



United Nations  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Statistics Division  
Trade Statistics Branch  
International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section

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**INTRODUCTION TO THE  
ANNUAL TOTALS TABLE (ATT) FOR IMPORTS AND EXPORTS**  
(2013 edition, December 2013)

**1. Purpose**

Data users are often confronted with different trade values for the same country provided by different sources. In general, it is not feasible for users to confirm the data with the national organizations which originally compiled and disseminated the data, and thus it can be very difficult to decide which data to use. A major reason for the existence of different values for imports and exports of one country is that different figures and datasets are produced by the same or different national institutions for different purposes or at different times and with different revision schedules. Also, the exchange rates used in the conversion of data from national currency to a common currency (like the US dollar) might cause discrepancies.

The Annual Totals Table (ATT) addresses the above issue by comparing the different total imports and exports of all countries (or areas) for the years 2000 to 2012, which are published by UNSD after being compiled from different sources and/or using different methodologies. While the table does not provide a “best” or “most reliable” time series based, it highlights where the major differences with the aim of assisting users to make an informed decision as to which datasets to use for their own purposes. The ATT is produced by the International Merchandise Trade Statistics Section (IMTSS) of the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD)/ Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

In contrast to previous ATT publications, as of the 2013 edition, ATT does not include anymore reconciled total trade values, but instead, compares the data and provides descriptive explanation on the discrepancies between total merchandise trade figures published by UNSD to the extent possible.

The ATT is produced at least once a year. It is a snapshot at a certain point in time, although the different data sources that provide input for the production of the ATT are updated on a continuous basis. The current ATT has been produced with information available as of 15 December 2013.

**2. Total Merchandise Trade Published by UNSD**

The IMTSS has two data collections for trade data of countries. The first is UN Comtrade (<http://comtrade.un.org/db/>)<sup>1</sup> which contains annual merchandise trade data detailed by partner country and commodity. The data for UN Comtrade are either directly obtained from countries or are received indirectly via partner organizations such as OECD and FAO (the original source of

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<sup>1</sup> For the production of the ATT the internal version of the UN Comtrade database is used which contains in a few cases data which has not been published yet.

data is described in the publication notes). As part of the data collection and verification process for UN Comtrade, countries are requested to provide their official totals for the period 2000 to 2011.

The second data collection is UN TotalTrade, which contains monthly, quarterly and annual totals (actual and estimated) for imports and exports and which is the basis for various analytical tables which are published on a regular basis in the Monthly Bulletin of Statistics (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mbs/>). The data for UN TotalTrade are mostly sourced from the IMF's International Financial Statistics (<http://www.imfstatistics.org/>) on a monthly basis, but also supplemented with data received directly from countries or taken from national publications. Missing country totals are estimated by UNSD and they are clearly identified.

In order to help users decide which annual trade values provide the most reliable time series for a country (or area), IMTSS compares the data available from these two data collections and provides a descriptive explanation.

### **3. Disclaimer**

The purpose of the Annual Totals Table (ATT) is not to identify the “correct” or final value for imports and exports of countries. Only countries themselves can provide such information. This table only intends to provide users of international merchandise trade statistics with a comparison of the available data for annual imports and exports based at the particular point in time of the production of this table.

## **Annex 1:      Layout of the ATT**

The ATT contains the following nine fields:

1. Country (or Area)
2. Country Code
3. Trade Flow
4. Year
5. UN Comtrade (in US dollar)
6. UN TotalTrade (in US dollar)
7. UN TotalTrade Status (“A”=Actual data; “E”=Estimated data)
8. Difference (in %)
9. Additional Explanation