

**Comments on Draft Information Collection Request for the
Consumer Expenditure Surveys (OMB Number 1220-0050)**

[Bruce D. Meyer](#), Professor, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago and
[James X. Sullivan](#), Associate Professor of Economics, University of Notre Dame

Recommendations Submitted to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in Response to 81 FR 42731
August 29, 2016

In the short run, the Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CE) should:

- Add more current life event questions (marriage, divorce, unemployment, job loss, disability)
- Focus on interview collection, rather than moving toward more self-reports via a diary or other in-the-moment collection, which while beguiling, leads to measurably lower quality data
- Insure that relevant fields are kept to permit linking to admin data (and make sure the disclosure statement is consistent with linking)
- Return make, model and year of vehicles to the public use file or include the bluebook value
- Ask respondents to rely more on written and online records in its interviews

In the medium run, the CE should:

- Use admin income data to eliminate the need to collect income information
- Link to Nielsen, JP Morgan Chase Research Institute, Mint, or comparable data for a subsample of the interview survey with the larger random sample used for its current purposes as well as to adjust for selection

Contact information:

- Bruce D. Meyer: (773) 702-2712, bdmeyer@uchicago.edu
- James X. Sullivan: (574) 631-7587, sullivan.197@nd.edu