Data Sources for the Policy Sciences**[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Peter V. Schaeffer, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, USA

This list of data sources started in 2018 as a service to students in my research methods course. After the semester ended, I kept adding to this list whenever I came across or remembered another data source. Although I am now adding new sources less frequently because I have already identified the “easy pickings,” this document is a work in progress and open to changes.

In general, I am limiting the list to sites where at least some of the data are available free of charge. There are many private vendors of data and they are not covered in this document if they charge for all of their data. As much as possible I have avoided duplicate listings of sources and instead relied on cross-references. However, there are instances when duplicating a listing under a different topic makes finding a resource easier for the reader.

I welcome suggestions and, of course, additions to the list. If a link is no longer working, please also let me know, as link failures are unavoidable as time passes. I included the titles of data sources whenever they are available. This will allow you to enter them as search terms if a link is no longer working. All links worked when I first entered them. Comments on how to improve the organization of this resource would be appreciated. Please send suggestions, corrections, and comments to pvschaeffer@gmail.com.

For those interested in microdata, I recommend the following open-access book:

Nuno Crato and Paolo Paruolo, editors. *Data-Driven Policy Impact Evaluation: How Access to Microdata is Transforming Policy Design*. SpringerOpen 2019. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-319-78461-8>

For those interested in “Big Data,” I recommend:

Steh Stephen-Davidowitz (2017). *Everybody Lies – Big Data, New Data and what the Internet can tell us about who we really are*. Dey Street Books. Available as inexpensive paperback or for Kindle or audio book. I found a free PDF version at <http://www.bdbanalytics.ir/media/1211/everybody-lies-2017.pdf>. Before downloading, make sure it is a legal copy (I think it is). [Also recommended is a Big Data Course by Opportunity Insights: [Big Data to Solve Economic and Social Problems | Opportunity Insights](https://opportunityinsights.org/course/)]

The American Economic Association maintains a data portal you may also find helpful: <https://www.aeaweb.org/resources/data>.

A new project called TOP (The Opportunity Project) makes access to US Census data easier. Information about the project is available at: [TOP: Colleges and Universities Promote Census Data Accessibility](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2021/the-opportunity-project-colleges-universities.html?linkId=100000066341264)

Even if you never conduct any surveys of your own, every data user should have some knowledge of survey research methods because most data we use are based on surveys. The National Institutes of Health maintain a site about survey research: <http://www.esourceresearch.org/tabid/36/Default.aspx>. Another good resource is a paper published by the U.S. Census Bureau:

William J. Carrington, John L . Eltinge, and Kristin McCue, 2000. *An Economist’s Primer on Survey Samples*. Washington, DC: Census Bureau, Discussion Paper CES 00-15.
<https://www2.census.gov/ces/wp/2000/CES-WP-00-15.pdf>

When working with U.S., Canadian, or Mexican industries, make sure you are familiar with the NAICS codes. NAICS stands for North American Industrial Classification System, established in 1997. A searchable “handbook” can be found at <https://www.naics.com/search-naics-codes-by-industry/>. The predecessor system in the United States was called the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) and differs from the NAICS. If you use older data you may need to “translate” between these two systems, which can be done with the help of <https://www.naics.com/sic-naics-crosswalk-search-results/>.

A word of caution when using a site in a language you are not familiar with. Online translation software has become much better than it used to be, but it is not perfect. This applies especially to technical terms and language. Also, be aware that the same word can mean different things in different languages. An example is *Corn* in English (*Mais* in German) and *Korn* in German (*wheat* in English, the generic meaning in German is grain and the word is also used for a 70 – 80 proof beverage made from grains). *High School* is another word with different meanings. Literally translated it is *Hochschule* in German; however, in German this word refers to university-level institutions such as the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule, ETH). The Scandinavian uses of this word also refer to higher education institutions. Polytechnic is another term in education that does not mean the exact same thing everywhere. An even greater difference exists in the use of *gymnasium* in American English (usually an indoor sports/exercise facility) and a *Gymnasium* in German-speaking countries (a selective high school leading to entry into college). Some terms may almost mean the same in different languages but have subtly different meanings, such as *friend* in English and its literal translation *Freund*, in German. The latter is usually reserved for closer relationships than its English counterpart and is therefore used more sparingly. Industry is another word with similar but not necessarily identical meanings. In English, industry can be used for any industrial sector. In German, *Industrie* is often used as a synonym for manufacturing and *Industriebetrieb* (industrial facility) almost always refers to a manufacturing plant. In German, Fabrik stands for an industrial production facility while the English fabric is a textile.

For an example other than German versus English, consider the *baccalaureate* in American English, which is a college degree and the French *baccalauréat*, which is a high school diploma. Anyone with knowledge of another language could add to these examples.

Another word of caution concerns definitions. “Rural” has different definitions, even within the United States. In fact, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) alone uses several definitions and distinguishes between different types by degree of rurality. Some differences reflect the missions of the agencies that created the definitions, and of course, the meaning of “rural” in the United States should not be assumed to be the same as in other countries. Therefore, when conducting research that involves data from more than one country, make sure that definitions in each country are sufficiently consistent, or that particular data should not be used or, if no alternative is available, the results should be cautiously interpreted. Similarly, “urban” and “city” have different definitions in different countries. As an aside, in the United States, Virginia has counties but they do not include cities located in the county and information about them are kept separate.

Differences in laws can also make for different meanings. For example, foreign residents of countries that do not award automatic citizenship to children born within their borders (*jus sanguinis*) could be native born and foreign residents, something not possible in countries, such as the US, that award citizenship at the time of birth (*jus soli*, common in most of the Americas).

The potential of errors because of different definitions applies to research using data from more than one country and to longitudinal studies. For example, U.S. counties defined as urban in 2020, reflecting growing urbanization, are different from those defined as urban in 1960. Community boundaries can also change over time because of mergers between communities (e.g., Switzerland, Sweden) or annexation (United States). In addition, even within the United States, there are differences in the powers of local governments. While in most states counties are important, in Rhode Island and Connecticut they play only a very minor role. In addition, the rough equivalent of counties in Louisiana are called parishes and in Alaska they are referred to as boroughs. The point is that you should become informed about the places and regions you wish to study and not assume that they are similar to places you are familiar with.

I recommend an article first published in German and then in English by OECD. It deals with the quality of statistical information and is, therefore, useful to all who use statistical data in their writing. [Don’t trust just any statistics! (oecdstatistics.blog)](https://oecdstatistics.blog/2023/04/13/dont-trust-just-any-statistics/)

I also encourage you to check out the FAIR Guiding Principles of Data Management and Stewardship. The information is available at [FAIR Principles - GO FAIR (go-fair.org)](https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/).

In summary, the purpose of this document is to make information about data more easily available, while at the same time alerting inexperienced users of data to potential issues with data.

Morgantown, West Virginia
West Virginia University

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# GENERAL DATA

## United States

* Census, *American Community Survey* (ACS): <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/> ; see also Statistical Abstracts of the United States: <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/time-series/statistical_abstracts.html>
* NBER (National Bureau of Economic Research), *Public Use Data Archive*: [Public Use Data Archive | NBER](https://www.nber.org/research/data?page=1&perPage=50)
* PACER (Public Access to Court Electronic Records): <https://www.pacer.gov/>
* Pew Research Center on (1) *Politics and Policy*, (2) *Journalism and Media*, (3) *Internet and Technology*, (4) *Science and Society*, (5) *Religion and Public Life*, (6) *Hispanic Trends*, (7) *Social and Demographic Trends*: <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/>. To access go to “Datasets.” The data are free, but you must register to access them.
* STATSAMERICA, *Your Portal to US Data* (variety of economic data, including by region): <http://www.statsamerica.org/>
* US Government Open Data: <https://www.data.gov/>
* WVU Bureau of Business and Economic Research, *Data* (focused on West Virginia) but also contains links to data for other states): <https://business.wvu.edu/research-outreach/bureau-of-business-and-economic-research/data>

## Global, International

* CIA, *World Factbook*: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>
* CIA, [GlobalTrends\_2040.pdf (dni.gov)](https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf)
* Cross National Data Center in Luxemburg, *LIS* (*Luxemburg Income Study*, covers some 50 countries): <http://www.lisdatacenter.org/our-data/lis-database/>
* EU (European Union), *EUROSTAT*: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/data/database>; also check out [Data and resources | Eurofound (europa.eu)](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data).
* Gallup (polls and reports on many issues; not everything is freely available): <https://www.gallup.com/home.aspx>
* *Gapminder* (gives access to visualization tools made famous in TED Talks): <https://www.gapminder.org/data/>
* Germany, *Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsf0rschung* (German Institute for Economic Research): <https://www.diw.de/en>
* IMF (International Monetary Fund): <http://www.imf.org/en/Data>
* OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development): <https://data.oecd.org/>
* Our World in Data: <https://ourworldindata.org/>
* Statistics Times: <http://statisticstimes.com/index.php>
* STATISTA: <https://www.statista.com/>
* Trading Economics: <https://tradingeconomics.com/>
* UBS (Union Bank of Switzerland), *UBS Global Risk Radar* (provides general overview of risks potentially impacting the world economy): <https://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealth-management/chief-investment-office/market-insights/global-risk-radar/2020/february.html>
* UK Data Service: <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>
* United Nations: <https://unstats.un.org/home/>
* World Bank: <https://data.worldbank.org/>; also see: [World Development Indicators | DataBank (worldbank.org)](https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=World-Development-Indicators)
* World Data (databank with links to a great number of data): <https://worlddata.ai/>

# DATA BY TOPIC (in alphabetical order)

## Agriculture and Forestry; Agriculture and Food

* EC (European Commission), FADN: [Farm accountancy data network | European Commission (europa.eu)](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/farming/facts-and-figures/farms-farming-and-innovation/structures-and-economics/economics/fadn_en)
* EUROSTAT: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Agriculture_statistics_at_regional_level>
* FAO (Food and Agricultural Organization [of the UN]): <http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#home>
* *Global Hunger Index*: <https://www.globalhungerindex.org/results.html>
* IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), *Data on Trends in Structural Transformation, Rural Transformation and Rural Poverty*: <https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/39381417/Data_Annex.pdf/0915ba4b-841b-426d-9895-5187229f578a>
* ISSF (International Seafood Sustainability Foundation): <https://iss-foundation.org/>
* USDA, *DATA*: <https://www.usda.gov/topics/data>; also see <https://data.nal.usda.gov/>
* USDA (US Department of Agriculture): <https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Ag_Statistics/>
* OECD, *Agriculture Statistics*: <http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/agriculture-and-food/data/oecd-agriculture-statistics_agr-data-en>
* OECD, *Food Systems*: [Food systems (oecd.org)](http://www.oecd.org/food-systems/?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=email&utm_content=food-systems-portal&utm_campaign=whatsnew-29-jan-2021&utm_term=pac)
* Country Statistical Offices (some national statistical offices charge a fee for full access)

## Animal Welfare

* ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, *Pet Statistics*: <https://www.aspca.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics>
* Animal Welfare Institute (international; covers legislations and policy; no systematic numerical statistics): <https://awionline.org/content/animal-welfare-publications>
* FBI, : <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/-tracking-animal-cruelty>
* Voiceless: <https://vaci.voiceless.org.au/>

## Arts and Culture

* National Endowment for the Arts, *Arts Data Profile* (USA): <https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/arts-data-profiles/arts-data-profile-10/aabs-tables>
* Pew Research Center, *Global Attitudes and Trends*: <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/>. To access go to “Datasets.” The data are free, but you must register to access them.
* WVS (*World Values Survey*, currently covers 60 countries): <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>

**Climate** $\rightarrow $ **see Environment and Climate**

## Commodities and Stocks

* Dow Jones: <http://www.macrotrends.net/1319/dow-jones-100-year-historical-chart>
* OECD, *Crop Production*: <https://data.oecd.org/agroutput/crop-production.htm>
* USDA, *Crop Production Data*: <https://www.usda.gov/topics/farming/crop-production>

**Community Economic Development** $\rightarrow $ **Economic Performance, Stability, and Resilience**

## Communication and Internet

* Digital Divide Index (DDI, Purdue University):[2019 Digital Divide Index (DDI) (arcgis.com)](https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/8ad45c48ba5c43d8ad36240ff0ea0dc7)

## Corona Virus (COVID-19)

* Economist, *Worldwide Cost of Living: How is COVID-19 affecting the prices of consumer goods?* (Registration required for full access but no fee): <https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/worldwide-cost-of-living-2020>
* Johns Hopkins University, *COVID-19 Dashboard for Systems Science and Engineering*: <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>
* Mainstreet America, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Small Businesses*: <https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NMSC/390e0055-2395-4d3b-af60-81b53974430d/UploadedImages/Resource_Center/COVID_19/NMSC57_MSA_COVID19IMAPCTSURVEY_F.pdf>
* OECD, *Tackling Coronavirus (COVID-19)*: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/> and also [OECD COVID-19 Recovery Dashboard](https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/en/recovery-dashboard)
* US Census Bureau: [Pandemic Impact on 2020 American Community Survey 1-Year Data (census.gov)](https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2021/10/pandemic-impact-on-2020-acs-1-year-data.html?linkId=100000079110354)

The following list has been received from the **Industry Studies Association** (May 15, 2020):

* ***Census Bureau***
* COVID-19 Data Hub <https://covid19.census.gov/>
* Small Business Pulse Survey [https://www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/small-business-pulse-survey.html](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.census.gov/data/experimental-data-products/small-business-pulse-survey.html__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-SeESTyBA$)
* Household Pulse Survey <https://www.census.gov/householdpulsedata>
* Weekly Business Applications [https://www.aeaweb.org/forum/1531/census-bureau-weekly-release-business-applications-nation](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.aeaweb.org/forum/1531/census-bureau-weekly-release-business-applications-nation__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-TpRRdo7g$)
* COVID impact questions on five business surveys (Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories & Orders (M3) Survey, Building Permits Survey, Monthly Wholesale Trade Survey, Monthly Retail Surveys, Quarterly Services Survey) <https://www.aeaweb.org/forum/1546/census-bureau-seeks-keeping-impact-questions-business-surveys>
* Telework questions on Annual Business Survey [https://www.aeaweb.org/forum/1563/emergency-telework-questions-business-survey-measure-impacts](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.aeaweb.org/forum/1563/emergency-telework-questions-business-survey-measure-impacts__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-T4-mWNpA$)
* ***Bureau of Labor Statistics***
* COVID questions on monthly CPS <https://www.aeaweb.org/forum/1540/covid-questions-monthly-current-population-survey-update>
* Well-being Supplement to American Time Use Survey <https://www.aeaweb.org/forum/1551/invites-comments-proposed-being-supplement-american-survey>
* COVID sick leave survey <https://www.aeaweb.org/forum/1566/requests-emergency-approval-survey-effects-business-policies>
* ***Federal Reserve***
* Survey of Household Economics and Decision Making (SHED) -- April 2020 COVID supplement <https://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerscommunities/shed.htm>
* ***Bureau of Economic Analysis***
* Adjustments to GDP estimates (from today's BEA Advisory Committee meeting [https://www.bea.gov/about/bea-advisory-committee](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.bea.gov/about/bea-advisory-committee__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-TxWFtavA$))
* Presentation: [Impact of Covid-19 on BEA’s Economic Accounts](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.bea.gov/system/files/2020-05/Impact-of-COVID-19-on-BEAs-Economic-Accounts_0.pdf__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-QGssbEUQ$)
* Background: [Technical Note: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Impact on First-Quarter 2020 GDP](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.bea.gov/system/files/2020-05/tech1q20_adv_0.pdf__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-SAlOCEew$)
* [COVID-19 Pandemic: Federal Recovery Legislation and the NIPAs](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.bea.gov/system/files/2020-05/COVID-19%2A20Pandemic-Federal%2A20Recovery%2A20Legislation%2A20and%2A20the%2A20NIPAs.pdf__;JSUlJSUl!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-TbevsIWw$)
* [How did BEA adjust March 2020 wages and salaries?](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.bea.gov/help/faq/1411__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-REPqtaxQ$)
* [How does the 2020 CARES Act affect BEA's estimates of personal interest payments?](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.bea.gov/help/faq/1407__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-RbEDJY-A$)
* [How does BEA measure public education services during the closings of schools and college campuses?](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https%3A/www.bea.gov/help/faq/1410__;!!JmPEgBY0HMszNaDT!9H2e-Vv0whv7ent5Yv1Wy8TT1NuGa2G-DCbX8n4H3O9r5_atcBTlsjczglgTnDYZEq1HwV9yg-TAzn48QQ$)

## Crime

* Many states, cities, and colleges publish crime statistics online
* *Bureau of Justice Statistics* (BJS): <https://www.bjs.gov/>
* [City-Data.com - Stats about all US cities - real estate, relocation info, crime, house prices, cost of living, races, home value estimator, recent sales, income, photos, schools, maps, weather, neighborhoods, and more](http://www.city-data.com/)
* [Criminal Victimization, 2019 | Bureau of Justice Statistics (ojp.gov)](https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/criminal-victimization-2019)
* European Commission, *Organised Crime and Human Trafficking*: <https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/statistics_en>
* Fatal Encounters (database of people killed in the US in encounters with police): <https://fatalencounters.org/>
* FBI, *Uniform Crime Reporting Program*: <https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/ucr>; also <https://www.ucrdatatool.gov/>’ also <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement/offenses-known-to-law-enforcement>
* Gun Violence Archive, *Mass Shootings [Year]* (US): <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/reports/mass-shooting>
* NationMaster, Prisoners per Capita (by country, 2003): <https://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/stats/Crime/Prisoners/Per-capita#:~:text=Crime%20%3E%20Prisoners%20%3E%20Per%20capita%3A%20Countries%20Compared,per%20100%2C000%20people%20%2037%20more%20rows%20>
* Organized Crime Index, *Africa*: <https://ocindex.net/>
* Prison Studies, *Prison Data*:<https://www.prisonstudies.org/highest-to-lowest/prison-population-total>
* UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), *Crime Statistics*: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/Crime-Monitoring-Surveys.html>
* The Guardian, *The Counted: People Killed by Police in the US*:<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database>
* Washington Post, *Fatal Force* (Police Shooting Database*,* US):[Police shootings database 2015-2021 - Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/?itid=lk_inline_manual_9)
* World Bank, Intentional Homicides (per 100,000 people):<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/vc.ihr.psrc.p5>

## Economic Performance[[2]](#footnote-2), Stability, and Resilience $\rightarrow $ also see Money, Credit, and Banking or Stock Markets

* ADB (Asian Development Bank), *Selected Input-Output Tables*: <https://www.adb.org/data/icp/input-output-tables>
* BEA (Bureau of Economic Analysis, US), *U.S. Economy at a Glance*: <https://www.bea.gov/news/glance>
* BEA (Bureau of Economic Analysis, US), *Input-Output Accounts Data*: <https://www.bea.gov/industry/input-output-accounts-data>
* BLS (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S.), *CPI Inflation Calculator*: <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>
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1. The most up-to-date version of this document will always be made available online at <https://www.petervschaeffer.com/publications.html> (look for *Miscellaneous*)
I acknowledge helpful suggestions and additions from Eric Bowen [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In addition to data, you also may need to check on applicable laws, rules, customs, or norms. In the case of labor market competition, see: [Non-Compete Clause Rulemaking | Federal Trade Commission (ftc.gov)](https://www.ftc.gov/legal-library/browse/federal-register-notices/non-compete-clause-rulemaking) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. When using statistics, for example the labor force participation rate, check the definition. You may get substantially different numbers depending on the definition and criteria used. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Marcel P Timmer, Erik Dietzenbacher, Bart Los, Robert Stehrer, Gaaitzen J De Vries, 2015. An Illustrated User Guide to the World Input–Output Database: the Case of Global Automotive Production. *Review of International Economics*, 23(3), 575–605 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I included five university rankings, in part to illustrate a point about rankings (the same point also applies to indices). If you intend to use any of them, find out what criteria and methodology were used to construct them. If you compare the university rankings, you will notice significant rank differences between them, which illustrates the importance of knowing how the rankings or indices were constructed. Think of it as the equivalent of food labels: you need to know what is in it. The following references are recommended: Sonja Martin Poole, Michael A. Levin & Kate Elam (2017): Getting out of the rankings game: a better way to evaluate higher education institutions for best fit, *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/08841241.2017.1311981 and P.T.M. Marope, P.J. Wells and E. Hazelkorn (eds), 2013. Rankings and Accountability in Higher Education: Uses and Misuses. Unesco Publishing. [Rankings and Accountability in Higher Education: Uses and Misuses | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (unesco.org)](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/rankings_and_accountability_in_higher_education_uses_and_mi/)

 The following website provides a useful discussion and comparison of university rankings: [List of Ruth’s Rankings and News Updates – Access (librarylearningspace.com)](https://librarylearningspace.com/list-ruths-rankings/) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For background information, you may also wish to check [Alliance of Democracies](https://www.allianceofdemocracies.org/) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The cost of housing is a major factor determining cost of living in large world cities, which is why we list this title under housing. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Reminder: Be careful when using data from a site in a language you are not familiar with. It is easy to make mistakes because of misunderstanding or misinterpreting terminology. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Another caution: If you use Swiss population numbers at the local level over time, be aware that during the last few decades, several local boundaries and populations have changed due to mergers. This is not unique to Switzerland and you may want to check first, if a country has undergone community or county reorganizations or mergers, before using longitudinal data. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Google subsidiary. For more data sets, go to <https://www.kaggle.com/datasets?utm_medium=paid&utm_source=google.com+search&utm_campaign=datasets&gclid=Cj0KCQjw1Iv0BRDaARIsAGTWD1uMOmIHg2OaCg43EDsk_uxsZZku07rgfH8ChJE-YYEYgW-75wlIPi8aAgC7EALw_wcB> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)