



Estimating the State-Level Food Expenditure Series

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What Is the Issue?

The USDA, Economic Research Service's (USDA, ERS) Food Expenditure Series (FES) is a comprehensive measure of the total value of food acquired in the United States over time, by outlet and product type, and by final purchasers and users. The FES provides users with data to evaluate changes in food spending and its composition at the national level. This report presents methodology and source data used to generate State-level FES estimates. The newly developed State-level FES provides information about consumer food acquisitions and spending behavior across States and time and can improve the understanding of whether certain policies or shocks (e.g., economic recessions, tax policies, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic) have different effects on food spending at the State level.



What Did the Study Find?

The State-level FES shows several notable trends and cross-State variations in food spending:

- In 2019, Texas recorded the median State-wide total food spending per capita at \$5,218, while the State with the highest total food spending per capita was Colorado and the lowest was Arkansas (\$6,651 versus \$4,030, respectively).
 - The median State-wide food-at-home (FAH) spending per capita was \$2,448 (New Jersey), while FAH spending per capita was the highest in Maine and the lowest in Washington, DC (\$3,587 versus \$1,219, respectively).
 - The median State-wide food-away-from-home (FAFH) spending per capita was \$2,721 (Tennessee), while FAFH spending per capita was the highest in Washington, DC (\$4,774) and the lowest in Mississippi (\$2,030).

ERS is a primary source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.

- Between 1997 and 2019, the median change in inflation-adjusted total food spending per capita was 29 percent (Missouri); the largest increase was 66 percent (Rhode Island) and the largest decrease at 29 percent was in Washington, DC.
 - The median change in inflation-adjusted FAH spending per capita was 15 percent (Florida). Rhode Island spending increased the most at 64 percent, and Washington, DC decreased the most at 41 percent. Six other States also saw decreases in inflation-adjusted FAH spending per capita.
 - The median change in inflation-adjusted FAFH spending per capita was 49 percent (Texas). Inflation-adjusted FAFH spending per capita increased the most in Vermont at 74 percent and decreased the most in Washington, DC at 25 percent.
- In 2019, 50 percent or more of food spending went toward FAFH in 36 States plus Washington, DC.
 - The median FAFH share in 2019 was 52.3 percent in Arkansas, with the highest share in Washington, DC at 79.7 percent and the second highest share in Hawaii at 63.6 percent. The lowest FAFH share was in Maine at 44.7 percent, followed by Iowa at 45.3 percent.

How Was the Study Conducted?

The State-level FES follows a similar methodology to that used in the national level but with a different underlying dataset. The national-level estimates are based primarily on food sales reported in the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census's Economic Census, which is published every 5 years and uses three annual surveys to interpolate between years and extrapolate lagged data forward. The State-level FES estimates are based largely on sales reported in the National Establishment Time Series Database. The database provides time-series data on establishments across all sectors, including grocery stores and food service outlets. To make the national- and State-level estimates comparable, the State-level estimates are benchmarked to the FES at the national level each year.