

About this edition of Family Spending 2015

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Introduction

This report presents the latest information from the Living Costs and Food Survey for the 2014 calendar year (January to December). The Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS) was renamed as the Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF) in 2008 when it became a module of the Integrated Household Survey (IHS); the LCF left the IHS in 2014.

The current LCF is the result of the amalgamation of the Family Expenditure and National Food Surveys (FES and NFS). Both surveys were well established and important sources of information for government and the wider community, charting changes and patterns in Britain's spending and food consumption since the 1950s. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has overall project management and financial responsibility for the LCF while the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) sponsors the specialist food data.

The survey continues to be used primarily to provide information for the Consumer Prices Index and the Retail Prices Index; national accounts estimates of household expenditure; the analysis of the effect of taxes and benefits; and trends in nutrition. However, the results are multi purpose, providing an invaluable supply of economic and social data.

About this edition of Family Spending

The 2014 survey

In 2014, 4,982 households in Great Britain took part in the LCF survey. The response rate was 48% in Great Britain and 60% in Northern Ireland. The fieldwork was undertaken by the Office for National Statistics and the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). Further details about the conduct of the survey are given in the [methodology section](#).

This year's report includes an overview chapter outlining key findings, and detailed chapters focusing upon expenditure on housing, patterns of spending by equivalised income, trends in household expenditure over time.

Data quality and definitions

The results shown in this report are of the data collected by the LCF, following a process of validation and adjustment for non-response using weights that control for a number of factors. These issues are discussed in the section on reliability in the [methodology section](#).

Figures in the report are subject to sampling variability. Standard errors for detailed expenditure items are presented in relative terms in [Table A1 \(154.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#) and are described in the [methodology section](#). Figures shown for particular groups of households (for example income groups or household composition groups), regions or other sub-sets of the sample are subject to larger sampling variability, and are more sensitive to possible extreme values than are figures for the sample as a whole.

The definitions used in the report are set out in the [methodology section](#), and changes made since 1991 are described in the [Technical Report](#). Note particularly that housing benefit and council tax rebate (rates rebate in Northern Ireland), unlike other social security benefits, are not included in income but are shown as a reduction in housing costs.

Income and expenditure balancing

The LCF is designed primarily as a survey of household expenditure on goods and services. It also gathers information about the income of household members, and is an important and detailed source of income data. However, the survey is not designed to produce a balance sheet of income and expenditure either for individual households or groups of households. For further information on the balancing of income and expenditure figures, see 'Response to the survey' in the [methodology section](#).

Related data sources

Details of household consumption expenditure within the context of the UK National accounts are produced as part of [Consumer Trends](#). This publication includes all expenditure by members of UK resident households. National accounts figures draw on a number of sources including the LCF: figures shown in this report are therefore not directly comparable to National accounts data. National accounts data may be more appropriate for deriving long term trends on expenditure.

More detailed income information is available from the Family Resources Survey (FRS), conducted for the Department for Work and Pensions. Further information about food consumption, and in particular details of food quantities, is available from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, who produce their own [report of the survey](#).

Additional tabulations

This report gives a broad overview of the results of the survey, and provides more detailed information about some aspects of expenditure. However, many users of LCF data have very specific data requirements that may not appear in the desired form in this report. The ONS can provide more detailed analysis of the tables in this report, and can also provide additional tabulations to meet specific requests. A charge will be made to cover the cost of providing additional information.

The tables in Family Spending 2015 are available as Excel spreadsheets.

Anonymised microdata from the Living Costs and Food Survey (LCF), the Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS) and the Family Expenditure Survey (FES) are available from the United Kingdom

Data Service. [Details on access arrangements and associated costs](#) can be found on the UK Data Service website or by telephoning 01206 872143.

Background notes

1. Symbols and conventions used in Family Spending 2015 Edition

[] Figures should be used with extra caution because they are based on fewer than 20 reporting households.

.. The data is suppressed if the unweighted sample counts are less than 10 reporting households.

- No figures are available because there are no reporting households.

Rounding: Individual figures have been rounded independently. The sum of component items does not therefore necessarily add to the totals shown.

Averages: These are averages (means) for all households included in the column or row, and unless specified, are not restricted to those households reporting expenditure on a particular item or income of a particular type.

Period covered: Calendar year 2014 (1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014).

2. Contacts

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The Government Statistical Service

The Government Statistical Service (GSS) is a network of professional statisticians and their staff operating both within the Office for National Statistics and across more than 30 other government departments and agencies.

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