Overview of the Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE)

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Roadmap

- Goals of the CE
- Brief History
- Scope / Coverage
- Data Collection and Estimation
- National, Regional, and Local Publications
- New CE Products
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The Face of the United States

- CE Surveys collect the following data:
  - Income
  - Expenditures
  - Demographics

- The only nationally representative survey to collect the complete range of all three.
Accurate and Timely Dissemination

“...disseminate high quality data that present an unbiased statistical picture of consumer expenditures for the Consumer Price Index, government agencies, and other data users, in support of a better understanding of consumer economic behavior.”
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History and Milestones

1888-1891
First CE Survey

1901 - 1961
CE surveys are conducted roughly every 10 years

1972
CE Diary and Interview first collected by Census Bureau
History and Milestones

- End of 1979: CE starts annual collection
- 2003: CE switches to CAPI Interview
- 2004: Income Imputation
History and Milestones

2013
First publication of mid-year tables; Tax Estimation

2014
New generation tables published experimentally

2017
First set of state representative weights are released
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Scope and Coverage

- The CE is a nationwide survey designed to represent the entire U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population.

- The U.S. Census Bureau collects CE data from consumer units (CUs) or households - people living at one address who share living expenses.

- Survey participants report dollar amounts for all non-investment purchases. Business expenses and reimbursements are excluded.
<table>
<thead>
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Data Collection

The U.S. Census Bureau collects CE data for BLS using two different surveys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarterly Interview Survey</th>
<th>Weekly Diary Survey</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Large purchases (e.g. appliances or automobiles) and recurring payments (e.g. Utilities)</td>
<td>• Smaller purchases (e.g. Stick of gum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Three month recall</td>
<td>• Diary is placed for two weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rotating panel</td>
<td>• Respondents fill out diary contemporaneously with purchases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection: Interview

- Approximately 6,000 CUs or households are in the quarterly Interview Survey each quarter.

- This results in about 24,000 usable interviews each year.
Data Collection: Diary

- About 6,000 households a year are sampled for the Diary Survey.

- Each household keeps a diary for two consecutive one-week periods, yielding about 12,000 diaries a year.
Estimation and Results

- Average annual expenditures are estimated using weighted means. Weights are nationally representative and are assigned to each household.

- Source data from the Interview and Diary Surveys are integrated by income and other demographic variables to create total expenditures.

- U.S. Households spent $60,060 on average in 2017, from an after-tax income of $63,606.
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Publications

- Tables of national expenditures and variances published twice a year on a 12-month rolling basis.

- There are separate tables sorted by Income, Race, Hispanic Origin, Education, Family size, Age, Generation, and other key demographic variables. As well as key geographies.

- Free Public Use Microdata sets from 1996 to the present on the CE website in multiple file formats (i.e. SAS, Stata, Excel, SPSS).
CE Expenditure Shares 2017

- Housing: 33%
- Apparel: 3%
- Transportation: 16%
- Healthcare: 8%
- Entertainment: 5%
- Personal care, Reading, Tobacco, Misc.: 5%
- Education: 3%
- Cash Contributions: 3%
- Personal Insurance and Pensions: 11%
- Food: 13%
Publications

New Research Articles on a regular basis

- BTN
  *Tradeoffs in the expenditure patterns of families with children*
  – Evan Hubener, Arcenis Rojas, and Neil Tseng

- MLR
  *Fun facts about Millennials: comparing expenditure patterns from the latest through the Greatest generation*
  – Geoffrey Paulin

- CE Report Series
  *The Effects of Power Transformations on Consumer Expenditure Survey Data*
  – Taylor J. Wilson
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CE State Weights

- First test estimates produced in 2013 for three states.
- First official weights published for 2016.
- Two years of state weights are now available for FL, CA, and NJ.
- Feasibility for additional states is being investigated.
Upcoming Research Work

- Data Quality Profile
  - Additional Indicators are being investigated
- Spending by family type
- Evaluation of Owner’s Equivalent Rent
- Spending on vice expenditures
- American Council on Consumer Interests (ACCI)
- American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)
Questions
Contact Information

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