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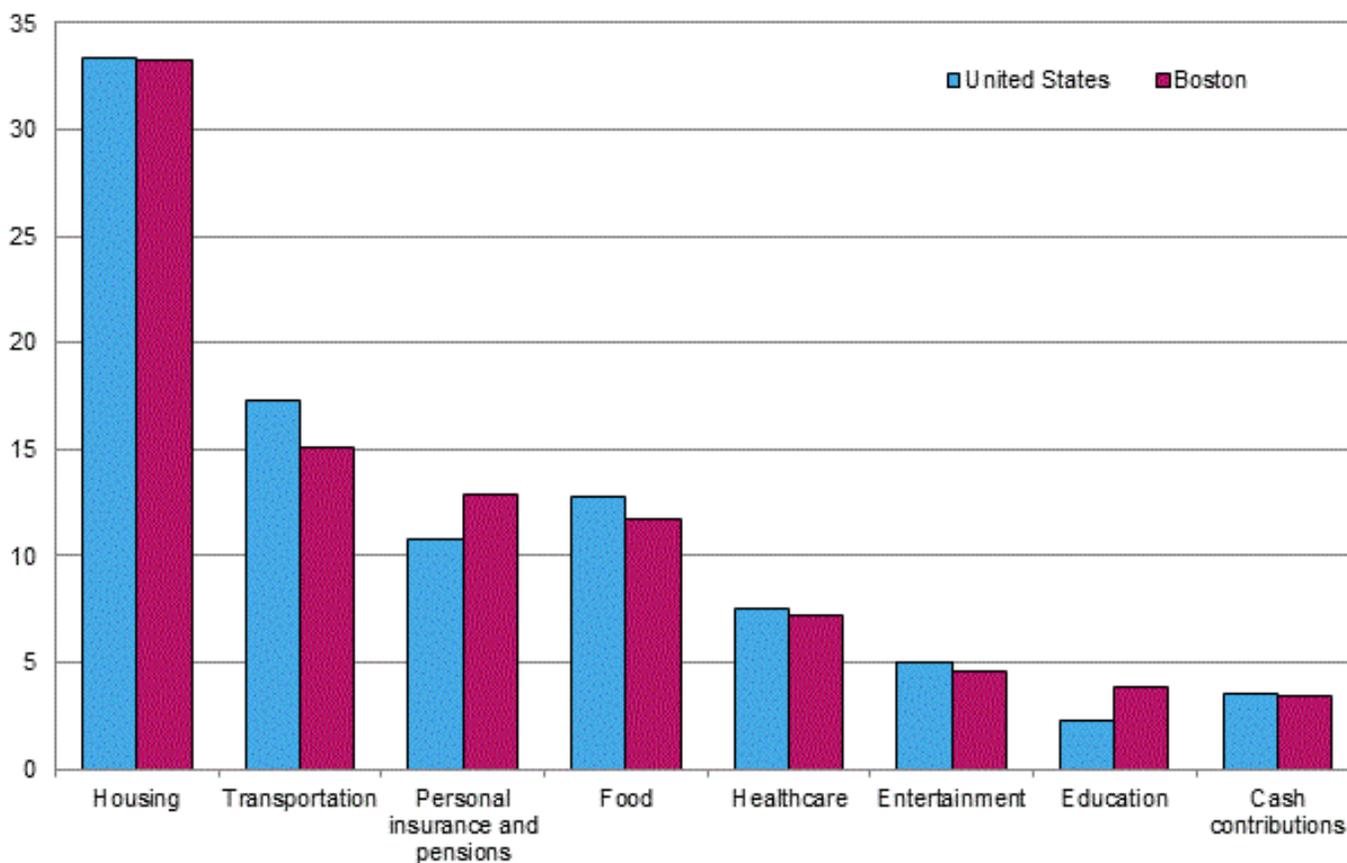
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Consumer Expenditures for the Boston Metropolitan Area: 2013-14

Households in the Boston-Brockton-Nashua metropolitan area spent an average of \$66,203 per year in 2013-14, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. Regional Commissioner Deborah A. Brown noted that this figure was significantly higher than the \$52,284 average expenditure level for a typical household in the United States. Not only did households in the Boston area spend more than the U.S. average, they also allocated their dollars differently in 4 of the 8 major expenditure categories. For example, the expenditure share personal insurance and pensions accounted for 12.9 percent of the household budget in Boston, significantly higher than the 10.8 percent national average. (See [chart 1](#) and [table 1](#).)

Chart 1. Percent distribution of average annual expenditures for eight major categories in the United States and Boston metropolitan area, 2013-14

Expenditure shares



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Highlights of the Boston area’s 2013–14 spending patterns:

- **Housing:** This was the largest expenditure category for Boston-area households and averaged \$22,048. Housing accounted for 33.3 percent of the area’s household budget, not significantly different from the 33.4-percent U.S. average. (See [table 1.](#)) Among 18 metropolitan areas nationwide for which data were available, Boston was 1 of 8 areas with a housing expenditure share not significantly different from the U.S. average. Housing expenditure shares among the 18 areas ranged from 39.6 percent in New York to 30.2 percent in Detroit. (See [table 2.](#))
- **Transportation:** Boston-area households spent 15.1 percent of their budget on transportation, significantly below the national average of 17.3 percent. Of the \$9,997 in annual transportation expenditures in Boston, 91.7 percent was spent buying and maintaining private vehicles; this compared to the national average of 93.8 percent.
- **Food:** The portion of a Boston household’s budget spent on food, 11.7 percent, was significantly below the 12.8-percent U.S. average. Boston-area households spent \$4,883, or 62.8 percent, of their food dollars on food prepared at home and \$2,895 (37.2 percent) on food prepared away from home. In comparison, the average U.S. household spent 59.5 percent of its food budget on food prepared at home and 40.5 percent on food prepared away from home.

Additional Information

Data in this release are from the Consumer Expenditure Survey (CE), which the U.S. Census Bureau conducts for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The data in this release were averaged over a 2-year period, 2013 and 2014.

A household in the CE survey is defined as a consumer unit which consists of members 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.

Differences in spending among metropolitan areas may reflect differences in the cost of living, but they also may reflect other causes. Spending differences may result from different consumer preferences or variations in demographic characteristics, such as household size, age, or income levels. However, expenditure shares, or the percentage of a household’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.

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. A large difference between two values may not be statistically significant, while a small difference could be significant; both the sample size and the variation among the values in the sample affect the relative error of the estimates.

For additional technical and related information, see www.bls.gov/opub/hom/pdf/homch16.pdf. Data for the nation, the four geographic regions of the U.S., and 18 metropolitan areas nationwide are available at www.bls.gov/cex/tables.htm. Metropolitan definitions used in the survey are available at www.bls.gov/regions/ce_areadef.pdf. The metropolitan area discussed in this release is Boston-Brockton-Nashua, Mass.-N.H.-Maine-Conn., which includes Windham County in Connecticut; Bristol, Essex, Hampden, Hampshire,

Middlesex, Norfolk, Plymouth, Suffolk, and Worcester Counties in Massachusetts; York County in Maine; Hillsborough, Merrimack, Rockingham, and Strafford Counties in New Hampshire. Metropolitan area news releases for the Consumer Expenditure Survey are available at www.bls.gov/regions/consumerspending.htm.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; Federal Relay Service: 800-877-8339.

Table 1. Average annual expenditures, characteristics and percent distribution, United States and Boston metropolitan area, 2013-14

Category	United States	Boston
Consumer unit characteristics:		
Income before taxes	\$65,339	\$88,932
Age of reference person	50.2	51.9
Average number in consumer unit:		
People	2.5	2.4
Children under 18	0.6	0.5
Adults 65 and older	0.4	0.4
Earners	1.3	1.4
Vehicles	1.9	1.8
Percent homeowner	63.0	63.0
Average annual expenditures	\$52,284	\$66,203*
Percent distribution	100.0	100.0
Food	12.8	11.7*
Alcoholic beverages	0.9	0.9
Housing	33.4	33.3
Apparel and services	3.3	3.0
Transportation	17.3	15.1*
Healthcare	7.5	7.2
Entertainment	5.0	4.6
Personal care products and services	1.2	1.1
Reading	0.2	0.2
Education	2.3	3.8*
Tobacco products and smoking supplies	0.6	0.7
Miscellaneous	1.3	2.0
Cash contributions	3.5	3.4
Personal insurance and pensions	10.8	12.9*

Note: An asterisk (*) represents a statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level

Table 2. Percent share of average annual expenditures for housing, transportation, and food, United States and 18 metropolitan areas, 2013-14

Area	Housing	Transportation	Food
United States	33.4	17.3	12.8
Atlanta	33.2	16.4	12.8
Baltimore	33.9	15.0	11.5
Boston	33.3	15.1*	11.7*
Chicago	35.1*	15.2*	12.7
Cleveland	31.0*	18.0	13.7
Dallas	33.1	18.3	12.7
Detroit	30.2*	19.2*	12.4
Houston	33.4	17.9	12.1
Los Angeles	38.7*	15.0*	13.1
Miami	39.4*	16.8	13.0
Minneapolis	32.4	17.9	11.3*
New York	39.6*	13.4*	11.6*
Philadelphia	35.4*	16.4	12.5
Phoenix	34.2	19.4	13.9
San Diego	37.6*	16.3	11.0*
San Francisco	37.3*	13.7*	11.9
Seattle	35.0	15.4*	12.3
Washington	35.8*	18.0	10.0*

* Note: An asterisk (*) represents a statistically significant difference from the U.S. average at the 95-percent confidence level