



Technical Note
Gross Domestic Product
Fourth Quarter of 2011 (Advance)
January 27, 2012

This technical note provides background information about the source data and estimating methods used to produce the estimates presented in the GDP news release. The complete set of estimates for the fourth quarter is available on BEA's Web site at www.bea.gov; a brief summary of "highlights" is also posted on the Web site. In a few weeks, the estimates will be published in BEA's monthly journal, the *Survey of Current Business*, along with a more detailed analysis of the estimates ("GDP and the Economy").

Real GDP

Real GDP increased 2.8 percent (annual rate) in the fourth quarter of 2011, following an increase of 1.8 percent in the third quarter. The acceleration in real GDP in the fourth quarter reflected an upturn in inventory investment and accelerations in consumer spending and in residential fixed investment that were partly offset by a deceleration in nonresidential fixed investment, a downturn in federal government spending, an acceleration in imports, and a larger decrease in state and local government spending.

Source Data for the Advance Estimate

The advance GDP estimate for the fourth quarter of 2011 is based on source data that are incomplete and subject to revision. Three months of source data were available for consumer spending on goods; shipments of capital equipment, including aircraft; motor vehicle sales and inventories; manufacturing durables inventories; federal government outlays; and consumer, producer, and international prices. Only two months of data were available from most other key data sources; BEA's assumptions for the third month are shown in table A. Among those assumptions are the following:

- an increase in nondurable manufacturing inventories,
- an increase in non-motor-vehicle merchant wholesale and retail inventories,
- an increase in exports of goods, excluding gold, and
- an increase in imports of goods, excluding gold.

Prices

The price index for gross domestic purchases—the prices paid by U.S. residents for goods and services wherever produced—increased 0.8 percent in the fourth quarter after increasing 2.0 percent in the third. Excluding food and energy

prices, the price index for gross domestic purchases increased 1.0 percent after increasing 1.8 percent.

Disposable Personal Income and Personal Saving

Real disposable personal income (DPI) increased 0.8 percent in the fourth quarter, following a decrease of 1.9 percent in the third. Current-dollar DPI increased 1.5 percent, following an increase of 0.4 percent. The personal saving rate was 3.7 percent in the fourth quarter, compared with 3.9 percent in the third.

Fourth quarter corporate profits and gross domestic income (which is a measure of output based on the costs incurred and the incomes earned in the production of GDP), as usual, are not available with the advance GDP estimate; they are scheduled for release with the third GDP estimate on March 29, 2012.

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**Table A. KEY ASSUMPTIONS FOR THE ADVANCE ESTIMATE OF GDP
FOR THE FOURTH QUARTER OF 2011**

For many of the key series used to prepare the advance estimate of GDP, including retail sales, unit automobile and truck sales and inventories, manufacturers' shipments of nondefense capital goods, manufacturers' inventories of durable goods, federal defense spending, and consumer, producer, and international price indexes, actual data are available for all months of the quarter.

For the key series shown in this table, actual data for the third month of the quarter usually are not available in time for inclusion in the advance GDP estimate. BEA makes assumptions for the source data that are not yet available; assumptions for December 2011 are shown in the last column of the table. For most series shown, the data for November are preliminary and subject to further revision. Occasionally, the data for earlier months are also subject to revision.

All series shown in the table are in billions of dollars, seasonally adjusted at annual rates, and are published by the Bureau of the Census.

| | 2011 | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| | Jul. | Aug. | Sep. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec.* |
| Private fixed investment: | | | | | | |
| Nonresidential structures: | | | | | | |
| 1 Value of new nonresidential construction put in place..... | 270.7 | 276.2 | 280.2 | 278.5 | 278.6 | 278.5 |
| Residential structures: | | | | | | |
| Value of new residential construction put in place: | | | | | | |
| 2 Single family..... | 105.7 | 106.6 | 106.8 | 107.4 | 109.1 | 110.6 |
| 3 Multifamily..... | 15.0 | 15.7 | 15.3 | 15.2 | 15.4 | 15.6 |
| Change in private inventories: | | | | | | |
| NOTE: Historical (July-October) data may reflect concurrent seasonal factors. | | | | | | |
| 4 Change in inventories for nondurable manufacturing..... | 2.3 | -14.4 | 5.1 | 48.9 | 10.6 | 4.8 |
| 4a Change in inventories for merchant wholesale and retail industries other than motor vehicles and equipment... | 29.9 | 24.6 | -14.1 | 66.5 | 26.1 | 60.2 |
| Net exports: | | | | | | |
| Exports of goods: | | | | | | |
| 5 U.S. exports of goods, international-transactions-accounts basis..... | 1521.4 | 1520.0 | 1551.2 | 1536.8 | 1518.7 | 1528.0 |
| 5a Excluding gold..... | 1489.5 | 1482.1 | 1494.7 | 1492.5 | 1487.0 | 1494.9 |
| Imports of goods: | | | | | | |
| 6 U.S. imports of goods, international-transactions-accounts basis..... | 2256.5 | 2251.8 | 2265.4 | 2239.6 | 2276.8 | 2307.4 |
| 6a Excluding gold..... | 2242.3 | 2236.4 | 2246.5 | 2223.3 | 2259.4 | 2289.2 |
| 7 Net exports of goods..... | -735.1 | -731.7 | -714.2 | -702.8 | -758.1 | -779.4 |
| 7a Excluding gold..... | -752.8 | -754.2 | -751.8 | -730.8 | -772.4 | -794.3 |
| Government: | | | | | | |
| State and local: | | | | | | |
| Structures: | | | | | | |
| 8 Value of new construction put in place..... | 249.2 | 254.5 | 257.1 | 253.9 | 257.3 | 255.6 |

*Assumption.