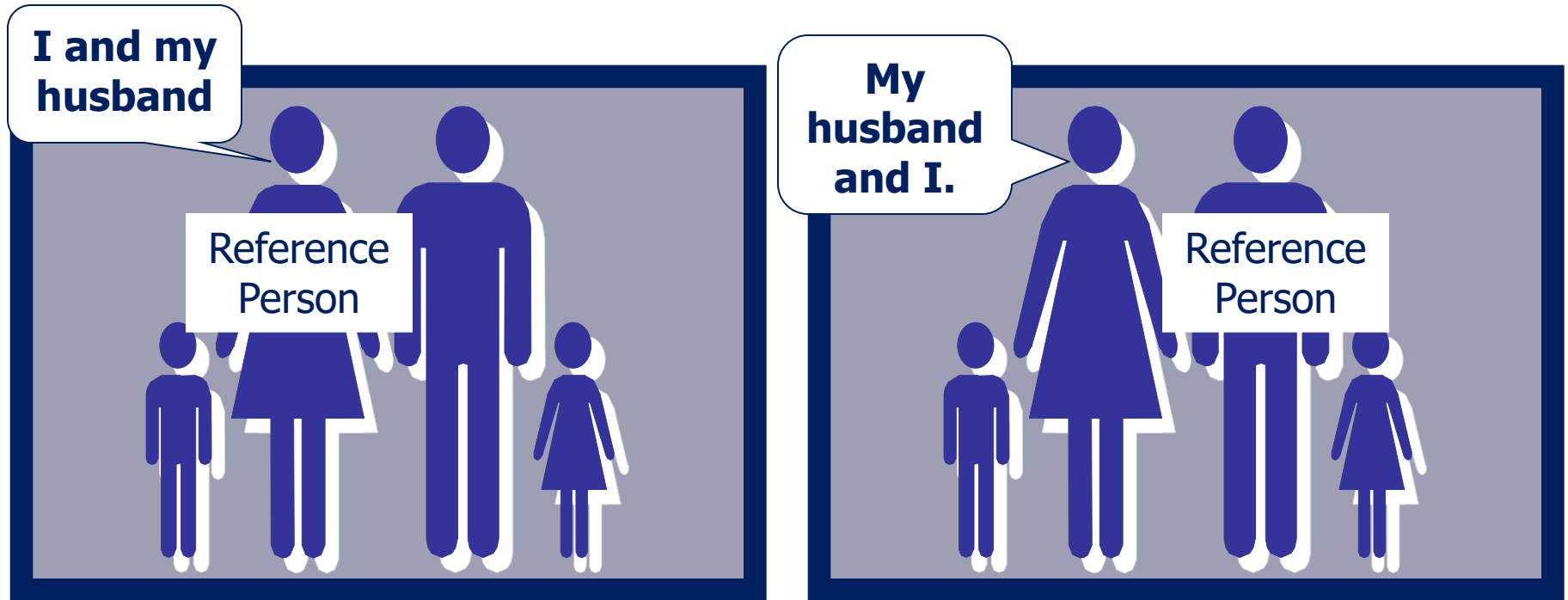
...which are categorized in publication by characteristics of the “reference person.”

A Consumer Unit is:



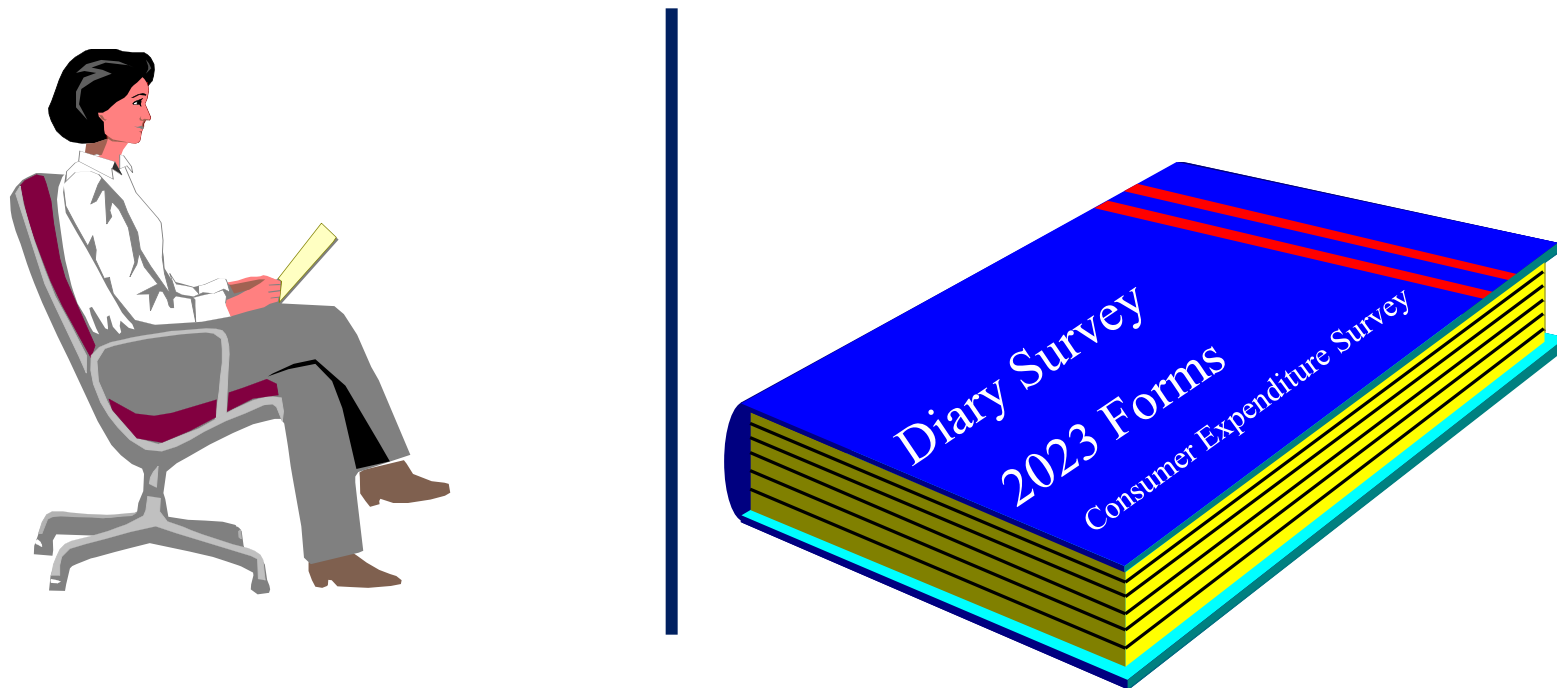
A single person, or group of persons who live together and who share responsibilities for most major expenditures.

The “Reference Person” is the first person named...



...when the respondent is asked, “Who is responsible for owning or renting this home?”

There are actually two components to the CE



The Interview Survey and the Diary Survey.

The Interview Survey is...

- Designed to collect detailed information on “big-ticket” and recurring expenditures, and global estimates on others (such as food at home).
- Collected every three months for four* consecutive quarters.
- A rotating-panel survey.
- Comprises more than 5,000 “consumer units” interviewed each quarter.

*The bounding interview was discontinued in February 2015, yielding a total of four, rather than five, consecutive quarterly interviews.



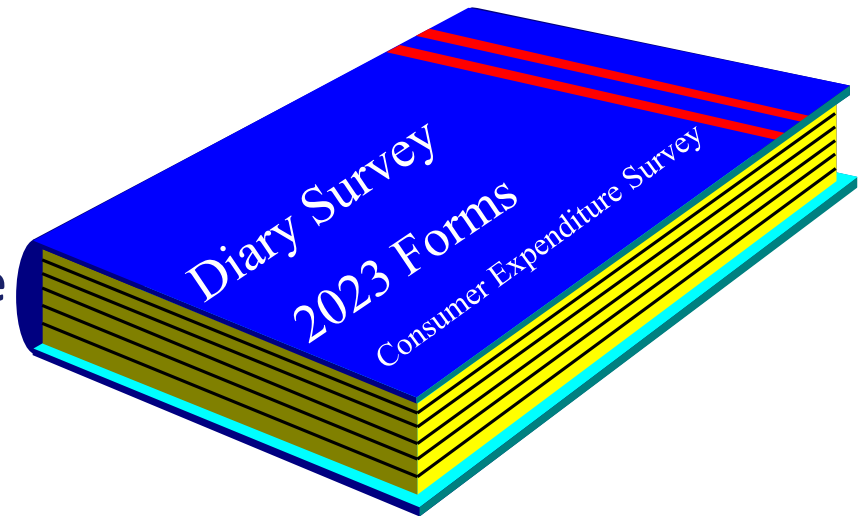
The Diary Survey is designed to capture “small-ticket” and frequently purchased items for which expenditures would be difficult to recall over a three month period.

So tell me, by gum.
In the last three months did you
buy gum?



Additional Facts about the Diary Survey:

- The Diary Survey is conducted independently from the Interview survey.
- One diary is placed with participating families (“CUs”) each week for two consecutive weeks.
- Approximately 12,000 diaries are placed with families each year.



Results are integrated before publication of the data in tables.

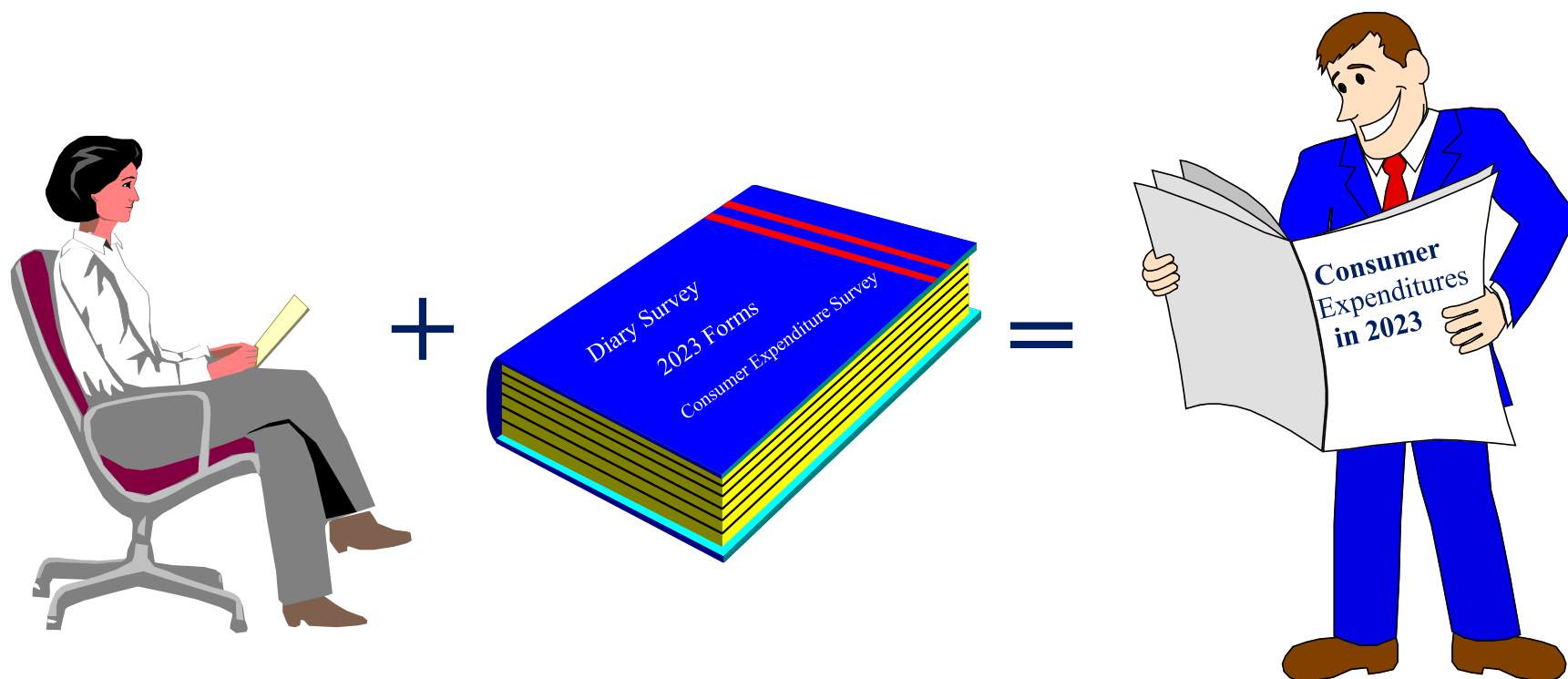


Table formats:

■ Annual:

- ▶ January to December: 1984 onward.
- ▶ July to June: 2011-12, starting March 27, 2013;
Discontinued after production of 2019-20 tables

■ Two-year Tables (January year1-December year2):

- ▶ Cross-tabulated data (e.g., age by income): 1986-87 onward
- ▶ Selected MSA tables: 1986-87 onward
- ▶ Other (e.g., population size): Various start dates

Experimental research tables:

- Special tabulations in development for official publication
- Subject to change (as “experimental” implies)
- Current examples include:
 - ▶ Detailed, prepublished data for all consumer units, previously only available on request
 - ▶ High income groups, including \$150,000 to \$199,999 and \$200,000 and more
 - ▶ Generational groups (“Millennials,” “Generation X,” etc.)

Public use microdata files are arranged to allow user to compute:

- Quarterly estimates (Interview survey)
- Weekly estimates (Diary survey)
- Calendar year estimates (Both surveys)

Microdata formats:

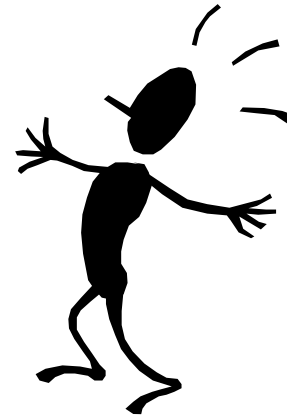
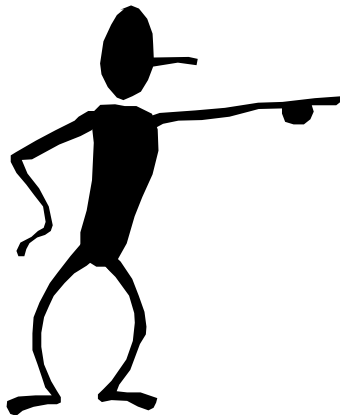
- Online, free download:

- ▶ Interview: 1980-81; 1984-1989 (FMLI only); 1990 onward
- ▶ Diary: 1980-81, and 1990 onward

- Paradata:

- ▶ Data on Interview Survey collection process
- ▶ Available 2009 onward

The following presentations demonstrate some of the many ways to analyze CE data.



Hopefully, many will be right for you!

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