

Background for Session: (Previously) Measuring the Economy May Not be as Simple as 1,2,3 , (New Title) Can Discrepant Estimates Be a Good Thing?

1. Washington Post Article, Measuring the Economy May Not Be as Simple as 1,2,3

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/28/AR2005082800730.html>

2. EIA “discrepant” estimates of distillate fuel oils sales

Below is a link to our “adjusted” distillate fuel oil sales data. The consumption tab also provides distillate fuel oil sales data, without the adjustment to product supplied.

http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/pet_cons_821dsta_dcu_nus_a.htm

3. EIA “discrepant” estimates of gross withdrawals of natural gas

EIA has been providing data on gross withdrawals of natural gas obtained from the individual State agencies and the Minerals Management Service.

http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/ng/ng_prod_top.asp

We recently started providing data from the EIA-914 survey on gross withdrawals of natural gas. We decided to show 2 production estimates in this situation because we thought it was better to go forward with what we had and get comments than to wait until we completed our evaluation. When we complete the evaluation of the EIA-914 data, we will declare them to be our official estimates and replace the data we are currently showing with them.

http://www.eia.doe.gov/oil_gas/natural_gas/data_publications/eia914/eia914.html

4. Presentation by Jennifer Madans of National Center for Health Statistics at Committee on National Statistics Seminar, “Discrepant Estimates of Social Phenomena: Love’em or Leave’em?” May 5, 2005.

In May, the Committee on National Statistics sponsored a seminar on discrepant estimates. Charles Nelson of the Census Bureau, Philip Rones of the Bureau of Labor Statistics and Jennifer Madans of the National Center for Health Statistics discussed how data producers handle discrepant estimates.

[In a second attachment on the ASA Meeting Home Page](#) is Jennifer’s slides for her presentation, “Estimating Disability Numbers to Make Your Head Spin.” Although it’s on a different topic than energy data, it very nicely summarizes issues in question wording and moving from concept to measurement.

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For Discussion:

When this topic has come up previously the response we have gotten from other statisticians is that presenting more than one estimate is good because we are showing variability and that we can learn from discrepant estimates. However, the public doesn't always see it this way and we get questions or headlines about "conflicting data."

What can we do to help the public see that discrepant estimates can be a good thing and avoid the perception that we are presenting conflicting data? Alternatively, do we restrict what we show? Do we concentrate on developing better caveats? We welcome the Committee's thoughts on these and other related issues.