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YEARS



الهيئة العامة للإحصاء  
General Authority for Statistics

## Methodology and quality report for International Trade in Services Statistics (Quarterly)

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V-4.0

Quality management

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## 1. Contact

1.1. Contact organization	General Authority for Statistics
1.2. Contact organization unit	Business, investment, and international trade Statistics
1.3. Contact person function	Director of Business, Investment, and International Trade Department
1.4. Contact mail address	P.O. Box: 3735 Riyadh, 11481 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
1.5. Contact email address	<a href="mailto:info@stats.gov.sa">info@stats.gov.sa</a>
1.6. Contact phone number	199009

## 2. Methodology and Quality Update

2.1. Latest Update on Methodology and Quality	29/10/2025
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## 3. Statistical Presentation

3.1. Data description
<p>The International Trade in Services Survey (Quarterly) presents data on the exchange of international trade in services among residents and non-residents.</p> <p>The International Trade in Services Survey (Quarterly) is a survey conducted to provide data on exports and imports of services in the Kingdom.</p>

## 3.2. Classifications

The following classifications are used in the International Trade in Services Survey:

### **The Extended Balance of Payments Services Classification (EBOPS 2010):**

It is a statistical statement that summarizes transactions between residents and non-residents over a specific period. It consists of the goods and services account, the primary income account, the secondary income account, and the capital account.

### **The National Classification for Economic Activities (ISIC4)**

It is a statistical classification based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC4) used to describe the productive activities of an establishment.

The classifications are available on the GASTAT's website: [www.stats.gov.sa](http://www.stats.gov.sa)

## 3.3. Statistical concepts and definitions

### **Terminologies and concepts of the International Trade in Services Statistics Survey:**

- International trade in services exports (total):

Service exports refer to the value of cross-border services provided by residents to non-residents.

- International trade in services imports (total):

Service imports refer to the value of cross-border services provided by non-residents to residents.

- Trade balance for services:

It is calculated as the total value of service exports minus the total value of service imports.

- International trade in services volume:

It refers to the total sum of exports and imports.

- Services:

They are intangible economic outputs produced based on consumers' demands.

- International trade in services:

The value of services exchanged between residents and non-residents in the economy, as well as the value of services provided through foreign branches of establishments in countries other than their country of origin.

- Resident:

Any individual, company, or organization located within the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This includes subsidiaries, branches, and sales offices, as well as individuals residing in the Kingdom or expected to reside for a period of one year or more.

- Non-resident:

Any individual, company, or organization located outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This includes subsidiaries, branches, and sales offices, as well as individuals residing abroad or expected to reside outside the Kingdom for a period of one year or more.

### 3.4. Data sources

#### **The first source for International Trade in Services Statistics (Quarterly):**

International Trade in Services Survey:

Data are collected from a sample of establishments classified by economic activities, with an estimated sample size of about 22,807 establishments.

#### **The second source for International Trade in Services Statistics (Quarterly):**

Administrative records from:

- Saudi Central Bank.
- Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority
- Ministry of Tourism
- Insurance Authority (IA).

The business framework of 2020 was used as a list containing all society categories. It is a basic framework for this survey and other economic research to be conducted by GASTAT in the future, through which all establishments are classified by economic activity and by the size of establishment at the level of the Kingdom and administrative regions. The activities

of these establishments are classified according to the National Classification of Economic Activities (ISIC- 4).

The classification of economic activities has been aligned with the Extended Balance of Payments Services Classification (EBOPS 2010).

The metadata required to create the statistical framework and the test framework were identified, validated, and used for the current survey cycle.

**Main variables of administrative data are:**

- Travel services.
- Government services.

### 3.5. Designing the data collection tool

The data were collected using a questionnaire that was prepared and designed by specialists from the Business, Investment, and International Trade Statistics Department at GASTAT. International recommendations, standards, and definitions were taken into account during its design. The questionnaire was reviewed by departmental experts and presented to relevant entities to obtain their feedback and comments. The questions were formulated using a specific scientific approach aimed at standardizing the way questions are asked by field researchers.

Programming the questionnaire and developing the required tools for conducting interviews using the Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) system.

Audit and control rules have been established in the form to ensure that the data collected is consistent, accurate, and logical.

These rules were developed by establishing logical relationships between answers, questions, and different variables to help the researcher identify any errors directly while completing the questionnaire with the establishment.

**The questionnaire includes several sections, including:**

- Identification and contact information of the establishment.
- Main services provided by the establishment.
- Sub-services with the specification of countries.
- Attachments.

**The International Trade in Services Statistics Survey Questionnaire (Quarterly):**

## [Survey Questionnaire](#)

### 3.6. Questionnaire test (cognitive test)

The cognitive test results from the previous survey year (2022) were used, and it was not necessary to repeat the test for the current year. The interview sample was drawn from a random selection of establishments. During the cognitive testing process, the following evaluation pillars were taken into consideration: (The general concept of the question, clarity of the question wording, clarity of the terms used in the question, and the appropriateness of the response options) until a report was produced summarizing the full results of the cognitive test.

### 3.7. Statistical population

The statistical population of the International Trade in Services Statistics Survey consists of all establishments in Saudi Arabia that export and import services to and from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

### 3.8. Sample Design

The sample was designed with a two-stage stratified cluster systematic random sampling method, in which in the first stage a random sample was selected from the primary sampling units (counting areas) for each stratum of the adopted sampling design.

#### **Stratification:**

To increase the efficiency of the sample and improve its representation of the target population, establishments in the sampling frame were classified into homogeneous strata. In order to obtain more accurate results compared to a simple random sample of the same size, and to provide a sufficient number of establishments at publishable levels, the stratification was applied across two levels as follows:

- Stratification at the 2-digit level of economic activity (ISIC4).
- Stratification by establishment size categories, which are:
  - Micro enterprises: Establishments with 1 to 5 employees.
  - Small enterprises: Establishments with 6 to 49 employees.
  - Medium enterprises: Establishments with 50 to 249 employees.
  - Large enterprises: Establishments with more than 249 employees.

**Size of sample:**

*h* The sample size was calculated at the level of each stratum, representing the field of study (economic activity at the first level – section – of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities, ISIC4).

The resulting sample size for each study domain (ISIC-1) was then distributed across establishment size classes and subsequently across the second level of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC4), using the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) allocation method. This approach reduces the variance of sampling weights, thereby lowering the variance of estimates and enhancing the efficiency of the design. In addition, the sample size at the study domain level (ISIC-1) was adjusted to ensure a minimum acceptable number of establishments, thus securing a sufficient response size for producing accurate estimates at the publication level (ISIC-1). Furthermore, all medium and large establishments were included in the sample with a 100% selection probability, given their importance.

The calculations outlined above resulted in a total sample size of (22,807) establishments, distributed as shown in the tables below:

**Table1: Distribution of the quarterly survey sample at the section level (ISIC4, ISIC-1).**

Division identifier	Chapter	Number of establishments
A	Agriculture, forestry and fishing	595
B	Mining and quarrying activity	594
C	Manufacturing	2944
D	Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supplies	281
E	Water supply, sewerage and waste management and remediation activities.	599
F	Construction	4897
G	Wholesale and retail trade, and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	4293
H	Transportation and storage	779
I	Accommodation and food services activities	1701
J	Information and communication	604
K	Financial and insurance activities	604
L	Real estate activities	296
M	Professional, scientific and technical activities	657
N	Administrative and support services	1077
P	Education	674

Q	Human health and social work activities	1018
R	Arts, entertainment and recreation	600
S	Other service activities	594
<b>Total overall</b>		<b>22807</b>

### 3.9. Statistical unit (sampling unit)

The statistical unit in the International Trade in Services Statistics Survey (Quarterly) is the establishment.

### 3.10. Data collection

#### **Data collection from the survey:**

The data of the International Trade in Services Statistics Survey are collected through Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI), Computer-Assisted Web Interviews (CAWI), and Computer-Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI).

#### **Data collection from administrative records:**

In coordination with the relevant departments within GASTAT, the administrative data for the International Trade in Services Statistics Survey (Quarterly) are obtained from the Saudi Central Bank, the Ministry of Tourism, the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority, and the Insurance Authority. These data are stored in GASTAT's databases after undergoing verification and review processes in accordance with approved statistical methods and recognized quality standards. The data sources are also consulted in cases where errors or observations in the data are identified.

### 3.11. Data collection frequency

The data collection process for the International Trade in Services Statistics is carried out on a quarterly basis.

### 3.12. Reference area

The survey sample is a representative sample of Saudi Arabia's 13 administrative regions.

### 3.13. Reference period (time reference)

The reference period for the data is the first quarter of 2023.

### 3.14. Base period

Not applicable.

### 3.15. Measurement unit

Most of the results are numerical values, and the input category is in thousands of riyals (e.g., Payments made outside the Kingdom for maintenance and repair services).

### 3.16. Time coverage

The statistics presented in the International Trade in Services Statistics Publication cover data from the first quarter of 2024 and continue on a quarterly basis.

### 3.17. Publication frequency

The results of the International Trade in Services Statistics are published on a quarterly basis in accordance with the approved statistical plan.

## 4. Statistical processing

### 4.1. Error detection

- Outlier detection refers to values that differ significantly from the general pattern of the data and are often the result of input or response errors.
- Detection of missing or blank values and verification of whether they are mandatory or optional.

### 4.2. Data integration and matching from multiple sources

The data from the International Trade in Services Survey (Quarterly) are integrated with data from administrative records.

### 4.3. Imputation and calibration

Compensation (for non-response cases or incomplete datasets):

The approach used for compensation in the International Trade in Services Survey was whether for establishments with incomplete responses or missing data for specific variables. Reinterviews are allowed to obtain missing data from non-respondents. Subsequently, dealing with missing or non-response data involves assessing it by following a scientific approach to estimate the results based on considerations such as historical data series and an acceptable range of missing data, along with estimates built on class-level data.

### 4.4. Seasonal adjustments

Not applicable, only final results will be published.

### 4.5. Adjustment of preliminary results

Not applicable, only final results will be published.

## 5. Used Resources

Description	Total
Total employees (GASTAT employees and researchers).	178
Total number of days in the data collection period (end date - start date).	26
Average number of interviews conducted per day (during data collection).	692

## 6. Quality dimensions

### 6.1. Suitability

A criterion that indicates how well the product meets users' needs.

#### 6.1.1. User needs

**Internal users of the International Trade in Services Survey:**

National accounts.

**Whereas the external users and beneficiaries of the International Trade in Services Survey data are:**

- Saudi Exports Development Authority.
- Saudi General Authority of Foreign Trade.
- Saudi Central Bank.
- Localization and Balance of Payments Office.

**The disseminated key variables that are mostly used by key users:**

Total exports of services, total imports of services, and trade balance for services.

## 6.1.2. Completeness

The data of the International Trade in Services Statistics are based on two main sources:

**First source:** Data collected through the field survey of establishments.

**Second source:** Administrative data obtained from government entities (the Saudi Central Bank, the Ministry of Tourism, the Zakat, Tax and Customs Authority, and the Insurance Authority).

This is to provide comprehensive and complete information on the indicators of the International Trade in Services Statistics.

## 6.2. Accuracy and reliability

A standard that measures how close the calculations or estimates are to the exact or true values that reflect reality.

### 6.2.1. Overall accuracy

- The data collected is improved through the researchers who have been selected according to a set of practical and objective criteria and a training program related to the field of work.
- Alert, prevention, and correction rules are applied during the data collection process to improve data quality.
- Internal quality standards are applied to the data received from the field to ensure their consistency and accuracy.
- Data is checked with previous years to identify any significant changes in the data.
- The internal consistency of the data is checked before it is finalized.
- The links between variables are checked, and coherence between different data series is confirmed.

## 6.3. Timeliness and punctuality

A standard that measures the time gap between the availability of information and the occurrence of the event.

However, timeliness reflects the time difference between the date of data publication and the target date when it is actually published.

### 6.3.1. Timeliness

GASTAT uses the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) issued by the International Monetary Fund. According to this Standard, all statistics agencies are required to publish data quarterly, with a delay of not more than mid-year (90 days) after the end of the reference period. If the data are from different sources, they may be published at a different frequency.

### 6.3.2. Punctuality

Publication takes place in accordance with published release dates for the International Trade in Services Survey on the GASTAT webpage. Data will be available on time as scheduled in the statistical release calendar.

## 6.4. Coherence and comparability

The ability for users to access data, the availability of accurate or complete data, and the availability of a methodology and quality report.

### 6.4.1. Comparability - geographical

Data is comparable locally and internationally.

### 6.4.2. Comparability - over time

The quarterly International Trade in Services Survey was launched in the first quarter of 2024, based on the same statistical framework and methodology used in the annual survey, to ensure consistency in concepts and data collection mechanisms. The quarterly survey aims to provide periodic data that contribute to monitoring short-term changes in trade in services while maintaining comparability with the annual results. Accordingly, the quarterly results serve as an extension of the annual data and contribute to enhancing the continuity of the time series and accurately monitoring economic trends.

### 6.4.3. Coherence- Cross domain

The International Trade in Services Statistics are consistent, as they are based on international standards.

### 6.4.4. Coherence- Sub-annual and annual statistics

Export and import data are consistent due to the application of international standards in the International Trade in Services Statistics.

### 6.4.5. Coherence- National Accounts

Export and import data for services are consistent and serve as an input among the variables and indicators of the national accounts in the balance of payments.

### 6.4.6. Coherence- Internal

The statistics of the International Trade in Services Survey (Quarterly) exhibit complete internal consistency, as they are all based on international standards and are calculated using statistical methods.

## 6.5. Accessibility and clarity

The ability for users to access data, the availability of accurate or complete data, and the availability of a methodology and quality report.

### 6.5.1. Press releases

The announcements for each publication are available in the statistical calendar, as mentioned in 10.1. The press releases can be viewed on the website of GASTAT on the link:

[Press release](#)

## 6.5.2. Publications

GASTAT issues the publications and reports of the International Trade in Services Survey (Quarterly) on a regular basis within a pre-prepared dissemination plan, and they are published on GASTAT's website. GASTAT is keen to publish its publications in a way that serves all users of different types, including publications in different formats that contain publication tables, data graphs, indicators, metadata, methodology, and questionnaires in both English and Arabic.

**The results of the International Trade in Services Survey (Quarterly) are available at:**

[The International Trade in Services statistics](#)

## 6.5.3. Online database

Not available.

## 6.5.4. Microdata accessibility

Accurate data is unit-level disaggregated data obtained from multiple sources such as sample statistical surveys, general population and housing censuses, and administrative systems, providing detailed information about the characteristics of individuals, families, business entities, and geographical areas, supporting the construction and development of statistical indicators and scientific research.

**Different types of microdata files to meet diverse information needs:**

- Public use:

It consists of sets of records containing information on individuals, households, or business entities anonymized in such a way that the respondent cannot be identified either directly (by name, address, contact number, identity number, etc.) or indirectly (by combining different - especially rare - characteristics of respondents), **such as** age, occupation, education, etc.

- Scientific use:

These files are generated based on specific methodologies requested by data users to extract datasets with particular characteristics used for strategic studies, decision-making,

and scientific research purposes on individuals, households, and enterprises. They contain no direct identifiers and are subject to confidentiality protection controls.

Qualified users who meet the standards and procedures of confidentiality protection can access the files of scientific use of accurate data through the platform "ITAHA" of the General Authority for Statistics, while the most sensitive data for use is shared by visiting the accurate data laboratory within a secure environment managed by the Authority.

### 6.5.5. References and standards

The concepts, definitions, and classifications are based on the following international standards:

- The Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services (MSITS) issued by the United Nations:

[Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services](#)

- The Balance of Payments and International Investment Position Manual (BPM6) issued by the International Monetary Fund:

[Balance of Payments Manual](#)

## 7. Quality assurance

GASTAT considers the following principles: Impartiality, ensuring that the statistical product is user-oriented, maintaining the quality of processes and outputs, enhancing the effectiveness of statistical operations, and reducing the burden on respondents.

Data is validated through procedures and quality controls that are applied during the process at various stages, such as data entry, data collection, and other final controls.

## 8. Quality assessment

GASTAT performs all statistical activities according to a national model (Generic Statistical Business Process Model - GSBPM). According to the GSBPM, the final stage of statistical activities is overall evaluation using information gathered in each stage or sub-process. This

information is used to prepare the evaluation report, which outlines all the quality issues related to the specific statistical activity and serves as input for improvement actions.

## 9. Confidentiality

### 9.1. Confidentiality - Policy

According to Royal Decree No. 23 dated 07/12/1397, data must always be kept confidential and must be used by GASTAT for statistical purposes only.

Therefore, the data is protected in the data servers of GASTAT.

### 9.2. Confidentiality - Data Treatment

Data from the SMEs survey are presented in the right tables in order to summarize, understand, as well as extract their results. Moreover, to compare them with other data and to obtain statistical significance about the selected study population. However, referring to such data indicated in tables is much easier than going back to check the original questionnaire that may include some data like names and addresses of individuals and names of data providers, which violates the data confidentiality of statistical data.

“Anonymity of data” is one of the most important procedures. To keep data confidential, GASTAT removed information on individual persons, households, or business entities in such a way that the respondent cannot be identified either directly (name, address, contact number, identity number, etc.) or indirectly (by combining different - especially rare - characteristics of respondents), **such as** age, occupation, education, etc.

## 10. Dissemination policy

### 10.1. Statistical calendar

The International Trade in Services Statistics Survey (Quarterly) has been included in the statistical calendar.

## [Statistical Calendar](#)

### 10.2. User access

One of GASTAT's objectives is to meet its clients' needs; therefore, it immediately provides them with the results upon the release of the International Trade in Services Survey (Quarterly) results publication.

**It also receives questions and enquiries from clients about the publication and its results through various communication channels, such as:**

- GASTAT official website: [www.stats.gov.sa](http://www.stats.gov.sa)
- GASTAT official email address: [info@stats.gov.sa](mailto:info@stats.gov.sa)
- Official visits to GASTAT's official head office in Riyadh or one of its branches in Saudi Arabia.
- Official letters.
- Statistical telephone: (199009).

## 11. Comments