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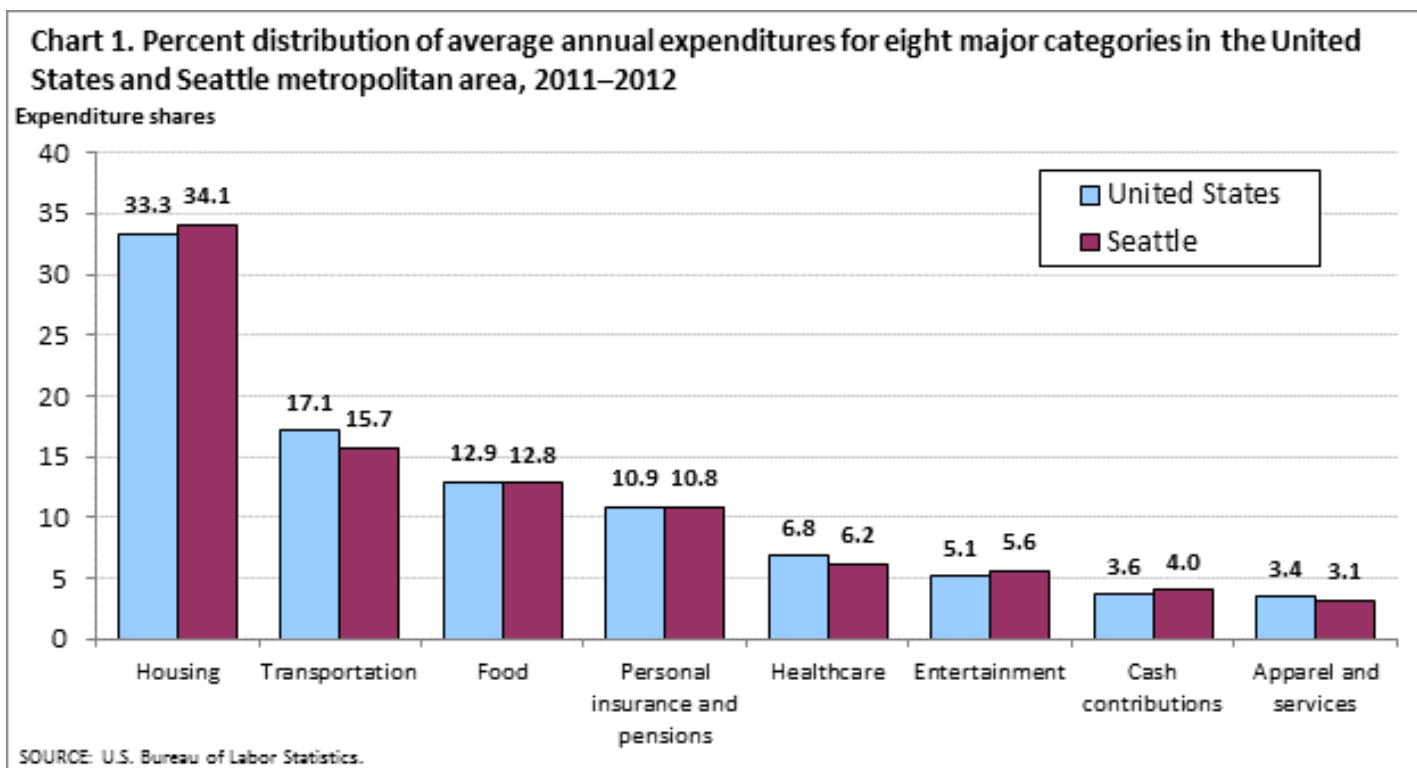
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Consumer Expenditures for the Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton Area: 2011-2012

Consumer units (households) in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton, Wash., metropolitan area spent an average of \$60,674 per year in 2011-2012, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Richard J. Holden noted that this figure was 20 percent above the \$50,581 average expenditure level for a typical household in the United States. Although households in the Seattle area spent more than the U.S. average, they allocated their dollars similarly among the eight largest expenditure categories, differing significantly in only one. Specifically, expenditures for healthcare accounted for 6.2 percent of a typical household budget in the Seattle area, significantly less than the nationwide average of 6.8 percent. (See [chart 1](#) and [table 1](#).)



Housing in the Seattle metropolitan area averaged \$20,681 annually and was the largest expenditure category, accounting for 34.1 percent of a Seattle area household's total budget. This share was not significantly different from the 33.3-percent national average. (See [tables 1](#) and [2](#).) Overall, 8 of the 18 published

metropolitan areas had expenditure shares for housing measurably above the U.S. average, while 3 had significantly lower-than-average shares. (See [chart 2](#).) Among the 18 areas, housing shares ranged from 39.7 percent in New York to 31.7 percent in Detroit. (See [table 3](#).)

The majority of total housing expenditures in Seattle, 63.5 percent, went toward shelter, which includes mortgage interest, property taxes, repairs, and rent, among other items; nationwide, 58.5 percent of the housing budget was allocated for shelter. (See [table A](#).) Utilities, fuels, and public services expenses accounted for 17.7 percent of the housing budget locally; nationally, it made up 21.9 percent. The rate of homeownership in Seattle, at 61 percent, was less than the U.S. average of 65 percent.

Table A. Percent distribution of housing expenditures, United States and Seattle, 2011–2012

Category	United States	Seattle
Total Housing.....	100.0	100.0
Shelter	58.5	63.5
Utilities, fuels and public services.....	21.9	17.7
Household operation	6.8	6.2
Housekeeping supplies	3.6	3.4
Household furnishings and equipment.....	9.2	9.2

Note: Columns may not add to 100 due to rounding.

At 15.7 percent of the total budget, transportation was the second-largest expenditure category in the Seattle area, not significantly different from the national average of 17.1 percent. Among the 18 published areas nationwide, 8 had transportation shares that were below the national average; only one had a share that was significantly above the average. (See [chart 3](#).)

Of the \$9,526 in annual expenditures for transportation in Seattle, 89.1 percent was spent buying and maintaining private vehicles; this compared to the national average of 93.9 percent. The remaining 10.9 percent of a Seattle household’s transportation budget was spent on public transit—which includes fares for taxis, buses, trains, and planes—and was above the 6.1-percent average for the nation. (See [table B](#).) The average number of vehicles per household in Seattle was 2.3, compared to the national average of 1.9.

Table B. Percent distribution of transportation expenditures, United States and Seattle, 2011–2012

Category	United States	Seattle
Total Transportation.....	100.0	100.0
Vehicle purchases (net outlay)	34.0	33.9
Gasoline and motor oil	31.3	29.8
Other vehicle expenses.....	28.6	25.4
Public transportation.....	6.1	10.9

Note: Columns may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The portion of the average Seattle consumer unit’s budget spent on food, 12.8 percent, was not significantly different from the 12.9-percent U.S. average. Among the 18 metropolitan areas, 14 had food expenditure shares that were not measurably different from the nationwide average. In the four remaining areas, three had food shares significantly below the national average, while one’s food share was significantly above the average.

Households in Seattle spent 58.9 percent (\$4,580) of their food dollars on food prepared at home and the remaining 41.1 percent on food prepared away from home, such as restaurant meals, carry-out, board at school, and catered affairs. In comparison, the typical U.S. household spent 59.4 percent of its food budget on food prepared at home and 40.6 percent on food prepared away from home.

As noted, Seattle is 1 of 18 metropolitan areas nationwide for which Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE) data are available. Metropolitan area CE data and that for the four geographic regions and the United States are available on our website at www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm. Metropolitan area CE news releases are available at www.bls.gov/regions/subjects/consumer-spending.htm.

Additional information

Data contained in this report are from the CE, which is collected on an ongoing basis by the U.S. Census Bureau for the BLS. The CE data were averaged over a two-year period, 2011 and 2012 and are available for the nation, the 4 geographic regions of the country, and 18 metropolitan areas. The metropolitan area discussed in this release is Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton, Washington, which is comprised of Island, King, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish and Thurston Counties.

The survey consists of two components, a diary or recordkeeping survey, and an interview survey. The integrated data from the BLS Diary and Interview Surveys provide a complete accounting of consumer expenditures and income, which neither survey component alone is designed to do. Due to changes in the survey sample frame, metropolitan area data in this release are not directly comparable to those prior to 1996.

A consumer unit is defined as members of a household related by blood, marriage, adoption, or other legal arrangement; a single person living alone or sharing a household with others but who is financially independent; or two or more persons living together who share responsibility for at least 2 out of 3 major types of expenses – food, housing, and other expenses. The terms household or consumer unit are used interchangeably for convenience.

CE metropolitan area estimates are not comparative cost of living surveys, as neither the quantity nor the quality of goods and services has been held constant among areas. Differences may result from variations in demographic characteristics such as consumer unit size, age, preferences, income levels, etc. However, expenditure shares, or the percentage of a consumer unit's budget spent on a particular category, can be used to compare spending patterns across areas. Sample sizes for the metropolitan areas are much smaller than for the nation, so the U.S. estimates and year-to-year changes are more reliable than those for the metropolitan areas. Users should also keep in mind that prices for many goods and services have changed since the survey was conducted.

Expenditure shares for housing and transportation that are above or below that for the nation after testing for significance at the 95-percent confidence interval are also identified in charts 2 and 3 for the 18 metropolitan areas surveyed.

A value that is statistically different from another does not necessarily mean that the difference has economic or practical significance. Statistical significance is concerned with our ability to make confident statements about a universe based on a sample. It is entirely possible that a large difference between two values is not significantly different statistically, while a small difference is, since both the size and heterogeneity of the sample affect the relative error of the data being tested.

For additional technical and related information, see www.bls.gov/opub/hom/homch16.htm.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 800-877-8339.

Table 1. Percent distribution of average annual expenditures, United States and Seattle, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2011–2012

Category	United States	Seattle
Average annual expenditures.....	\$50,581	\$60,674
Percent distribution:.....	100.0	100.0
Food	12.9	12.8
Alcoholic beverages	0.9	1.0
Housing	33.3	34.1
Apparel and services.....	3.4	3.1
Transportation	17.1	15.7
Healthcare	6.8	6.2*
Entertainment	5.1	5.6
Personal care products and services	1.2	1.2
Reading	0.2	0.3*
Education	2.2	3.0
Tobacco products and smoking supplies.....	0.7	0.5*
Miscellaneous.....	1.6	1.6
Cash contributions.....	3.6	4.0
Personal insurance and pensions	10.9	10.8

*Statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level.

Note: Columns may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 2. Average annual expenditures and characteristics, United States and Seattle, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2011–2012

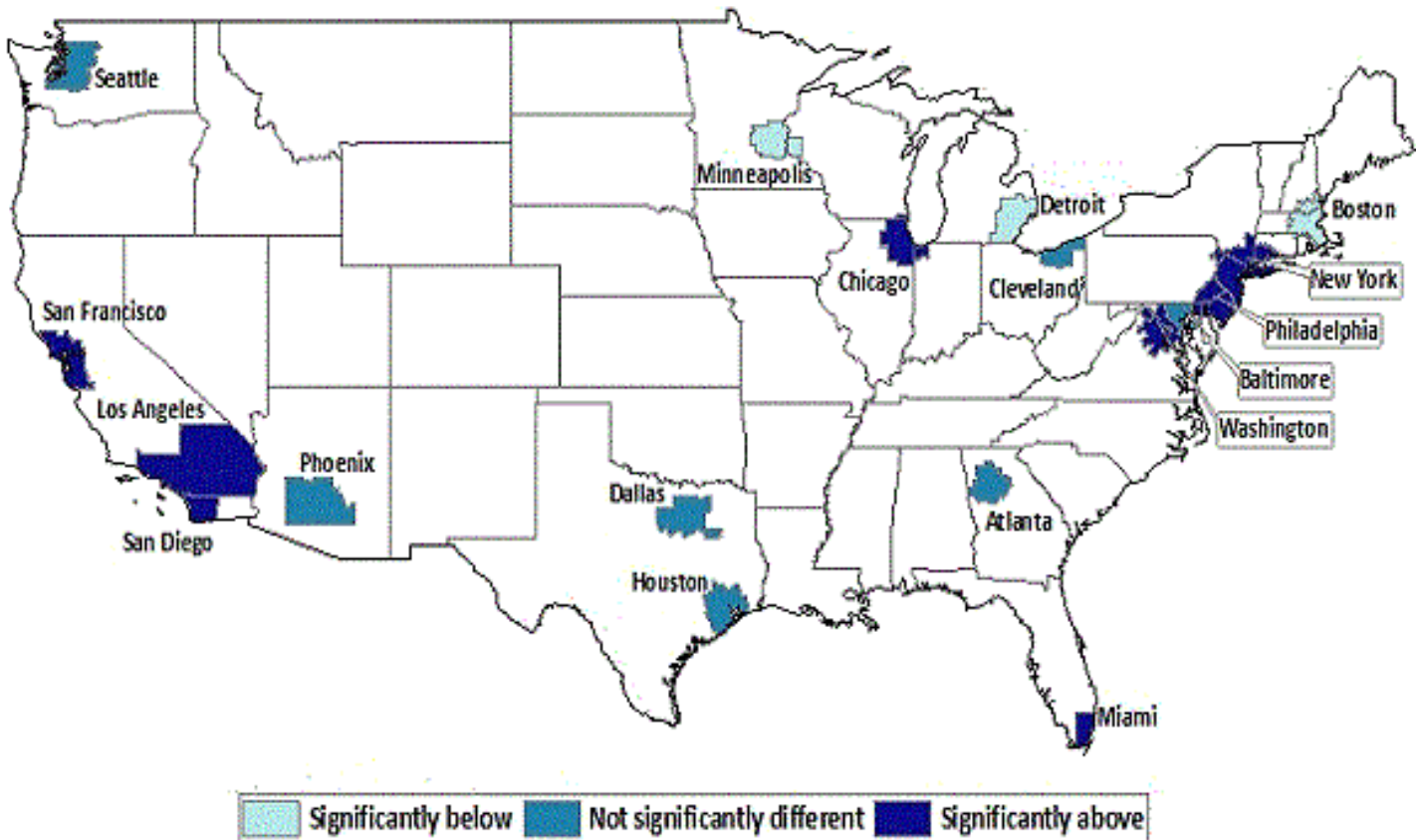
Category	United States	Seattle
Consumer unit characteristics:		
Income before taxes.....	\$64,649	\$74,072
Age of reference person.....	49.9	47.6
Average number in consumer unit:		
Persons	2.5	2.5
Children under 18.....	0.6	0.6
Persons 65 and over	0.3	0.3
Earners.....	1.3	1.3
Vehicles.....	1.9	2.3
Percent homeowner	65	61
Average annual expenditures:		
Average annual expenditures.....	\$50,581	\$60,674
Food	6,529	7,776
Food at home	3,880	4,580
Cereals and bakery products	534	625
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs.....	843	874
Dairy products	413	482
Fruits and vegetables	723	849
Other food at home	1,367	1,751
Food away from home.....	2,649	3,196
Alcoholic beverages	454	628
Housing	16,846	20,681
Shelter	9,858	13,123
Owned dwellings	6,101	8,038
Rented dwellings.....	3,109	3,842
Other lodging.....	648	1,242
Utilities, fuels, and public services.....	3,687	3,654
Household operations	1,141	1,283
Housekeeping supplies	612	710
Household furnishings and equipment.....	1,547	1,910
Apparel and services.....	1,738	1,901
Transportation	8,649	9,526
Vehicle purchases (net outlay)	2,942	3,234
Gasoline and motor oil	2,706	2,838
Other vehicle expenses.....	2,472	2,415
Public transportation.....	529	1,040
Healthcare	3,436	3,754
Entertainment	2,589	3,401
Personal care products and services	631	735
Reading	112	194
Education	1,130	1,790
Tobacco products and smoking supplies.....	341	284
Miscellaneous.....	802	999
Cash contributions.....	1,818	2,447
Personal insurance and pensions	5,508	6,558
Life and other personal insurance	335	356
Pensions and Social Security.....	5,173	6,202

Table 3. Percent share of average annual expenditures for housing, transportation, and food, United States and 18 metropolitan areas, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2011-2012

Area	Housing	Transportation	Food
United States	33.3	17.1	12.9
Atlanta	34.7	16.9	11.7*
Baltimore	33.8	13.7*	12.7
Boston	31.8*	14.8*	13.2
Chicago	34.9*	15.0*	12.3
Cleveland	31.9	17.8	12.3
Dallas	32.9	18.6	12.5
Detroit	31.7*	18.8	13.3
Houston	31.9	20.3*	12.5
Los Angeles	37.7*	16.0*	13.6*
Miami	38.4*	17.0	13.7
Minneapolis	31.8*	17.5	12.6
New York	39.7*	13.7*	12.4
Philadelphia	37.9*	14.4*	12.7
Phoenix	34.8	15.9	13.0
San Diego	38.5*	15.6	12.0
San Francisco	35.2*	14.2*	11.5*
Seattle	34.1	15.7	12.8
Washington	35.3*	15.0*	11.6*

* Statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level.

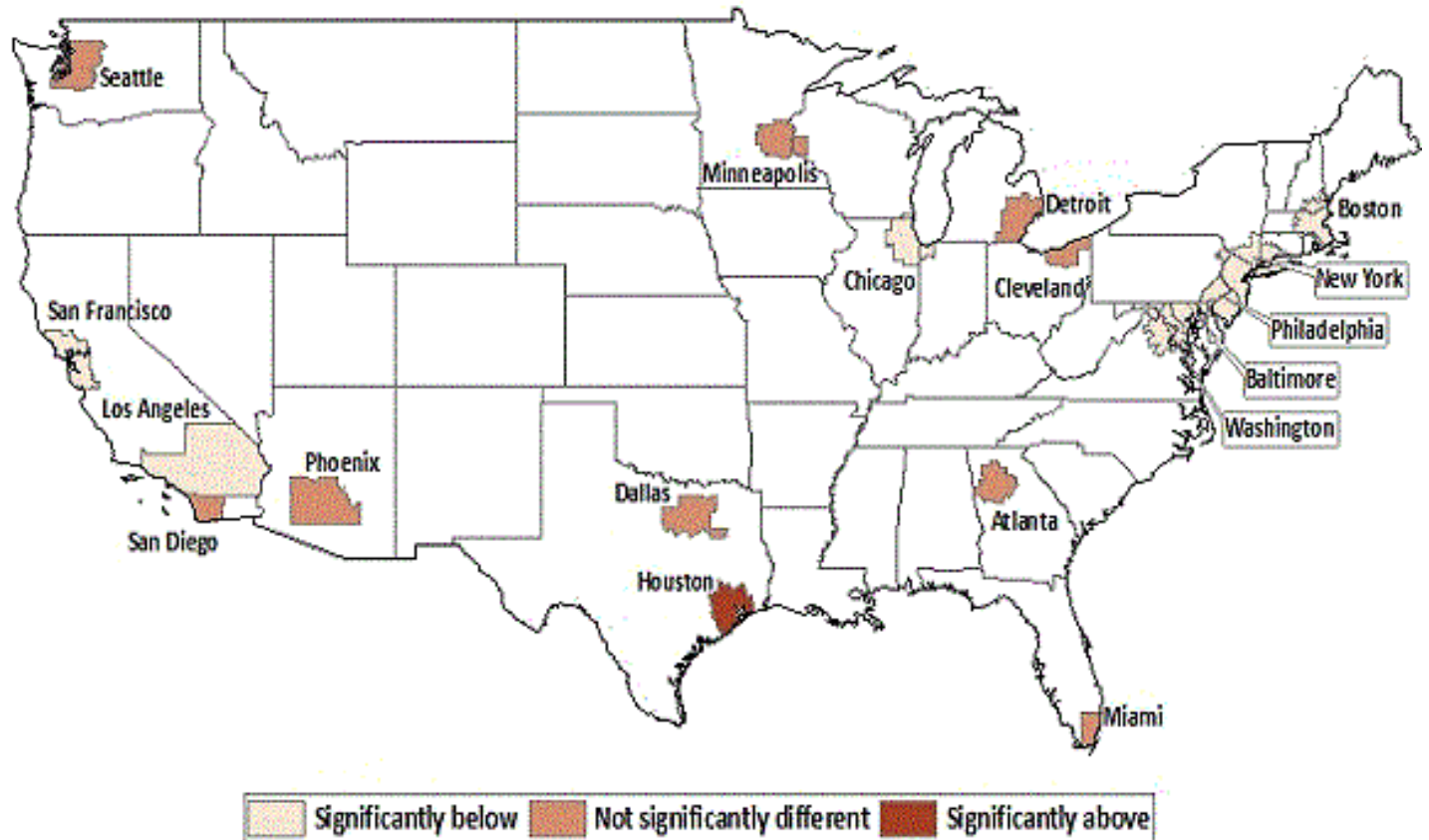
Chart 2. Expenditure shares spent on housing in 18 metropolitan statistical areas compared to the U.S. average, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2011-2012



Note: Statistical significance testing at the 95-percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Chart 3. Expenditure shares spent on transportation in 18 metropolitan statistical areas compared to the U.S. average, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2011-2012



Note: Statistical significance testing at the 95-percent confidence interval.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.