

Definitions

Population

Population—The U.S. civilian noninstitutional urban population, as well as that portion of the institutional population living in the following group quarters: boarding houses; housing facilities for students and workers; staff units in hospitals and homes for the aged, infirm, or needy; permanent living quarters in hotels and motels; and mobile home parks.

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)—Except in New England, a county or group of contiguous counties that contains at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more or "twin cities" with a combined population of at least 50,000. In addition to a county or counties containing such a city or cities, contiguous counties are included in an MSA if, according to certain criteria, they are essentially metropolitan in character and are socially and economically integrated with the central city. In New England, MSAs consist of towns or cities rather than counties.

Urban population—All persons living in MSAs and in urbanized areas and urban places of 2,500 or more people outside of MSAs. The term "other urban" is used here to describe the urban population living outside of MSAs.

Student population—Students living in college or university housing, usually dormitories.

Primary sampling unit (PSU)—Usually a county or group of contiguous counties, except in certain areas of the Northeast where a PSU is a cluster of towns. A PSU may include both urban and rural areas as well as farm and nonfarm areas.

Geographic regions—Data are presented for four major regions: Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. Consumer units are classified by these regions according to the address at which the household was residing during the time of its participation in the diary survey. These regions comprise the following States:

- *Northeast*—Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.
- *Midwest*—Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.
- *South*—Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia.
- *West*—Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Consumer Unit (Household)

Consumer unit—The basic reporting unit for the diary survey. A consumer unit (CU) comprises (1) all members of a particular household who are related by blood, marriage, adoption, or other legal arrangement, such as a foster child; (2) a financially independent person living alone or sharing a household with others, living as a roomer in a private home or lodging house, or living in permanent quarters in a hotel or motel; or (3) two or more persons living together who pool their income to make joint expenditure decisions. This report treats each consumer unit as a household. However, it should be noted that in reality a household may contain more than one consumer unit, such as grandparents or in-laws who live independently along with another consumer unit.

Householder (or reference person)—The first household member mentioned by the respondent when instructed to "Start with the name of the person, or one of the persons, who owns or rents the home." The relationship of other CU members is determined with respect to this person.

Size of household—The number of persons who normally make up the CU at the sample address.

Age of householder—The actual age of the householder at the time the diary is placed in the household.

Number of wage earners—The number of all CU members, age 14 and older, who report having worked at least 1 week during the 12 months prior to the interview date. This measure will tend to overstate the number of wage earners employed on a regular basis.

Number of vehicles—The number of automobiles, trucks, and other vehicles owned by all members of the unit, including vehicles used partially for business but excluding those used entirely for business.

Income

Total income—The combined income earned by all CU members age 14 or older in the 12-month period prior to the last day of participation in the survey. The components of income are wages and salaries, net business and farm income, Social Security and other pension income, interest, dividends and other asset income, and other income. Other income includes (1) supplemental security income paid by Federal, State, and local welfare agencies to low-income persons who are age 65 or older, blind, or disabled; (2) income from unemployment compensation; (3) income from workers' compensation and veterans' payments, including education benefits but excluding military retirement; (4) public assistance or welfare, including money received from job-training grants; (5) alimony and child support as well as any regular contributions from people outside the CU; (6) income from the care of foster children, cash scholarships, fellowships, or stipends not based on working; and (7) the value of food stamps.

Complete income reporting—A distinction between complete and incomplete income reporting prior to the 2004 survey, based on whether the respondent provides information on major sources of income, such as wages and salaries, self-employment, and Social Security income. Even complete income reporters may not provide a full accounting of all income from all sources. Income tabulations in this publication for 2003 are based only on CUs with complete income data. The definition of "complete income reporting" used in the 2003 survey differs from the 1972-73 definition. A CU reporting zero income in 1972-73 was considered a complete respondent as long as there was no evidence of intent to refuse to answer the income question. In later surveys, across-the-board zero-income reporting was designated as invalid by BLS, and the CU was categorized as an incomplete reporter. None of the surveys, however, accounted for possible under-reporting. CUs designated as incomplete reporters of income are excluded from computations of average income in this report.

Top coding of income—A method used to record a maximum value. The top coding of income routine changed with the 1996 CE. Previous to 1996, there was truncation at a critical value, and all values above the critical value (upper tail) were replaced by the critical value (usually at \$100,000 for income). Since 1996, a new method replaces upper-tail values with the mean of the values from the upper tail. This results in more accurate estimates of average income for the whole sample.

Quintiles of income before taxes—Quarterly rankings of respondents who provide income reports, based on the level of total before-tax income reported by the consumer unit. The ranking is divided into five equal groups called income quintiles, and the data for each of the four quarters are then combined. CUs providing incomplete income reports are not ranked and are shown separately in all income tables for 2003. For 2004, all households with incomplete income reporting have imputed income values. The mean imputed income value is used in the 2004 income tables.