

Glossary: Household budget survey (HBS)

Statistics Explained

The **Household budget survey**, abbreviated as **HBS**, is a national survey focusing on [households](#)' expenditure on goods and services, giving a picture of living conditions in the [European Union \(EU\)](#). It is carried out by each Member State and is used to compile weightings for important macroeconomic indicators, such as [consumer price indices](#) (used as measures of [inflation](#)) and [national accounts](#).

The data from the survey are broken down by household characteristics, such as income, socio-economic characteristics, size and composition, [degree of urbanisation](#), and region.

Data collection involves a combination of one or more interviews and diaries or logs maintained by households and/or individuals, generally on a daily basis.

The basic unit of data collection and analysis in the surveys is the household. It is important to identify the reference person (often the head of the household) whose personal characteristics can be used in the classification and analysis of information on the household. The socio-economic group, occupation and employment status, income, sex and age of the reference person is often used to classify and present results.

Expenditure made by households to acquire goods and services is recorded at the price actually paid, which includes indirect taxes ([VAT](#) and excise duties) borne by the purchaser.

Two-thirds of the Member States carry out annual surveys, while the remainder have five-year or even longer intervals between surveys. Probability sampling is used in the large majority of surveys in the EU. The high incidence of non-response is a common and major problem.

Further information

- [Household budget surveys in the EU: methodology and recommendations for harmonization – 2003](#)

Statistical data

- [Living conditions in Europe - income distribution and income inequality](#)
- [Household budget survey - statistics on consumption expenditure](#)