




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

Payroll Employment

According to the *Bureau of Labor Statistics*, nonfarm payroll employment rose by 200,000 in December, and the unemployment rate, at 8.5 %, continued to trend down. Job gains occurred in transportation and warehousing, retail trade, manufacturing, health care, and mining. Read more >> <http://bls.gov/news.release/empst.nr0.htm>

Jobless Rates in Metro Areas

Jobless rates were lower in November than a year earlier in 351 of the 372 metropolitan areas, higher in 16, and unchanged in 5. Nonfarm payroll employment was up in 239 metropolitan areas over the year, down in 127, and unchanged in 6. Read more >> <http://bls.gov/news.release/metro.nr0.htm>

Retail Sales

Many retailers reported solid sales gains for December, capping a decent holiday season. But, merchants had to mark down coats and other gifts to get shoppers to buy in a challenging economy. That resulted in a string of retailers reducing their earnings outlooks. Read more >> http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/06/business/retailers-post-sales-gains-but-discounts-hurt.html?_r=1&ref=global

Oil Prices

If Iran were to follow through with its threat to blockade the Strait of Hormuz, a vital transit route for almost one-fifth of the oil traded globally, the impact would be immediate: Energy analysts predict the price of oil would start to soar and could increase by 50% or more within days. Read more >>

http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/05/business/oil-price-would-skyrocket-if-iran-closed-the-strait.html?_r=1&ref=global

Apartment-Vacancy Rate

The nation's apartment-vacancy rate in the fourth quarter of 2011 fell to its lowest level since late 2001 as Americans continued to favor renting homes instead of buying them. Rents increased, however data firm *Reis Inc.* said the increase was less than expected. Read more >>

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970204331304577141130335463256.html?mod=WSJ_economy_LeftTopHighlights

Private Sector Employment

According to *Automatic Data Processing's* monthly hiring report, the private sector added 325,000 jobs in December. Read more >>

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052970203513604577142394232057240.html?mod=WSJ_economy_LEADStoryTop

Economic Trends

The *Council on Foreign Relations* polled economists to identify five trends to watch in 2012. They all fall under the increasingly common theme of "uncertainty," and most of them touch on U.S. or euro-zone policies. Read more >>

<http://blogs.wsj.com/economics/2011/12/30/five-economic-trends-to-watch-in-2012/?mod=marketbeat>

Texas Economic Indicators

The Texas economy grew at a moderate pace in November, with employment expanding at a 2.0% annual rate. Texas existing-home sales increased, but single-family housing permits and housing starts fell. Texas exports held steady. Manufacturing activity weakened slightly in December. Read more >>

<http://dallasfed.org/research/indicators/2012/tei1201.pdf>

Texas Service Sector Outlook Survey

Texas service sector activity increased in December, according to business executives responding to the *Texas Service Sector Outlook Survey*. The revenue index fell from 14 to 9, which is indicative of slower revenue growth. Read more >>

<http://dallasfed.org/research/surveys/tssos/2011/1112/tssos1112.cfm>

Texas Retail Outlook Survey

Retail sales increased in December. The volatile sales index edged down from 12.8 to 11 and has seen five consecutive months of sales increases. Inventories rose. Read more >>

<http://dallasfed.org/research/surveys/tssos/2011/1112/tssos1112.cfm>

Texas Manufacturing Outlook Survey

Texas factory activity weakened slightly in December, according to business executives responding to the *Texas Manufacturing Outlook Survey*. The production index posted a second negative reading but moved up from -5.1 to -1.3. This suggests a slowing of the pace of decline. Read more >>

<http://dallasfed.org/data/outlook/2011/1112/tmos1112.cfm>