Overview of the Consumer Expenditure Surveys Program

Adam Safir, Division Chief
Consumer Expenditure Surveys Program

CE Microdata Users’ Workshop
July 22, 2020
1. CE Program Overview
2. Annual Program Activities
3. CE Data Use
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Overview

- Principal fact-finding agency for the U.S. government in the field of labor economics
- Established in the Department of the Interior in 1884, to collect information about employment and labor; now part of Department of Labor

Core Values

- “Just the Facts”
- Gold standard data
- Transparency & confidentiality
CE Program Mission

- The mission of the CE is to collect, process, and disseminate information that presents a statistical picture of consumer spending for the Consumer Price Index, government agencies, and private data users.

- This mission encompasses analyzing CE data to produce socio-economic studies of consumer spending, and providing CE data users with assistance, education, and tools for working with the data.
CE Survey Overview

- CE data consist of estimates derived from two separate surveys
- The **Quarterly Interview Survey** is designed to collect data on large and recurring expenditures that consumers can be expected to recall for a period of 3 months or longer, such as rent and utilities (approximately 6,000 interviews/quarter)
- The **Diary Survey** is designed to collect data on small, frequently purchased items, including most food and clothing (approximately 3,000 diaries/quarter)
- Together, the data from the two surveys cover the complete range of consumers’ expenditures
CE Survey Overview

- CE data are collected for BLS by the U.S. Census Bureau, from consumer units (CUs), in other words people living at one address who share living expenses (in most cases, CUs are the same as households)
- The sample frame is a national probability sample of households designed to be representative of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population
- Respondents report dollar amounts for all non-investment purchases; business expenses and reimbursements are excluded
CE Program Staffing Structure

Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys

- Branch of Information & Analysis
- Branch of Production & Control
- Branch of Research & Program Development (incl. Office of Survey Methods Research consultants)

Division of Consumer Expenditure Information Systems

- Publication & Information Management Systems
- Expenditure & Income Processing Systems

Statistical Methods Division

- Consumer Expenditure Branch
CE Program Workflow

1. Sampling (SMD, P&C, Census)
2. Questionnaire Design and Revisions (P&C, Census)
3. Field Procedures and Training (P&C, Census)
4. Data Collection (P&C, Census)
5. Data Processing and Estimation (P&C, BIA, SMD, CEIS)
6. Data Dissemination, Publications, and Outreach (All)
7. Methods Research, Development, and Evaluation (BRPD, P&C, BIA, SMD)
CE Program Data Products

- CPI Cost Weights
- LABSTAT Database
- Publications
- Public-Use Microdata
- Restricted Microdata
- Tables
CE History – Highlights

- **1888**: First BLS expenditure survey
- **1972**: First use of weekly Diary & 3-month recall Interview
  Census Bureau begins survey collection for BLS
- **1979**: Continuous data collection starts
- **2003**: Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) begins
- **2004**: Imputation for missing income data implemented
- **2013**: Model-based estimation of income taxes introduced
- **2013**: 1<sup>st</sup> publication of midyear tables (July 2011 - June 2012)
- **2015**: Elimination of the first (bounding) interview in Interview
- **2018**: State-level weights released for 2016 and 2017 data,
  regular publication of the Data Quality Profile begins
- **2020**: Pre-1996 PUMD & state-level research tables posted
Topics

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FY20 Program Activities

Data Collection

- Inputs for Interview and Diary Survey data collection protocol changes, training, and questionnaires

Data Processing

- Interview and Diary Survey processing (2019 & 2020)
- Interview and Diary Survey changes (2019 & 2020)

Data Dissemination

- Midyear Tables released in April 2020 (July 2018–June 2019 data)
- Annual Tables/Public-Use Microdata release in September 2020 (2019 data)
FY20 Program Activities

Publications
- Beyond the Numbers
- Data Comparisons (PCE, CPS, ACS)
- Monthly Labor Review
- Spotlight on Statistics
- Data Quality Profile

Outreach
- Conference Presentations
- Microdata Users’ Workshop
- Survey Methods Symposium
FY20 Program Activities

Research

- Continue CE redesign activities, including fielding, processing, and analysis of the Large Scale Feasibility test of an online diary
- Investigate additional methods to evaluate and reduce measurement error in the CE Survey
- Work with Census to evaluate matched administrative data for potential production use in nonresponse adjustments or imputation models
Topics

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CE Customers

- Bureau of Economic Analysis
- Census Bureau
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- Consumer Price Index
- Depts of Agriculture; Defense; Health & Human Services
- Internal Revenue Service
- Media, Market Research, & Academic Research
- YOU!
CE Data in Recent External Publications

Generational Spending
- Why Do Millennials Hate Groceries?, The Atlantic

Regional Spending
- San Diego ranked No. 1 booziest city in America, FOX 5 San Diego

Health Care Spending
- The Financial Burden of Health Care Spending, Kaiser Family Foundation

Policy Analysis
- Tax Cuts And Jobs Act Begins To Have Positive Impact On Spending Intentions, Forbes
- Annual report on US consumption poverty: 2017 - AEI, AEI
Top CE Webpages by Views, Jan-Jun 2019

- News Releases: 5,008
- Publications: 6,062
- MSA Tables: 6,321
- PUMD Homepage: 8,266
- PUMD Data Page: 8,523
- Labstat Databases: 10,568
- PUMD Documentation: 18,307
- Tables: 55,028
- CE Home Page (Primary): 63,833
Contact Information

Adam Safir
Consumer Expenditure Surveys Program
(202) 691-5175 | safir.adam@bls.gov