A CLOSER LOOK AT DISCRETIONARY SPENDING
Spending that lawmakers control through annual appropriation acts

AT A GLANCE

- **$1.3 Trillion**
  - Discretionary outlays by the federal government in 2019

- **$0.7 Trillion**
  - Outlays for national defense, which accounted for about half of the discretionary total, in 2019

- **7.2% of GDP**
  - Average discretionary outlays between 1999 and 2018

- **6.3% of GDP**
  - Discretionary outlays in 2019

TRENDS IN DISCRETIONARY SPENDING
Outlays, as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product

DISCRETIONARY SPENDING IN 2019
Billions of Dollars

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Source: Congressional Budget Office, April 2020

All data are for federal fiscal years, which run from October 1 to September 30. Numbers may not add up to totals because of rounding.