

Research Sources

U.S. Government	U.S. Census Bureau	Small Business Administration
	U.S. Department of Commerce & U.S. Department of Labor	Securities and Exchange Commission (Edgar database)
	Internal Revenue Service	
	Other government departments appropriate to your industry	
State Government	Sales Tax	Planning Departments
	Franchise Business Tax	New Business Licenses
	City and County Governments	
Quasi-Governmental Sources	Regional Planning Associations	
Industry & General Business	Trade Associations	Corporate Annual Reports
	Trade Publications	Thomas Register
Community Services	Chambers of Commerce	Merchants Associations
	Banks	Real Estate Agents
	Universities	Yellow Pages
	Newspaper and Online Libraries	
	Entrepreneurs' Associations	
Computer Databases	Business and Trade Information	
	Individualized Research Services	
Market Research Sources	Customers	
	Suppliers	
	Distributors	
	Independent Sales Representatives	
	Managers of Related Businesses	
	Loan officers/Factors/Venture Capitalists	
	Competitors	
Paid Services	Industry-Related Research firms	
	Survey/Polling Firms	
	Market Research Consultants	
Internal Data	For existing businesses	

U.S. Census Bureau

www.census.gov

The U.S. Census Bureau, part of the Department of Commerce, is the government agency with the primary responsibility for collecting and disseminating in-depth data on all aspects of American life. You may be aware that the Census gathers data on the American people: population, income, housing patterns, levels of education, and so on. But it also accumulates an enormous amount of data on the economic activity of the United States, right down to the number, type, and average sales of businesses, by particular business type, zipcode by zipcode.

Because Census Bureau data covers such a huge number of people and businesses, and because it is so detailed, Census Bureau data is considered among the most reliable information you can use. Those reading your business plan (for example, potential investors or bankers) will generally consider Census Bureau data reliable and conservative.

The Census Bureau has done an excellent job of making that vast resource of data easily available on the Internet. And remember – all that data is **free**.

Economic Census

www.census.gov (click on “Economic Census”)

If you are looking for information about specific industries or types of businesses, from the Census Bureau’s home page, click on “Economic Census.” From there, choose the link to the latest results (left-hand column) or the years that you are interested in. A full Economic Census of the United States is conducted every five years; the last one covered the year 2002.

By exploring the tables, you can find data on the number of businesses by industries in any zipcode, county, metropolitan area, or state in the U.S. You’ll also be able to find a vast amount of other information, such as distribution of business expenses and receipts by industry, data on women-owned and minority-owned businesses, product shipments. Be certain to drill down from many pages by clicking on the “More Data” or arrows for much greater detail in any report you select.

County Business Patterns

www.census.gov/epcd/cbp/view/cbpview.html

The Census Bureau produces annual reports on the number of business establishments -- detailed by industry, business size, and payroll – throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. This data is available on the national, state, county, metropolitan area, and zipcode levels. County Business Patterns are very useful in evaluating how well-served or under-served specific geographic areas are by particular business types.

Other ways to access Census data on the Internet include:

CenStats

<http://censtats.census.gov>

This site provides access to databases including Census Tract Street Locator, County Business Patterns, Zip Business Patterns, International Trade Data, and more.

American FactFinder

<http://factfinder.census.gov>

This has an easy-to-use pull-down interactive menu that allows you to find a range of demographic information about the American people – down to city or census tract level.

Quickfacts

<http://quickfacts.census.gov>

Quickfacts offers easy access to frequently-requested demographic data at national, state, or local level.

Current Industrial Reports

www.census.gov/cir/www/index.html

The U.S. Census Bureau publishes more than 100 *Current Industrial Reports*, providing very detailed data on tens of thousands of manufactured products – everything from baby clothes to consumer electronics to airplane engines. This information accounts for more than 40% of all goods manufactured in the United States. CIRs provide information on production, shipping, inventories, consumption and the number of firms manufacturing each product. The data is reported on a monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.

For other websites with federal U.S. statistics, visit these useful sites:

FedStats – Gateway to U.S. Government Federal Statistics

www.fedstats.gov

This main gateway to national statistics has links to statistics compiled by over 100 government agencies as well as government statistical agencies. It is a very good entry-point to all U.S. statistics.

Edgar Database – U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission

www.sec.gov

You can find annual, quarterly, and other financial reports required from publicly-traded companies by selecting the “Edgar” filings. You need the name of the corporation, not the brand name of the product, to find reports. For information about *USA Today*, for instance, enter the parent company, “Gannett Company.”

Internal Revenue Service

www.irs.gov/taxstats/

Tax statistics are generally harder to maneuver than Census Bureau statistics. However, if you have a specific income or tax-related statistic you are seeking, this might be a source of that data.

"To begin, I started by talking to people. I went to stores to see what products were already out there. I went to the Fancy Food Show and looked around for products similar to mine. I called the city Health Department to get names of commercial kitchens, so I could talk to people who made food products locally. From these kitchens, I got a lot of information about what I would need, as well as leads for production facilities."

Deborah Mullis
Entrepreneur

Individual U.S. State and Local Sources

Each U.S. state, as well as many individual counties and cities, collect and maintain information that can be useful to you in planning your business. For instance, state sales tax receipts may be a good indicator of the health of your local economy and local planning department information regarding building permits can indicate where population growth is occurring.

Use a search engine to locate your state and local government websites.

State Data Centers

www.census.gov/sdc/www/

The U.S. Census Department maintains links to individual U.S. states data/statistics programs. This will help you locate state-wide economic statistics.

BusinessLaw.gov

www.BusinessLaw.gov

Operated by the U.S. Small Business Administration, this is a portal to government – federal and state-by-state – legal and regulatory information. Keep in mind this is a site for legal information, not statistics.

Statistics for Canada

The Canadian government not only collects extensive data about Canadian businesses and population, but it provides a number of sites to make accessing and using that information relatively easy.

Statistics Canada

www.statcan.ca

This is the primary entry point for statistical information about all aspects of Canada, including demographics and economic conditions.

Statistics Canada — Business Data

<http://commerce.statcan.ca/english/commerce/>

This is an excellent place to start to gather information about specific target markets and performance of industries.

BusinessGateway

www.businessgateway.ca

This site provides a single access point to all the Canadian government services and information to start, run and grow a business in Canada.

Strategis — Canada's Business and Consumer Site

www.strategis.gc.ca

This well-organized site makes the resources and data of the Canadian government department, Industry Canada, readily available.

Bank of Montreal – Economic Research

www.bmo.com/economic/

The Bank of Montreal is a good non-governmental source of Canadian and North American economic statistics, including economic outlooks.

International Statistics

The Internet has made it much easier to gather data globally. Most developed, and many developing, countries have substantial statistical information available on the Internet, and international economic organizations also make data available.

U.S. Census Bureau List of Foreign Statistical Websites

www.census.gov/main/www/stat_int.html

The U.S. Census Bureau maintains links to locate statistical sites of countries throughout the world.

The World Bank

www.worldbank.org

This international organization compiles data world-wide. It offers free data by topic or country, links to online databases, as well as publishing its own economic reports.

Export.gov — Country and Industry Market Research

www.export.gov/cntryind.html

A rich resource of information, designed primarily for American countries engaged in international trade, Export.gov provides substantial, in-depth information about markets and industries throughout the world.

State Department Country Background Notes

www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/

The U.S. State Department prepares background papers on virtually every country in the world. These background papers include statistics and overviews of each country's economy as well as useful links.

International Data Base

www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html

The International Data Base (IDB) contains statistical tables of demographic, and socio-economic data for 227 countries and areas of the world.

Non-Governmental Free Online Resources

In addition to the sources listed below, be certain to use search engines such as Google, www.google.com, and online directories, such as Yahoo, www.yahoo.com, to find information from many sources about the topics you're interested in. Other good sources are listed below.

Louisiana State University

www.lib.lsu.edu

LSU maintains a very well-organized index to research and data available on the web, including government sources and subject-specific search engines.

"To come up with projections of customer turnover and sales, we went around to restaurants in the neighborhood and similar restaurants in the surrounding communities. We counted the customers at different times throughout the day and timed them to see how frequently tables turned over. Then we knocked those numbers way down for our own conservative projections."

Martha Johnson
Restaurateur

National Association of Manufacturers

www.nam.org

This large industry association provides substantial information to manufacturing companies, as well as collecting data about manufacturing. Click on the "About Manufacturing" link to find data and economic analysis and reports on manufacturing topics.

Society for Human Resource Management

www.shrm.org

The leading organization for human resource executives, this site has some good information on personnel issues available to non-members (and a lot more information for members). However, it also has some excellent links to general business resources on the Internet.

Thomas Register

www.thomasregister.com

The Thomas Register is the ultimate resource for locating suppliers and vendors. They not only list suppliers by product category, but many suppliers have detailed product/part/equipment lists, some with prices.

You can also find information about industries, trends, and companies from publications, which may charge a fee for archived stories. A few to try include:

Wall Street Journal

www.wsj.com

Business Week

www.businessweek.com

Red Herring

www.redherring.com

The Economist

www.economist.com

Forbes

www.forbes.com

Fee-based Online Resources

Some of the websites listed below offer some information free, but for more in-depth information, you will have to pay a fee.

LexisNexis

www.lexisnexis.com

This service provides a wealth of information and should be the first place you start when you are ready to pay for information. It is indispensable to researchers and includes comprehensive company, country, financial, demographic, market research, and industry reports. LexisNexis offers access to hundreds of databases, thousands of worldwide publications, public and legislative records, data on companies and executives and more. Payment for access to the LexisNexis database is available on a per article, per day, per week, or subscription basis.
