

Introduction

USDA periodically publishes reports on food expenditures by U.S. urban households. This report continues the tradition. Previous versions were issued in 1985, 1987, 1990, 1991, 1994, and 2001. Like the earlier versions, this report presents data on urban food expenditures by selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

Data on per capita food expenditures enable researchers to determine the similarities and disparities in the spending habits of households of differing sizes, races, incomes, geographic areas, and other socioeconomic and demographic features. This information is valuable for assessing existing market conditions, product distribution patterns, consumer buying habits, consumer living conditions, and, when combined with demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, anticipated consumption trends. Researchers may also use the data to develop typical market baskets of food for special population groups, such as the elderly. These market baskets may, in turn, be used to develop price indices tailored to the consumption patterns of these population groups.

Tabulations in this report are based on data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE) conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). The tabulations provide more food item detail than is available in BLS publications or news releases. The CE contains the most recent and comprehensive data available on food spending by U.S. urban households. Note that beginning with the 2004 survey, BLS now imputes all missing income data. In a strict sense, 2003 and 2004 income data are not comparable other than mean values because of the methodology change.