

ADVANCE REPORT INFORMATION SECTION

GOODS (CENSUS BASIS)

Data for goods on a Census basis are compiled from the documents collected by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and reflect the movement of goods between foreign countries and the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and U.S. Foreign Trade Zones. They include government and non-government shipments of goods and exclude shipments between the United States and its territories and possessions; transactions with U.S. military, diplomatic, and consular installations abroad; U.S. goods returned to the United States by its Armed Forces; personal and household effects of travelers; and in-transit shipments. Data for U.S. exports to Canada are derived from import data compiled by Canada. For more information on the data exchange and substitution please refer to the FT-900. The General Imports value reflects the total arrival of merchandise from foreign countries that immediately enters consumption channels, warehouses, or Foreign Trade Zones.

For imports, the value reported is the U.S. Customs and Border Protection appraised value of merchandise—generally, the price paid for merchandise for export to the United States. Import duties, freight, insurance, and other charges incurred in bringing merchandise to the United States are excluded.

Exports are valued at the f.a.s. (free alongside ship) value of merchandise at the U.S. port of export, based on the transaction price including inland freight, insurance, and other charges incurred in placing the merchandise alongside the carrier at the U.S. port of exportation.

NONSAMPLING ERRORS

The goods data are a complete enumeration of documents collected by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection and are not subject to sampling errors. Quality assurance procedures are performed at every stage of collection, processing, and tabulation. However, the data are still subject to several types of nonsampling errors. The most significant of these include reporting errors, undocumented shipments, timeliness, data capture errors, and errors in the estimation of low-valued transactions.

Reporting Errors: Reporting errors are mistakes or omissions made by importers, exporters, or their agents in their import or export declarations. Most errors involve missing or invalid commodity classification codes and missing or incorrect quantities or shipping weights. They have a negligible effect on aggregate import, export, and balance of trade statistics. However, they can affect the detailed commodity statistics.

Undocumented Shipments: Federal regulations require importers, exporters, or their agents to report all merchandise shipments above established exemption levels. The U.S. Census Bureau has determined that not all required documents are filed, particularly for exports.

Timeliness and Data Capture Errors: The U.S. Census Bureau captures import and export information from administrative documents and through various automated collection programs. Documents may be lost, and data may be incorrectly keyed, coded, or recorded. Transactions may be included in a subsequent month's statistics if received late.

Low-valued Transactions: The total values of transactions valued as much as or below \$2,500 for exports and \$2,000 (\$250 for certain quota items) for imports are estimated for each country, using factors based on the ratios of low-valued shipments to individual country totals for past periods.

The U.S. Census Bureau recommends that data users incorporate this information into their analyses, as nonsampling errors could impact the conclusion drawn from the results. For a detailed discussion of errors affecting the goods data, see "U.S. Merchandise Trade Statistics: A Quality Profile," available at www.census.gov/foreign-trade/aip/quality_profile10032014.pdf or from the Economic Indicators Division, U.S. Census Bureau.

ADJUSTMENTS FOR SEASONAL AND TRADING-DAY VARIATIONS

Goods are initially classified under the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (Harmonized System), which is an internationally accepted standard for the commodity classification of traded goods. The Harmonized System describes and measures the characteristics of the goods and is the basis for the systems used in the United States: Schedule B for exports and Harmonized Tariff Schedule for imports. Combining trade into approximately 140 export and 140 import end-use categories makes it possible to examine goods according to their principal uses. These categories are used as the basis for computing the seasonal and trading-day adjusted data. These adjusted data are then summed to the six end-use aggregates for publication.

The seasonal adjustment procedure (X13-ARIMA-SEATS) is based on a model that estimates the monthly movements as percentages above or below the general level of series (unlike other methods that redistribute the actual series values over the calendar year).

Each June, advance seasonally adjusted data are updated to reflect recalculated seasonal adjustments. For December statistical month Advance Reports, each prior month of the most recent full year of advance data is updated so that the totals of the seasonally adjusted months equal the annual totals.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The "Advance Report: U.S. International Trade in Goods" is available at the following: www.census.gov/foreign-trade/advance/current/.