

# Quarterly national accounts

## Publication

The accounts for each quarter are released in two forms:

- The first, entitled "preliminary figures" (*premiers résultats*), is issued 45 days after the end of the quarter. It provides an early estimate of GDP as well of goods and services transactions (trade, production, consumption, gross fixed capital formation, change in inventories).
- The second publication, called "detailed figures" (*résultats détaillés*), is issued 90 days after the end of the quarter and provides full information on goods and services transactions, and on households and corporations accounts.

Insee published not only quarterly growth rate figures but also the "Statistical overhang" for the current year. The statistical overhang of a variable is the annual growth rate of the variable that would be obtained if the variable was to remain at its level in the last known quarter. For example, the statistical overhang of GDP at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of a given year is the annual growth rate of GDP that would be obtained if the growth rate of GDP in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter was 0.0%. The overhang measures the impact of past changes; it is not a forecast.

## Main items

### External trade

Sources: customs statistics; balance of payments; unit value indexes for external trade, price indexes for imports and exports of industrial goods.

### Production

Sources: industrial production index (industry except energy, agriculture, transport and fuel); agricultural and transportation statistics; turnover index from VAT forms filed for the payment of value added tax, industrial producer price index and business surveys (on prices).

For the other industries, production is obtained indirectly from the use figures.

### Gross Fixed Capital Formation

Sources: vehicle registrations; turnover index in industry, wholesale trade and services; new housing starts, statistics from construction and public-works trade federations (FNB and FNTP).

### Household consumption

Sources: retail-trade surveys by the Bank of France; statistics from public organizations (e.g. health insurance payments), trade-organization statistics; turnover index (VAT); consumer price indices.

Estimations of household expenditure in manufactured goods are published every month.

### Other items of the input-output table (IOT)

Intermediate consumption : usually computed from the output figures for the corresponding industry and technical coefficients.

Change in inventories (industry except energy, agriculture, transport and fuel) : obtained as a balancing item from resources minus uses other than inventories (intermediate consumption, final consumption, GFCF, exports).

### Taxes

Sources: monthly records of central-government revenue collection and notices of publication of taxpayer lists for local taxes (Directorate of Public Finances [DGFIP]); central accounting department of social-security funds (ACOSS) for taxes earmarked for social security (such as the CSG, explained below).

Note: the Contribution Sociale Généralisée (CSG), a social-security levy on all taxable income, is classified under this heading and not under "social contributions."

### Wages and salaries

Sources: quarterly statistics form payroll employment (Dares-Unedic-INSEE), Survey on Labor Activity and Employment Status (ACEMO), Ministry of Employment and Solidarity (see Web page on this site for Survey on labor activity and employment status), Public accounting, central accounting department of social-security funds (ACOSS).

### Legal weekly worked hours and total worked hours

Sources: Survey on Labor Activity and Employment Status (ACEMO), survey on very small enterprises (less than 10 employees), and quarterly statistics on short-time working from the Ministry of Employment and Solidarity, quarterly statistics on leaves for industrial accidents, sickness and maternity from the national sickness-insurance fund.

### Social contributions and benefits

Sources: ACOSS (contributions to general social-security fund); statistics from national sickness-insurance, old-age-pension, and family-benefits funds; UNEDIC (unemployment contributions and benefits); other social-protection agencies, Public accounting.

### Integrated economic accounts table (summary)

Only the accounts of households and non-financial corporations are published in detailed form.

## **Compilation procedure**

The quarterly national accounts are designed to provide, at an intra-year frequency, a comprehensive set of macroeconomic information that is relatively detailed and consistent with past annual accounts. The information (in value, volume, and price series) is seasonally and working-days adjusted in order to highlight significant cyclical movements.

The quarterly accounts are consistent with the data of past annual accounts: they have the same conceptual framework, the national accounting system (ESA 95). As well as for annual accounts, quarterly accounts volume are chain-linked volumes at previous year prices.

The quarterly accounts are compiled from intra-year indicators, using two procedures:

1 If the indicator is in volume (e.g. car registrations) :

- volume account: gross volume indicator -> seasonal and working-days adjustment -> s-wda volume indicator -> calibration (econometric adjustment for converting the indicator into the corresponding series in the accounts) -> fitting (the series to the annual-accounts figures) -> volume account
- prices: gross price indicator -> seasonal adjustment -> seasonally adjusted price indicator
- value account: volume account \* price indicator -> calibration -> fitting -> value account
- price account: value account / volume account.

2 If the indicator is in value, the volume account indicator is the value account divided by the price indicator

The methodology is the same for the "preliminary figures" and for the "detailed results". The number of forecasted indicators alone distinguishes the two estimations. In particular, between these estimations, the last month of turnover indexes and the last two months of health insurance payments. The missing indicators are calculated either from statistical processes (ARIMA) or by modeling business surveys.

The experimentation of this method shows that since 1999, the mean absolute deviation of GDP growth is equal to 0.04 point of percentage between the « preliminary figures » and the "detailed results".

## Revisions

With each successive publication, the quarterly accounts may be revised for any of the following reasons:

- difference between the forecast of the non available indicator and the indicator once available
- revisions of gross indicators, generally in the last quarter, but they can sometimes also modify the data on a entire year
- revisions in the seasonal adjustment coefficients
- sometimes methodological revisions.

Therefore, the quarterly data can be modified from the beginning of the series, but the annual gross data, which result from them, are not revised because they fit the annual accounts until the semi-definitive accounts (and until the provisional account for public administrations data). The quarterly accounts integrate the data of the last annual campaign in May of each year, when the preliminary results for the first quarter of the year are released.

Revisions of quarterly GDP growth rates for the period 1991-2006 have been analyzed: they show that the mean absolute revision of GDP growth rate is 0.15 point of percentage between the first publication and the figures released one year later. The mean absolute revision is 0.21 point after two years and 0.27 point after three years: after 3 years the quarterly figures may be considered as stabilized since the definitive account of the year to which the considered quarter belongs has been published.