

Information on Goods

The goods data 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. The General Imports value reflects the total arrival of merchandise from foreign countries that immediately enters consumption channels, warehouses, or Foreign Trade Zones. Imports for Consumption measure the total of merchandise that has physically cleared through Customs either entering consumption channels immediately or entering after withdrawal for consumption from bonded warehouses under Customs custody or from 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.

Monthly data include actual month's transactions as well as a small number of transactions for previous months. SITC and country detail data are not revised monthly. These data are revised annually to eliminate "carry-over" (that portion of the monthly statistics that arrives too late for inclusion in the transaction month) and to include errata (corrections to the published monthly data).

[Standard International Trade Classification \(SITC\)](#)

Goods data are classified in terms of SITC also. The SITC is a statistical classification of the commodities entering external trade designed to provide the commodity aggregates needed for purposes of economic analysis and to facilitate the international comparison of trade-by-commodity data. The Harmonized System and SITC Revision 3 are interrelated. For more details, see "What is the SITC classification system?" at:

<http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/www/sec2.html#sitc>

[Steel 201 Remedy in Effect](#)

To facilitate positive adjustment to competition from imports of certain steel products, in March 2002 the President signed into law a relief program for the domestic steel industry. This program has come to be known as "Steel 201" named after Section 201 of the Trade Act of 1974. For more information on Section 201 Steel Products, see the United States Trade Representative (USTR) steel section at:

www.ustr.gov/sectors/industry/steel201/background.htm

[U.S./Canada Data Exchange and Substitution](#)

The data for U.S. exports to Canada are derived from import data compiled by Canada. The use of Canada's import data to produce U.S. export data requires several alignments in order to compare the two series.

1. *Coverage* -- Canadian imports are based on country of origin. U.S. goods shipped from a third country are included. U.S. exports exclude these foreign shipments and excludes certain Canadian postal shipments.
2. *Valuation* -- Canadian imports are valued at point of origin in the United States. However, U.S. exports are valued at the port of exit in the United States and include inland freight charges, making the U.S. export value slightly larger. Canada requires inland freight to be reported.

3. *Reexports* -- U.S. exports include reexports of foreign goods. Again, the aggregate U. S. export figure is slightly larger.
4. *Exchange Rate* -- Average monthly exchange rates are applied to convert the published data to U.S. currency.
5. *Other* -- There are other minor differences which are statistically insignificant, such as rounding error.

Canadian Estimates

Effective with January 2001 statistics, the current month data for exports to Canada contain an estimate for late arrivals and corrections. The following month, this estimate will be replaced, in the press release tables only, with the actual value of late receipts and corrections. This estimate will improve the current month data for exports to Canada and treat late receipts for exports to Canada in a manner more consistent with the treatment of late receipts for exports to other countries.

Adjustments for Seasonal and Working-Day Variations

Goods are initially classified under the Harmonized System (HS) which describes and measures the characteristics of goods traded. 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 working-day adjusted data. These adjusted data are then summed to the six end-use aggregates for publication. These data are provided to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, from the U.S. Census Bureau, for use in the Balance of Payments and the National Income and Product Accounts.

The seasonal adjustment procedure is based on a model that estimates the monthly movements as percentages above or below the general level of each end-use commodity series (unlike other methods that redistribute

the actual series values over the calendar year). Imports of petroleum and petroleum products are adjusted for the length of the month. Because of the extremely variable movements of the data series for aircraft, users studying data trends may wish to analyze aircraft separately from other trade.

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; but they are subject to several types of nonsampling 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 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, 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 on the INTERNET at:

www.census.gov/foreign-trade/aip/index.html#infopapers

Area Groupings

North America - Canada, Mexico

Western Europe - Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta and Gozo, Macedonia, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Slovenia, Spain, Svalbard, Jan Mayen Island, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Vatican City, Yugoslavia.

European Union - Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.

Euro Area - Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain.

European Free Trade Association - Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland.

Eastern Europe - Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan.

Pacific Rim - Australia, Brunei, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Macao, Malaysia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan.

South/Central America - Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Bermuda, Bolivia, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Falkland Islands, French Guiana, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, Uruguay, Venezuela.

OPEC - Algeria, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela.