

MIDWEST INFORMATION OFFICE  
Chicago, Ill.

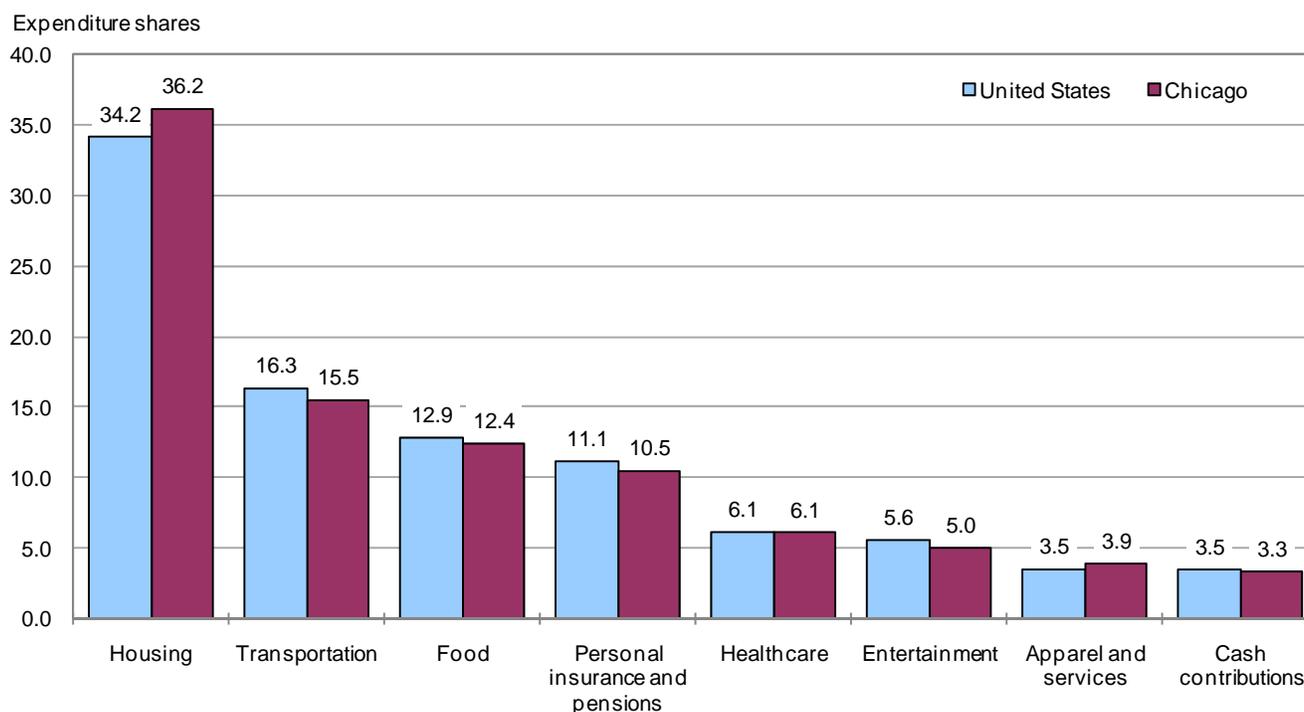
**For release: Thursday, December 2, 2010**

General information: (312) 353-1880 • BLSInfoChicago@bls.gov • www.bls.gov/ro5  
Media Contact: (312) 353-1138

## CONSUMER EXPENDITURES FOR THE CHICAGO AREA: 2008-09

Consumer units<sup>1</sup> in the Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, Ill.-Ind.-Wis., metropolitan area spent an average of \$56,947 per year in 2008-09, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Charlene Peiffer noted that this figure was 14 percent higher than the \$49,778 average expenditure level for a typical household in the United States. Although households in the Chicago area spent more than the U.S. average, they allocated their dollars similarly among the eight major categories which represented 93 percent of household spending in the Chicago area, with only three differing significantly. For example, the expenditure for personal insurance and pensions, which comprised 10.5 percent of a typical household's budget in the Chicago area, was significantly less than the nationwide average of 11.1 percent. (See chart 1.)

**Chart 1. Percent distribution of average annual expenditures for eight major categories in the United States and Chicago metropolitan area, 2008-09**



<sup>1</sup> See the Additional Information for the definition of a consumer unit. The terms consumer unit and household are used interchangeably throughout the text for convenience.

Housing in the Chicago metropolitan area averaged \$20,620 annually and was the largest expenditure category, accounting for 36.2 percent of a Chicago area household's total budget. (See tables 1 and 2.) This share was significantly above the 34.2-percent national average. Overall, 10 of the 18 published metropolitan areas had expenditure shares for housing measurably above the U.S. average; only Houston had a lower-than-average share. (See chart 2.) Housing expenditures ranged from 41.3 percent in San Diego to 31.9 percent in Houston among the 18 areas. (See table 3.)

The majority of housing expenditures in Chicago went toward shelter, 63.6 percent, which includes mortgage interest, property taxes, repairs, and rent, among other items; nationwide, 59.6 percent of the housing budget was allocated for shelter. (See table A.) Utilities, fuels, and public services expenses accounted for 19.7 percent of the housing budget locally; nationally, this category made up 21.5 percent. The rate of homeownership in Chicago was 71 percent, whereas the U.S. average was 66 percent.

**Table A. Percent distribution of housing expenditures, United States and Chicago, 2008-09**

Category	United States	Chicago
Total housing	100.0	100.0
Shelter	59.6	63.6
Utilities, fuels, and public services	21.5	19.7
Household operations	5.9	5.5
Housekeeping supplies	3.9	3.0
Household furnishings and equipment	9.2	8.2

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

At 15.5 percent of the total budget, transportation was the second-largest expenditure category in the Chicago area; this was not significantly different from the national average of 16.3 percent. Among the 18 metropolitan areas nationwide, only Detroit (19.2 percent) had an above-average transportation share. (See chart 3.)

Of the \$8,840 in annual expenditures for transportation in Chicago, 91.6 percent was spent buying and maintaining private vehicles; this compared to the national average of 93.9 percent. The remaining 8.4 percent of a Chicago household's transportation budget was spent on public transit, which includes fares for taxis, buses, trains, and planes. Nationally, 6.1 percent of transportation expenditures went to public transit. (See table B.) Among the 18 metropolitan areas, shares of the transportation budget for public transit ranged from 13.6 percent in San Francisco to 3.9 percent in Detroit. The average number of vehicles per household in Chicago was 1.8 while the national average was 2.0.

**Table B. Percent distribution of transportation expenditures, United States and Chicago, 2008-09**

Category	United States	Chicago
Transportation	100.0	100.0
Vehicle purchases (net outlays)	33.3	35.1
Gasoline and motor oil	28.9	26.7
Other vehicle expenses	31.7	29.8
Public transportation	6.1	8.4

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

The portion of a Chicago consumer unit's budget spent on food, 12.4 percent, was not significantly different from the 12.9-percent U.S. average. Among the 18 metropolitan areas, 10 had food expenditure shares that were not measurably different from the nationwide average. Boston was the only area with an expenditure share (13.8 percent) for food significantly above that for the nation.

Households in Chicago spent \$4,250, or 60.4 percent, of their food dollars on food at home and the remaining 39.6 percent on food away from home, such as restaurant meals, carry-out, board at school,

and catered affairs. In comparison, the typical U.S. household spent 58.5 percent of its food budget on food at home and 41.5 percent on food away from home.

As noted, Chicago is 1 of 18 metropolitan areas nationwide for which Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE) data are available. We encourage users interested in learning more about the CE to contact the Midwest Information Office at (312) 353-1880. Metropolitan area CE data and that for the four geographic regions and the United States are available on our Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/ro5/>.

### **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). The CE data were averaged over a two-year period, 2008 and 2009, 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 Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, Ill.-Ind.-Wis., which is comprised of Cook, DeKalb, Du Page, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties in Illinois; Lake, Newton, and Porter Counties in Indiana; and Kenosha County in Wisconsin.

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.

The expenditure data in this release should be interpreted with care. The expenditures are averages for consumer units with the specified characteristics, regardless of whether a specific unit incurred an expense for that item during the recording period. The average expenditure may be considerably lower than the expenditure by those consumer units that purchased the item. This study is not intended as a comparative cost of living survey, 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. Users should also keep in mind that prices for many goods and services have risen since the survey was conducted.

The CE significance tests in this release compare expenditure shares for selected expenditure categories in the United States to expenditure shares in selected metropolitan areas. (See table 3.) Expenditure shares for housing and transportation that are above or below that for the nation after testing for significance at the 95-percent confidence interval are also identified in charts 2 and 3 for the 18 metropolitan areas surveyed. 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.

NOTE: 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.

**Table 1. Percent distribution of average annual expenditures, United States and Chicago, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2008-09**

<b>Category</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>Chicago</b>
Average annual expenditures	\$49,778	\$56,947
Percent distribution:	100.0	100.0
Food	12.9	12.4
Alcoholic beverages	.9	.9
Housing	34.2	36.2 *
Apparel and services	3.5	3.9
Transportation	16.3	15.5
Health care	6.1	6.1
Entertainment	5.6	5.0 *
Personal care products and services	1.2	1.2
Reading	.2	.2 *
Education	2.1	2.6
Tobacco products and smoking supplies	.7	.6
Miscellaneous	1.7	1.5
Cash contributions	3.5	3.3
Personal insurance and pensions	11.1	10.5 *

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

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

**Table 2. Consumer unit characteristics and average annual expenditures, United States and Chicago, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2008-09**

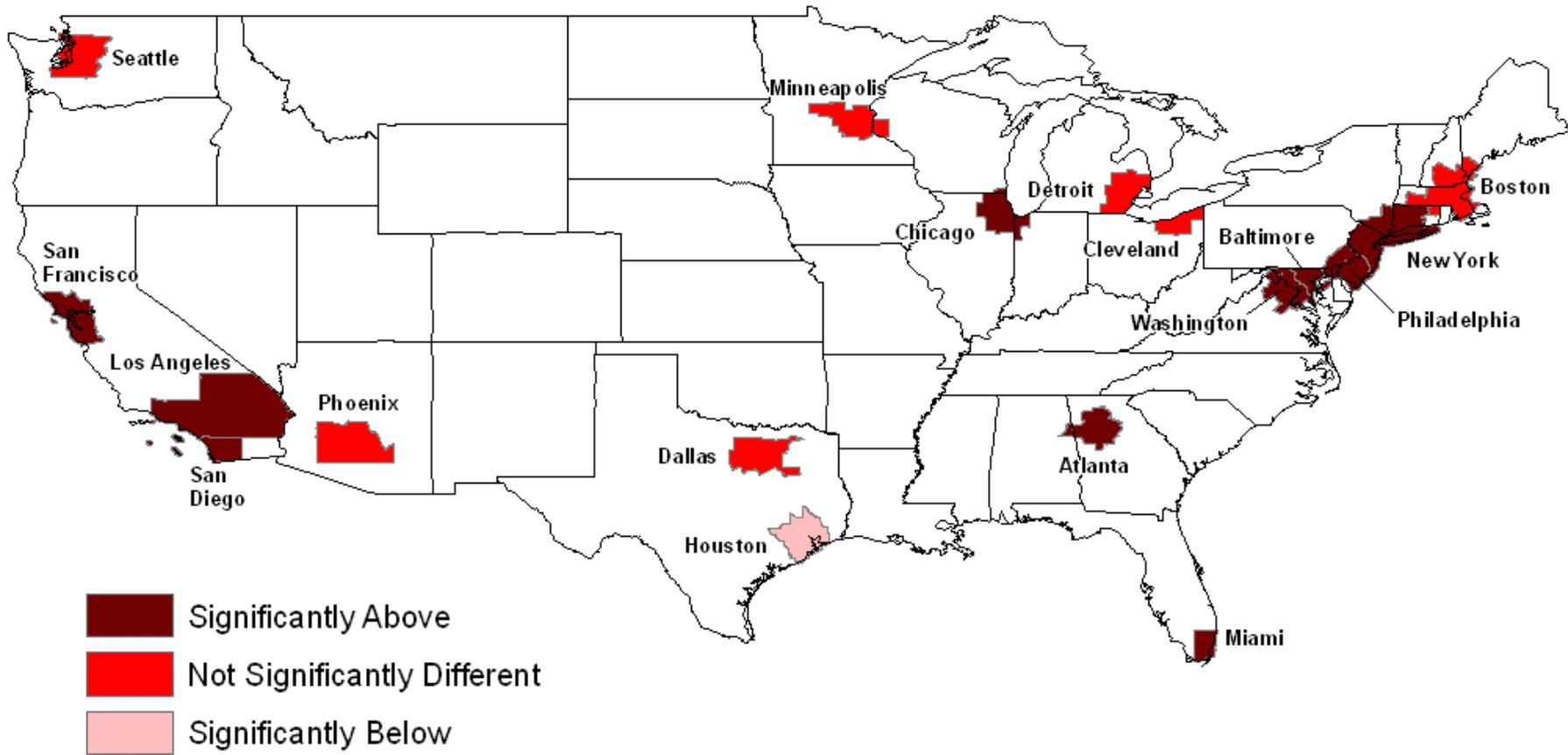
Category	United States	Chicago
Consumer unit characteristics:		
Income before taxes	\$63,209	\$74,887
Age of reference person	49.2	49.8
Average number in consumer unit:		
Persons	2.5	2.6
Children under 18	.6	.6
Persons 65 and over	.3	.3
Earners	1.3	1.4
Vehicles	2.0	1.8
Percent homeowners	66	71
Average annual expenditures		
	\$49,778	\$56,947
Food	6,407	7,037
Food at home	3,749	4,250
Cereals and bakery products	507	584
Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs	844	960
Dairy products	418	434
Fruits and vegetables	657	766
Other food at home	1,324	1,506
Food away from home	2,658	2,787
Alcoholic beverages	439	510
Housing	17,002	20,620
Shelter	10,129	13,116
Owned dwellings	6,651	9,379
Rented dwellings	2,792	2,771
Other lodging	685	966
Utilities, fuels, and public services	3,647	4,052
Household operations	1,004	1,133
Housekeeping supplies	657	624
Household furnishings and equipment	1,565	1,695
Apparel and services	1,763	2,206
Transportation	8,133	8,840
Vehicle purchases (net outlay)	2,706	3,101
Gasoline and motor oil	2,351	2,364
Other vehicle expenses	2,580	2,636
Public transportation	496	739
Healthcare	3,051	3,485
Entertainment	2,764	2,861
Personal care products and services	606	711
Reading	113	114
Education	1,057	1,486
Tobacco products and smoking supplies	348	362
Miscellaneous	828	863
Cash contributions	1,730	1,897
Personal insurance and pensions	5,538	5,953
Life and other personal insurance	313	313
Pensions and Social Security	5,225	5,640

**Table 3. Percent share of average annual expenditures for housing, transportation, and food, United States and 18 metropolitan areas, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2008-09**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Housing</b>	<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Food</b>
United States	34.2	16.3	12.9
Atlanta	37.2 *	14.7 *	11.7 *
Baltimore	39.6 *	12.6 *	11.3 *
Boston	35.1	14.5 *	13.8 *
Chicago	36.2 *	15.5	12.4
Cleveland	33.8	15.3	12.5
Dallas	33.8	16.1	12.5
Detroit	33.1	19.2 *	13.0
Houston	31.9 *	18.3	11.9 *
Los Angeles	38.6 *	15.5	13.3
Miami	39.9 *	17.7	12.2
Minneapolis	34.0	15.7	12.2
New York	39.2 *	14.1 *	12.3 *
Philadelphia	37.2 *	14.4 *	11.4 *
Phoenix	34.9	17.4	11.9
San Diego	41.3 *	13.3 *	12.2
San Francisco	38.5 *	14.1 *	11.7 *
Seattle	33.4	14.2 *	12.2
Washington	37.1 *	13.8 *	11.3 *

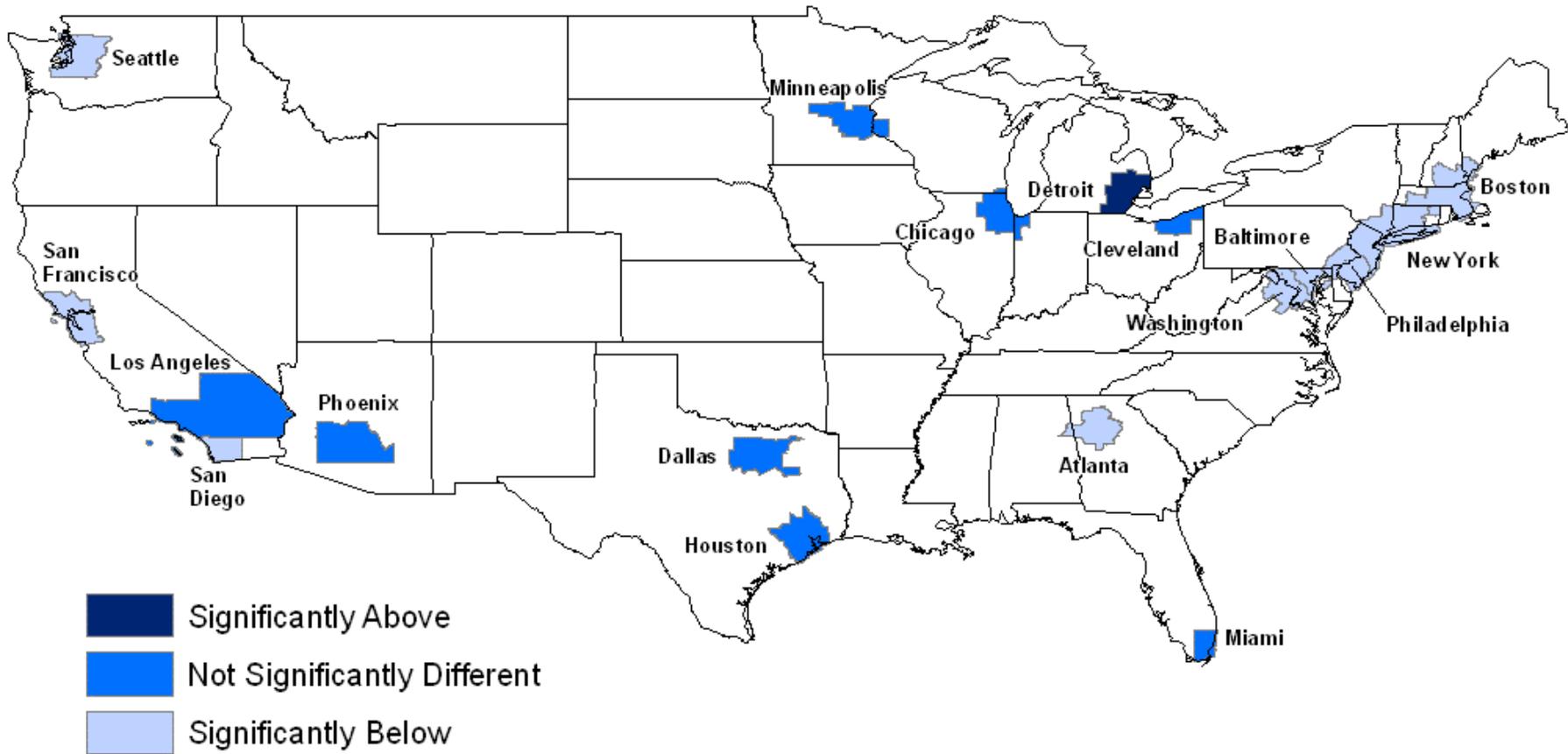
\* Statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level.

Chart 2. Expenditure shares spent on housing in 18 metropolitan statistical areas compared to the U.S. average, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2008-09



Note: Statistical significance testing at the 95-percent confidence interval.

Chart 3. Expenditure shares spent on transportation in 18 metropolitan statistical areas compared to the U.S. average, Consumer Expenditure Survey, 2008-09



Note: Statistical significance testing at the 95-percent confidence interval.