Overview of the Consumer Expenditures Surveys

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BLS Consumer Expenditure Surveys Program

USITC Symposium: The Distributional Effects of Trade and Trade Policy on U.S. Workers
Session F: Government Datasets for Analyzing Distributional Effects of Trade among Different Subgroups
Group 2: Individual and Household Level Microdata

April 6, 2022
CE Program Mission

The mission of the CE program 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.
BLS Data Provide a Detailed Breakdown of ~70 Percent of GDP (estimated by BEA)

Percentage of Components of U.S. GDP on the Demand Side: Consumption makes up over half of the demand side components of the GDP. (Source: http://bea.gov/Table/index_nipa.cfm)
Changes in Real GDP can be Explained by CE Data

Percent change from preceding period, not seasonally adjusted.

Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Investopedia
CE Data Products

- BLS provides CE data on expenditures, income, and demographic characteristics of consumers in the United States.
- These data are available in news releases, tables, LABSTAT database, reports, and public use microdata files.
- These data allow us to shed light on U.S. household spending habits across all ages, locations, and backgrounds.
CE Data Products

- Economic Analysis
  - Beyond the Numbers: [https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxwebarticles.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxwebarticles.htm)
  - Spotlight on Statistics: [https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxspotlight.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxspotlight.htm)

- CE Tables
  - Data Tables: [https://www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm)
  - LABSTAT database: [https://www.bls.gov/cex/data.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/data.htm)

- CE Public Use Microdata (PUMD)
  - Data Files: [https://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd_data.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd_data.htm)
Economic Analysis

News release

- Published in September for the annual release
- Contains notable changes in consumer expenditures
  - Selected demographic groups
  - Income quintiles
- Contains charts and tables that focus on spending differences between the current and prior year

“Average expenditures per consumer unit for 2020 were $61,334, a 2.7-percent decrease from 2019 levels, and average pretax income increased by 1.8 percent”
Economic Analysis

- Percent change in expenditures and income before taxes by income quintiles, 2019-2020
Economic Analysis

What the Consumer Expenditure Surveys tell us about travel in the COVID-19 pandemic
CE Tables

Tables provide expenditure estimates by demo breakdown:

- CU (11 tables)
  - Income, income quintiles, income deciles
  - Region, population size, area type (urban/rural)
  - CU composition, education, tenure, earners, CU size

- Reference person (6 tables)
  - Age, selected age ranges, generation
  - Ethnicity, occupation, race
CE Public Use Microdata (PUMD)

Data files:
- File types available include:
  - SAS (*.sas7bdat), STATA (*.dta), SPSS (*.sav), comma-delimited (*.csv)

Documentation:
- Getting Started Guide

Supplementary resources:
- Provide information regarding PUMD disclosure methods and requirements
CE Public Use Microdata (PUMD)

- What's new?
  - Historical PUMD
  - State weights, which allow users to develop weighted means for specific states
    - California
    - Florida
    - New Jersey
    - New York
    - Texas
CE Public Use Microdata (PUMD)

PUMD allow users to conduct more detailed analyses, answering questions such as:

- What are the spending patterns of the American middle class?
- What are the effects of various policy initiatives on spending?
- How does grocery spending relate to U.S. dietary recommendations?
- What are the effects of SNAP benefits on spending?
- What are changes in ride hailing/ride sharing expenditures?
# Summary Information about the CE Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dataset name</th>
<th>Consumer Expenditure Surveys; Interview Survey and Diary Survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="https://www.bls.gov/cex/">https://www.bls.gov/cex/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Microdata access</td>
<td><a href="https://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd.htm">https://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd.htm</a></td>
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<td>Survey coverage</td>
<td>Civilian noninstitutional population</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey frequency</td>
<td>Annual survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Longitudinal component</td>
<td>Yes; four quarterly interviews</td>
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## Summary Information about the CE Surveys

| Demographics for underserved communities | Yes – Race, ethnicity, rural  
No – Religion, SOGI, disability, poverty level of surrounding community |
<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to restricted use microdata</td>
<td><a href="https://www.bls.gov/rda/home.htm">https://www.bls.gov/rda/home.htm</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Information about content or design changes | [https://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd_doc.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd_doc.htm)  
[https://www.bls.gov/cex/ce-improvements.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/ce-improvements.htm) |
| Value added                             | Provides information on the complete range of consumers’ expenditures as well as their incomes and demographic characteristics |
| Examples of research applications       | [https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxreport.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxreport.htm)  
[https://www.bls.gov/cex/research_papers/research-paper-catalog.htm](https://www.bls.gov/cex/research_papers/research-paper-catalog.htm) |
Contact Information

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