

HOT LINKS

Economic Data Sources

A look at where to go on the Web to find information or services that are useful, substantial and available for free or at a reasonable price.

Most of the data that Aaron Smith discussed in his article in this issue, “Which Economic Indicators Matter,” can be accessed online, for no charge. Here is a list of the primary websites to visit.

U.S. Department of Labor **www.dol.gov**

A table on the home page of the Labor Department’s website lists key employment and inflation statistics. Clicking on any of these data points will call up a page with more detailed information.

The economic data is provided by two divisions within the Labor Department. The first is the Employment and Training Administration (www.ows.doleta.gov). This division has comprehensive data about initial jobless claims and publishes updated data weekly.

The second is the Bureau of Labor Statistics, or BLS (www.bls.gov), which publishes the monthly Employment Situation report. This report contains the unemployment rate, payroll employment (also known as nonfarm payrolls), and wages. Statistics on the size of the labor force and the number of discouraged workers can also be found.

The BLS also publishes monthly inflation reports, such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Producer Price Index (PPI) and the U.S. Import Price Index. The division’s quarterly reports include productivity and U.S. import prices.

Institute for Supply Management (ISM) **www.ism.ws**

The ISM publishes two widely followed reports: the Manufacturing Report on Business (called the ISM manufacturing index) and the Non-Manufacturing Report on Business (called the ISM services index). Both are based on monthly surveys of purchasing and supply executives. Index values above 50 imply expansion in the manufacturing or services sectors and values below 50 suggest contraction.

U.S. Census Bureau **www.census.gov/cgi-bin/briefroom/BriefRm**

In addition to collecting population data, the U.S. Census Bureau also compiles a variety of economic statistics. This data is used in several monthly reports, including manufactured durable goods, new home sales, housing starts and building permits, retail sales, wholesale trade, construction spending, and manufacturing shipments and inventories.

Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) **www.bea.gov**

This division of the Commerce Department tabulates quarterly changes in U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) and the monthly changes in personal income and spending. Personal consumption expenditures (PCE), a statistic used by economists as a measure of inflation, can be found in both reports.

The BEA also publishes monthly trade deficit data and the quarterly current account deficit.

The Conference Board **www.conference-board.org**

The Conference Board’s two most widely followed reports are a monthly consumer confidence survey and the monthly Leading Economic Index (LEI), also known as the Leading Indicators Index. The Conference Board also publishes a monthly Employment Trends Index and a quarterly survey of CEO confidence.

Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan **press.sca.isr.umich.edu**

The Thomson Reuters/University of Michigan consumer confidence survey is published twice a month. The preliminary report is based on the initial responses to the monthly survey, while the final report includes all survey responses tabulated throughout the calendar month.