

# Overview of the Consumer Expenditure Surveys Program

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Consumer Expenditure Surveys Program

CE Microdata Users' Workshop

July 17, 2019



# Topics

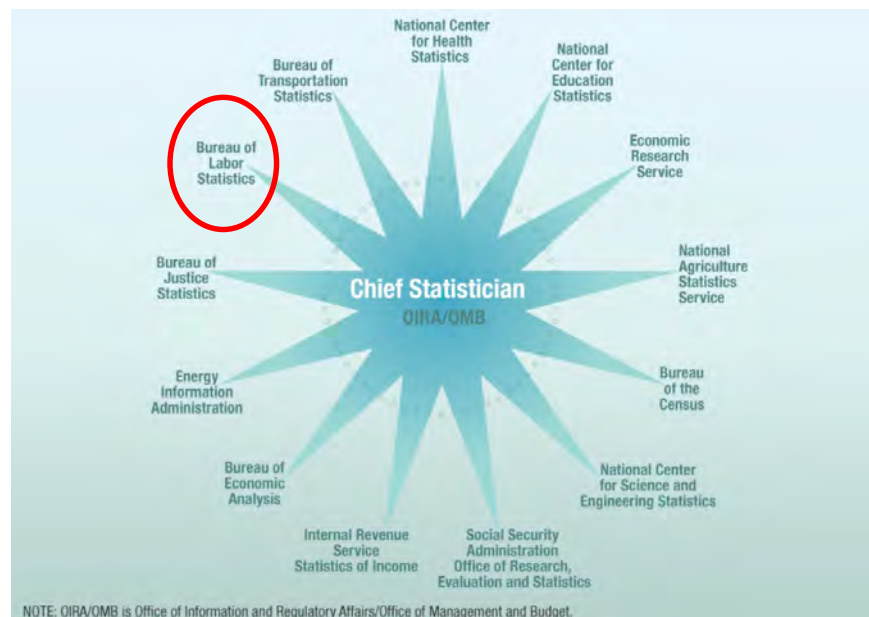
1. CE Program Overview
2. Annual Program Activities
3. CE Data Use



# Bureau of Labor Statistics

## Overview

- Principal fact-finding agency for the U.S. government in the field of labor economics
- Established in the Department of the Interior in 1884, to collect information about employment and labor; now part of Department of Labor



## Core Values

- “Just the Facts”
- Gold standard data
- Transparency & confidentiality

# CE Program Mission

- The mission of the CE is to collect, process, and disseminate information that presents a statistical picture of consumer spending for the Consumer Price Index, government agencies, and private data users.
- This mission encompasses analyzing CE data to produce socio-economic studies of consumer spending, and providing CE data users with assistance, education, and tools for working with the data.



# CE Survey Overview

- The CE consists of estimates derived from two separate surveys
- The **Quarterly Interview Survey** is designed to collect data on large and recurring expenditures that consumers can be expected to recall for a period of 3 months or longer, such as rent and utilities (approximately 6,000 interviews/quarter)
- The **Diary Survey** is designed to collect data on small, frequently purchased items, including most food and clothing (approximately 3,000 diaries/quarter)
- Together, the data from the two surveys cover the complete range of consumers' expenditures

# CE Survey Overview

- CE data are collected for BLS by the U.S. Census Bureau, from consumer units (CUs), in other words people living at one address who share living expenses (in most cases, CUs are the same as households)
- The sample frame is a national probability sample of households designed to be representative of the U.S. civilian noninstitutionalized population
- Respondents report dollar amounts for all non-investment purchases; business expenses and reimbursements are excluded



# CE Program Staffing Structure

## Division of Consumer Expenditure Surveys

- Branch of Information & Analysis
- Branch of Production & Control
- Branch of Research & Program Development  
(incl. **Office of Survey Methods Research** consultants)

## Division of Consumer Expenditure Information Systems

- Publication & Information Management Systems
- Expenditure & Income Processing Systems

## Statistical Methods Division

- Consumer Expenditure Branch

# CE Program Workflow

1. Sampling (SMD, P&C, Census)
2. Questionnaire Design and Revisions (P&C, Census)
3. Field Procedures and Training (P&C, Census)
4. Data Collection (P&C, Census)
5. Data Processing and Estimation (P&C, BIA, SMD, CEIS)
6. Data Dissemination, Publications, and Outreach (All)
7. Methods Research, Development, and Evaluation (BRPD, P&C, BIA, SMD)





# CE Program Data Products

- CPI Cost Weights
- LABSTAT Database
- Publications
- **Public-Use Microdata**
- Restricted Microdata
- Tables



# CE History – Highlights

- **1888:** First BLS expenditure survey
- **1972:** First use of weekly Diary & 3-month recall Interview  
Census Bureau begins survey collection for BLS
- **1979:** Continuous data collection starts
- **2003:** Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) begins
- **2004:** Imputation for missing income data implemented
- **2013:** Model-based estimation of income taxes introduced
- **2013:** 1<sup>st</sup> publication of midyear tables (July 2011 - June 2012)
- **2015:** Elimination of the first (bounding) interview in Interview
- **2018:** State-level weights released for 2016 and 2017 data



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# FY19 Program Activities

## Data Collection

- Inputs for Interview and Diary Survey data collection protocol changes, training, and questionnaires

## Data Processing

- Interview and Diary Survey processing (2018 & 2019)
- Interview and Diary Survey changes (2018 & 2019)

## Data Dissemination

- Midyear Tables released in April 2019 (July 2017–June 2018 data)
- Annual Tables/Public-Use Microdata release in September 2019 (2018 data)

# FY19 Program Activities

## Publications

- Beyond the Numbers
- Data Comparisons (PCE, CPS, ACS)
- Monthly Labor Review
- Spotlight on Statistics

## Outreach

- Conference Presentations
- Microdata Users' Workshop
- Survey Methods Symposium

### Consumer Expenditure Survey Anthology, 2005



U.S. Department of Labor  
U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics  
April 2005  
Report 981



# FY19 Program Activities

## Research

- Continue CE redesign activities, including development, and fielding, of the Large Scale Feasibility test of an online diary
- Investigate additional methods to evaluate and reduce measurement error in the CE Survey (e.g., a respondent worksheet)
- Work with Census to evaluate matched administrative data for potential production use in nonresponse adjustments

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# CE Customers

- Bureau of Economic Analysis
- Census Bureau
- Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services
- Consumer Price Index
- Depts of Agriculture; Defense; Health & Human Services
- Internal Revenue Service
- Media, Market Research, & Academic Research
- *YOU!*





# CE Data in Recent External Publications

## Generational Spending

- [Why Do Millennials Hate Groceries?](#), The Atlantic

## Regional Spending

- [San Diego ranked No. 1 booziest city in America](#), FOX 5 San Diego

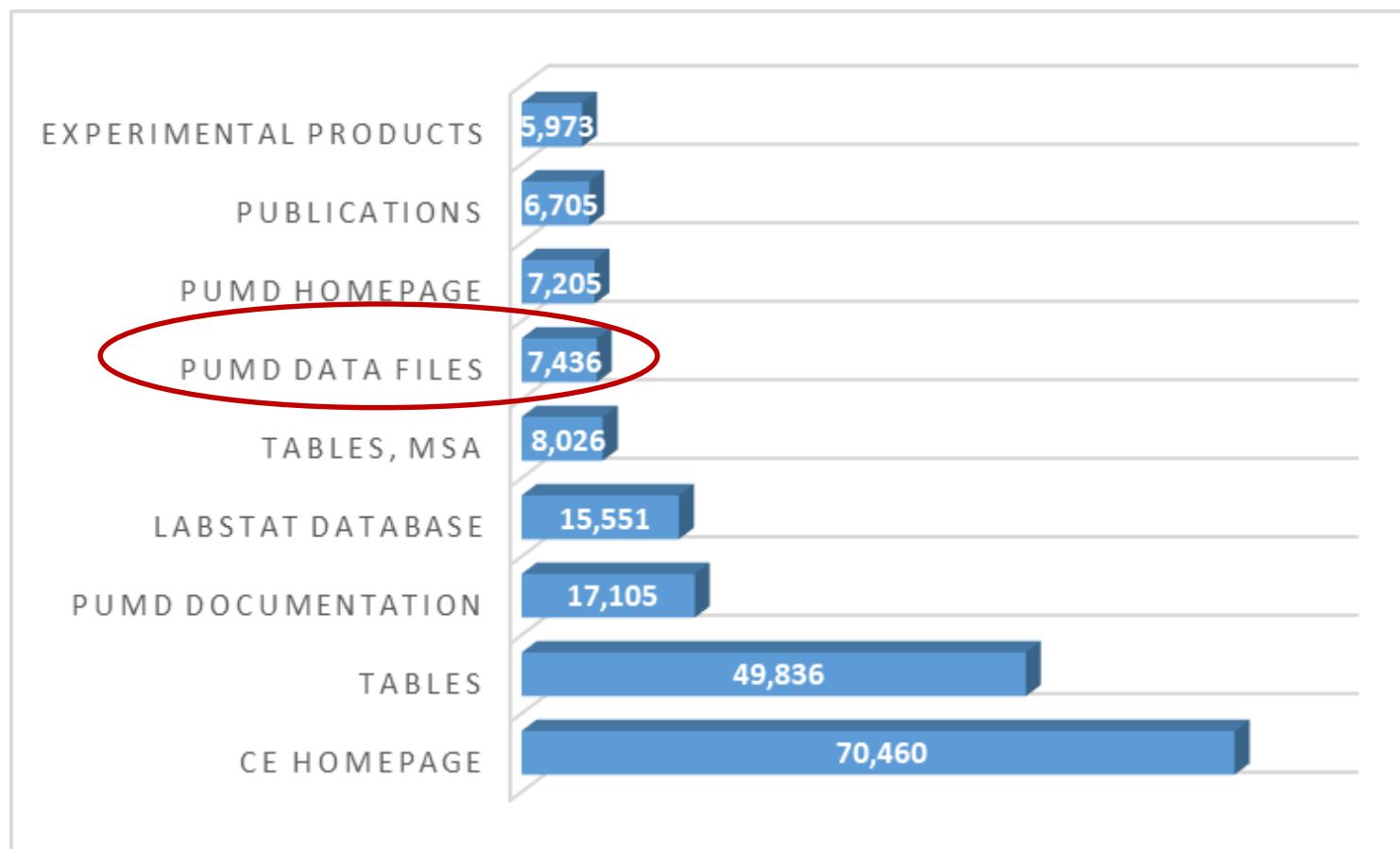
## Health Care Spending

- [The Financial Burden of Health Care Spending](#), Kaiser Family Foundation

## Policy Analysis

- [Tax Cuts And Jobs Act Begins To Have Positive Impact On Spending Intentions](#), Forbes
- [Annual report on US consumption poverty: 2017 - AEI](#), AEI

# Top 10 Webpages by Views, Jul-Dec 2018



# Contact Information

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