



# AUSTRALIA'S IMPORTS OF AIRCRAFT & PARTS – UPDATE FOR 2018

## Introduction

This article updates analysis on the impact of confidentiality in Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS) international merchandise trade statistics on imports of aircraft and parts. To avoid divulging commercially-sensitive details of individual firms, the ABS restricts release of statistics on certain commodities. These restrictions have led to the partial restriction of data released for imports of SITC code 792 - *Aircraft, spacecraft & related parts* in ABS reported data.

The following data are estimates of those imports, drawing on publicly available information including data from the countries where these imports are sourced. The methodology behind these estimates is laid out in **Attachment A**.

## Estimates of imports of aircraft and related parts in 2018

**Table 1** shows estimates of Australia's imports of *Aircraft, spacecraft & related parts*. Australia's imports of *Aircraft, spacecraft & related parts* fell 7.6 per cent (or \$340 million) to \$4.1 billion in 2018, making it Australia's 19th largest import (in terms of goods and services). In 2018, Australian imported aircraft valued at \$2.5 billion, helicopters valued at \$310 million and parts for aircraft & helicopters valued at \$1.1 billion.

**Table 1: Imports of Aircraft, spacecraft & parts (SITC 792) by type (A\$ million)**

	2016	2017	2018	% share 2018	% growth 2017 to 2018
Aircraft	1,204	2,710	2,527	61.5	-6.8
Helicopters	1,460	419	310	7.5	-26.1
Parts of aircraft & helicopters	1,122	1,086	1,147	27.9	5.6
Other	128	230	122	3.0	-47.2
<b>Total Aircraft, spacecraft &amp; parts</b>	<b>3,915</b>	<b>4,446</b>	<b>4,106</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-7.6</b>

Based on ABS & UN merchandise trade data on DFAT STARS database and Global Trade Atlas.

**Table 2** shows imports of *Aircraft, spacecraft & related parts* by Australia's major sources. In 2018, Australia's top source for these imports was the United States valued at \$3.0 billion, down 5.5 per cent (or \$174 million).

Following the United States, Switzerland was the second largest source with imports up \$93 million to \$225 million, Italy, with imports up \$108 million to \$214 million, was the third largest source and France with imports down \$61 million to \$146 million the fourth largest source.

Table 2: Imports of Aircraft, spacecraft & parts (SITC 792) for selected countries  
(A\$ million)

	2016	2017	2018	% growth	
				% share 2018	2017 to 2018
Canada	84	103	103	2.5	0.0
France	182	207	146	3.6	-29.4
Germany	309	105	105	2.6	0.0
Italy	342	106	214	5.2	101.5
Netherlands	22	195	20	0.5	-89.6
New Zealand	39	70	12	0.3	-82.2
Portugal	0	52	0	0.0	-99.9
Spain	12	231	5	0.1	-97.7
Switzerland	27	132	225	5.5	70.5
United Kingdom	157	61	94	2.3	53.8
United States (a)	2,523	3,155	2,981	72.6	-5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,915</b>	<b>4,446</b>	<b>4,106</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>-7.6</b>
of which:					
European Union 28	1,083	803	586	14.3	-27.1

(a) Excludes imports of some military aircraft from Sep-2008 onwards which cannot be separately identified in US merchandise trade.

Based on ABS & UN merchandise trade data on DFAT STARS database and Global Trade Atlas.

Author: Frank Bingham  
Office of Economic Analysis  
[statssection@dfat.gov.au](mailto:statssection@dfat.gov.au)

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# ATTACHMENT A: METHODOLOGY FOR ESTIMATING AIRCRAFT & PARTS IMPORTS

## Background

The ABS has a legal obligation to confidentialise data from an individual or organisation that is identifiable if that individual or organisation has requested that the data be suppressed. These restrictions affect the level of detailed merchandise trade data that is potentially available for release.

The ABS publishes monthly a list of merchandise trade commodities with confidential restrictions in its publication *International Merchandise Trade: Confidential Commodities List* (ABS catalogue 5372.0.55.0.01). More detail on how the ABS applies confidentiality in merchandise trade statistics is available in the ABS information paper *International Trade - Request to Confidentialise data* (ABS catalogue 5497.0.55.001). These products are available on the ABS website at [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au).

## Impact of confidentiality on imports of aircraft & parts

From September 2008, the ABS made select Harmonised Tariff Item Statistical Classification (HTISC) codes confidential that make up most of the SITC code Aircraft, spacecraft & parts. These codes have the restriction applied of no commodity details. No data relating to these HTISC are released by the ABS.

**Table A** lists the ABS confidentiality restrictions applied to these aircraft codes and the dates when they were in effect.

**Table A: SITC 792 - Aircraft, spacecraft & parts**

### Confidential codes

HTISC	From	To	Description
8802.11	Dec-08	Jun-15	Helicopters of an unladen weight not exceeding 2,000 kg
8802.12	Dec-08	Aug-15	Helicopters of an unladen weight exceeding 2,000 kg
8802.30	Dec-08	Jun-15	Aeroplanes and other aircraft (excl helicopters) of an unladen weight exceeding 2,000 kg but not exceeding 15,000 kg
8802.40	Sep-08		Aeroplanes and other aircraft (excl helicopters) of an unladen weight exceeding 15,000 kg
8803.30	Dec-08	Aug-15	Parts of aeroplanes or helicopters (excl propellers, rotors and undercarriages and parts thereof)

### Non-confidential codes

HTISC	Description
8802.20	Aeroplanes and other aircraft (excl helicopters) of an unladen weight not exceeding 2,000 kg
8802.60	Spacecraft
8801.00	Balloons and dirigibles, gliders and other non-powered aircraft
8803.10	Propellers and rotor parts
8803.20	Undercarriages and parts
8803.90	Other



## Alternative sources of information

By using partner country export data or mirror statistics (e.g. United States exports of aircraft & parts to Australia) it is possible to get an idea of the size of Australia's imports of the confidential aircraft & parts codes. This partner country data was then summed with the non-confidential codes in the ABS trade data to produce an estimate of imports of aircraft & parts for Australia.

## Quality of these estimates

The reader should note the above analysis provides only an estimate of the actual value of Australian aircraft & parts imports. These estimates have a number of data quality issues:

- Firstly, not all of Australia's export partners publish their own export trade data (for example only limited data is available for Middle East countries) and therefore some Australian confidential aircraft & parts imports may not have been included. As Australia's major trading partners were covered in the calculation this should only have a small impact on the above estimates.
- Timing differences will also impact on the quality of the estimates, given the long distances to some of Australia's major trading partners.
  - For example a good that is imported and recorded in ABS trade statistics in January 2018 could be exported and recorded in partner country trade data in December 2017 due to the time it takes to ship the good to that country. As a result this good is recorded in ABS trade statistics in calendar year 2018, while in the partner country data it will be recorded in 2017. This will impact more on aircraft parts than aircraft themselves as the time to fly the aircraft to Australia is within 24 hours. However part of the partner country data may be allocated to the incorrect time period.
- It is possible that in partner country export statistics the final country of destination for these goods are incorrect (it may be shipped through a third party country). This is unlikely for shipments of bulk goods, such as aircraft. However for aircraft parts this may be more of an issue, especially for trading hubs such as Singapore. To minimise this issue only Singapore-produced goods were included in these estimates
- A particular problem in using this type of analysis to estimate the imports of aircraft into Australia is to exclude imports of aircraft on an operational lease (which the ABS excludes from Australian import statistics). To try to overcome this issue the Civil Aviation Safety Authority's civil aircraft register has been used to try and identify imports of leased aircraft so as to exclude these aircraft in partner country export data.
- In 2009, both the United Kingdom and the United States confidentialised aircraft exports to a degree. For the United States, the lower level of confidentiality still enabled the analysis of United States export data and ABS import data to produce an estimate of the value of imports of civil aircraft from the United States (it excludes some US military aircraft, which could not be separately identified in US merchandise trade statistics). However, the higher degree of confidentiality in the United Kingdom export statistics prevented the estimation of aircraft imports from the United Kingdom. As a result, the estimation of Australian aircraft imports from 2008 to 2012 excludes imports from the United Kingdom.