

U.S. International Transactions Accounts

Concepts and Estimation Methods



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Preface

BEA last published a volume on the concepts and estimation methods used to prepare the U.S. international transactions accounts in 1990. Since that time, most major concepts underlying the accounts have changed little, but data collection and estimation methods have changed greatly.

BEA has maintained a thorough presentation of its advances in measurement in the international transactions accounts with technical notes published each June or July in the *SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS* at the time of the annual revisions to the accounts. Recently, these revisions were catalogued and summarized for 1976 to 2008; the catalog is available in the Methodology Papers section on BEA's Web site. An introductory guide to the accounts is also available in the same section of the Web site.

The current volume on concepts and methods, which is introduced here, updates the 1990 volume and places the descriptions of major estimation methods in one location. Like its predecessor, this volume describes the major concepts and estimation methods account by account, and each account is referenced to its corresponding line number in table 1 of the standard presentation of the accounts.

In addition, in the May 2010 and May 2011 *SURVEYS*, BEA described its plans for a multiyear effort to modernize and enhance the international accounts to incorporate new international standards and other improvements. Changes in concepts, methods, and presentations associated with this initiative will be described in future articles in the *SURVEY* and will be incorporated into periodic updates of this volume.

A large share of the estimates in the tables that accompany the text can be updated by consulting the interactive tables of international transactions on BEA's Web site: electronic releases of the estimates occur in March, June, September, and December; the print versions of the estimates appear in the January, April, July, and October issues of the *SURVEY*. A few tables contain detailed estimates developed specifically for this presentation that are not updated on a regular basis.

The most detailed statements of concepts and methodologies for compilation of international accounts are presented in: International Monetary Fund, *Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual*, 6th ed. (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 2009); and Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), *OECD Benchmark Definition of Foreign Direct Investment*, 4th ed. (Paris: OECD, 2008).

Acknowledgments

Christopher Bach, former chief of the Balance of Payments Division (BPD), prepared this volume. Technical expertise was provided by BPD staff under the direction of **Robert Yuskavage**, Associate Director for International Economics. Overall guidance was provided by **Obie Whichard**, former Associate Director for International Economics.

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The following methodology sections were updated in August 2011:

U.S. Government Miscellaneous Services	Paragraphs 1.1, 2.1.1
U.S. Government Investment Income	Paragraphs 1.1.1, 2.1.1, 2.1.5 (new)
Other Private Services	Paragraphs 1.6.5, 1.7.2
Compensation of Employees	Paragraphs 1.4 (new), 2.4, 2.5
Other Transportation	Paragraphs 1.1.3.1, 2.1.3.1
Royalties and License Fees	Paragraph 1.6

The following methodology sections were updated in August 2012:

Goods	Paragraph 3.8 (5)
Compensation of Employees	Paragraph 2.3
Private Remittances and Other Transfers	Paragraph 1.1.2

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