Survey Overview

Survey Abbreviation: ACES

Purpose:
Produce economy-wide annual information about business capital expenditures on new and used structures, equipment, operating leases, and capitalized computer software.

Coverage
The survey covers all domestic, private non-farm businesses including companies with and without paid employees.

Content
Companies with and without paid employees report capital expenditures on new and used structures and equipment and operating leases; companies with employees report capitalized software expenditures by software categories and also report capital expenditures on structures and equipment by broad NAICS industry categories.

Frequency

Data are collected annually; statistical products are released 13-15 months after the reference period.

Legal authority
Title 13, U.S. Code authorizes this survey and businesses are required by the same law to respond to the Census Bureau. All responses are confidential and are used only for statistical purposes. Copies of filed forms are immune from legal process and are exempt from Freedom of Information Act requests. No data are published that would disclose the identity of an individual company. Data items are suppressed to prevent the disclosure of sensitive information about an individual company.

The Census Bureau has reviewed this data product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and has approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied (Approval ID: CBDRB-FY20-376).

Methods
Capital expenditures for 2019 were collected, using an internet self-administered questionnaire, from a sample of about 50,000 companies with paid employees, called the employer or ACE-1 component, from a universe of 5.8 million companies.

In most years, data are collected from a sample of 20,000 companies without paid employees, called nonemployee companies or the ACE-2 component. For ACES 2019, that component was removed. References to the nonemployers or the ACE-2 component is not relevant for the ACES 2019 data release.

Companies with paid employees are asked to report capital expenditures on structures and equipment by broad industry categories. Companies without employees are only asked about structures and equipment without any industry associated with it.

Statistical products
The ACES program produces two reports: an annual report providing the most recent ACES survey results and a bi-annual Capital Spending Report that contains ten years of capital expenditures data.

Key statistics
National estimates of total capital expenditures (structures, equipment, and operating leases), capital expenditures on structures (total, new, and used), capital expenditures on equipment (total, new, and used), and operating leases are available for all companies with and without paid employees. For companies with paid employees, additional information is available for capitalized expenditures on computer software (total, prepackaged, vendor-customized, and internally developed). More detailed structures and equipment detail are available for reference years: 2008, 2012, and 2017.

Geographic detail
U.S only, no subnational information.

Industry detail
For companies with paid employees, capital expenditures data on structures and equipment are available by NAICS sector and for about 132 selected NAICS categories. Capital expenditures by NAICS categories is not available for companies without paid employees or for capitalized software expenditures.

Uses
Capital expenditures fuel future economic growth and productivity by permitting businesses to produce more output in the future. By definition, capital expenditures provide long-term benefits, are non-recurring, result in the acquisition or improvement of permanent assets, and are chargeable to assets accounts for which depreciation or amortization accounts are ordinarily maintained. ACES statistics are an important input for federal agencies constructing composite national economic measures, such as the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Federal Reserve Board. Industry analysts and businesses use capital expenditures as a barometer of future economic prospects.