Data Gaps in International Trade Statistics

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SECTORAL COMPOSITION OF U.S. LABOR FORCE
2017

Wholesale, Retail, and Transportation and Warehousing 18%
Utilities and Construction 5%
Agriculture, Mining, and Manufacturing 10%
Government 15%
Personal Services 28%
Business Services 24%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau and U.S. Department of Agriculture
Data Gaps in International Trade Statistics


• The report was prepared for the Committee on Economic Statistics of the American Economic Association.
Report Conclusions

• Data on values of imports and exports of goods are of high quality and coverage...

• Value data for imports and exports of services are too aggregated and valuations are questionable ...

• ...price data for service exports and imports are almost non-existent.

• Foreign direct investment data are of high quality...

• Data on trade in intellectual property are fragmentary.
Trade Data Collection

• Merchandise trade (administrative systems)
  – Imports: Customs forms required at port of entry
  – Exports: Shippers Export Declarations

• Services trade (surveys)
  – Imports: BEA surveys
  – Exports: BEA and Census Bureau (EC and SAS) surveys
Services Trade Data Gaps

• Industry/type of service detail
Variation in Trade Costs

Source: Gervais and Jensen (2019)
Services Trade Data Gaps

• Industry/type of service detail

• Coverage

• Geography
Key Opportunity

• Census Bureau could add questions about service imports and exports in a consistent way across the whole economy