

Technical Note

U.S. International Transactions, Third Quarter 2021

December 21, 2021

This technical note provides background information about the estimation methods that the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) uses to produce the estimates presented in the U.S. International Transactions Accounts news release. The complete set of estimates for the third quarter is available on BEA's website at www.bea.gov; a brief summary of "highlights" is also posted there.

COVID-19 impact on third-quarter U.S. international transactions

Nearly all major categories of current-account transactions increased in the third quarter of 2021, the fifth consecutive quarter of broad-based growth following notable COVID-19-related declines in the second quarter of 2020. In the financial account, a new allocation of [special drawing rights](#), approved by the International Monetary Fund to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the finances of developing countries, was a significant cause of the net acquisition of assets and net incurrence of liabilities.

The full economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic cannot be quantified in the statistics, because the impacts are generally embedded in source data and cannot be separately identified.

Impact on estimation methods

For international transactions categories based on source data that are lagged, including services categories based on BEA's quarterly surveys of financial, insurance, and other selected services and intellectual property transactions, BEA generally estimates the current quarter using related indicator series and historical trends. To more accurately measure third-quarter transactions given the impact of COVID-19, BEA incorporated early reporting on the Quarterly Survey of Transactions in Selected Services and Intellectual Property with Foreign Persons (BE-125) and the Quarterly Survey of Financial Services Transactions Between U.S. Financial Services Providers and Foreign Persons (BE-185). Reported data were available for 65 percent of the reporters for the BE-125 and for 74 percent of the reporters for the BE-185; BEA used its standard methods to estimate companies that had not yet reported.

More complete source data will be incorporated following the schedule described under “Release and update cycle” in the “Additional Information” section of each international transactions news release.