

Taking Account...

Web site upgrade: new look and data tools

The Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) has launched a new interactive table and chart service as well as an updated, more modern look and feel on its Web site. These upgrades are in keeping with BEA's goal of making its statistics more widely available and its Web site easier to use.

The new interactive data system, available to the public free of charge, aims to provide an intuitive and more powerful tool through which customers can access BEA's national, international, regional, and industry statistics.

The new interactive features allow customers to:

- Create statistical tables using a streamlined step-by-step process. Customers can also customize these tables by easily changing table parameters.
- Save work. A log-in feature allows customers to save the steps used to create complex tables so tables do not have to be recreated from scratch. This feature requires only an e-mail address; no personal information is collected. The saved tables will always include the most recent statistics.
- Share work. The new system allows customers to share tables with others through a variety of tools, including e-mail and social media sites such as Twitter, Digg, and Facebook.

- Create more functional charts. Customers can create line charts and bar charts based on tables. These new charts are color coded and allow multiple components to be graphed. Customers can also use various features to click into the data to take a closer look at specific time periods.

- Download tables and charts. All tables can be downloaded and stored in a variety of formats, including Excel spreadsheets, comma separated files, and PDFs. Tables can also be printed directly from the application. In addition, charts can be downloaded as .PNG files for easy cutting and pasting into other applications.

The new interactive system represents the culmination of 3 years of planning and development. In 2008, BEA commissioned a report from an outside consultancy that recommended the creation of a single interactive data tool to provide access to all BEA statistics. Previously, BEA customers accessed data through discrete applications that provided data from specific program areas.

The legacy interactive data system has not been dismantled, however. To allow for a smooth transition by heavy users of the system, BEA will keep both systems up and running for several months. At some point this year, BEA will communicate its plan to remove the legacy system

from its Web site.

BEA is planning future versions of the interactive table system with additional features built on the new system's core technology.

In addition to the new interactive table application, BEA has updated the appearance of its Web site, giving it a more modern look and feel. None of the information previously provided on the Web site has been taken away. The location of the information also remains the same.

While these look-and-feel enhancements are largely cosmetic, BEA is currently exploring a redesign of its site that would reorganize the information in a way that better conforms to industry best practices and better serves customers.

The interactive tables are available at www.bea.gov/itable. All comments and feedback are welcome at webmaster@bea.gov.

Web site feature: economy at a glance

BEA's "U.S. Economy at a Glance: Perspectives From the BEA Accounts" page offers regularly updated charts, statistics, press releases, and links to additional information from the agency's featured national, international, regional, and industry accounts. Taken as a whole, the information highlighted on the page provides a comprehensive, up-to-date picture of the U.S. economy.