

COMPARISON OF BLS PRICE AND SPENDING MEASURES

This table describes the main characteristics of the price and spending measures produced by BLS: the Consumer Price Index (CPI), Producer Price Index (PPI), Import and Export Price Indexes, and the Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE). This table is intended to provide users a basic understanding of what the surveys measure and the primary uses of the measures. Please see the links at the end of this table for additional details on the data available from each survey and how the estimates are constructed.

Survey characteristic	Consumer Price Index (CPI)	Producer Price Index (PPI)	Import and Export Price Indexes (MXP)	Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE)
What is being measured?	The CPI measures changes in the cost of living over time—specifically, the average month-to-month change in the prices consumers pay for a typical “market basket” of goods and services.	The PPI is a set of indexes that measure the average change over time in selling prices that domestic producers of goods, services, and construction receive for their output. PPIs differ from CPIs in that they measure price change from the seller’s perspective rather than the consumer’s.	Import price indexes measure the average change in price for goods and services purchased by U.S. residents from non-U.S. residents. Export price indexes measure the average change in transaction prices paid by non-U.S. residents for goods and services provided by U.S. residents.	The CE measures average spending of all U.S. households. It measures the total amount spent and the proportion spent on various categories, such as food, housing, and healthcare, along with income and other related demographic details. The basic unit of measurement is the consumer unit, which is any single-person household or a household of people related by birth, marriage, or adoption or who share expenses.
What is included in the measure?	Prices for all items purchased for consumption by consumers.	Prices of goods and services sold by domestic producers of goods, services, and construction.	Most merchandise goods exported from or imported into the United States; also includes some services. Military goods, works of art, used items, charity	All goods and services purchased by consumers, plus some related consumption information. Investments and business expenses are excluded. Auto purchases are

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			donations, railroad equipment, rebuilt and repaired items, items leased for less than a year, and custom-made capital equipment are excluded.	net after trade-in allowance; health costs and car repairs are net after insurance reimbursements.
What is the headline measure in the BLS news releases?	CPI-U, All items	PPI for Final Demand	All price indexes for U.S. imports and exports	Average 12-month spending and income by each U.S. household
What are the measure's primary uses?	CPI data are used to make cost-of-living adjustments for Social Security and other retirement or pension systems, as well as to adjust tax brackets, rents, wages, and other payments for changes in the cost of living.	PPI data for capital equipment are used by the federal government to calculate the nation's gross domestic product. Private firms use PPI data to assist their operations, especially with long-term sales or purchase contracts to account for changes in costs.	U.S. import and export price indexes are used to adjust international trade data for changes in prices over time and to assess the effects of international trade on domestic prices and the competitive position of the United States.	BLS uses CE data to revise the CPI "market basket" for changes in the relative importance of various goods and services. The U.S. Census Bureau uses CE data in calculating the Supplemental Poverty Measure. The U.S. Department of Defense uses CE data in calculating cost-of-living allowances for military families living off base. Other government agencies, policymakers, planners, and researchers use CE data to assess the impact of policy changes on particular economic groups.

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How often are the data revised?	The CPI-U and CPI-W indexes are not revised; the Chained CPI-U indexes are revised when updated expenditure data are available.	Producer Price Indexes are normally revised once, 4 months after they are initially published.	Import and export price indexes are revised up to 3 months after they are initially published, as more information becomes available.	Published CE data are not revised.
How are the data organized for publication?	CPI data are divided into 3 large groups (food, energy, and all items less food and energy), 8 major subgroups (for example, apparel, shelter, and medical care), and 243 specific item categories.	PPI data are grouped several different ways, including by industry (NAICS), by the type of commodity, by the level of demand (final or intermediate), and as inputs to industry.	Import and export merchandise goods are classified three ways: by end use (BEA), by product type (Harmonized system), and by industry (NAICS).	CE data are organized by demographic characteristics, such as income or age, and by major groups such as food, housing, apparel, and transportation. There are numerous subgroups within each of the major groups.
How large are the samples used in these measures?	BLS collects about 83,000 consumer prices from about 23,000 places of business each month, as well as approximately 6,000 rents.	BLS collects roughly 74,000 prices from a sample of about 18,500 domestic producers of goods, services, and construction each month.	BLS collects about 24,000 prices from a sample of 4,600 importers and exporters each month.	There are two surveys with two samples, the Quarterly Interview Survey and the Diary Survey. The U.S. Census Bureau collects about 6,000 household Interviews each quarter, and another 12,000 weekly Diaries per year (two sets of 1-week diaries from 6,000 households.)
How are the survey data collected?	The initial contact is a personal visit, with subsequent prices	The initial contact is made by a personal visit, with subsequent prices	The initial contact is made by a personal visit, with subsequent prices collected by internet (75 percent	The initial contact for both surveys is made by a personal visit. Interview surveys are collected by Computer

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	collected by personal visit, phone, or internet.	collected by internet, traditional mail, and fax.	each month), traditional mail, and fax	Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI) for four quarters, either in person or by telephone. Diary surveys are paper booklets filled out by respondents and picked up by the Census Bureau.
When are the data collected each month?	Consumer prices are collected throughout each month.	PPI requests that price information gathered from producers refer to the Tuesday that occurs during the week that includes the 13th day of the month.	Import and export prices are collected as close as possible to the first day of the month (except for oil prices, which are collected throughout the month).	Data on consumer expenditures are collected throughout each month.
How is a price defined?	Retail/transaction price, including sales and excise taxes.	Net selling prices, including discounts and surcharges, excluding taxes and delivery charges. PPI uses margin prices for establishments engaged in wholesale and retail trade; these establishments purchase goods primarily for direct resale to other businesses and consumers.	Transaction prices that exclude any duty or other taxes.	Retail/transaction price at time of purchase or obligation, including sales and excise taxes
How often are the data published?	CPI data are published monthly.	PPI data are published monthly.	Import and export price indexes are published monthly.	Consumer Expenditure Surveys data are published twice per year. The estimates are averages of 12-month periods, either a calendar year or the

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				period from July of one year to June of the following year.
How can I find out more information?	CPI Home page: http://www.bls.gov/cpi/ CPI Chapter in the BLS Handbook of Methods: http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/homch17.pdf CPI contact email: cpi_info@bls.gov	PPI Home page: http://www.bls.gov/ppi/ PPI Chapter in the BLS Handbook of Methods: http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/homch14.pdf PPI contact email: PPI-Info@bls.gov	IPP Home page: http://www.bls.gov/mxp/ IPP Chapter in the BLS Handbook of Methods: http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/homch15.pdf IPP contact email: MXP@bls.gov	CE Home page: http://www.bls.gov/cex CE Chapter in the BLS Handbook of Methods: http://www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/homch16.pdf CE contact email: CEXInfo@bls.gov

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