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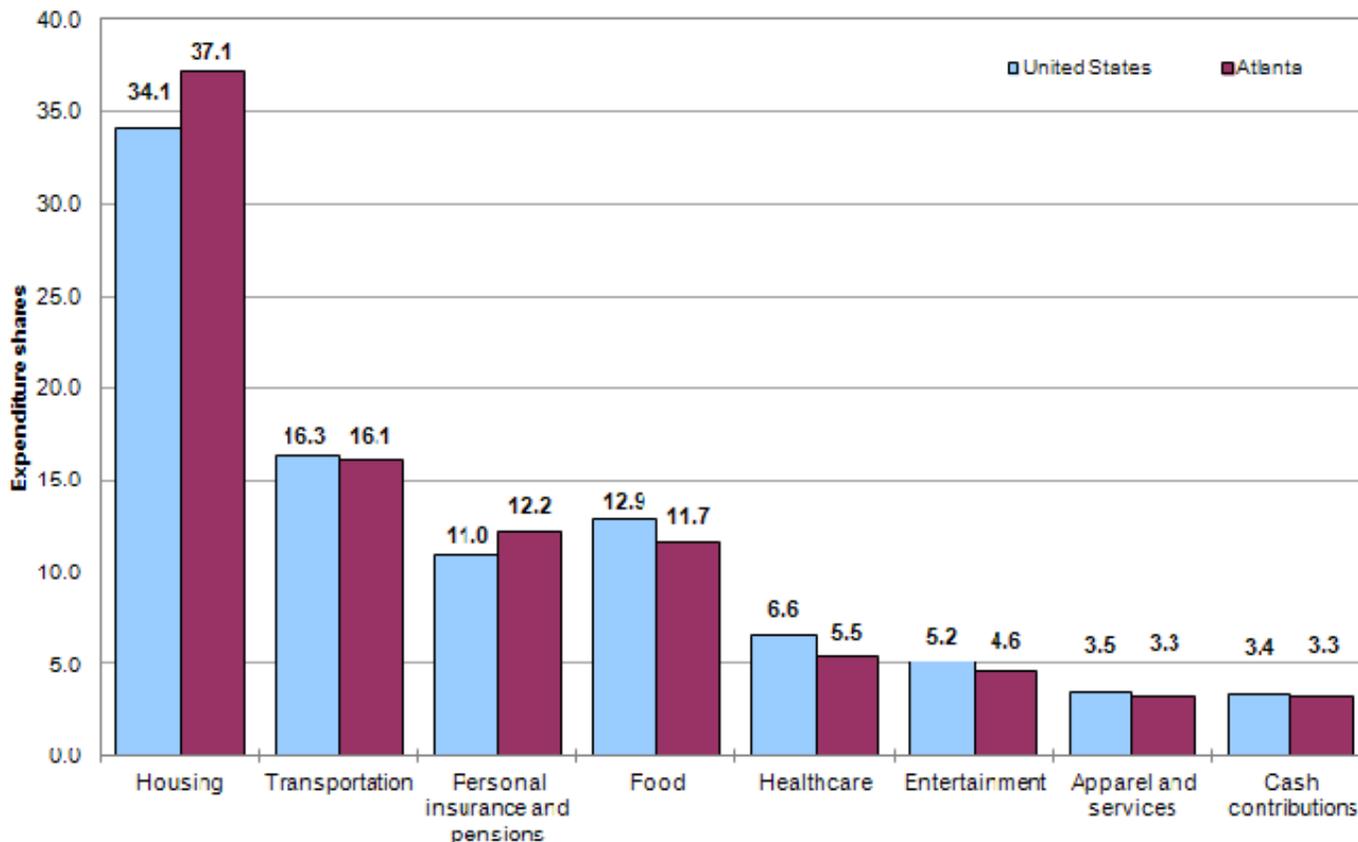
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Consumer Expenditures for the Atlanta Area: 2010-2011

Consumer units in the Atlanta metropolitan area spent an average of \$49,692 per year in 2010-2011, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Janet S. Rankin noted that this figure was similar to the \$48,926 average expenditure level for a typical household in the United States. Although households in the Atlanta area spent a comparable amount to the U.S. average, they allocated their dollars differently among the major categories, differing significantly in five of the eight. For example, expenditures for housing, which comprised 37.1 percent of a typical Atlanta household budget, were significantly larger than the national average of 34.1 percent. (See [chart 1.](#))

Chart 1. Percent distribution of average annual expenditures for the eight major categories in the United States and Atlanta metropolitan area, 2010-2011



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Housing in the Atlanta metropolitan area averaged \$18,448 annually and was the largest expenditure category, accounting for 37.1 percent of an Atlanta area household's total budget, significantly higher than the national average of 34.1 percent. (See [tables 1 and 2](#).) Overall, 9 of the 18 published metropolitan areas had expenditure shares for housing significantly above the U.S. average. Four areas had shares for housing that were measurably below the U.S. average. (See [chart 2](#).) Housing expenditure shares among the 18 areas ranged from 32.0 percent in Cleveland to 41.5 percent in Miami. (See [table 3](#).)

The majority of housing expenditures in Atlanta went toward shelter, 57.9 percent, which includes mortgage interest, property taxes, repairs, and rent, among other items; nationwide, 58.8 percent of the housing budget was allocated to shelter. (See [table A](#).) Utilities, fuels, and public services expenses accounted for 23.6 percent of the housing budget locally; nationally, it made up 22.1 percent. The rate of home ownership in Atlanta, at 69 percent, was above the U.S. average of 65 percent.

Table A. Percent distribution of housing expenditures, United States and Atlanta, 2010-2011

| Category | United States | Atlanta |
|--|---------------|---------|
| Total housing | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Shelter | 58.8 | 57.9 |
| Utilities, fuels, and public services..... | 22.1 | 23.6 |
| Household operations | 6.4 | 6.3 |
| Housekeeping supplies | 3.7 | 3.9 |
| Household furnishings and equipment..... | 8.9 | 8.3 |

Note: Columns may not add to 100 due to rounding.

At 16.1 percent of the total budget, transportation was the second largest expenditure category in the Atlanta area, not significantly different than the national average of 16.3 percent. Among the 18 metropolitan areas nationwide, 6 had transportation expenditure shares below the national average. (See [chart 3](#).)

Of the \$7,998 in annual expenditures for transportation in Atlanta, 93.3 percent was spent buying and maintaining private vehicles; this compared to the national average of 93.7 percent. The remaining 6.7 percent of an Atlanta household's transportation budget was spent on public transit, which includes fares for taxis, buses, trains, and planes; this allocation was on par with the 6.3-percent average for the nation. (See [table B](#).) The average number of vehicles per household in Atlanta (1.7) was lower than the national average (1.9).

Table B. Percent distribution of transportation expenditures, United States and Atlanta, 2010-2011

| Category | United States | Atlanta |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------|
| Transportation | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Vehicle purchases (net outlay) | 32.9 | 34.5 |
| Gasoline and motor oil | 30.0 | 33.1 |
| Other vehicle expenses | 30.8 | 25.8 |
| Public transportation..... | 6.3 | 6.7 |

Note: Columns may not add to 100 due to rounding.

The portion of an Atlanta consumer unit's budget spent on food, 11.7 percent, was significantly less than the U.S. average (12.9 percent). Among the 18 metropolitan areas, 12 had food expenditure shares that were not measurably different from the nationwide average. (See [table 3](#).)

Households in Atlanta spent a greater percentage of their food dollars on food at home (56.8 percent) than they did for food away from home (43.2 percent). Food away from home includes restaurant meals, carry-out, board at school, and catered affairs. In comparison, the typical U.S. household spent 59.3 percent of its food budget on food at home and 40.7 percent on food away from home.

As noted, Atlanta is 1 of 18 metropolitan areas nationwide for which CE data are available. We encourage users interested in learning more about the CE to contact the Southeast Information Office at (404) 893-4222.

Metropolitan area CE data and that for the four geographic regions of the United States are available on our Web site at <https://www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm>. Metropolitan area CE news releases are available at <https://www.bls.gov/regions/consumer-spending.htm>.

Additional Information

Data contained in this report are from the Consumer Expenditure Survey, which is collected on an ongoing basis by the U.S. Census Bureau for the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), collecting expenditure and socioeconomic data on an ongoing basis. The CE data were averaged over a two-year period, 2010 and 2011 and are available for the nation, the 4 geographic regions of the country, and 18 metropolitan areas. The metropolitan area discussed in this release is Atlanta, Ga., which is comprised of Barrow, Bartow, Butts, Carroll, Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Dawson, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Haralson, Henry, Newton, Paulding, Pickens, Pike, Rockdale, Spalding, and Walton Counties in Georgia; and Cleburne County in Alabama.

The survey consists of two components, a diary or recordkeeping survey, and an interview survey. The integrated data from the BLS Diary and Interview Surveys provide a complete accounting of consumer expenditures and income, which neither survey component alone is designed to do. Due to changes in the survey sample frame, metropolitan area data in this release are not directly comparable to those prior to 1996.

A consumer unit is defined as members of a household related by blood, marriage, adoption, or other legal arrangement; a single person living alone or sharing a household with others but who is financially independent; or two or more persons living together who share responsibility for at least 2 out of 3 major types of expenses – food, housing, and other expenses. The terms household or consumer unit are used interchangeably for convenience.

CE metropolitan area estimates are not comparative cost of living surveys, as neither the quantity nor the quality of goods and services has been held constant among areas. Differences may result from variations in demographic characteristics such as consumer unit size, age, preferences, income levels, etc. However, expenditure shares, or the percentage of a consumer unit's budget spent on a particular category, can be used to compare spending patterns across areas. Sample sizes for the metropolitan areas are much smaller than for the nation, so the U.S. estimates and year-to-year changes are more reliable than those for the metropolitan areas. Users should also keep in mind that prices for many goods and services have changed since the survey was conducted.

Expenditure shares for housing and transportation that are higher or lower than the national average, after testing for significance at the 95-percent confidence interval, are also identified in charts 2 and 3 for the 18 metropolitan areas surveyed.

A value that is statistically different from another does not necessarily mean that the difference has economic or practical significance. Statistical significance is concerned with our ability to make confident statements about a universe based on a sample. It is entirely possible that a large difference between two values is not significantly different statistically, while a small difference is, since both the size and heterogeneity of the sample affect the relative error of the data being tested.

For additional technical documentation and related information, see <https://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/homch16.htm>.

Table 1. Percent distribution of average annual expenditures, United States and Atlanta, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2010-2011

| Category | United States | Atlanta |
|---|---------------|----------|
| Average annual expenditures..... | \$48,926 | \$49,692 |
| Percent distribution:..... | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Food | 12.9 | 11.7* |
| Alcoholic beverages | 0.9 | 0.9 |
| Housing | 34.1 | 37.1* |
| Apparel and services..... | 3.5 | 3.3 |
| Transportation | 16.3 | 16.1 |
| Healthcare | 6.6 | 5.5* |
| Entertainment | 5.2 | 4.6* |
| Personal care products and services | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| Reading | 0.2 | 0.2* |
| Education | 2.2 | 2.1 |
| Tobacco products and smoking supplies..... | 0.7 | 0.3* |
| Miscellaneous..... | 1.7 | 1.5 |
| Cash contributions..... | 3.4 | 3.3 |
| Personal insurance and pensions | 11.0 | 12.2* |
| *Statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level | | |

Note: Columns may not add to 100 due to rounding

Table 2. Consumer unit characteristics and average annual expenditures, United States and Atlanta, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2010-2011

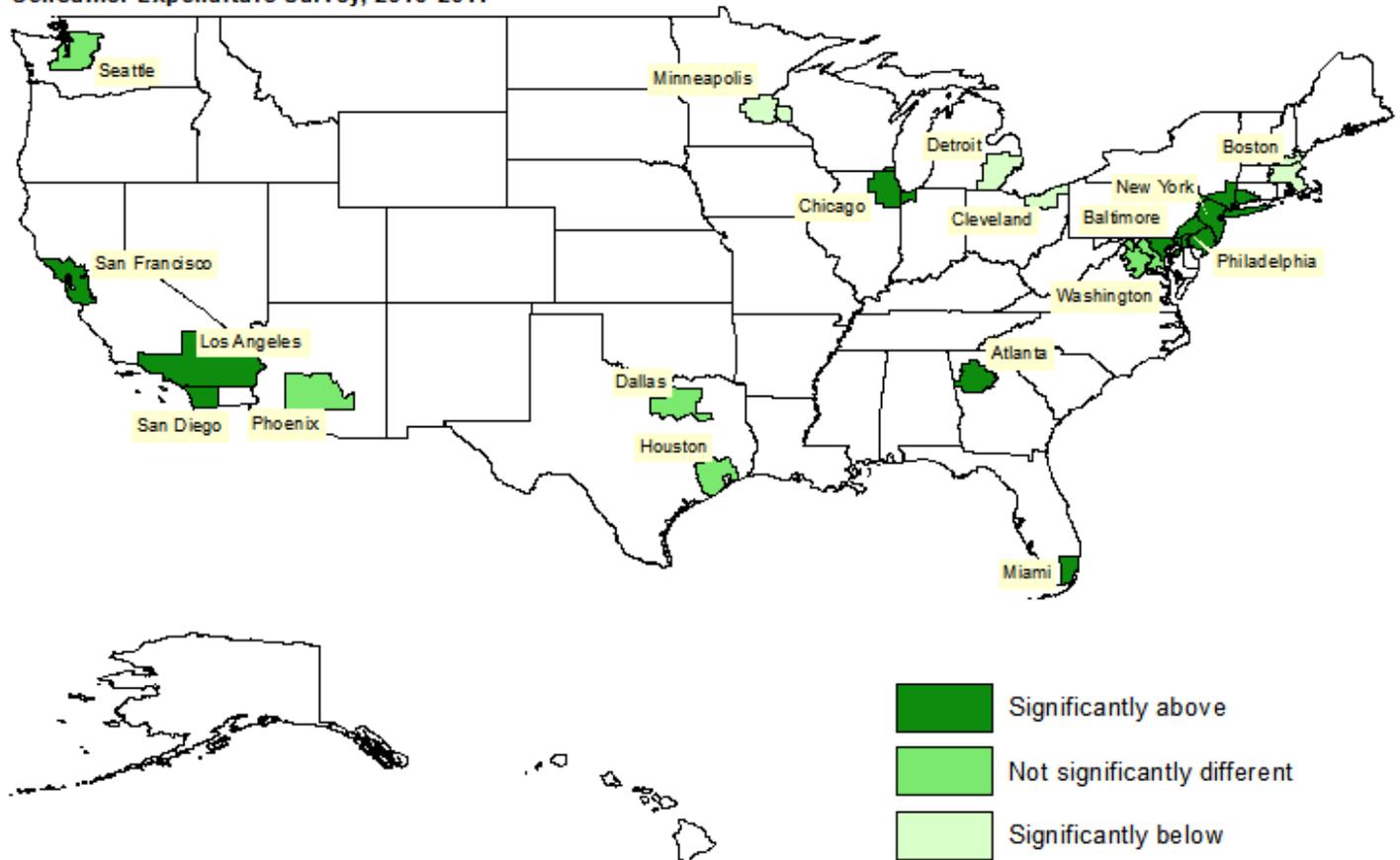
| Category | United States | Atlanta |
|--|---------------|----------|
| Consumer unit characteristics: | | |
| Income before taxes..... | \$63,086 | \$69,914 |
| Age of reference person..... | 49.6 | 46.7 |
| Average number in consumer unit: | | |
| Persons | 2.5 | 2.6 |
| Children under 18..... | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| Persons 65 and over | 0.3 | 0.2 |
| Earners..... | 1.3 | 1.3 |
| Vehicles..... | 1.9 | 1.7 |
| Percent homeowners | 65 | 69 |
| Average annual expenditures: | | |
| Average annual expenditures..... | \$48,926 | \$49,692 |
| Food | 6,294 | 5,798 |
| Food at home | 3,731 | 3,291 |
| Cereals and bakery products | 516 | 440 |
| Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs..... | 808 | 791 |
| Dairy products | 394 | 327 |
| Fruits and vegetables | 697 | 591 |
| Other food at home | 1,316 | 1,143 |
| Food away from home..... | 2,562 | 2,507 |
| Alcoholic beverages | 434 | 431 |
| Housing | 16,687 | 18,448 |
| Shelter | 9,819 | 10,681 |
| Owned dwellings | 6,212 | 7,301 |
| Rented dwellings..... | 2,965 | 2,879 |
| Other lodging..... | 642 | 502 |
| Utilities, fuels, and public services..... | 3,693 | 4,348 |
| Household operations | 1,074 | 1,166 |
| Housekeeping supplies | 613 | 724 |
| Household furnishings and equipment..... | 1,487 | 1,528 |
| Apparel and services..... | 1,720 | 1,644 |
| Transportation | 7,987 | 7,998 |
| Vehicle purchases (net outlay) | 2,629 | 2,761 |
| Gasoline and motor oil | 2,395 | 2,645 |
| Other vehicle expenses..... | 2,459 | 2,060 |
| Public transportation..... | 504 | 533 |
| Healthcare | 3,235 | 2,724 |
| Entertainment | 2,547 | 2,281 |
| Personal care products and services | 608 | 647 |
| Reading | 108 | 76 |
| Education | 1,063 | 1,064 |
| Tobacco products and smoking supplies..... | 356 | 167 |
| Miscellaneous..... | 812 | 724 |
| Cash contributions..... | 1,677 | 1,624 |
| Personal insurance and pensions | 5,398 | 6,067 |
| Life and other personal insurance | 318 | 235 |
| Pensions and Social Security..... | 5,081 | 5,833 |

Table 3. Percent share of average annual expenditures for housing, transportation, and food, United States and 18 metropolitan areas, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2010-2011

| Area | Housing | Transportation | Food |
|---------------------|---------|----------------|-------|
| United States | 34.1 | 16.3 | 12.9 |
| Atlanta | 37.1* | 16.1 | 11.7* |
| Baltimore | 37.4* | 11.9* | 12.5 |
| Boston | 32.5* | 14.1* | 12.5 |
| Chicago | 35.6* | 14.5* | 12.4 |
| Cleveland | 32.0* | 17.1 | 12.4 |
| Dallas | 33.4 | 17.1 | 12.8 |
| Detroit | 32.2* | 17.4 | 12.5 |
| Houston | 33.5 | 16.7 | 12.5 |
| Los Angeles | 37.6* | 16.2 | 13.2 |
| Miami | 41.5* | 15.7 | 12.9 |
| Minneapolis | 32.3* | 16.2 | 12.4 |
| New York | 39.8* | 13.5* | 12.7 |
| Philadelphia | 38.9* | 14.4* | 11.8* |
| Phoenix | 33.5 | 16.9 | 13.0 |
| San Diego | 40.8* | 14.9 | 11.1* |
| San Francisco | 37.7* | 13.1* | 11.5* |
| Seattle | 34.9 | 15.4 | 11.3* |
| Washington | 35.3 | 15.0 | 11.5* |

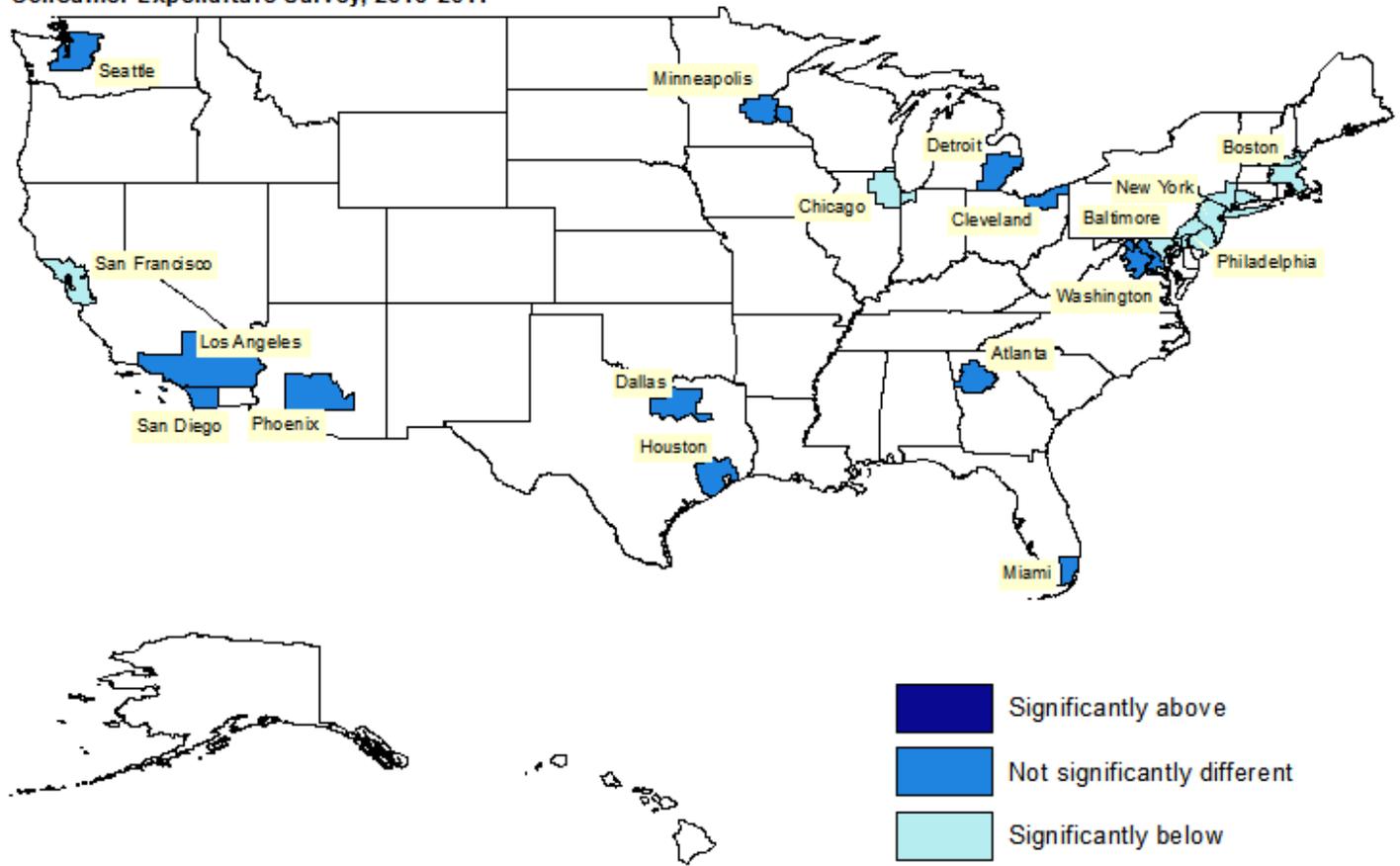
*Statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level

Chart 2. Expenditure shares spent on housing in 18 metropolitan statistical areas compared to the U.S. average, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2010-2011



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

Chart 3. Expenditure shares spent on transportation in 18 metropolitan statistical areas compared to the U.S. average, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2010-2011



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics