

JANUARY 6, 2012

The *Weekly Economic & Business Update* is a summary report of key economic and business data releases and reports that are issued each week. Prepared and issued by the SABÉR Research Institute, this report aims to provide current information on current economic and business indicators and market events that affect the local and regional economies.

The SABÉR Research Institute is an economic development think tank dedicated to researching regional economies and their development. A strategic alliance between *St. Mary's University* and the *San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce*, the Institute is committed to providing expert counsel and research to organizations such as businesses and government.

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WEEKLY UPDATES

U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRADE

According to the *Bureau of Economic Analysis*, total November exports of \$177.8 billion and imports of \$225.6 billion resulted in a goods and services deficit of \$47.8 billion, up from \$43.3 billion in October. Read more

>><http://www.bea.gov/newsreleases/international/trade/tradnewsrelease.htm>

JOB OPENINGS

The *Bureau of Labor Statistics* reported that there were 3.2 million job openings on the last business day of November. The hires rate (3.2%) and separations rate (3.0%) were little changed over the month. The job openings rate has trended upward since the end of the recession in June 2009. Read more >>

<http://bls.gov/news.release/jolts.nr0.htm>

CONSUMER SPENDING IN 2010

On the basis of data from the *Consumer Expenditure Survey*, consumers spent less in 2010, compared with 2009, on almost all

major components of the household budget. Average annual expenditures per consumer fell by 2.0%, and average annual income before taxes declined by 0.6%. Read more >>

http://bls.gov/opub/focus/volume2_number12/cex_2_12.htm

WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

The past several decades have been marked by notable changes in women's labor force activities. Women's labor force participation is much higher today than it was in the 1970s, particularly among women with children under 18 years of age. This report presents historical and current labor force and earnings data for women and men from the *Current Population Survey*. Read more >>

<http://bls.gov/cps/wlf-databook-2011.pdf>

DECEMBER 2011 MONTHLY LABOR REVIEW

The *Bureau of Labor Statistics* produces size class statistics that allow for detailed analyses of firms of different sizes. In this

month's lead article, *Bureau* authors present a comparison of firm-level and establishment-level data in order to study the size class contributions to jobs created by large, medium, and small businesses. Read more >>
<http://bls.gov/opub/mlr/2011/12/mlr201112.pdf>

U.S. FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION

According to the *Census Bureau's American Community Survey*, the U.S. population in 2010 included 39.9 million foreign-born residents. This estimate is 1.5 million higher than the survey's 38.5 million estimate in 2009. An analysis by the *Pew Hispanic Center*, a project of the *Pew Research Center*, concludes that the growth in the foreign-born population from 2009 to 2010 is a markedly lower 616,000, or 1.6%. Read more >>
<http://www.pewhispanic.org/files/2012/01/Foreign-Born-Population.pdf>

REAL HOUSE PRICE VOLATILITY

A shift in the volatility of real house price growth seems to have occurred over the last decade without a similar change in volatility of real GDP growth. Read more >>
<http://dallasfed.org/research/eclett/2012/el1201.html>

ECONOMIC EXPANSION

The *Federal Reserve* reported that economic expansion improved last month across most of the country while hiring was limited and housing remained stagnant. Read more >>
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/12/business/fed-survey-finds-growth-widespread.html?_r=1&ref=economy

Weekly Economic & Business Update

RETAIL SALES & JOBLESS CLAIMS

The *Department of Commerce* reported that retail sales increased a less-than-expected 0.1%, despite continued strength in auto purchases. Separately, the *Department of Labor* released a report that showed a sharp increase in initial unemployment claims to a six-week high of 399,000 last week. Read more >>
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/12/us-usa-economy-idUSTRE7BM0AB20120112>

CONSUMER CREDIT

The Federal Reserve reported that U.S. consumer borrowing rose by the most in a decade during November. The level of consumer credit outstanding increased by \$20.37 billion to \$2.478 trillion. Economists surveyed by *Dow Jones Newswires* had forecast an \$8.0 billion increase. Read more >>
<http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2012/01/09/consumer-credit-surged-in-november/?mod=marketbeat>

SMALL BUSINESS SENTIMENT

According to the *National Federation of Independent Business*, small-business-owner confidence increased again in December. The NFIB's small-business optimism index rose by 1.8 points to 93.8 last month from 92.0 in November. It was the fourth consecutive increase. Read more >>
<http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2012/01/10/small-business-sentiment-improves-2/?mod=marketbeat>

HEALTH CARE SPENDING

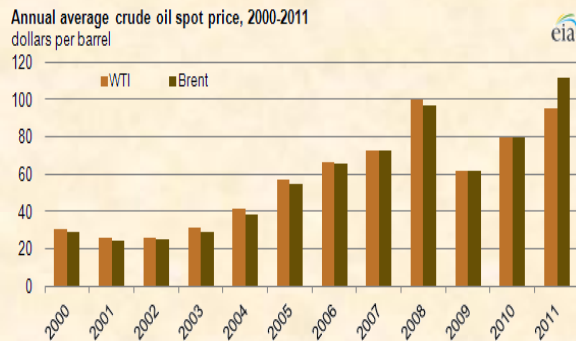
The growth of health-care spending was near a historic low at 3.9% in 2010 as the weak economy prompted people to cut back on medical care. Health expenditures in the U.S. totaled \$2.6 trillion in 2010, or

\$8,402 per person, the *Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services* said. Read more >>

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203436904577151033764613376.html?mod=WSJ_economy_LeftTopHighlights

CRUDE OIL

The *U.S. Energy Information Administration* reported that the crude oil markets sustained high price levels in 2011, as the spot price of Brent averaged \$111.26 per barrel, marking the first time the global benchmark averaged more than \$100 per barrel for a year (see chart below).



Read more >>

<http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=4550>

ENERGY OUTLOOK

To read the *U.S. Energy Information Administration's* latest edition of the Short-Term Energy Outlook, access the following link:

http://www.eia.gov/forecasts/steo/pdf/steo_full.pdf

This edition is the first to include forecasts for 2013. The highlights of this report include projections for crude oil, natural gas, motor gasoline, and household heating expenditures.

MONTHLY SALES FOR RETAIL AND FOOD SERVICES

The *Census Bureau* issued a report announcing that advance estimates of U.S. retail and food services sales for December were \$400.6 billion, an increase of 0.1% from the previous month and 6.5% above December 2010. Total sales for the 12 months of 2011 were up by 7.7% from 2010. Read more >>

<http://www.esa.doc.gov/sites/default/files/ei/documents/2012/January/advancemonthlysalesforretailandfoodservicesdecember2011.pdf>

EURO ZONE TRADE SURPLUS

A surge in exports helped the euro zone post a major surplus on trade with the rest of the world in November. This unexpected development could boost hopes that the region will avoid a severe economic downturn. According to *Eurostat*, the 17-nation currency bloc posted a \$8.84 billion surplus on trade in November. Read more >>

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/6-13012012-AP/EN/6-13012012-AP-EN.PDF