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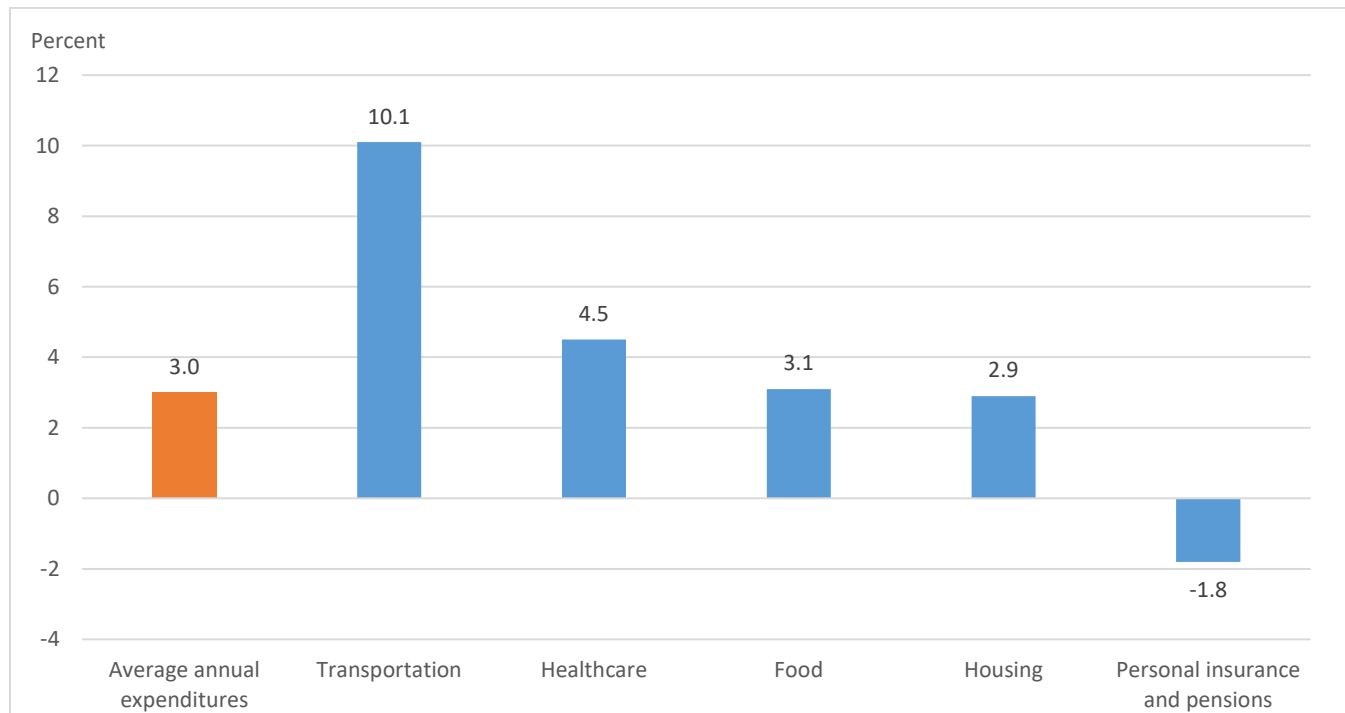
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## CONSUMER EXPENDITURES - 2019

Average annual expenditures for all consumer units<sup>1</sup> in 2019 were \$63,036, a 3.0-percent increase from 2018, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. (See chart 1.) During the same period, the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U) rose 1.8 percent and average income before taxes increased 5.4 percent.

**Chart 1. Annual percent change in expenditures and selected components, 2019**



### Vehicle Insurance Spending

In 2019, the data source used to estimate spending on vehicle insurance switched from the Diary Survey to the Interview Survey. It was determined that the Interview Survey provided a better measure of spending for this category. This change in methodology and its impact on the estimate is explained in greater detail at [www.bls.gov/cex/2019-vehicle-insurance.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/2019-vehicle-insurance.htm).

<sup>1</sup> Consumer units include 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 major expenses.

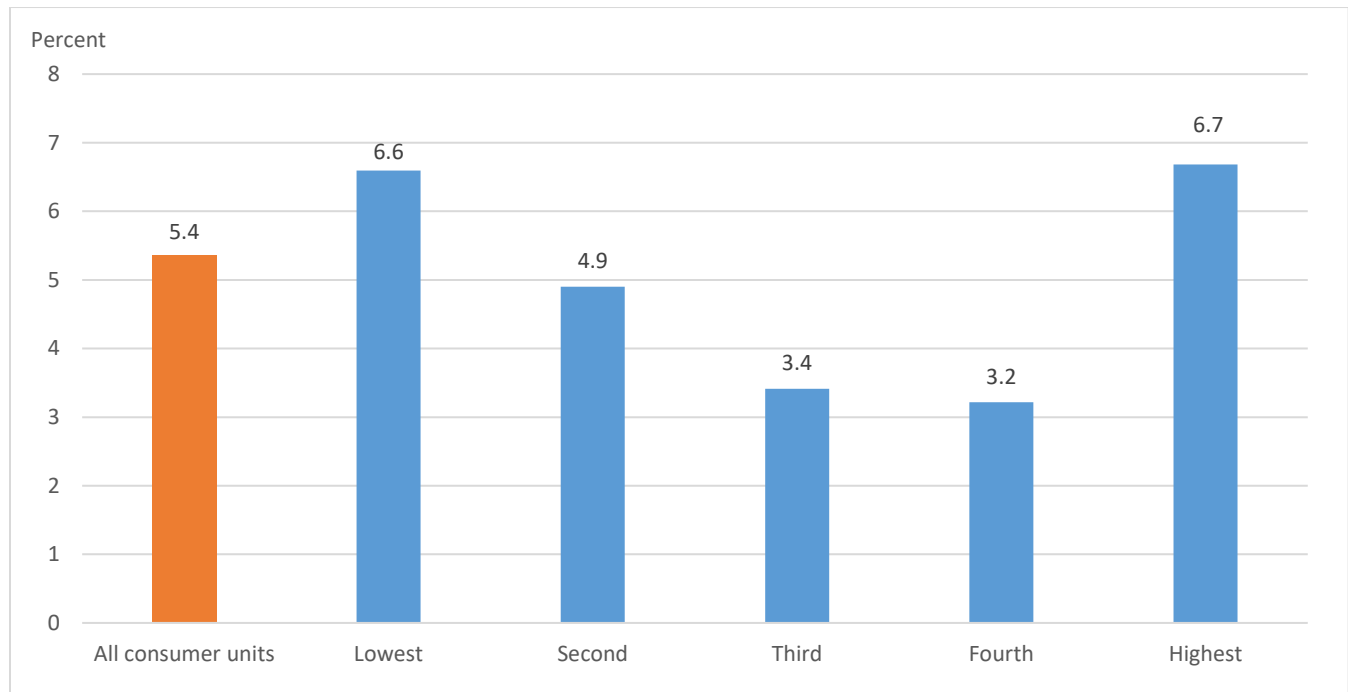
In total expenditures, 8 of the 10 largest components of household spending increased during 2019. (See table A.) The 10.1-percent rise in transportation spending was the largest percentage increase among all major components, followed by a 5.7-percent rise in cash contributions. The largest decline in spending was entertainment (-4.2 percent), followed by personal insurance and pensions (-1.8 percent).

### **Selected spending changes, 2019**

- Transportation expenditures increased 10.1 percent from 2018 to 2019 to \$10,742. This change was largely driven by vehicle insurance spending. Vehicle insurance spending showed a sizable increase (58.3 percent), in part due to a change in source selection from the Diary Survey to the Interview Survey, which was determined to better measure spending for this item in 2019. (For more information on how this change to vehicle insurance spending impacts the year-over-year comparison of this category, see the methodology section below). Average expenditures for vehicle purchases were up 10.5 percent, and average household expenditures for gasoline, other fuels, and motor oil decreased 0.7 percent over the period.
- Cash contributions were up 5.7 percent in 2019 after a modest 0.8-percent increase in 2018.
- Healthcare expenditures were up 4.5 percent in 2019, following a modest 0.8-percent increase in 2018. The largest component of healthcare, health insurance, was up 3.6 percent, following a 0.3-percent decrease in the preceding year.
- Spending on food increased 3.1 percent over this period. The increase was driven by both food at home spending, up 4.0 percent, and food away from home spending, up 1.9 percent.
- Housing expenditures increased 2.9 percent in 2019. Expenditures on rented dwellings were up 4.3 percent, while expenditures on owned dwellings were up 1.8 percent. In addition to rent, expenditures on rented dwellings include rent as pay, and maintenance, insurance, and other expenses. The owned dwellings category includes interest on mortgages, interest on home equity loans, property taxes and insurance, refinancing charges, homeowners' insurance, and expenses for maintenance and repairs.
- Expenditures on education were up 2.6 percent in 2019 after a decrease of 5.6 percent in 2018.
- Personal insurance and pensions spending decreased 1.8 percent in 2019, compared to an increase of 7.8 percent in 2018. This was driven by a 2.7-percent decrease in contributions to pensions and Social Security.
- Entertainment expenditures decreased 4.2 percent in 2019. The decrease was driven by a 36.6-percent drop in other entertainment supplies, equipment, and services, as well as a 9.1-percent decrease in toys, hobbies, and playground equipment.

Average annual income before taxes rose 5.4 percent in 2019, after increasing 6.9 percent in 2018. (See chart 2.) Income increased within each of the five income quintiles, which are based on the weighted distribution of income before taxes among consumer units. For the highest quintile, average income increased 6.7 percent in 2019. For the lowest quintile, the increase (6.6 percent) was nearly identical. The middle quintiles experienced smaller percentage increases (3.2 percent to 4.9 percent). In 2019, the lower income bounds for each quintile were \$22,488 for the second quintile, \$43,432 for the third quintile, \$72,234 for the fourth quintile, and \$120,729 for the highest quintile. (For more information on how income before taxes is defined, see the methodology section below).

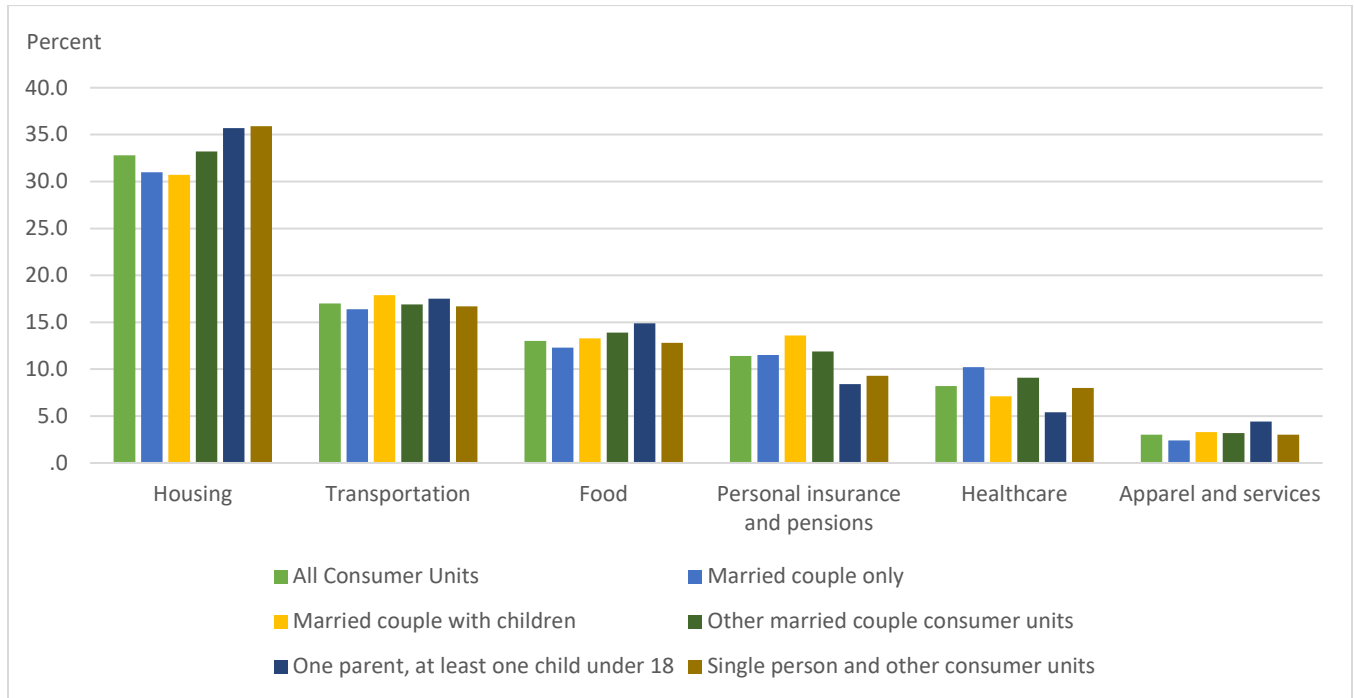
**Chart 2. Annual percent change in average pretax income by income quintile, 2019**



**Spending by composition of consumer unit, 2019**

Data from the Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE) indicate how consumers allocate their spending among the various components of total expenditures. Chart 3 and table B compare the shares allocated to selected expenditures by composition of consumer units. For example, married-couple-only consumer units allocated the largest share of total expenditures to healthcare (10.2 percent), while single parent consumer units allocated the smallest share (5.4 percent). Single parent consumer units allocated the highest share of all groups to food (14.9 percent). Single person and other consumer units allocated the highest share of all groups to housing (35.9 percent). Married-couple-with-children consumer units allocated the highest share of all groups to transportation (17.9 percent). In contrast, married couples only allocated the least amount to food (12.3 percent) and transportation (16.4 percent), and the second least to housing (31.0 percent). Married couples with children allocated the smallest share to housing (30.7 percent).

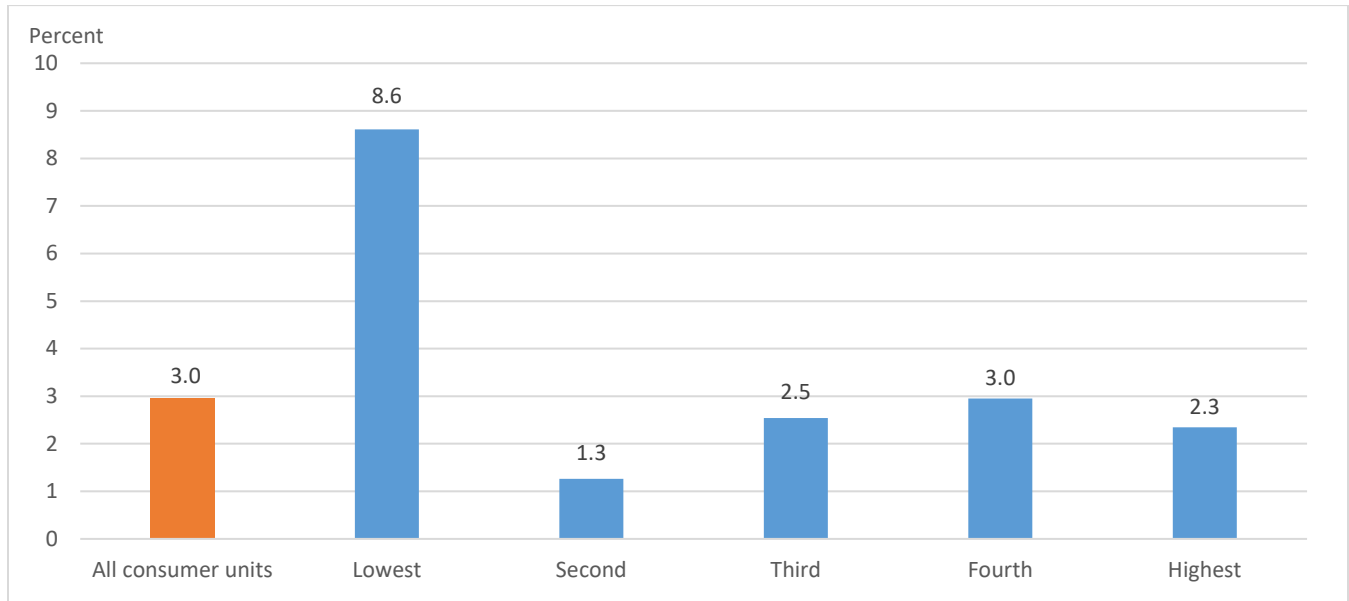
**Chart 3. Shares of average annual expenditures on selected major components by composition of consumer unit, 2019**



**Spending by income quintile, 2019**

Chart 4 and table C show the annual percent change in expenditures by income quintile. Overall spending increased in all five quintiles, ranging from 1.3 percent in the second quintile to 8.6 percent in the lowest quintile. Among components of spending, food at home, housing, transportation, and cash contributions increased for all five quintiles. Healthcare expenditures rose in four of five quintiles. Expenditures for food away from home and apparel and services increased in three of five quintiles. Entertainment, personal insurance and pensions, and all other expenditures decreased in four of five quintiles.

**Chart 4. Annual percent change in average expenditures by income quintile, 2019**



**Table A. Average income and expenditures of all consumer units, 2017-19**

Item	2017	2018	2019	Percent change	
				2017-18	2018-19
Number of consumer units (000's).....	130,001	131,439	132,242	1.1	0.6
Average income before taxes.....	\$73,573	\$78,635	\$82,852	6.9	5.4
Average annual expenditures.....	60,060	61,224	63,036	1.9	3.0
Food.....	7,729	7,923	8,169	2.5	3.1
Food at home.....	4,363	4,464	4,643	2.3	4.0
Food away from home.....	3,365	3,459	3,526	2.8	1.9
Housing.....	19,884	20,091	20,679	1.0	2.9
Shelter.....	11,895	11,747	12,190	-1.2	3.8
Owned dwellings.....	6,947	6,678	6,797	-3.9	1.8
Rented dwellings.....	4,167	4,249	4,432	2.0	4.3
Apparel and services.....	1,833	1,866	1,883	1.8	0.9
Transportation.....	9,576	9,761	10,742	1.9	10.1
Vehicle purchases.....	4,054	3,975	4,394	-1.9	10.5
Gasoline, other fuels, and motor oil.....	1,968	2,109	2,094	7.2	-0.7
Healthcare.....	4,928	4,968	5,193	0.8	4.5
Health insurance.....	3,414	3,405	3,529	-0.3	3.6
Entertainment.....	3,203	3,226	3,050	0.7	-4.2
Personal care products and services.....	762	768	786	0.8	2.3
Education.....	1,491	1,407	1,443	-5.6	2.6
Cash contributions.....	1,873	1,888	1,995	0.8	5.7
Personal insurance and pensions.....	6,771	7,296	7,165	7.8	-1.8
Pensions and Social Security.....	6,353	6,831	6,645	7.5	-2.7
All other expenditures.....	2,010	2,030	1,891	1.0	-6.8

Note: Only selected subcategories are shown; as a result the subcategories do not sum to their respective major item category.

**Table B. Shares of average expenditures on selected major components by composition of consumer unit, 2019**

Item	All Consumer Units	Married couple only	Married couple with children	Other married couple consumer units	One parent, at least one child under 18	Single person and other consumer units
Housing	32.8	31.0	30.7	33.2	35.7	35.9
Transportation	17.0	16.4	17.9	16.9	17.5	16.7
Food	12.9	12.3	13.3	13.9	14.9	12.8
Personal insurance and pensions	11.4	11.5	13.6	13.6	8.4	9.3
Healthcare	8.2	10.2	7.1	9.1	5.4	8.0
Apparel and services	3.0	2.4	3.3	3.2	4.4	3.0

**Table C. Change in average annual expenditures of major components by income quintile, 2019**

Item	Lowest Quintile		Second Quintile		Third Quintile		Fourth Quintile		Highest Quintile	
	Over-the-year change		Over-the-year change		Over-the-year change		Over-the-year change		Over-the-year change	
	Dollar	Percent	Dollar	Percent	Dollar	Percent	Dollar	Percent	Dollar	Percent
Total.....	2,273	8.6	504	1.3	1,316	2.5	2,042	3.0	2,790	2.3
Food.....	291	7.1	19	0.3	547	7.9	-273	-2.9	639	4.8
At home.....	81	3.0	52	1.4	341	8.4	117	2.3	302	4.4
Away from home.....	210	15.0	-33	-1.5	207	7.2	-390	-9.1	336	5.2
Housing.....	978	9.3	512	3.6	215	1.2	394	1.8	801	2.3
Apparel and services.....	69	9.2	-34	-2.7	11	0.7	142	6.8	-109	-3.0
Transportation.....	863	23.2	399	5.9	1,214	14.1	1,622	14.4	779	4.2
Healthcare.....	380	15.4	-47	-1.2	57	1.2	170	2.9	550	7.0
Entertainment.....	-260	-19.0	-338	-15.5	-274	-10.8	-106	-3.0	296	4.5
Cash contributions.....	16	2.5	48	4.3	1	0.1	318	17.1	152	3.4
Personal insurance and pensions.....	-97	-13.5	-48	-2.3	-314	-6.3	29	0.3	-251	-1.2
All other expenditures.....	33	1.6	-7	-0.3	-141	-4.3	-254	-5.9	-67	-0.8

## **Additional Information**

### **Data Products**

Data from the Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE) include income and demographic characteristics in addition to expenditures for consumers. Tables with more expenditure details than those presented here are available at [www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm). Published tables provide 2019 CE data by standard classifications that include income quintile, income decile, income class, age of reference person, generation of reference person, size of consumer unit, number of earners, composition of consumer unit, Census region of residence, Census division of residence, housing tenure, race, Hispanic origin, occupation, highest education level of any member, and type of area (urban-rural). These annual tables include means, shares, and standard errors. Other published tables available on the website include expenditures by age, region, size, or gender cross-tabulated by income before taxes and other demographic variables. Historical published tables back to 1984 and selected metropolitan area tabulations are also available.

Standard CE midyear tables, which are similar to the annual tables but cover the third quarter of a given year through the second quarter of the next year, are available at [www.bls.gov/cex/midyear.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/midyear.htm). The most recent set covers July 2018 through June 2019.

A table showing results for all consumer units including the most detailed breakdown of expenditures, as well as other research tables (e.g., those showing expenditures by higher-than-standard income groups or by selected states) are available at [www.bls.gov/cex/csxresearchtables.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxresearchtables.htm). Unpublished, but releasable, tables of detailed expenditures by demographic can be obtained by sending a request to [cexinfo@bls.gov](mailto:cexinfo@bls.gov).

The CE LABSTAT database provides tools to access historical CE data (1984 onward) to produce trends in expenditures by demographic groups of interest, and can be found at [www.bls.gov/cex/data.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/data.htm). Documentation on how to use the CE LABSTAT database is available at [www.bls.gov/cex/ce-labstat-getting-started-guide.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/cex/ce-labstat-getting-started-guide.pdf).

The 1980 through 2019 CE public-use microdata, including Interview Survey data, Diary Survey data, and paradata (information about the data collection process), are available on the CE website at [www.bls.gov/cex/pumd\\_data.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd_data.htm). The Interview Survey files contain detailed expenditure data in two different formats: MTBI files that present monthly values in an item-coding framework based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) pricing scheme, and EXPN files that organize expenditures by the section of the Interview questionnaire in which they are collected. Expenditure values on EXPN files cover different time periods depending on the specific questions asked, and the files also contain relevant non-expenditure information not found on the MTBI files. For those interested in examining broader categories of expenditures (e.g., housing or owned dwellings) rather than detailed items (e.g., mortgage interest or property taxes), summary variables are also available on the FMLI files.

Documentation of the CE public-use microdata, its conventions, files, sample code, and methodology are available at [www.bls.gov/cex/pumd-getting-started-guide.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd-getting-started-guide.htm). Researchers interested in learning more about both the Interview and Diary files, and in receiving “hands on” training in their usage, are encouraged to attend the annual CE Microdata Users’ Workshop ([www.bls.gov/cex/csxannualworkshop.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxannualworkshop.htm)). The next event is scheduled for July 21-23, 2021, and is free of charge to attendees. (See Upcoming Events for more information.)

## **Publications**

Recent CE-specific articles are available in the Beyond the Numbers publication series at [www.bls.gov/cex/csxwebarticles.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxwebarticles.htm), and the CE Data Comparisons section of [www.bls.gov/cex/cecomparison.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/cecomparison.htm). The BLS Beyond the Numbers publication series provides analyses of topical economic issues and long-term spending trends, and the data comparison articles examine CE data benchmarked to other sources. Additional methodological and analytical articles using CE data will be published in these series as they become available.

The CE program also produces occasional articles for publication in the Monthly Labor Review (MLR) and Spotlight on Statistics series. The flagship publication of the BLS, the MLR publishes scholarly articles on many topics in labor economics. Items in the Spotlight series are meant to be shorter pieces accessible to the general public. A Spotlight generally includes a series of charts or graphs accompanied by a brief explanation of their relevance to the analysis. At the time of publication of this release, the most recent analytical MLR article that features CE data (June 2019) is “Not fun for young and old alike: how the youngest and oldest consumers have fared in recession and recovery” ([www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2019/article/not-fun-for-young-and-old-alike-how-the-youngest-and-oldest-consumers-have-fared-in-recession-and-recovery.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2019/article/not-fun-for-young-and-old-alike-how-the-youngest-and-oldest-consumers-have-fared-in-recession-and-recovery.htm)); the most recent Spotlight (April 2020) is “Meal Appeal: Patterns of Expenditures on Food away from Home” ([www.bls.gov/spotlight/2020/food-away-from-home/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2020/food-away-from-home/home.htm)).

The 2019 Data Quality Profile, which reports quality metrics and indicators for the Interview and Diary Surveys regarding measurement, nonresponse, and processing error, will be available shortly after this release at [www.bls.gov/cex/cecomparison.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/cecomparison.htm).

The 2019 Annual Report, which includes more detailed information on spending patterns, will be published in late 2020. (See [www.bls.gov/cex/csxreport.htm#annual](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxreport.htm#annual).)

For a listing of links to other published reports featuring CE data, see the CE publications page at [www.bls.gov/cex/csxreport.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxreport.htm).

## **Survey Materials**

Also available are the Diary Survey questionnaire and a modified version of the computer assisted personal interview (CAPI) instrument used to collect the Interview Survey data at [www.bls.gov/cex/csxsurveyforms.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxsurveyforms.htm).

## **Methodology**

The change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U) cited in the text was calculated as the percentage change between the 12-month average CPI-U for all items from January to December 2018 (251.107) and the 12-month average CPI-U for all items from January to December 2019 (255.657).

Income before taxes includes the following components: Wages and salaries; self-employment income; Social Security; private and government retirement; interest, dividends, rental income, and other property income; unemployment, workers' compensation and veterans' benefits; public assistance, supplemental security income, and food stamps; regular contributions for support; and other income.

Income quintiles are constructed by sorting consumer units in the sample from lowest to highest income before taxes. The population weight (i.e., the number of consumer units within the population that each sampled unit represents) associated with each consumer is summed with those of the consumer units preceding it in the sorted set, resulting in a cumulative frequency count. The first quintile includes all consumer units for which the cumulative frequency count is less than or equal to 20 percent of the



number of consumer units in the population. The second quintile includes all those consumer units for which the cumulative frequency count is greater than 20 percent, but less than or equal to 40 percent of the population, and so forth. Because there were approximately 132 million consumer units in the population in 2019, each quintile includes over 26 million consumer units.

For expenditures collected in both surveys, the CE program uses a statistical method to select the source used in publication. In 2019, while vehicle insurance spending showed a sizable year-over-year increase of 58.3 percent, it is important to note that the 2018 estimate was sourced from the Diary Survey and the 2019 estimate was sourced from the Interview Survey. As noted, this source change was due to the determination of better measurement of vehicle insurance spending in the Interview Survey in 2019. For comparison, the year-over-year change for the Diary Survey estimate was -15.1 percent; and the year-over-year change for the Interview Survey estimate was 4.0 percent. Had the source for vehicle insurance spending remained the Diary Survey in 2019, the year-over-year change in the estimate of transportation expenditures would have been 2.7 percent, instead of 10.1 percent. For more information about the source selection process, see [www.bls.gov/cex/anthology11/csxanth3.pdf](http://www.bls.gov/cex/anthology11/csxanth3.pdf).

Composition of the consumer unit is the classification of interview families according to: (1) relationship of other family members to the reference person; (2) age of the children of the reference person; and (3) combination of relationship to the reference person and age of the children. Stepchildren and adopted children are included with the reference person's own children. Definitions of CE terms are in the CE glossary at [www.bls.gov/cex/csxgloss.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxgloss.htm).

Information on the methodology used to calculate and collect CE data is available at [www.bls.gov/opub/hom/cex/home.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/cex/home.htm). General articles and research papers using CE data are in the CE research library at [www.bls.gov/cex/research\\_papers/research-paper-catalog.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/research_papers/research-paper-catalog.htm).

## **Upcoming Events**

Each year, the CE program sponsors a symposium and a microdata users' workshop. Both events are free, although registration is required.

The CE Symposium focuses on survey methodology, and typically features invited presenters from the CE program, other BLS programs, and researchers who are not affiliated with the BLS. The symposium typically meets on one day.

The CE Microdata Users' Workshop is a three-day event that combines practical "hands on" training in use of the data (Interview and Diary) with presentations from users who are not affiliated with the BLS. The practical training builds from an introduction to the data files and structure on the first day to expert topics on the final day. Presentations from researchers are selected from those who answer the call for presenters. (See [www.bls.gov/cex/ce-2021-presenters.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/ce-2021-presenters.htm)). As with registration, there is no fee for submitting a proposal to present in answer to the call.

Both events are held in the same week of July. The next CE Symposium will be held July 20, 2021. The next CE Microdata Users' Workshop will be held July 21-23, 2021. More information about these events is available on the CE website ([www.bls.gov/cex/csxannualworkshop.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxannualworkshop.htm)). Reports on these events are also published in the Monthly Labor Review (MLR). The most recent report available at the time of publication of this news release describes the 2019 events ([www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2020/article/consumer-expenditure-survey-methods-symposium-and-microdata-users-workshop-2019.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2020/article/consumer-expenditure-survey-methods-symposium-and-microdata-users-workshop-2019.htm)). Reports on earlier events are available on the CE MLR publications webpage (<https://www.bls.gov/cex/csxart.htm>). Reports on subsequent events (2020 onward) will be posted at a later date.

## **Contact Information**

For further information, contact the Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Office of Prices and Living Conditions at (202) 691-6900 or by email at [cexinfo@bls.gov](mailto:cexinfo@bls.gov). Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: (202) 691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 1 (800) 877-8339.