

Roundup: The Best Sources of International Industry Statistics

If you're doing research on industries in other countries, what are the best sources to turn to? We recently had to tackle an in-depth international industry research project, which gave us the opportunity to look deeply into this question and gain new insights as to what are the most fruitful, substantive, and accessible sites, sources, resources, and strategies for locating global statistical industry data today. This article identifies and summarizes what we discovered.

In our research, we utilized a wide range of English-language sources, and we found it is useful to group these into the following broad categories:

- Online databases
 - Dialog databases
 - Stand-alone databases
- Market research reports
- National statistical sites

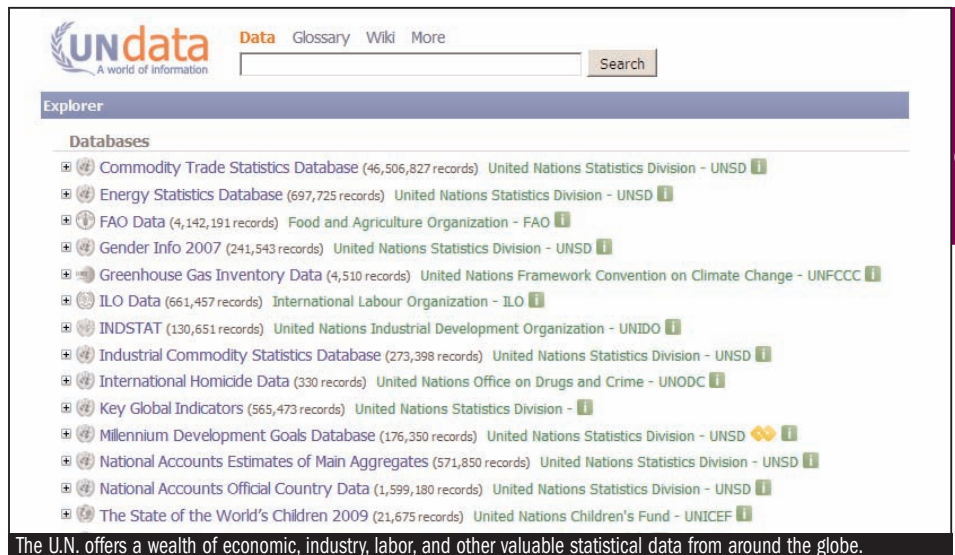
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The screenshot shows the UNdata website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Data', 'Glossary', 'Wiki', and 'More' links, and a search box. Below this is a section titled 'Explorer' with a sub-section 'Databases'. A list of databases is displayed, each with a small icon, a title, and the number of records. The databases listed include: Commodity Trade Statistics Database (46,506,827 records), Energy Statistics Database (697,725 records), FAO Data (4,142,191 records), Gender Info 2007 (241,543 records), Greenhouse Gas Inventory Data (4,510 records), ILO Data (661,457 records), INDSTAT (130,651 records), Industrial Commodity Statistics Database (273,398 records), International Homicide Data (330 records), Key Global Indicators (565,473 records), Millennium Development Goals Database (176,350 records), National Accounts Estimates of Main Aggregates (571,850 records), National Accounts Official Country Data (1,599,180 records), and The State of the World's Children 2009 (21,675 records). At the bottom of the screenshot, a caption reads: 'The U.N. offers a wealth of economic, industry, labor, and other valuable statistical data from around the globe.'

Figure 1

- International organizations
- U.S. government
- University library portals
- Other sites and sources

Note, of course, that our listing here does not represent any kind of comprehensive collection of international research sources, only those that we have used and can recommend. Some of these sources will be familiar, but others will be new. In any case, you may find it helpful to print or copy this listing for your own or your colleagues' ready reference. (Link to <http://informationadvisor.com/InternationalRoundup.pdf> for a stand-alone copy of this article with unlimited copy permissions.)

Fee-Based Databases

Naturally one of the first places you're going to turn to for quickly look-

ing up international industry statistics are the traditional fee-based databases. Here's a roundup of those we found most helpful. (Of course, you would also want to supplement these general industry databases with any industry-specific ones too.)

Dialog. We remain a big fan and user of Dialog, and we found these databases to be best for our research:

- File 9: Business & Industry
- File 13: Business & Management Practices
- File 15: ABI/Inform
- File 16: PROMT
- File 93: TableBase
- File 148: Trade & Industry
- File 620: EIU Viewswire
- File 622: The Economist
- File 636: Newsletters

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(For a quick, free overview of these and the other Dialog databases, link to its advisory Bluesheets at <http://library.dialog.com/bluesheets>. And for some tips on effectively searching industry information on Dialog, see <http://support.dialog.com/howdoi/business/54812.shtml>.)

Stand-Alone Databases

These are other databases not available on Dialog that we found of value for international industry information:

- Mergent Online
(www.mergentonline.com)
The Industry Report data module of Mergent Online covers North America, Asia/Pacific, and Europe by country and region.
- S&P NetAdvantage (www.netadvantage.standardandpoors.com)
- OneSource Global Business Information (www.onesource.com)

Market Research and Investment Research Reports

Market and investment research reports are often filled with granular statistical industry data. One place to search collections of these reports is on Dialog, and one convenient approach is to use the OneSearch category “MarketFull” to search its major publishers all at once (BCC Market Research; Business Insights; Datamonitor; EIU Market Research; Freedonia; Frost & Sullivan Market Engineering; Verdict Market Research). Investext investment research is broken into two files: File 545 for the archive and File 745 for the newer reports in PDF.

Note: Some of the major research publishers do not make their most current reports available on resellers such as Dialog. Datamonitor, for example, embargoes some of its reports for 4 to 5 years! Also you should be sure to check that a research file you’ve chosen that looks good is still being updated, as some are still searchable but have ceased being updated.

Of course, Dialog is not the only place by any means—nor necessarily the best—for locating industry and market research reports. There are a variety of other online services and web-based aggregators that we cover regularly.

National Statistical Sites

Virtually every country has some kind of national statistical office that conducts censuses and collects and disseminates statistics on the economy. While the particular sets of data available and how to search them will naturally vary by country, you can normally count on turning up data on indus-

Excerpts from Market Reports can be found on the free web.

tries, labor force, and other major economic indicators. There are several well-known organizations and sites that have aggregated and listed links to the websites of these offices, making your job finding them much easier. Here are ones that we’ve used and liked:

- OFFStats
(www.offstats.auckland.ac.nz)
- Census list: International Statistical Agencies (www.census.gov/aboutus/stat_int.html)
- United Nations Statistics Division: Information on National Statistical Systems (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/inter-natlinks/sd_natstat.asp)

International Agencies

Some of the most useful international statistical data can be obtained from the large, international agencies, ranging from the U.N., the OECD, the European Union, the International Labour Organization, and others. Those we found most useful follow.

United Nations

The U.N. pulls together an enormous amount of useful economic, industry, labor, and other international statistical data of potential value for industry research. Here are the U.N. sites we recommend you start with.

- Infonation (www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/infonation/e_infonation.htm)
Statistical data on U.N. member states’ geographies, economies, population, and social indicators.
- UNData (<http://data.un.org>)
A great deal of U.N.-housed searchable statistical databases, ranging from its Commodity Trade Statistics Database to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the logo Industrial Commodity Statistics Database, and more (see Figure 1 on page 1).

While you may find a great deal of what you need from the U.N. site, it’s not the only international agency with valuable industry-related data. We also



Figure 2

Locating Market Research Report Data on the Open Web for Free

Another option for locating market research studies is to find portions, segments, or even full reports free on the open web. This is not easy and can be hit-or-miss, but sometimes you can get lucky. And there are some things you can do to increase the odds of finding an excerpt, piece of data, summary, or even parts of a full report on the web. Here are our tips:

1. First try to find titles of any relevant reports so you can use that title as part of a future search. You can do this by appending the name of a market research vendor that covers your topic. For example, in our research, we found that Datamonitor did the most comprehensive job in covering the “call center” market, so we did searches with its name. Better yet, find the name of a specific report (which you can easily find on an aggregator such as MarketResearch.com or Research and Markets) and append the title to your search.

2. When reviewing your results, pay particular attention to results that are PowerPoint or PDF files, as these might represent presentations given at conferences by vendors or other experts, or are publicly available reports that quote from market research reports. Better yet, redo your search—twice—once limiting results to filetype:pdf and the next time to filetype:ppt. (Also, as use of the SlideShare site has become a more popular way to freely share presentations, we have also been having good luck appending the command site:slideshare.net to our search string to find substantive market presentations.)

3. Also pay particular attention to results that end in .edu or .gov. Often academic or governmental institutions will issue freely available industry-related reports. Once again, consider redoing your search and

limiting one with the site:.edu filter and another with site:.gov. (Google sometimes seems to be thrown off if you try to combine these commands.) And if you are getting lots of results, a particularly powerful way to narrow your results is to combine both a filetype and site limit into a single search.

4. If you are turning up older reports and want to try to locate the newer ones, use Google’s “number range” command to try to ensure that there is a recent date located close to a report title. The easiest way to do this is to click on Google’s advanced search page, click “more,” and then enter the dates you want to apply as a numerical range. For instance 2006...2000 may work to limit, or at least prioritize, the list of what you get back to reports from the last 3 years.

5. The fastest way to quickly determine if the data you are looking for is found in a document you select is to click on Google’s cached link, then quickly scan down for the colored, shaded keywords. Of course you can also press Control F (Find) to locate other words and phrases.

6. There are sites that offer free research reports too, such as ReportLinker (you pay a small subscription fee for access to this one), but those sites’ definition of what “counts” as a market research report is usually quite broad, and you’re almost certainly not going to find full premium research reports from the well-known vendors there.

7. When you search an article database on a fee-based site such as Dialog to find excerpts of market reports, consider using a search statement that will limit just to results where your phrase appears at least twice in the same paragraph. Then, if available, use the keyword-in-context (KWIC) format to just view the snippets you want to find.

recommend that you check out the following:

European Commission: Eurostat (<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>)

Scores of statistics and data sets on EU member countries.

OECD (<http://stats.oecd.org>)

Countless tables, data sets, and collections of data related to employment, income, education, labor, and more for countries around the globe. OECD is experimenting with a next-generation online library, currently in a preliminary version stage. It is available at www.oecdilib.org (see Figure 2).

JETRO: Japan External Trade Organization (www.jetro.go.jp)

Information on Japanese companies, trade, industries, and related data on business in Japan.

The World Bank

As a global hub for financial and technical assistance to developing coun-

tries, the World Bank collects and disseminates statistical data on about 100 nations. These are two of the key pages and URLs to review:

- The World Bank: Data and Research <http://tinyurl.com/9qcwq>
- Knowledge Resources for Financial & Private Sector Development (<http://rru.worldbank.org>)

Know the industry classification codes used by different countries.

International Labour Organization

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is devoted to ensuring social justice for workers around the globe and is an advocate for labor rights. The ILO aggregates labor force surveys from countries around the world and

publishes its own labor-related series. These are the key sections to check:

- Key Indicators of the Labour Market (www.ilo.org/empelm/what/pubs/lang—n/WCMS_114060/index.htm)
- Statistics and Databases (www.ilo.org/global/What_we_do/Statistics/lang—en/index.htm)
- LABORSTA database (<http://laborsta.ilo.org>)

United States Government

We’ve written many articles over the years on the best U.S. government sites for business information, so we’ll just identify a few here that we’ve recently found to be of particular value for locating international industry statistics:

- STAT-USA/Internet: National Trade Data Bank (www.stat-usa.gov)
- Statistical Abstract: International Statistics (www.census.gov/compendia/statab/cats/international_statistics.html)

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- BuyUSA e-Market Express
(www.tradeport.org/trade_statistics/tradestats.htm)
- U.S. Commercial Service: Market Research Library (www.buyusa.info.net/adsearch.cfm?search_type=int&loadnav=no)
Includes country commercial guides, market research reports and more
- U.S. International Trade Center
(http://pubapps.usitc.gov/applications/publogs/qry_publication_loglist.asp)
- ITC publications
(<http://dataweb.usitc.gov>)
Import, export, tariff statistics
- Directory of International Trade Analyst Commodity/Service Assignments (www.usitc.gov/research_and_analysis/documents/ITADirectory2009.pdf)
- U.S. Dept. of Commerce: International Trade Administration
(http://ita.doc.gov/td/industry/otea/OTII/want2_industry.html)
- Export.gov: Search by Industry
(<http://export.gov/industry/index.asp>)
- TradeStats Express
(<http://tse.export.gov>)

Web Portals: Data and Links to Industry Sites

- NationMaster.com
(www.nationmaster.com)
(Industry Statistics: www.nationmaster.com/cat/ind-industry&all=1)
- FITA: Really Useful Links for International Trade (<http://fita.org/webindex/index.html>)
- Industry Research Desk
(www.virtualpet.com/industry)

University Library Portals and Guides

Most business researchers are well aware of the wealth of pointer and finder sites available from academic institutions, particularly their libraries. Below are a few that we found to be particularly useful for identifying and pointing to international industry sources:

- Michigan State University: globalEDGE
(<http://globaledge.msu.edu>)
- University of Texas: Latin American Network Information Center (LANIC; <http://lanic.utexas.edu>)

A Couple of Tips When Searching International Agency Databases

The global public sources highlighted in this section produce mountains of valuable data, but they aren't necessarily easy to use. Two quick tips can make your search job easier:

Tip 1.

Be sure you are aware of any industry, occupational, or other categorization coding system used by the country or agency, and know how to look up the correct codes ahead of time. Doing this can make your job a lot easier and your results much more precise. For instance, while you would use SIC or NAICS industry codes for searching North American industries, when searching European industries, for instance, you would probably use NACE codes. You can look up industries at www.cso.ie/px/u/NACECoder/NACEItems/search_nace.asp. There are industry codes for Australia and New Zealand (ANZSIC), Japan has JSIC, Brazil has CNAE, and there are global codes such as ISIC used by the U.N. for its International Standard Industrial Classification of all economic activities. There are global occupational codes too, such as ISCO (see www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/index.htm).

Tip 2.

Don't forget to look for a help page and an email contact of a technical assistance person if you have questions or any difficulties. In several cases, we found that if we explained exactly what we were trying to find, the customer assistance or technical staffer instructed or directed us right to the page, table, database, etc., we needed.

- Georgetown University Library: Subject Guide for International Business (http://resources.library.georgetown.edu/libdata/rqs.phtml?subject_id=25)

Other Useful Sites and Sources

In addition to the obvious news, blogs, and general websites that turn up in an industry search, we also recommend these:

- Associations: Provide results of member surveys, industry articles, summary statistics, and more
- Consultants: Often produce white papers, reports, presentations
- Vendors: Produce their own white papers and conference presentations
- Books: You can sometimes find excerpts of industry data on pages from Google Books
- Unions: EG Communication Workers Union offers statistics on the telecommunications industry, etc.

Industry Search Strategies and Tips

The following methods can make your open web searching for international industry information more efficient:

1. **Know your terms and defini-**

tions. This is true for all kinds of research, of course, but it is particularly critical with international industry research, as terms and phrases are likely to be different than those used in the U.S. Even the spelling variations can make a difference when searching—for example, what are termed “call centers” in the U.S. are called “call centres” in the U.K. As mentioned previously, the best way to be precise here is to see if an industry (or occupational) code categorization is being utilized, and apply those codes to your search.

2. Use the best words. Consider certain words and phrases to add to your search that can increase the odds you obtain results to those with numerical and hard data results. Those that we found to be of greatest value included forecast/s, grow/increase, and “vertical markets.”

3. Consider English-language versions. Language can be a barrier when trying to get information directly from national statistical agencies, so consider using an international agency that has already aggregated data from multiple countries and presents it in English. The U.N., OECD, and International Labour Organization, all highlighted above, are examples of global bodies that do this. ■