

Seasonal Adjustment of Trade in Goods by Selected Country and World Areas

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Census Bureau seasonally adjusting import/export data by geography?

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 only published not seasonally adjusted data for selected countries and world areas.

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

The selected twelve countries and five world areas represent the major trading partners of the United States and were chosen based on the additional resources available to develop and maintain the appropriate seasonal adjustment models.

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

The geographic seasonal adjustments are developed and applied directly at the country and world area level. This differs from commodity-based seasonal adjustments in other Census Bureau exhibits, which are applied to detailed end-use level data. For more information, please consult the information regarding seasonal adjustments in the “Guide to Foreign Trade Statistics” at <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/guide/sec2.html#seasonal>.

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.

Will prior years of geographic data calculated using the methodology be made available?

With the initial release of geographic seasonally adjusted data for the January 2014 statistical month, we are providing monthly and quarterly seasonally adjusted data back January 2012. Census-basis trade data starting with January 2009 will be made available when annual revisions are published on June 4, 2014.

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.

Why aren't total exports and imports included in the exhibit showing the seasonally adjusted countries and world areas?

For total exports and imports, data users should refer to the commodity-based totals shown in the other exhibits. The seasonally adjusted country and world area data will not sum to the seasonally adjusted commodity-based totals because the seasonally adjusted country and world area data and the commodity-based totals are derived from different aggregations of the export and import data and from different seasonal adjustment models. Data users should use caution drawing comparisons between the two sets of series.