

FY 2005 Report on Customer Satisfaction

Results of the
FY 2005 *Customer Satisfaction Survey*
and the
Ongoing Web Site Satisfaction Survey

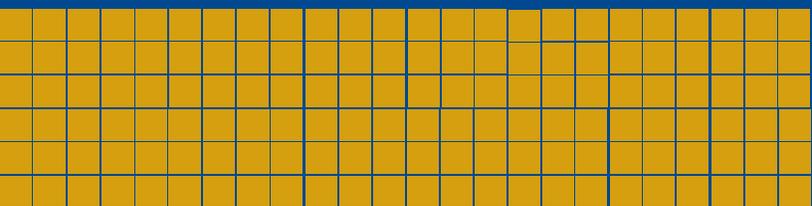


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1.0 Executive Summary

Customer service is a core component of BEA activities; in fact, BEA's first strategic objective is to "Make BEA's economic accounts and services more responsive to the needs of its customers and partners."¹ Since FY 2000, BEA has conducted the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* to better understand the needs of its customers. In FY 2005, BEA began conducting a *Web Site Satisfaction Survey*. This survey included more specific Web-based questions to better assess customer opinion about the Web site. BEA has the benefit of two survey instruments this fiscal year, and the results of the surveys, which are detailed in this report, will be used to track past performance and to spur new initiatives to better serve BEA customers.

Results of both FY 2005 surveys indicate that customers are generally satisfied with BEA's performance, products, and services. Since the inception of the *Customer Satisfaction Survey*, a key indicator of customer satisfaction has been response to the question, "How satisfied are you with the overall quality of BEA products and services?" In FY 2005, respondents rated BEA's products and services a 4.4 on a 5-point scale. BEA scored high customer satisfaction levels (respondents indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied') by a number of measures, including

- Satisfaction with the overall quality of BEA's products and services rose 3% in FY 2005, to 97%.
- Satisfaction with the accuracy of BEA data rose 6% in FY 2005, to 88%.
- Satisfaction with the timeliness of BEA estimates remained high, with 81% of respondents indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied.'
- Customer use of the BEA Web site remained steady at 83%.

With 83% of FY 2005 *Customer Satisfaction Survey* respondents indicating use of the BEA Web site, growing numbers of unique visitors to the site, and the increasing online availability of BEA data products, it is clear that the BEA Web site has emerged as the Bureau's main communication portal with its customers. To assess the effectiveness of the site, the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* was begun in FY 2005. This survey has proven useful in tracking customer reaction to FY 2005 site improvements such as the search engine and the e-mail subscription service. Thanks in part to these upgrades, BEA scored well on the Web survey. Highlights² include

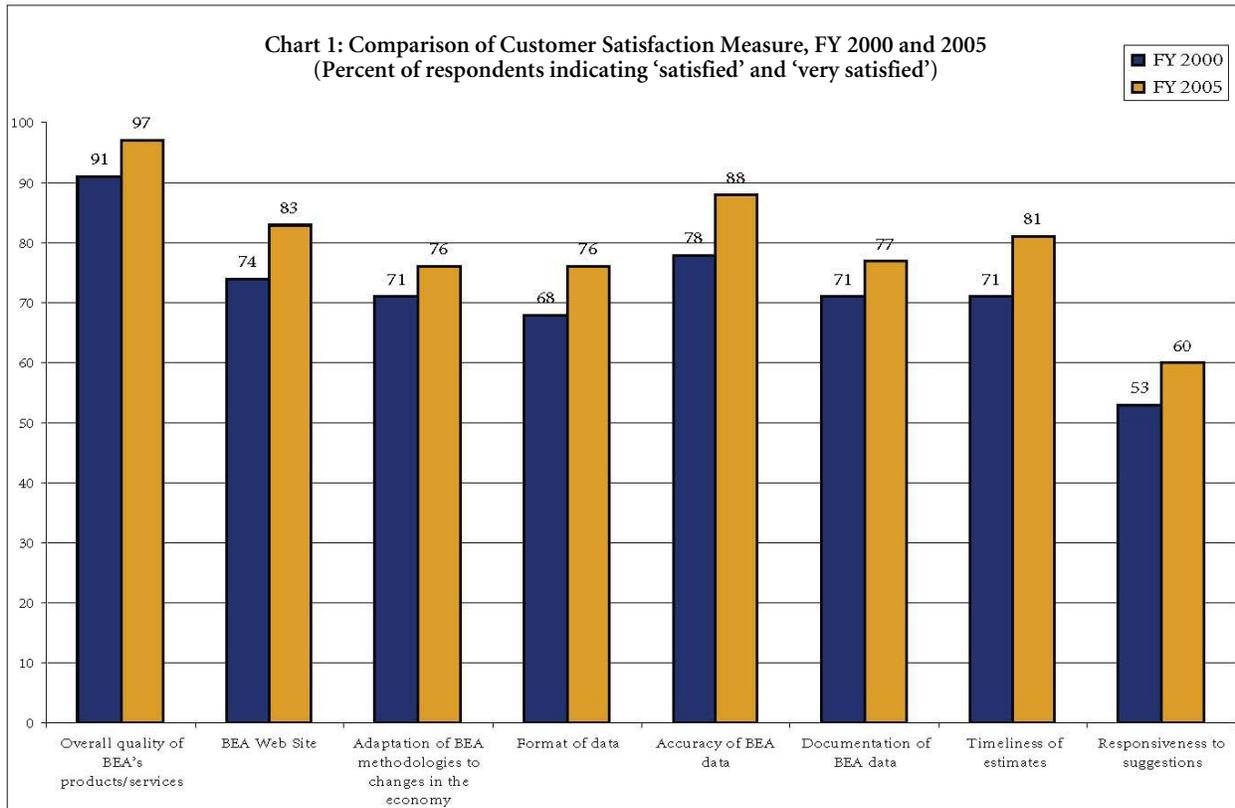
- The 'accuracy of information' on the site—8.9 on a 10-point scale.
- The 'usefulness of the information on the site'—8.7.
- Visitors' 'likely return' to the site—8.6.
- 'Reliability of site performance'—8.4.
- 'Freshness of information' on the site—8.4.

Overall, FY 2005 results from both surveys confirm that BEA is meeting its mission to promote a better understanding of the U.S. economy by providing the most timely, relevant, and accurate economic accounts data in an objective and cost-effective manner. Customers are pleased with our data, and Web site upgrades have been well received.

¹ *BEA Strategic Plan for FY2005–FY2009*, available at <http://www.bea.gov/bea/about/FY05_FY09PLAN_FINAL.pdf>

² Unless otherwise noted, report data is from the 10th sample, *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* (4/17/2005–6/29/2005).

Customer satisfaction across all categories is higher now than in FY 2000, as shown in Chart 1.



Through their responses to specific questions and their written comments, survey respondents have also indicated areas for improvement. With these recommendations in mind, BEA is focused on continuing to meet the needs of customers in the upcoming year. Planned improvements in FY 2006 include

1. **Acceleration of gross state product (GSP) and regional data sets**
BEA has dedicated itself to providing the most timely data possible, accelerating the release of several data sets in recent years. This commitment will continue in FY 2006 and includes plans to accelerate GSP, metropolitan area personal income, and county-level personal income.
2. **Expansion of data on services and detail of data on multinational companies.**
BEA has undertaken several initiatives to help strengthen international statistics. Improvements in the available information about services and multinational companies will ensure that BEA data is responsive to both the outcomes of an ever-changing economy and the evolving data needs of customers.
3. **Incorporation of real-time data into the National Income Products and Accounts (NIPAs)**
BEA will improve the overall accuracy of its statistics by acquiring and incorporating real-time data into the core accounts. This will improve the accuracy of advance NIPA estimates, minimizing the effect of revisions.

4. Improvements in Business Investment Data

BEA will complete its production of up-to-date, annual estimates of business investment spending by industry to locate where high-tech and other investments are being made in manufacturing and services. These statistics will help to answer complex questions about the sources of economic and productivity growth and the role of information technology in U.S. economic growth.

5. Improvements to the BEA Web site

The Web site is a critical aspect of BEA's external communications activities, and BEA will continue to measure customer's satisfaction with the Web site and their reaction to improvements to the site via the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey*. A study is underway, and the results will be used to improve site navigation. Additionally, BEA is working on improving the FAQ section of the site.

Further, new data about BEA's customers is now available through the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* and Web statistics. This includes detailed demographic information about our customers and new types of frequency-of-use information, such as that provided by download of products from the BEA Web site and by data on pages visited. This data will help BEA focus on specific customer needs.

6. Opportunities for Customer Feedback

The *Customer Satisfaction Survey* has traditionally been BEA's main source of customer feedback. With each year, BEA receives fewer responses to this survey. Additionally, the number of potential respondents to which this survey is mailed (based on BEA's mailing list) is also declining. This is due in part to increasing use of the Web site by customers seeking data products. BEA is examining several options to improve opportunities for customer feedback, including creating a new survey instrument or combining key elements from the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* with the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey*.

2.0 Background

In June 2005, BEA conducted its fifth *Customer Satisfaction Survey*. This survey provides customer feedback that allows BEA to evaluate its past performance and tailor its products and services to meet customer needs. Since FY 2000, the survey has been a means for determining the level of customer satisfaction with BEA, its products, and its services. The survey provides feedback in the areas of customer satisfaction, data products used, and Web site features.

The FY 2005 *Customer Satisfaction Survey* instrument was posted to BEA's Web site and sent to BEA's current mailing list, which consisted of subscribers to the SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS and members of data user groups. In past years, the mailing list has included customers requesting our data products, which were available on a fee schedule until 2003. Today, nearly all BEA products—including the SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS—are available free of charge on the BEA Web site, which results in a smaller mailing list.

This phenomenon is not indicative of how many customers are using BEA data products; they are simply accessing BEA products on its Web site. Customers are increasingly looking to the Web site to access BEA's products and services. From June 2002 to June 2005, unique monthly visitors to the Web site increased by more than 43,000—the figure for June 2002 was 90,511; for June 2003, 101,312; for June 2004, 109,824; and for June 2005, 134,304. This increase reflects our effort to make the BEA Web site responsive to its customers' needs.

BEA mailed the FY 2005 *Customer Satisfaction Survey* to 2,083 customers. This year, BEA received 169 mailed responses and 33 online responses, totaling 202 responses. This was significantly less than the response rates in FY 2004 and FY 2003, when BEA received 463 (5,100 mailed) and 563 (3,100 mailed), respectively.

To offset this lower response rate, results from BEA's online, Web-focused *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* are included in this report. Launched in November of 2004, the ongoing *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* seeks to clarify customers' opinions about the quality and usefulness of the BEA Web site. Since the survey's inception, 11 statistically relevant samples of 300 have been collected. The 10th sample, which coincides with the response period for the *Customer Satisfaction Survey*, was used for this report.

3.0 The *Customer Satisfaction Survey*

3.1 Survey Structure

The FY 2005 survey held the same overall format and questions from previous years. The data products section included questions about the use of general products, as well as the use of specific industry, international, national, and regional products. The customer satisfaction section included ten questions that targeted key areas of BEA's products and services. The Web site section explored four questions about the importance of specific Web site features. Respondents also provided written comments and suggestions about areas for improvement in BEA products and services. The full survey instrument is available in *Appendix A*.

3.2 Arriving at the Customer Satisfaction Measure

The overall customer satisfaction measure is the key indicator of the *Customer Satisfaction Survey*, with its results reported to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget and incorporated into BEA's *Strategic Plan*. The measure is based on responses to the question, "How satisfied are you with the overall quality of the BEA products/services?" Ultimately, the rating is determined by the total amount of rating points received (on a scale of 1–5) from respondents and is divided by the total number of respondents who provided a rating on this question.

For FY 2005, the total number of rating points was 853, and the total number of respondents was 194. Using the rating calculation, the overall customer satisfaction level in FY 2005 was 4.4—the same customer satisfaction level as in FY 2003. This represents an improvement over both FY 2002 and FY 2000, when the customer satisfaction level was 4.3.

3.3 Results of the FY 2005 Customer Satisfaction Survey

In addition to the key customer satisfaction question noted in section 2.2, customers were asked about BEA services. The most noticeable changes from FY 2004 to FY 2005 were increases in how satisfied customers are with the accuracy of BEA data and the timeliness of BEA estimates. Among survey respondents who expressed opinions on specific questions, key findings were:

- Satisfaction with the overall quality of BEA's products and services rose 3%, with 97% of respondents indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied.'
- Satisfaction with the accuracy of BEA data rose 6% in FY 2005, to 88%.
- Satisfaction with the timeliness of BEA estimates remained high, with 81% of respondents indicating they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied.'

These results indicate that customers are pleased with BEA products and services. The results also indicate BEA is meeting the standard of its mission to promote a better understanding of the U.S. economy by providing the most timely, relevant, and accurate economic accounts data in an objective and cost-effective manner.

A summary of overall satisfaction findings among BEA’s customers—which compares information from customer surveys conducted during fiscal years 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005—is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of Selected Customer Satisfaction Findings by Fiscal Year
Percent of respondents indicating ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’

	2000*	2002	2003	2004	2005
How satisfied are you with the overall quality of the BEA products/services?	91	94	94	94	97
How satisfied are you with the timeliness of BEA estimates?	71	75	80	76	81
How satisfied are you with the accuracy of BEA estimates?	78	84	81	82	88
How satisfied are you with the adaptation of BEA methodologies to changes in the economy?	71	76	77	82	76
How satisfied are you with the format of BEA data?	68	78	82	82	76
How satisfied are you with the documentation of BEA data?	71	79	79	78	77
How satisfied are you with the courtesy of BEA staff?	83	88	86	85	60
How satisfied are you with the expertise of BEA staff?	85	89	89	87	62
How satisfied are you with BEA responsiveness to your suggestions?	53	70	70	74	60
How satisfied are you with BEA’s Web site (www.bea.gov)?	74	79	82	83	83
* In FY 2000, the survey was conceived as an assessment to be conducted every other year. Following 2001, the decision was made to conduct it annually.					

In contrast with past surveys, customers have indicated reduced satisfaction with BEA responsiveness in FY 2005. This outcome is noted with consternation. In response, BEA has already raised standards regarding the speed and content of responses to customer inquiries received by phone and by e-mail. Overall customer service practices are being revised and additional resources are being directed toward this endeavor.

BEA Data Products

BEA’s data products are how the Agency promotes a better understanding of the changing U.S. economy. From general and industry to international, national, and regional, increasing numbers of our customers access these data products free of charge via the BEA Web site. Looking ahead, BEA will examine the usefulness of the frequency-of-use data gathered from the *Customer Satisfaction Survey*.

General Data Products. General data products include the SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS, CD-ROMs, BEA’s Web site <www.bea.gov>, and access to BEA staff via telephone and e-mail. Of those customers who expressed an opinion, 76.6% obtain BEA data ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ through the Web site. The SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS was used ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ by 61.7% of respondents—an increase of 8.7% from FY 2004.

Industry Data Products. Industry data products are gross domestic product by industry, the input-output tables, and satellite accounts. In the FY 2005 survey, 36.9% of respondents indicated use of gross domestic product by industry data. The FY 2005

survey indicated that 32.9% of customers ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ use the input-output tables, up slightly from the previous year.

International Data Products. International data products are U.S. international transactions (balance of payments), U.S. exports and imports of private services, U.S. direct investment abroad, foreign direct investment in the U.S., and U.S. international investment position. There was an 8.5% increase in ‘frequent’ or ‘often’ users of the U.S. international transactions data to 36.5% in FY 2005. U.S. direct investments abroad was used ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ by 24.7% of respondents in FY 2005, while foreign direct investment in the U.S. data increased to 25.3%.

National Data Products. National data products consist of the NIPAs, which include the gross domestic product (GDP), NIPA underlying detail data, and capital stock (wealth) and investment by industry. In FY 2005, 66.1% of respondents cited ‘frequent’ or ‘often’ use of the GDP data. The capital stock (wealth) and investment by industry data was used ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ by 25.5% of respondents.

Regional Data Products. Regional data products consist of state personal income (SPI), local area personal income, gross state product, and RIMS II regional multipliers. In FY 2005, 47.4% of the respondents indicated ‘frequent’ or ‘often’ use the SPI data. The RIMS II data was used ‘frequently’ or ‘often’ by 25.5% of respondents.

Web Site Results

The *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* provides more detailed and relevant data about customer satisfaction with the BEA Web site than that obtained via the FY 2005 *Customer Satisfaction Survey*. Data from the Web survey is provided in section 4.0.

Customer Comments

A full listing of customer comments, separated into corresponding program areas and/or divisions is available in *Appendix B*. These comments will be passed along to the appropriate division chiefs for consideration and, if appropriate, incorporated into existing processes.

4.0 The *Web Site Satisfaction Survey*

The Web site has become the ‘face’ of the Agency to increasing numbers of customers. Thus, BEA has focused on improving the utility and functionality of its Web site to best serve customer needs. The year-round *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* began in November 2004, and has rendered 11 statistically relevant samples. To correlate with the period during which the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* was conducted, results of the tenth sample, which was acquired between April 17, 2005, and June 29, 2005, are presented in the results section.

4.1 Survey Structure

The *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* is presented to randomly selected BEA Web site visitors upon exit. Site visitors are eligible for selection based upon the number of pages visited and the amount of time spent on the BEA Web site. Of the 39 possible survey questions, 20 are always asked of respondents and another 5 of the remaining 19 are randomly selected. The survey presents questions concerning the usefulness and accessibility of the site, along with questions about respondents and open-ended questions for comment. Since November, the survey has rendered 11 statistically relevant samples of 300. All questions are available in *Appendix C*.

This pop-up survey was created in accordance with American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) standards and approved by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. ACSI surveys are used worldwide to measure customer satisfaction with Web sites.

4.2 ACSI Customer Satisfaction Score and Key Findings

In both the tenth sample and overall, BEA’s Web site is scoring well on the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey*. The key indicator of the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* and all ACSI-based Web surveys is the customer satisfaction score. In the tenth sample, BEA scored a 70, which is the average score for Federal government Web sites. Moreover, customer satisfaction scores from all Federal government Web sites employing ACSI’s methodology are made public each quarter. In the June 14, 2005, report³, BEA scored a 71 overall customer satisfaction score—the median within Federal government sites in the news/information category. This was the same score received by other Federal statistical agencies.

With regard to overall site elements results, BEA scored higher than other Federal Web sites in content, functionality, and site performance. BEA scored slightly lower than average in ‘look and feel’ and navigation. BEA is working to address these site elements. BEA also scored above the Federal government Web site average in ‘likely return,’ ‘likely to recommend,’ and ‘use as primary resource.’

Throughout the survey cycle, data tables drew 44 percent of visitors; U.S. economy information, 26 percent; news releases, 14 percent; other, 8 percent⁴; SURVEY OF

³ From <www.theasci.org/government.html>.

⁴ See detailed customer responses from sample 10 in *Appendix D*.

CURRENT BUSINESS, 6 percent; BEA career information, 1 percent; BEA contact information, 1 percent. The *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* provides more detailed demographic information about BEA data users that has been unavailable in the past. Throughout the survey cycle, 46 percent of survey respondents have been economists/statisticians; 16 percent, students; 13 percent, other⁵; 6 percent, government employees; 6 percent, educators; 6 percent, general public; 5 percent, business owners; 2 percent, reporters; less than 1 percent, trade policy workers.

Taken together, the overall findings of the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* can greatly enhance both the functionality of the Web site and the usefulness of the content. This improved understanding of our customers and their needs can help BEA better tailor its Web site to exceed customers' expectations.

4.3 Results of the Web Site Satisfaction Survey, Sample 10

During sample 10, which coincides with the time period the FY 2005 *Customer Satisfaction Survey* was conducted, BEA's highest marks were for the 'accuracy of information' on the site (8.9 on a 10-point scale, with '10' being the high score) and for the 'usefulness of the information on the site' (8.7). Also high were marks for visitors' 'likely return' to the site (8.6), 'reliability of site performance' (8.4), and for 'freshness of information' on the site (8.4). While there are no results from previous years with which to compare these results, responses collected in sample 10 indicate that customers are highly satisfied with the BEA Web site.

A high percentage of respondents (78.8%) indicated that they found what they were looking for when they visited <www.bea.gov>; and 71.6% of respondents answered 'yes' when asked if the home page clearly indicated where to accomplish their goal. Respondents have also provided valuable written comments and answers, which are provided in *Appendix D*.

The *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* also provided information about our customers and their Web site needs. Economists and statisticians comprise the majority of site visitors (44.1%). Most guests to the site visit once a week (28.8%), with once-a-month (26.1%) and first-time visitors (19.1%) the next largest groups. Downloadable data tables draw 45.1% of site visitors, while general information about the economy and news releases draw 26.5% and 13.7%, respectively.

BEA received its lowest scores for ability to 'find the information for which the visitor was looking' (7.0) and the 'number of steps that were needed to get where the visitor wanted' (7.1). Both 'ease of reading' and 'clarity of site organization' received marks of 7.2. These lower scores may also provide insight into the score received for 'How does this site compare to your idea of an ideal Web site?' (6.9), which may be related to these navigation-related questions. To address these lower-scoring customer satisfaction indicators, BEA is currently evaluating its site navigation and will be redesigning its site to best suit the needs of users. A new FAQ page will be created as well.

Table 2, which features results from the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey*, follows.

⁵ *IBID.*

Table 2. Results of Web Site Satisfaction Survey

Sample 10: 4/17/2005–6/29/2005

Scale: 1–10

Question	Average Response
Please rate the accuracy of information on the site.	8.9
Please rate the quality of information on the site.	8.2
Please rate the freshness of content on the site.	8.4
Please rate the usefulness of information provided on the site.	8.7
Please rate the convenience of the information on the site.	7.5
Please rate the ability to accomplish what the customer wanted on the site.	7.8
Please rate the ease of reading the site.	7.2
Please rate the clarity of site organization .	7.2
Please rate the layout of the site.	7.4
Please rate the degree to which the number of steps needed to get where you want is acceptable .	7.1
Please rate the ability to find the information you want on the site.	7.0
Please rate the clarity of the A–Z index .	7.6
Please rate the ease of navigation on the site.	7.3
Please rate the speed of loading pages on this site.	8.1
Please rate the consistency of speed on site.	8.1
Please rate the reliability of site performance .	8.4
Please rate your overall satisfaction with the site .	7.5
How well does the site meet your expectations ?	7.4
How does the site compare to your idea of an ideal Web site ?	6.9
How likely are you to return to the site ?	8.6
How likely are you to recommend this site to someone else ?	8.2
How likely are you to use this site as your primary resource for obtaining information from this agency ?	8.3
Please rate the usefulness of search results on this site.	7.5
Please rate how this site provides comprehensive search results .	7.5
Please rate the organization of search results on this site.	7.4
Please rate how the search feature helps you to narrow the results to find the information you want .	7.2

5.0 Next Steps

Each year, the results of the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* have provided valuable feedback that helps BEA determine those issues important to customers and plan future initiatives. In FY 2006, BEA will undertake several new efforts in response to this year's results. Specifically, BEA will

- Improve customer service standards across the Bureau.
- Improve the Web site's navigation and its 'look and feel.'
- Expansion of data on services and detail of data on multinational companies.
- Incorporation of real-time data into the NIPAs.

Since FY 2000, the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* has proven a useful tool in determining the level of customer satisfaction with BEA's products and services. Feedback from the survey has been used to spur improvement efforts across the Agency—from methodological changes and new features on the Web site to a renewed focus on serving the needs of BEA customers. And with FY 2005 increases in BEA's overall customer satisfaction measure and in the percentage of customers 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the timeliness of BEA estimates and the accuracy of BEA data, it is clear that BEA is succeeding in its overall mission. However, due to the declining numbers of paid subscribers to the SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS (the core mailing list used for the *Customer Satisfaction Survey*), BEA needs to explore alternative measures to reach its customers and receive valuable feedback, advice, and guidance about improving its overall effectiveness.

For FY 2006, BEA will consider the possibility of merging the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* and the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* into one instrument for determining overall customer satisfaction with the range of BEA products and services. While the *Customer Satisfaction Survey* tracks key indicators—including the customer satisfaction measure—that are instrumental in BEA operations, with the passage of time some of the questions have become less helpful. For example, the questions asked in the *Web Site Satisfaction Survey* are much more detailed than the Web site questions included in the original survey. Additionally, with respect to the 'frequency of use' questions, now that all of BEA's data products are available for download from the Web site, the Agency can easily determine the frequency with which data products are accessed.