



Foreign Trade Statistics

Introduction

In 1790, the Federal Government began annual publication of general statistics on U.S. foreign commerce and navigation. Monthly data have been compiled and published since 1866. (Instead of annual data, quarterly cumulative statistics were published from 1946 to 1963; cumulative data continue to be available in some reports.) The task of compiling these statistics from customs collectors' figures first was given to the U.S.

Department of the Treasury, but later was turned over to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Since 1941, collecting these data has been part of the U.S. Census Bureau's responsibilities, which are spelled out under the Foreign Trade Statistics Regulation, Title 15, Part 30, *Code of Federal Regulations* (pursuant to Title 13, Chapter 9, of the U.S. Code).

The Trade Act of 1974 contains the requirements that U.S. export data be directly related to data on U.S. imports and, in turn, that both be related to domestic output. As a result, a revised Schedule B (Statistical Classification of Commodities Exported From the United States), based on the framework of the Tariff Schedules of the United States Annotated (TSUSA), was introduced in 1978. Both Schedule B and TSUSA contained additional detail to increase comparability with the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) Code used, at that time, in compiling domestic production data in the U.S. economic censuses and surveys, as well as elsewhere in the Federal Government. To compare data with those American trading partners,

the detailed classifications in Schedule B and TSUSA were recast to the United Nations' Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) used by most of the world trading community. SITC-based data were published in terms of Schedule E (exports) and Schedule A (imports). Presentation of the basic data by classification code permitted rearrangement in terms of end-use categories or other aggregations determined by the specific user.

In January 1989, the United States joined other nations by adopting the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS) of classifying commodities in international trade. Under HS, both exported and imported commodities carry the same codes down to the six-digit level. This allows closer comparisons, and the process has been further assisted by adjustments in the SIC Code.¹ The HS is intended to serve as a universally accepted product nomenclature. It can be used in the classification of goods for the administration of customs programs, the collection of data on exports and imports, and the assessment of freight charges. The use of a single product code for vessel, air, rail, and truck traffic simplifies statistical and customs tariff operations. It assists carriers, port authorities, steamship conferences, traffic managers, freight forwarders, administrative

¹In January 2000, the Census Bureau's Foreign Trade Division replaced the SIC with the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) as the industry classification system used by the statistical agencies of the United States for classifying business establishments.

officers, customs brokers, and others in planning commercial shipments. The HS also facilitates the preparation and processing of trade documents, as well as compliance with customs regulations.

Who Uses Foreign Trade Statistics?

The Federal Government uses these data in developing merchandise trade figures for its balance-of-payments accounts; in analyzing major movements and trends in international trade; in planning and evaluating such programs as export expansion, agricultural development and assistance, and work under the Foreign Assistance and Merchant Marine Acts; and in measuring the impact of concessions under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) or the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). Foreign trade data also are used extensively as the statistical base for implementing and analyzing operations under various international agreements, such as the Long-Term Cotton Textile Arrangement and the U.S.-Canadian Automotive Products Trade Agreement.

Nongovernment users in industry, finance, research institutions, transportation, and other fields employ foreign trade data in appraising the general trade situation and outlook, in share-of-market analyses and market penetration studies; in product and market development for measuring the impact of competition; and in general, as one of the statistical bases for determining marketing policies. The transportation industry—in particular, sea and air—also makes extensive use of the data in planning future facilities and equipment.

Sources of Current Information

Exports

Exporters or their forwarding agents submit Shipper's Export Declarations (SEDs) to the exporting carrier prior to exportation. The exporting carriers submit a complete manifest and the SEDs to the U.S. Customs Service officers at the U.S. port of export. SEDs for mail shipments are presented to the postmaster. U.S. Customs Service offices send the SEDs (approximately 500,000 per month) on a flow basis to the Census Bureau's National Processing Center (NPC) in Jeffersonville, IN. SEDs are required and processed for virtually all shipments to all countries that are valued at more than \$2,500. Shipments valued less than \$2,501 are estimated and published for individual countries using factors that are derived from ratios of low-valued shipments to individual country totals. Effective January 1, 1990, the U.S. export data on trade with Canada are obtained from Canadian import data per the U.S.-Canadian Data Exchange Agreement.

Exporters and forwarding agents have the option of filing their SED data electronically via the Automated Export System (AES). AES, located within the U.S. Customs Service, allows for predeparture and postdeparture filing of the SED data. Participants in the AES note benefits through the elimination of the paper document, savings in time and money, elimination of errors through upfront editing, and the facilitation of their cargo. For those filers who find it cost prohibitive to submit their data directly to the AES, the Foreign Trade Division provides free Internet-based filing of the SED via AESDirect. Data are submitted to AESDirect, which operates as a service center and submits the data to the AES.

Imports

Importers are required to file entry documents with customs officials as merchandise enters a customer's warehouse

or is released from Customs Service custody. Import statistics are fully compiled on shipments valued over \$1,250, except for articles that must be reported on formal entries when valued over \$250. Value data for smaller shipments are estimated and published for individual countries using factors based on the ratios of low-valued shipments to individual country totals. Almost 99 percent of import data are sent directly to the U.S. Customs Service electronically via the Automated Commercial System (ACS) for extraction by the Census Bureau or are reported directly (in the case of Foreign Trade Zones) to the Census Bureau. The Census Bureau receives and processes less than 20,000 entry documents (less than 1 percent of the total imports) each month.

What Data Are Available?

In general, export statistics record the physical movement of merchandise from the U.S. Customs territory (the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico), U.S. Foreign Trade Zones, and the Virgin Islands of the United States to foreign countries, whether a commercial transaction is involved or not. They exclude shipments to, between, or from any outlying area of the United States (U.S. trade with outlying areas is reported separately); certain shipments made by the Federal Government; monetary gold and issued coins; merchandise in transit between foreign countries; and fuel for use on departing vessels, planes, or other carriers (also reported separately). The statistics do, however, include foreign-aid, foreign military sales, and agricultural-assistance commodities; intracompany shipments; foreign purchases; and U.S. vessels sold abroad. Reported dollar values generally are the equivalent to the free alongside ship (f.a.s.) values at the U.S. port of export. Data, by commodity classification, are shown by net quantity, destination (country or world area), U.S. customs district of export, method of transportation, and month of export.

The import statistics reflect the physical movement of both government and nongovernment merchandise into U.S. Customs territory, U.S. foreign trade zones, and the Virgin Islands of the United States, whether or not a commercial transaction is involved. They exclude shipments in transit through the United States from one foreign country to another, trade with U.S. possessions or between them and foreign countries; monetary gold and issued coins; and American merchandise brought back to this country by members of the U.S. Armed Forces. Valuation is reported in two ways—by cost, insurance, and freight (c.i.f.) and customs value. Data, by commodity classification, are shown by net quantity, dutiable status and rate, country and area of origin, customs district of entry, method of transportation, and month of import.

FT900, *U.S. Export and Import Merchandise Trade* (Print, online [monthly])

FT900 Supplement, *U.S. Export and Import Merchandise Trade* (Print, online [monthly and annual])

FT895, *U.S. Trade With Puerto Rico and U.S. Possessions* (Print, microfiche [monthly and annual])

U.S. General Exports and Imports by State of Origin, See FT900 series above. (Online [monthly])

U.S. Exports, Imports, and Trade Balance by NAICS, See FT900 series above. (Online [monthly])

CDIM-(year), *U.S. Imports of Merchandise* (CD-ROM [monthly and annual with 5-year historical summary])

CDEX-(year), *U.S. Exports of Merchandise* (CD-ROM [monthly and annual with 5-year historical summary])

(Both of the CD-ROMs above include concordances—HS to SITC, Rev. 3, end

use, and SIC Codes; HS descriptions; country codes and names, and customs district names.)

National Trade Data Bank, USA Trade (CD-ROM, online [monthly and annual]) Presents HS commodities at a two-, four-, six-, and ten-digit level with country and district level detail for the current and prior months, cumulative year-to-date (current and prior years) with a 4-year history for both imports and exports.

World Trade Atlas, U.S. State Export Edition (CD-ROM [monthly]) Presents state export data beginning with 1996 at the two-, four-, or six-digit levels of the HS Schedule B commodity classification system for monthly, year-to-date, or annual data for a 3-year period and air and vessel value and shipping weights.

FT810, *Bunker Fuels* (Print [monthly, quarterly])

IM145 (Monthly) or IA245 (Annual), *U.S. General Imports for Consumption and General Imports* (CD-ROM, cartridge) Presents Harmonized Tariff Schedules of the United States Annotated (HTSUSA) commodity code, country of origin, customs district of entry and unloading, rate provision, quantity, shipping weight, method of transportation, and separate value data (customs, c.i.f., import charges, dutiable value, and calculated duty).

IM146A, *Imports for Consumption* (U.S. Goods Returned) (Printout [monthly]) Provides data on domestic goods shipped from the United States to other countries for processing and/or assembly and then returned to the United States. Presents data on eight special import programs by customs value in terms of the HTSUSA commodity by country, current month and year-to-year data for quantity, U.S. value, dutiable value, and total value.

IM195, *U.S. General Imports of Merchandise From U.S. Possessions*

(*Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa...*) [*HTSUSA Classification*] by *Customs District of Entry (Customs Value)* (Printout [monthly])

EM545 (Monthly) or EM645 (Annual), *U.S. Exports of Domestic and Foreign Merchandise* (CD-ROM, cartridge) Presents International Harmonized System Commodity Classification (HS-based Schedule B) code, country of destination, customs district of exportation, method of transportation, quantity, value, and shipping weight.

EM595 (Monthly) or EA695 (Annual), *Shipments of Merchandise From the United States to Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands and Shipments From Puerto Rico to the United States* (CD-ROM, cartridge) Presents International Harmonized System Commodity Classification (HS-Based Schedule B) code, country customs district, quantity, value (f.a.s.), shipping weight, and method of transportation.

Harmonized Commodity Master (CD-ROM [annual])

Tabulations

At user request and expense, the Census Bureau makes special tabulations of foreign trade data in various formats, including dBase, ASCII, Microsoft Access and Excel, and Lotus files via electronic means (e-mail), diskette, CD-ROM, or paper copy via mail or fax. Abstracts of various tabulations appear in the *Census Catalog & Guide*. These tabulations can be obtained from the Census Bureau's Foreign Trade Division or from the Customer Services Branch, Administrative and Customer Services Division.

Reference Materials

Several classification schedules and a compilation of regulations governing U.S. trade with foreign countries and

U.S. outlying areas, updated as necessary, are available to users. The introduction of the Harmonized System is creating changes in the classification schedules denoted below. They currently are—

- *Schedule B Statistical Classification of Domestic and Foreign Commodities Exported From the United States*, 2 vols. (Print, CD-ROM, online) Converts the export commodity classification system into the Harmonized System's nomenclature structure.
- *Schedule C Classification of Country and Territory Designations for U.S. Foreign Trade Statistics* (Print, online) (Merged Schedules C-E and C-I.)
- *Schedule D Classification of U.S. Customs Districts and Ports for U.S. Foreign Trade Statistics* (Print, online)
- *Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States Annotated for Statistical Reporting Purposes* (Print, online)
- *Foreign Trade Statistics Regulations* (Print, online)

Other Aids and Sources of Data

Foreign trade statistics are presented in convenient digest form in several Census Bureau publications, such as the annual *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (print, CD-ROM), the *Historical Statistics of the United States From Colonial Times to 1970* (2 vols.) (print, available commercially), and *Exports From Manufacturing Establishments*, in the Manufacturing Analytical Reports series AR-(year) (print, online). The Department of Commerce publishes *Commerce Business Daily* (print, online) and *Business America* (print, online); its International Trade Administration (ITA) provides a number of services, such as for agent/distributors and commercial information management, offers reports on world trade, and publishes both

U.S. Industry and Trade Outlook and the *Bureau of Export Administration Regulations* (online). Other Federal Government agencies publish complementary statistics, such as U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, *Waterborne Commerce of the United States, National Summary*; U.S. Department of Agriculture, *U.S. Foreign Agricultural Trade Statistical Report*; U.S. Bureau of Mines, *Minerals Yearbook*; and Environmental Information Administration, *Annual Energy Review* and *Petroleum Supply Annual*. Foreign trade statistics also appear in trade journals, textbooks, and other secondary sources.

Published foreign trade reports, as well as the other materials mentioned above, are available for use in many of the over 1,400 government and U.S. Census Bureau depository libraries across the country. These are mainly college, university, and large public libraries, but many smaller libraries also have Census Bureau publications. Recent reports are available for reference and/or order at ITA district offices and Census Bureau regional offices. Special tabulations of report results can be ordered from the Census Bureau at the address shown at the end of this brochure.

Selected foreign trade reports also are carried in state data centers (SDCs) and business and industry data centers (BIDCs). SDCs and their affiliates are located in all states and the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands of the United States, Guam, and American Samoa (list available on request). The data centers assist users with printed and computerized statistics.

BIDCs are the result of a U.S. Census Bureau pilot project launched in 1988. The U.S. Census Bureau and other Federal Government agencies furnish

economic data and related assistance and training to aid BIDCs in furthering economic development in their states. (As of this writing, 23 states, together with Guam and American Samoa, have established BIDCs.)

There also are organizations registered with the Census Bureau's National Clearinghouse for Census Data Services that offer tape printouts and other services to their customers (list available on request). The Census Bureau publishes user aids, such as the annual *Census Catalog & Guide* (online), and the *Guide to Foreign Trade Statistics* (online). Information services specialists at Census Bureau regional offices, staff members of ITA district offices, and resource personnel at Census Bureau headquarters (telephone contact list available on request) are equipped to answer users' questions about foreign trade statistics. The Census Bureau also publishes the monthly *Census and You* newsletter (subscription, single copies or free sample copy), a *Monthly Product Announcement* (online), and a *Daily List* (online), and conducts workshops on the availability and use of its statistics. It offers exhibits and resources for the conventions of interested national organizations.

How the Data Are Published

Most of these data are issued on CD-ROM and online through the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder and in PDF format at <http://www.census.gov>. Only selected highlights are published in printed reports. Printed products may be ordered by mail, telephone, and the Internet from—

Superintendent of Documents
U.S. Government Printing Office
P.O. Box 371954

Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954
Telephone: 202-512-1800
Fax: 202-512-2250
<http://www.gpo.gov>

Electronic products may be purchased by mail from—

U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau (MS1921)
P.O. Box 277943
Atlanta, GA 30384-7943

Electronic products may be ordered by telephone or fax from—

Administrative and Customer
Services Division
Customer Services Branch
U.S. Census Bureau
Washington, DC 20233
Telephone: 301-457-4100
Fax: 888-249-7295 or
301-457-3842

The U.S. Census Bureau's Customer Services Branch can print and bind any PDF report on demand, priced at \$25 or more per report, depending upon the number of pages. (A list of reports, with page counts, is available via the U.S. Census Bureau's Internet site (<http://www.census.gov>) in the economic census section of the *Catalog: Publications*.)

Factfinder for the Nation

General information about the U.S. Census Bureau's various statistical programs is contained in the publications of the *Factfinder for the Nation* series. Inquiries and suggestions about the services statistics program and other U.S. Census Bureau activities are invited. Write to—

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