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### **CONSUMER EXPENDITURES - 2015**

Average expenditures per consumer unit<sup>1</sup> for 2015 were \$55,978, a 4.6 percent increase from 2014 levels, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. During the same period, the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U) was virtually unchanged, rising 0.1 percent<sup>2</sup>. In 2014, spending increased 4.7 percent. Average pre-tax income per consumer unit increased at a slightly slower pace than expenditures, up 4.1 percent from 2014 to \$69,629.

All major components of household spending increased in 2015, as shown in table A. Of these, expenditures on personal insurance and pensions showed the greatest percentage increase, 10.9 percent. This was followed by education expenditures, rising 6.4 percent, transportation expenditures, rising 4.7 percent, and entertainment expenditures, rising 4.2 percent.

Expenditures on food, housing, and apparel and services showed smaller, positive gains between 3.4 percent and 3.9 percent, while expenditures on cash contributions, increased 1.7 percent. Healthcare expenditures rose 1.2 percent in 2015.

#### **Spending patterns, 2014-15**

Personal insurance and pensions expenditures rose 10.9 percent to \$6,349. This was primarily driven by the 11.4 percent increase in pensions and Social Security expenditures. In particular, non-payroll deposits to retirement plans, such as IRAs and Keoghs, rose 45.2 percent to \$795 and payroll deductions for private pensions increased 25.2 percent to \$645.

Education expenditures increased 6.4 percent. This was largely driven by a 63.7 percent increase in finance, late, and interest charges for student loans to \$157.

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<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 expenses.

<sup>2</sup> This is calculated as the percentage change between the annual average CPI-U for all items for 2015 (237.017) and the annual average CPI-U for all items for 2014 (236.736). See CPI Detailed Report, Data for December 2015, Table 1A.

Transportation expenditures increased 4.7 percent to \$9,503. Within transportation, expenditures on vehicle purchases increased 21.1 percent, while spending on gasoline and motor oil declined 15.3 percent, continuing trends highlighted in the 2014-15 midyear report.

Expenditures on cash contributions reversed their 2013 and 2014 declines, increasing by 1.7 percent.

Expenditures on the discretionary categories of food away from home and entertainment continued increasing in 2015, up 7.9 percent and 4.2 percent respectively, after increasing 6.2 percent and 9.9 percent in 2014.

**Table A. Average expenditures and income of all consumer units and percent changes for selected components, 2013-2015<sup>1</sup>**

Item	2013	2014	2015	Percent change	
				2013 - 2014	2014 - 2015
Average income before taxes.....	\$63,784	\$66,877	\$69,629	4.8	4.1
Average annual expenditures.....	51,100	53,495	55,978	4.7	4.6
Food.....	6,602	6,759	7,023	2.4	3.9
Food at home.....	3,977	3,971	4,015	-0.2	1.1
Food away from home.....	2,625	2,787	3,008	6.2	7.9
Housing.....	17,148	17,798	18,409	3.8	3.4
Shelter.....	10,080	10,491	10,742	4.1	2.4
Utilities.....	3,737	3,921	3,885	4.9	-.9
Household furnishings and equipment.....	1,542	1,581	1,818	2.5	15.0
Apparel and services.....	1,604	1,786	1,846	11.3	3.4
Transportation.....	9,004	9,073	9,503	0.8	4.7
Vehicle purchases.....	3,271	3,301	3,997	0.9	21.1
Gasoline and motor oil.....	2,611	2,468	2,090	-5.5	-15.3
Healthcare.....	3,631	4,290	4,342	n/a	1.2
Health insurance.....	2,229	2,868	2,977	n/a	3.8
Entertainment.....	2,482	2,728	2,842	9.9	4.2
Education.....	1,138	1,236	1,315	8.6	6.4
Cash contributions.....	1,834	1,788	1,819	-2.5	1.7
Personal insurance and pensions.....	5,528	5,726	6,349	3.6	10.9
Life and other personal insurance.....	319	327	333	2.5	1.8
Pensions and Social Security.....	5,209	5,399	6,016	3.6	11.4
All other expenditures.....	2,129	2,311	2,530	8.5	9.5

<sup>1</sup> Subcategories do not sum to 100%.

n/a: Because of a questionnaire change, the 2013-14 change was not strictly comparable to previous years.

## Spending by composition of consumer unit

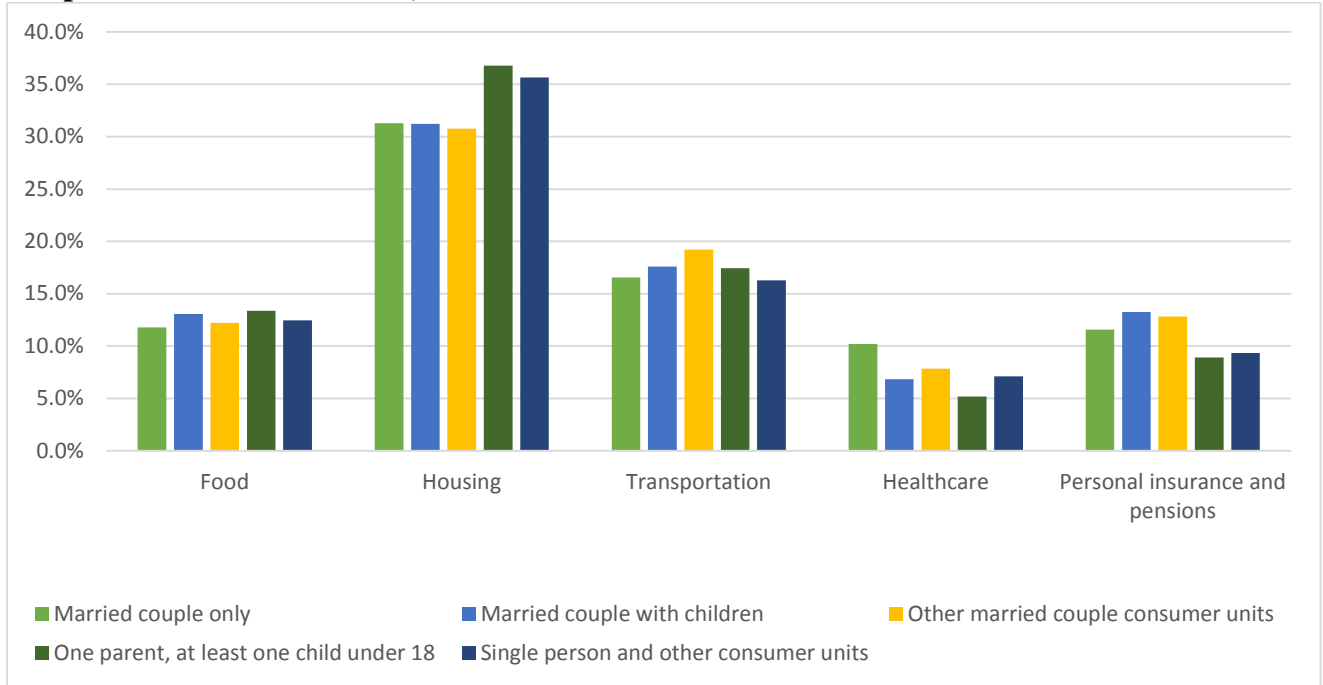
Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE) data measure how consumers allocate their spending among the various components of average annual expenditures. Table B and chart 1 compare the shares allocated to selected major expenditure categories by composition of consumer unit in 2015. One parent households with at least one child under 18 allocated just over one-half of their total spending to food and housing; they reported the highest shares of spending on food and housing among the groups studied.

Over 10 percent of total spending for married couple only households went to healthcare, almost twice as large a share as reported by one parent households (5.2 percent). Married couple with children households allocated the highest share of all groups to personal insurance and pensions (13.3 percent), while other married couple households (those with married couples and persons other than children living in the consumer unit) allocated the highest share to transportation (19.2 percent).

**Table B. Shares of average annual expenditures on selected major components by composition of consumer unit, 2015**

Item	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
Food	11.8	13.1	12.2	13.4	12.5
Housing	31.3	31.2	30.8	36.8	35.7
Transportation	16.6	17.6	19.2	17.5	16.3
Healthcare	10.2	6.8	7.9	5.2	7.1
Personal insurance and pensions	11.6	13.3	12.8	8.9	9.3

**Chart 1. Shares of average annual expenditures on selected major components by composition of consumer unit, 2015**



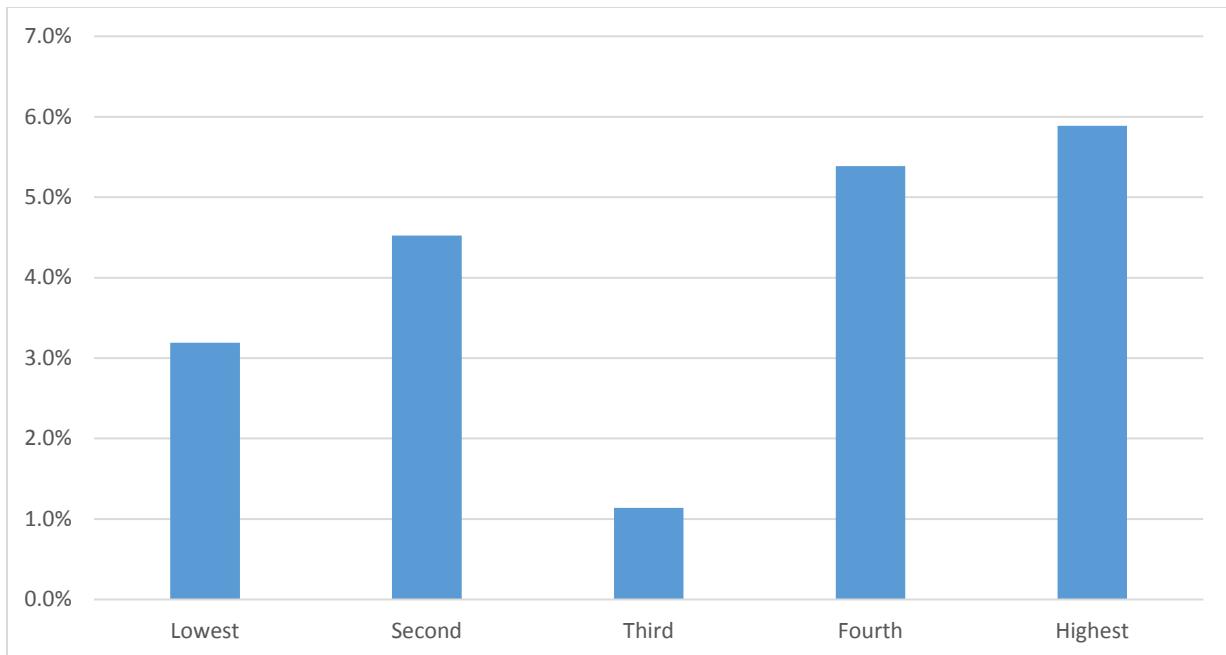
### Spending by income quintile

Table C and Chart 2 show the percent change for expenditures by income quintile. Overall spending increased in all five quintiles, ranging from 1.1 percent in the third quintile to 5.9 percent in the highest quintile. Personal insurance and pensions showed the largest overall increases across income quintiles, 9.0 percent to 18.2 percent. Food away from home expenditures also increased across all income quintiles, with increases ranging from 1.4 percent to 10.5 percent. Spending on apparel and services was mixed across quintiles, with the highest two quintiles increasing by 11.0 percent and 6.8 percent respectively, the lowest two quintiles changing less than 2.0 percent, and the third quintile down 15.1 percent. Cash contributions were also mixed by quintile, with the middle three quintiles reporting lower contributions and the lowest and highest quintiles showing increases. Transportation expenditures rose for all income quintiles, with the magnitude of the rise increasing as the level of income increased.

**Table C. Dollar change and percent change in average annual expenditures on major components by income quintile, 2014-15**

Item	Lowest		Second		Third		Fourth		Highest	
	Dollar	Percent	Dollar	Percent	Dollar	Percent	Dollar	Percent	Dollar	Percent
<b>Average annual expenditure change:</b>										
Total.....	\$757	3.2	\$1,517	4.5	\$517	1.1	\$3,254	5.4	\$6,145	5.9
Food.....	100	2.7	268	5.6	-193	-3.2	386	5.0	755	6.5
At home.....	-7	-0.3	133	4.3	-225	-6.1	44	1.0	271	4.5
Away from home.....	106	9.2	135	8.3	32	1.4	343	10.5	485	8.7
Housing.....	247	2.6	324	2.6	361	2.3	840	4.3	1,215	3.8
Apparel and services.....	-10	-1.2	17	1.5	-231	-15.1	126	6.8	400	11.0
Transportation.....	4	0.1	227	4.0	345	4.1	486	4.5	1,046	6.2
Healthcare.....	62	3.3	171	5.2	-61	-1.5	245	4.8	-171	-2.4
Entertainment.....	162	14.7	172	11.0	-146	-6.2	83	2.8	290	5.1
Cash contributions.....	206	40.6	-80	-7.1	-84	-5.9	-23	-1.2	123	3.1
Personal insurance and pensions.....	91	18.2	146	9.1	427	12.0	921	13.7	1,467	9.0
All other expenditures.....	-105	-5.0	273	14.2	99	3.8	191	5.2	1,019	13.6

**Chart 2. Percent change in average annual expenditures by income quintile, 2014-15**



## **Other available data**

CE data include the expenditures and income of consumers, as well as the demographic characteristics of those consumers. Tables with more expenditure detail are available at [www.bls.gov/cex](http://www.bls.gov/cex). Published tables provide 2015 CE data by standard classifications that include income quintile, income decile, income class, age of reference person, size of consumer unit, number of earners, composition of consumer unit, region of residence, housing tenure, type of area (urban-rural), race, Hispanic origin, occupation, and highest education level of any member. The classes in the income class table have been revamped to provide more detail at income levels above \$70,000 and less detail at levels below \$40,000. These annual tables include means, shares, and standard errors. Other tables available on the website include expenditures by age, region, size, or gender cross-tabulated by income before taxes and other demographic variables. Historical tables back to 1984 and tabulations for selected metropolitan areas are also available.

Future articles in the BLS Beyond the Numbers web report series will highlight recent trends in prices and spending in the U.S. economy, and will feature 2015 CE data. Recent CE-specific Beyond the Numbers articles provide analyses of topical economic issues and long term spending trends, as well as comparisons of CE data to other data series (see [www.bls.gov/cex/csxwebarticles.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/csxwebarticles.htm)). Other survey information available on the internet includes answers to frequently asked questions, a glossary, order forms for survey products, and analytical articles that use CE data. Also available are the Diary Survey questionnaire form and a modified version of the computer assisted personal interviewing (CAPI) instrument used to collect the Interview Survey data.

The 2015 CE public-use microdata, including Interview Survey data, Diary Survey data, and paradata (information about the survey process), are available on the CE website for free electronic download. The Interview files contain expenditure data in two different formats: MTBI files that present monthly values in an item-coding framework based on the 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. The public-use microdata for 2015 also includes the new estimates of state and federal tax liabilities. The CE introduced these estimates in 2013 to improve the quality of the tax data. The tax data collected directly from consumer units during the Interview survey are no longer available. CE public-use microdata from 1996 to 2014 are also available on the CE website for free download. For releases prior to 1996, users can continue to purchase USB Flash Drives using the public-use microdata order form (see [www.bls.gov/cex/pumd.htm](http://www.bls.gov/cex/pumd.htm)).

For further information, contact the Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys, Office of Prices and Living Conditions, Bureau of Labor Statistics at [cexinfo@bls.gov](mailto:cexinfo@bls.gov) or (202) 691-6892. Information in this release is available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 1 (800) 877-8339.