

# Measuring the U.S. Economy

## Economic Indicators

The U.S. Census Bureau's economic indicators and Advance Economic Indicator Reports keep the world informed by providing the first official measures of the U.S. economy. See <[www.census.gov/economic-indicators/](http://www.census.gov/economic-indicators/)> for more information.

### Manufacturing, Retail and Wholesale Trade, and Services

*Advance Report on Durable Goods Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories, and Orders (AdvM3), Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories, and Orders (M3), and Advance Total Manufacturing report*

The Advance Report on Durable Goods Manufacturing covers shipments, inventories, and new and unfilled orders estimates for durable goods industries in the United States. Beginning with September 2021 data, the Advance Total Manufacturing report will be available on the same day as the Advance Report on Durable Goods. The new report will show high-level data for shipments and inventories. The Full Report is available 5 business days later, includes revisions from the Advance Reports, and provides detail statistics on both durable and nondurable goods industries for U.S. manufacturing. See <[www.census.gov/m3](http://www.census.gov/m3)> for more information.

*Advance Monthly Sales for Retail and Food Services (MARTS)*

The MARTS is the earliest available monthly estimates of broad-based, retail trade activity and consumer spending. The survey provides reliable measures of current economic activity that are essential to an objective assessment of the need for, and impact of, a wide range of public policy decisions. See <[www.census.gov/retail](http://www.census.gov/retail)> for more information.

*Monthly Wholesale Trade (MWTS)*

The MWTS is conducted to provide data on the sales and inventories of U.S. Merchant Wholesalers, excluding Manufacturers' Sales Branches and Offices. The survey provides a reliable measure of current economic activity in the wholesale sector that is essential to an objective assessment of the need for, and impact of, a wide range of public policy decisions. See <[www.census.gov/wholesale](http://www.census.gov/wholesale)> for more information.

*Manufacturing & Trade Inventories & Sales (MTIS)*

The MTIS report provides measures of combined changes in domestic retail trade, wholesale trade, and manufacturers' activities. This report contains end-of-month inventories and inventories-to-sales ratio estimates for all three sectors, as well as estimates of retail sales, wholesale sales, and manufacturer shipments. See <[www.census.gov/mtis](http://www.census.gov/mtis)> for more information.

*Quarterly Services Survey (QSS)*

The QSS is the only source of service industry indicator performance providing estimates of revenue for selected service industries, source-of-revenue estimates for a subset of industries, estimates of total operating expenses from tax-exempt firms in industries that have a large not-for-profit component, as well as estimates of inpatient days and discharges for hospital services. See <[www.census.gov/services](http://www.census.gov/services)> for more information.

*Quarterly Financial Report—Manufacturing, Mining, Wholesale Trade, and Selected Service Industries (QFRM) and Retail Trade (QFRR)*

The Quarterly Financial Report is the sole source of quarterly statistics on the financial results and position of privately and publicly held nonfinancial corporations in the United States. The program produces statistics on the sales, profits, assets, liabilities, stockholders' equity, and related financial and operating ratios of corporations in the manufacturing, mining, wholesale trade, information, and professional, scientific, and technical services (excluding legal services) sectors. See <[www.census.gov/econ/qfr](http://www.census.gov/econ/qfr)> for more information.

### New! Census Bureau Index of Economic Activity (IDEA)

IDEA is a new experimental data product that is an aggregation of 15 of the Census Bureau's primary economic data series, providing a single time series constructed as a weighted combination. It is a monthly index that is calculated daily, incorporating the most recent values for each component series, including new estimates and revisions of previous estimates released for any of its component series. Values for the index are available from August 2004 to the present time. Historical data of the index is available for download.

Visit  
<[www.census.gov/economic-indicators/](http://www.census.gov/economic-indicators/)> for more information.

### How do we know?

The U.S. Census Bureau has devoted decades to collecting comprehensive and timely statistics via its censuses and surveys that tell the story of our changing economy.

Today, the economic indicators, economic census, and our quarterly and annual economic surveys give Congress, policymakers, and business and community leaders the information they need to make informed decisions that shape our economy.

Trade associations, chambers of commerce, and businesses, large and small, rely on information from these censuses and surveys for economic development, business decisions, and strategic planning.

**FRED** 

ECONOMIC DATA | ST. LOUIS FED

Receive the latest updates on the nation's key economic indicators by downloading the FRED mobile app for both Apple and Android devices. FRED, the signature database of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, now incorporates the Census Bureau's 13 economic indicators. Visit <<https://fred.stlouisfed.org/fred-mobile/>> for more information.

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### International Trade

*U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services (FT-900)*

This monthly report, released jointly with the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, is the official source of the most timely, comprehensive data on exports and imports of goods and services. Statistics available with this release include key measures of U.S. trade, such as commodity, country, and state, that impact business and policy decisions in both the private and public sectors. See <[www.census.gov/foreign-trade](http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade)> for more information.

### Construction and Housing

*New Residential Construction (NRC)*

The NRC series, released jointly with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides monthly estimates of the numbers of new, privately owned housing units authorized by permits, started and completed, as well as the inventories of units authorized but not yet started and units under construction. See <[www.census.gov/starts](http://www.census.gov/starts)> for more information.

*New Residential Sales (NRS)*

The NRS series, released jointly with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides monthly estimates of the numbers of new houses sold and for sale, as well as median and average prices of new houses sold. See <[www.census.gov/newhomesales](http://www.census.gov/newhomesales)> for more information.

*Value of Construction Put in Place (VIP)*

The VIP construction spending series provides monthly estimates of the total dollar value of construction work done in the United States. This includes new residential and nonresidential structures as well as improvements to existing structures. See <[www.census.gov/constructionspending](http://www.census.gov/constructionspending)> for more information.

*Housing Vacancies and Homeownership (HVS)*

The HVS quarterly release provides data on rental and homeowner vacancy rates and homeownership rates for the United States, regions, states, and for the 75 largest metropolitan statistical areas, including estimates of the total housing inventory, characteristics of units available for occupancy, and percent distributions of vacant for-rent and for-sale units for the United States and regions. See <[www.census.gov/housing/hvs](http://www.census.gov/housing/hvs)> for more information.

### Business Statistics

*Business Formation Statistics (BFS)*

The BFS is an experimental data product that provides timely and high-frequency information on new business applications and formations in the United States, available at state, regional, and national levels (includes industry sector data). See <[www.census.gov/econ/bfs](http://www.census.gov/econ/bfs)> for more information.

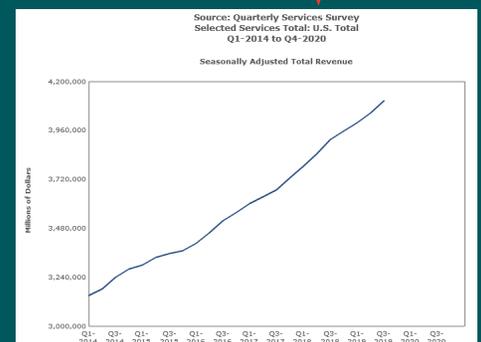
### For More Information

Visit <[www.census.gov/topics/business-economy.html](http://www.census.gov/topics/business-economy.html)> for access to all business and economic data. For more information, contact 800-242-2184, or e-mail <[ewd.outreach@census.gov](mailto:ewd.outreach@census.gov)>.



Visit the Economic Indicator Briefing Room Web site for access to the latest data, full release reports, historical data, and time series and trend charts. Go to <[www.census.gov/economic-indicators/](http://www.census.gov/economic-indicators/)> for more information.

A screenshot of the Census Bureau website. The top section is titled 'Construction Spending' and provides information about total construction activity for November 2019. Below this is a 'Quarterly Services Survey' section, which includes a link to 'Time Series/Trend Charts' circled in red. A red arrow points from this link down to a line chart.



Select an economic indicator and customize your data selection. To download the data to a spreadsheet and create your own time series charts, go to <[www.census.gov/econ/currentdata](http://www.census.gov/econ/currentdata)>.