

18 January 2007

**Coverage**  
United Kingdom  
**Theme**  
Social and Welfare

## Households spend on average £443 per week

### Family Spending 2006 – the results of the Expenditure and Food Survey 2005/06

UK households spent on average £443 a week in 2005/06, according to new results from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). In 2004/05 the average household spend was £434 a week.

Estimates in this year's *Family Spending* show that spending was highest in the transport category; with an average spend of almost £62 a week. This included £27.90 on the operation of personal transport (for example petrol, diesel, repairs and servicing) and £9.90 on transport services such as rail, tube and bus fares.

The second highest category of spending was on recreation and culture, e.g. televisions, computers, newspapers, books, leisure activities and package holidays, at £58 a week. Breaking this category down further, an average of £17.90 a week was spent on recreational and cultural services such as spectator and participant sports and cinema and live entertainment.

Food and non-alcoholic drink purchases contributed £45 to weekly household expenditure, £10.10 of which went on meat, £3.40 on fresh vegetables and £2.80 on fresh fruit. Non-alcoholic drinks accounted for £3.80 a week and £1.80 was spent on chocolate and confectionery each week.

Average weekly household expenditure was highest, £744 a week, among households with children and three or more adults and lowest, £135 a week, among one person retired households who were mainly dependent on state pensions. Households with two adults and two children spent an average of £642 a week.

Averaged over three years, households in the UK spent £432 a week though expenditure varied from £500 a week in London, 16 per cent more than the UK average, to £352 a week in the North East, 19 per cent less than the UK average. London, the South East, the South West and the East of England were the only regions in which average expenditure was higher than the UK average.

Issued by  
National Statistics  
1 Drummond Gate  
London SW1V 2QQ

Telephone  
Press Office 020 7533 5702  
Email [press.office@ons.gov.uk](mailto:press.office@ons.gov.uk)  
Public Enquiries 0845 601 3034

Statistician  
Ed Dunn 01633 812295  
Cathy Gibbins 020 7533 5407

Internet  
[www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

The 2005/06 results mark five years of the Expenditure and Food Survey on a consistent classification of expenditure. Measured on 2005/06 prices there has been little change in overall household expenditure over the period 2001/02 to 2005/06. In 2005/06 households have reported a slightly higher proportion of weekly expenditure on housing, fuel and power (10 per cent compared to 9 per cent five years ago) and the more general category of 'other expenditure' (17 per cent compared to 15 per cent five years ago). Other expenditure includes holiday spending, mortgage interest payments and council tax amongst other items. In contrast households have reported a slightly lower proportion of weekly expenditure on recreation and culture, clothing & footwear and household goods and services in 2005/06 than in 2001/02.

Almost three quarters of all households (74 per cent), owned a car or van with 28 per cent owning two or more. In the lowest income group, 29 per cent owned at least one car or van, compared with 96 per cent of households in the highest income group.

Households in the highest income groups were also much more likely to have a home computer, an internet connection and a mobile phone, than those in lower income groups. On average, 65 per cent of UK households owned a home computer and 55 per cent had an internet connection. In the highest income group these figures were 95 per cent and 93 per cent respectively though in the lowest income group just 29 per cent of households owned a computer and 17 per cent had an internet connection.

Ownership of mobile phones followed a similar pattern. On average, 79 per cent of UK households owned a mobile phone though only 56 per cent of households in the lowest income group reported owning a mobile phone, compared with 92 per cent in the highest income group.

## BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

### *How the information is collected*

1. In 2005/06, 6,785 households in the United Kingdom took part in the survey. The sample is representative of all regions of the UK and of different types of households and the survey is continuous: interviews are spread evenly over the calendar year to ensure that estimates are not biased by seasonal variation.
2. Strict care is taken to keep the information supplied by the individual households confidential. No material is released in a form which would allow individual households to be identified.

### *How the information is used*

1. The EFS shows how households spend their money; how much goes on food, clothing and so on; and how spending patterns vary depending upon income, household composition, and regional location of households. The survey also contains data on household income and its sources.
2. One of the main purposes of the EFS (formerly the Family Expenditure Survey) is to define the 'basket of goods' for the Retail Prices Index (RPI) and the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) which are both measures of inflation. The RPI has a vital role in the uprating of state pensions and welfare benefits, while the CPI is a key instrument of the government's monetary policy.
3. Information from the EFS is also a major source for estimates of Household Expenditure in the UK National Accounts.
4. EFS information on expenditure and income is used by HM Treasury to study how taxes and benefits affect household incomes and to analyse the effects of policy in these areas.
5. Regional EFS information is one of the sources of regional estimates of consumer spending and other regional statistics.
6. Many other government departments use EFS data as a basis for policy making, for example in the areas of housing and transport.
7. Users outside government include independent research institutes, academic researchers, and business and market researchers.

## BACKGROUND NOTES

1. Family Spending 2005/06 is available free at <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/Product.asp?vlnk=361>
2. In common with any sample survey, Expenditure and Food Survey (EFS) results are subject to sampling variability. This is indicated by the standard errors in table A1 of Family Spending 2005/06 which are discussed in Appendix B of the report. Figures, and differences between figures, should be interpreted in the light of these standard errors.
3. The EFS is reviewed each year, and changes may be made to keep it up-to-date. Year-on-year changes should be interpreted with caution.

4. The definitions of income and expenditure used are explained in Appendix B of Family Spending 2005/06.
5. Experience of household surveys in the United Kingdom and in other countries indicates that reported expenditure on a few items (notably tobacco and alcohol) is below the levels which might be expected by comparison with other sources of information. National Lottery spending has also been significantly under-recorded in the EFS, particularly for scratchcards.
6. The format of the Family Spending publication changed in 2003/04 and the tables of key results which historically were found in the main body of the report are now in Appendix A. within the 2005/06 publication chapter 1 presents an overview of findings. Chapter 2 presents results of expenditure on housing which covers all reported expenditure on housing. Results based on equivalised income are presented in Chapter 3. Results of trends in household expenditure over time, from 1982 to 2005/06, are presented in Chapter 4.
7. The 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 EFS data have very specific data requirements which 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.
8. For further information on this service, contact:  
  
Expenditure and Food Survey,  
  
Tel: 020 7533 5752  
Tel: 01633 819100  
e-mail: [efs@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:efs@ons.gsi.gov.uk)
9. Details of the National Statistics policy governing the release of new data are available from the press office. Also available is a list of the names of those given pre-publication access to the contents of this release.
10. National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference. © Crown copyright 2007.