



For Release: Thursday, October 10, 2019

19-1811-SAN

WESTERN INFORMATION OFFICE: San Francisco, Calif.

Technical information: (415) 625-2270 BLSinfoSF@bls.gov www.bls.gov/regions/west

Media contact: (415) 625-2270

Consumer Expenditures for the San Diego Area: 2017–18

Households in the San Diego-Carlsbad, CA, metropolitan area spent an average of \$79,672 per year in 2017–18, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Assistant Commissioner for Regional Operations Richard Holden noted that this figure was significantly higher than the \$60,580 average expenditure level for households in the United States. San Diego-area households allocated their dollars similarly to the nation in five of the eight major categories, with three differing significantly from their respective U.S. averages. For example, the share of expenditures for healthcare, which accounted for 6.5 percent of the average household’s budget in the San Diego area, was significantly lower than the national average of 8.1 percent. (See [chart 1](#) and [table 1](#).)

Highlights of the San Diego area’s 2017–18 spending patterns:

• **Housing:** This was the largest expenditure category for San Diego-area households and averaged \$28,591. Housing accounted for 35.9 percent of the area’s household budget, significantly higher than the 33.0-percent U.S. average. (See [table 1.](#)) Housing expenditure shares among the 22 metropolitan areas nationwide for which data were available ranged from 39.4 percent in San Francisco to 30.1 percent in Detroit. (See [table 2.](#))

• **Transportation:** San Diego-area households spent 14.3 percent of their budget on transportation, not significantly different from the national average of 16.0 percent. Of the \$11,363 in annual transportation expenditures in San Diego, 85.8 percent was spent buying and maintaining private vehicles; this compared to the national average of 92.1 percent.

• **Food:** The portion of a San Diego household's budget spent on food, 13.3 percent, was not significantly different from the 12.9-percent U.S. average. San Diego-area households spent \$5,580, or 52.6 percent, of their food dollars on food at home and \$5,033 (47.4 percent) on food away from home. In comparison, the average U.S. household spent 56.4 percent of its food budget on food at home and 43.6 percent on food away from home.

Additional information

Data in this release are from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE), which the U.S. Census Bureau conducts for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The data in this release were averaged over a 2-year period, 2017 and 2018.

A household in the CE survey is defined as a consumer unit which includes families, single persons living alone or sharing a household with others but who are financially independent, or two or more persons living together who share expenses. The terms household or consumer unit are used interchangeably for convenience.

Differences in spending among metropolitan areas may reflect differences in the cost of living, but they also may reflect other causes. Spending differences may result from different consumer preferences or variations in demographic characteristics, such as household size, age, or income levels. However, expenditure shares, or the percentage of a household'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.

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. A large difference between two values may not be statistically significant, while a small difference could be significant; both the sample size and the variation among the values in the sample affect the relative error of the estimates.

For additional technical and related information, see <https://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/cex/home.htm>. Data for the nation, the four geographic regions of the U.S., and 22 metropolitan areas nationwide are available at www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm. Metropolitan definitions used in the survey are available at www.bls.gov/cex/ce_msa_201516.htm. The metropolitan area discussed in this release is the San Diego-Carlsbad, CA Metropolitan Statistical Area which comprises San Diego County in California. Metropolitan area news releases for the Consumer Expenditure Survey are available at www.bls.gov/regions/subjects/consumer-spending.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. Average annual expenditures, characteristics, and percent distributions, United States and San Diego metropolitan area, 2017–18

| Category | United States | San Diego |
|---|---------------|-----------|
| Consumer unit characteristics: | | |
| Income before taxes | \$76,118 | \$100,327 |
| Age of reference person | 51 | 49.2 |
| Average number in consumer unit: | | |
| People | 2.5 | 2.7 |
| Children under 18 | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| Adults 65 and over | 0.4 | 0.4 |
| Earners | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Vehicles | 1.9 | 2.2 |
| Percent homeowner | 63 | 55 |
| Average annual expenditures | \$60,580 | \$79,672* |
| Percent distribution | | |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Food | 12.9 | 13.3 |
| Alcoholic beverages | 0.9 | 1.5* |
| Housing | 33.0 | 35.9* |
| Apparel and services | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| Transportation | 16.0 | 14.3 |
| Healthcare | 8.1 | 6.5* |
| Entertainment | 5.3 | 5.7 |
| Personal care products and services | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Reading | 0.2 | 0.2 |
| Education | 2.4 | 1.6* |
| Tobacco products and smoking supplies | 0.6 | 0.2* |
| Miscellaneous | 1.7 | 2.1 |
| Cash contributions | 3.1 | 2.3* |
| Personal insurance and pensions | 11.6 | 12.0 |

Note: An asterisk (*) represents a statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level.

Table 2. Percent share of average annual expenditures for housing, transportation, and food, United States and 22 metropolitan areas, 2017–18

| Area | Housing | Transportation | Food |
|---------------------------|---------|----------------|-------|
| United States..... | 33.0 | 16.0 | 12.9 |
| Anchorage..... | 31.5 | 15.7 | 12.6 |
| Atlanta..... | 32.8 | 16.3 | 11.5* |
| Baltimore..... | 32.3 | 15.8 | 11.9 |
| Boston..... | 37.5* | 12.0* | 12.1 |
| Chicago..... | 35.3* | 13.2* | 13.3 |
| Dallas-Fort Worth..... | 36.7* | 16.8 | 11.1* |
| Denver..... | 34.2 | 15.2 | 12.4 |
| Detroit..... | 30.1* | 19.3* | 12.3 |
| Honolulu..... | 38.0* | 10.9* | 18.1* |
| Houston..... | 34.1 | 15.9 | 11.8* |
| Los Angeles..... | 35.7* | 13.6* | 13.2 |
| Miami..... | 37.3* | 15.3 | 11.8 |
| Minneapolis-St. Paul..... | 33.6 | 12.9* | 11.6* |
| New York..... | 39.0* | 12.0* | 12.3 |
| Philadelphia..... | 32.8 | 15.6 | 12.6 |
| Phoenix..... | 31.0 | 19.0 | 11.7 |
| San Diego..... | 35.9* | 14.3 | 13.3 |
| San Francisco..... | 39.4* | 11.3* | 12.6 |
| Seattle..... | 34.5 | 14.1 | 13.4 |
| St. Louis..... | 32.9 | 15.1 | 11.7 |
| Tampa..... | 35.5 | 15.3 | 14.3 |
| Washington, D.C..... | 33.9 | 14.4 | 12.3 |

Note: An asterisk (*) represents a statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level.