

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) **COVID-19's Effect on the Advance Quarterly Services Report**

Data Collection

How has the collection of Quarterly Services Survey data been affected?

Processing and data quality were monitored throughout the quarter. Quality metrics, such as response rate standards for publication, were continuously monitored and evaluated throughout the data collection period for the published industries.

Methodology

Were there any estimates withheld or delayed because of data collection problems?

No. Estimates were released as scheduled. As part of the Census Bureau's methodological process, some estimates may be suppressed if they do not meet pre-existing publication standards.

Did the Census Bureau modify its usual weighting or estimation methods used to produce quarterly services estimates for the current quarter?

No. Standard weighting and estimation methods were used to produce all indicator estimates for the current quarter.

Did the Census Bureau do anything differently this quarter with data collected from fiscal reporters?

No. Data received from fiscal reporters was evaluated in a similar manner as is done in each quarter's processing. Since not all companies maintain their quarterly records on a calendar quarter, the Census Bureau accepts, evaluates, and uses the fiscal quarter data as part of the QSS collection unless it determines that the reported data are not representative of the calendar quarter.

How did the Census Bureau treat companies that reported zero or negative revenue this quarter?

The Census Bureau did not change its treatment of zero or negative revenue reporting for this quarter. The Quarterly Services Survey collects gross revenue. If a company's gross revenue is zero or negative, the Census Bureau accepts, evaluates, and uses the reported data, unless it determines that the reported data is not generally reflective of companies represented by that sampling unit.

Has the reliability of the quarterly services estimates changed?

No. The reliability of the services estimates, as measured by the coefficient of variation for quarterly totals and the standard error for quarter-to-quarter change, has not changed substantially. For the published industries, reported data for the current quarter exhibited variation similar to that for prior quarters.

Seasonal Adjustment

Does the Census Bureau alter the procedures for developing the seasonally adjusted estimate for the selected services total?

If it is determined that the selected services total current unadjusted value is found to be statistically untypical (as indicated by the appropriate t-statistic having a magnitude larger than a commonly used “critical value,” and for which there were independent indications of an impact), an alteration is made in an option in the Census Bureau’s X-13ARIMA-SEATS seasonal adjustment software (the “additive outlier adjustment” option) for the current quarter. This is done in an effort to ensure that the published seasonally adjusted value fully includes any immediate effects. These effects are not typical for the current quarter and so should not be permitted to influence the seasonal factors for the current and surrounding quarters. As a result, the prior quarter to current quarter percent change in the adjusted value will be further from zero.

Otherwise, we use X-13ARIMA-SEATS to derive our seasonal adjustment and produce seasonal factors according to standard procedures. Every survey value is “blindly” tested using a higher critical value, making it more difficult for the survey value to be classified as untypical. If the current quarter value is determined to be typical, the program takes part of the impact to be a seasonal effect and adjusts the data in a way that brings the adjusted percent change from the prior quarter to the current quarter closer to zero.

How is the survey value for the selected services total determined to be typical or untypical?

Each quarter, independent indications of how the service industry performed are researched as part of our normal review of the estimates to detect reporting errors. This research includes, but is not restricted to, conversations with companies in our survey, a review of publicly available press releases from both companies and industry associations, and a review of other economic indicators. We use these independent indications to confirm that the current quarter survey value has an unusual potential to be untypical (or not) and justify the use of a standard (or higher) critical value.

Additional Information

Are there additional Census Bureau resources available on the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Yes. The Census Bureau has created a [COVID-19 reference page](#) which includes links to relevant Census data sources.

Source: U. S. Census Bureau
Economic Indicators Division

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