

Seasonal Adjustment of Trade in Goods and Services by Selected Countries and World Areas

Frequently Asked Questions

Why are the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the U.S. Census Bureau publishing seasonally adjusted export/import data by geography in the monthly [U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services](#) report?

Publishing seasonally adjusted trade data by geography will allow data users to better assess underlying patterns in geographic time series data by removing predictable seasonal patterns specific to each country or world area.

Prior to March 2014, the Census Bureau published not seasonally adjusted data for selected countries and world areas. In March 2014, the Census Bureau introduced seasonally adjusted statistics by geography for trade in goods on a Census basis. In June 2014, BEA introduced seasonally adjusted statistics by geography for trade in goods on a balance of payments (BOP) basis and for trade in services.

Why are a limited number of countries/world areas being adjusted?

The selected countries and world areas represent the major trading partners of the United States and account for more than two-thirds of trade in goods and services.

Why are statistics on seasonally adjusted trade in goods and services only available at a quarterly frequency?

Seasonally adjusted statistics by geography for trade in goods on a BOP basis and trade in services are only available at a quarterly frequency because the source data are not available at the level of detail necessary to produce a monthly frequency.

However, seasonally adjusted statistics by geography for trade in goods on a Census basis are available monthly in exhibit 19 of the monthly U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services report.

How does the BEA seasonally adjust export/import data by geography?

The geographic seasonal adjustments are developed and applied directly at the country and world area level. This differs from seasonal adjustments in other BEA data on trade in goods and services, which are applied to detailed end-use commodity data for goods and to detailed service type data for services.

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

Will additional seasonally adjusted countries and areas be made available?

We will periodically reevaluate the list of selected countries and areas and may make additions/modifications at a future date, but at this time there are no plans to add additional countries or areas.

Are these statistics available as a time series?

Seasonally adjusted trade in goods and services are available beginning with statistics for first quarter 1999 in a historical time series file available at http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/international/trade/trad_geo_time_series.xls. This file is updated quarterly in March, June, September, and December.

Do the seasonal adjustments account for moving holidays such as Chinese New Year and Easter?

Yes. Due to the geographic nature of many moving holidays, we review the country and world area data for moving holiday effects and include them in seasonal adjustment models as appropriate.

How do the seasonally adjusted statistics on trade in goods in exhibit 20a of the U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services release differ from the statistics on trade in goods in exhibit 19?

The statistics in exhibit 20a reflect trade in goods on a BOP basis while the statistics in exhibit 19 reflect trade in goods on a Census basis. Goods on a Census basis are adjusted by BEA to a BOP basis to align the data with the concepts and definitions used to prepare the international and national economic accounts.

To derive the seasonally adjusted statistics by geography for trade in goods on a BOP basis, these BOP adjustments are applied to the not seasonally data on trade in goods on a Census basis, and the BOP basis totals for the selected countries and world areas are then directly seasonally adjusted.