
Money Disbursements of Wage Earners
and Clerical Workers in Eight Cities
in the East North Central Region
1934-36

By

FAITH M. WILLIAMS and ALICE C. HANSON

Assisted by GENEVIEVE B. WIMSATT
of the Bureau of Labor Statistics



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PREFACE

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has been making studies of the money receipts and disbursements of wage earners and salaried workers since 1888. The first survey was initiated to provide information on wages and levels of living among American and European workers. Later studies, made in 1903 and 1918, were undertaken to secure weights for indexes of the cost of food and other goods purchased by families of wage earners and salaried workers.

The 1918 survey, in which data were obtained from 12,096 families at 7 different income levels, has supplied the weights for the cost of living indexes published currently by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Since 1918, however, consumer purchasing habits and the articles available in the retail market have greatly changed. Many new types of articles which were not on the market in the earlier period are now commonly purchased by families of wage earners and clerical workers. Other goods in common use in 1918 are seldom or never purchased by workers' families of the present day.

The present survey, covering 2,694 families in eight cities in the East North Central region, is part of a Nation-wide survey undertaken to give a revised and complete account of the kinds of goods and services which represent the purchases of typical families of employed workers in 1934-36. The data obtained from each of the 2,694 families include information on annual incomes, housing facilities, current money expenditures for commodities and services separately and by groups of items, quantities of commodities purchased, and on net change in financial position during the year; that is, the amount of savings made or deficit incurred. They serve to answer many questions regarding the planes of living of American workers, their actual and potential demand for the commodities of agriculture, commerce, and industry, and the effectiveness of the operation of the economic system of our nation.

The surveys in the several cities were made in cooperation with various agencies, whose assistance is hereby gratefully acknowledged. In Columbus, the study was made in cooperation with the Ohio State University, Bureau of Business Research, Dr. Viva Boothe, acting director, and the Ohio Emergency Relief Administration; in Michigan, with the University of Michigan School of Education, Dr. A. B. Moehlman, head, and the Michigan Emergency Relief

Administration; in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Milwaukee, with the Works Progress Administrations.

In the final analysis and preparation of this report, special contributions to problems of method were made by Jerome Cornfield, William S. Shelton, and Samuel E. Cohen. Mary C. Ruark was responsible for the final tabulations.

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Commissioner of Labor Statistics.

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