ParlAmericas

NAVIGATING ONLINE INFORMATION

Tips and Tricks for Parliamentary Research

This publication was made possible with financial support from the Government of Canada.

ParlAmericas is grateful to Marian Vidaurri and Pablo Thaler from the Political Analysis Unit of the Secretariat for Strengthening Democracy of the Organization of American States (OAS) for the knowledge that they contributed on this subject matter in the facilitation of training sessions held in Medellin, Colombia in November 2017, which helped inform the content of this resource.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 3

Google Search Tips 4

- Tabs 4
- Gradually add search terms 4
- Use words that websites would use 5

Google Operators 5

Steering Clear of Filter Bubbles 6

- Delete Cache and Disable Tracking Cookies 6
- Go Anonymous 7

Managing Information Collected Online (Beyond Bookmarks) 7

- Google Alerts 7
- Pocket Application 8
- Google translate browser extension 8
- If This Then That (IFTTT) 9

Americas Digital Information System (ADIS) 10

Image Search Analysis 10

Disaggregated Databases 11

- ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean 11
- ECLAC's CEPALSTAT, Gender Statistics System 15
- World Bank's Gender Databank 17
- Gender Statistics Data Bank (visualization tool) 21
- Google Public Data Explorer 22

Using Twitter for Online Research 23

- Toolbar search filters 23
- Twitter operators 24
- Account Verification 25
- Geo-location 25
- Queryfeed 26

Twitter Analytics 27

- Twitonomy 27
- Trendsmap 28

Introduction

This resource contains guidelines and practical tips and tricks that parliamentarians can apply when conducting online research using popular search engines, databases, and social media platforms.

Parliamentarians require timely and targeted information to carry out their representational, law-making and oversight roles. The spread of online information and communication technologies (ICTs) and mobile internet devices has transformed how parliamentarians perform these roles by increasing the accessibility and diversity of sources that generate information on matters of relevance to legislative agendas. Coping with information overload in the context of busy daily schedules has nonetheless also become more challenging for parliamentarians in this context. Determining the objectivity of information found online has also been complicated by increased distribution of deliberate misinformation, and algorithms known as “filter bubbles” that can skew what information is displayed by online search engines. This resource has been developed to assist parliamentarians and legislative staff in navigating these challenges to fully maximize use of the internet for information gathering and management that complements library and research support services provided by parliaments.

This resource also profiles databases that disaggregate national and regional statistics on the basis of gender and other demographic variables, including ethnicity, geographic location, education, age and socio-economic wellbeing. These considerations are important for ensuring that legislative decisions achieve intended and equal results for women and men, and for traditionally under-represented population groups.

“The research sites with disaggregated data on gender are very useful. There are tips on pulling data from charts to execute comparative analysis in other countries. Research departments [in our parliaments] can find this helpful, particularly if the departments are understaffed."

Senator Irene Sandiford-Garner (Barbados)

"I consider this very important and useful [... as] there were techniques and websites that I hadn't been using. I'm now better equipped to conduct searches."

Member of the National Assembly Maritza Espinales (Nicaragua)

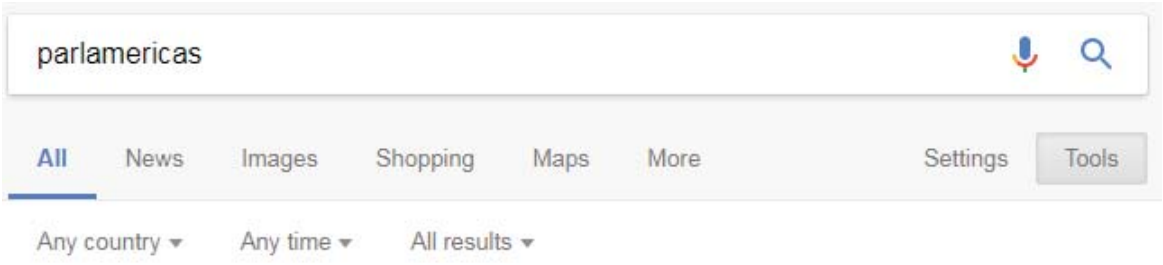
“This is a great initiative. We needed to know more about these topics. I consider it very opportune. I improved my knowledge and will put this into practice, reinforcing the learning among my team and among my parliamentary caucus."

Member of the National Assembly Bairón Valle (Ecuador)

Google Search Tips

Tabs

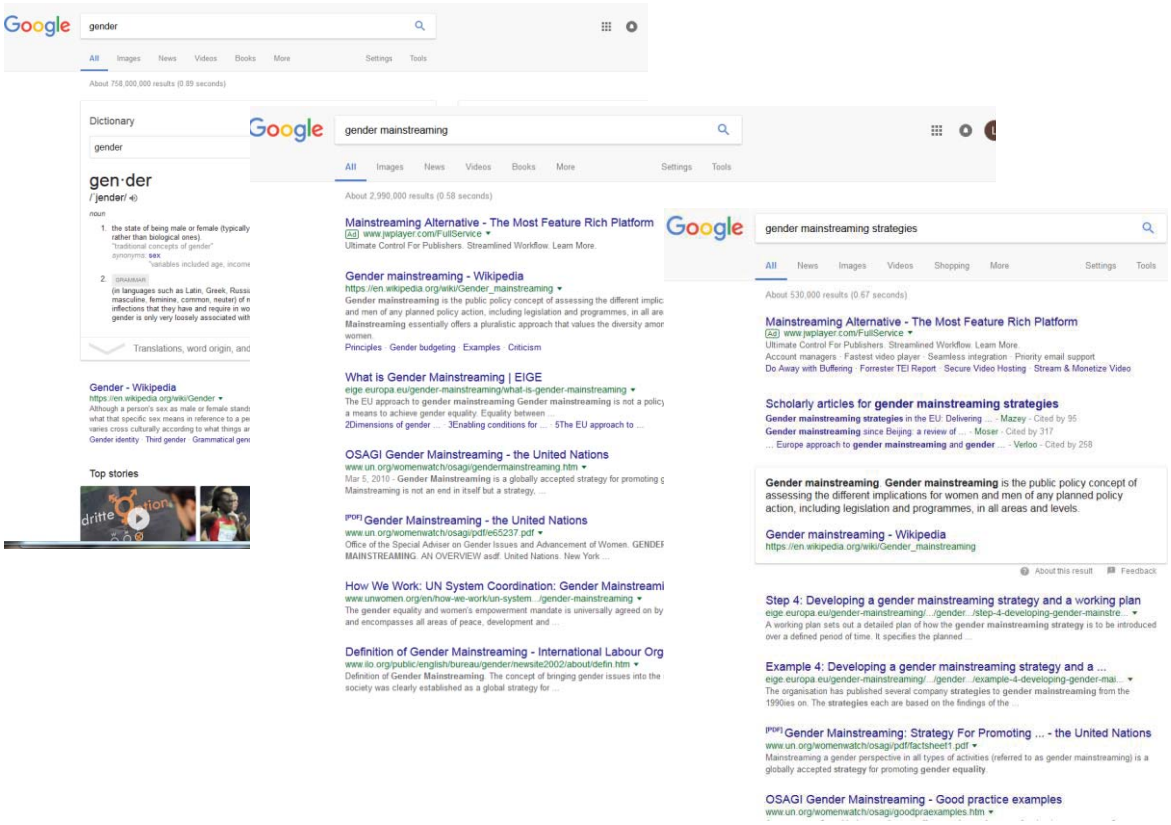
Tabs located under the search bar when using Google can help you narrow your search results. For example, if you only wish to view news articles, you can select the “News” tab. Additional filters can be found under the Tools tab to filter results by country, language and date (results from a specific period of time) of publication.



Gradually add search terms

To generate more specific results using the Google Search Engine, you can gradually refine the search with more targeted terms. Start with something simple and then gradually make the search term more complex.

1.) Gender
2.) Gender mainstreaming
3.) Gender mainstreaming strategies



Use words that websites would use

People sometimes search for things using the same terminology or phrasing that they would use when speaking. You can generate more precise results by using language likely to be found on websites, which is often technical or formal.

“I have a flat tire” could be replaced by “repair a flat tire.”
“My head hurts” could be replaced by “headache relief.”

Google Operators

An operator is a command that helps you filter and refine engine results when using an online search engine. The following table lists examples of several useful operators that are supported by Google.

Operator	Description	Example
“ ” (Quotation Marks)	Used to search for an exact phrase. Results will contain exactly what is in the quote marks.	“Bill 01 2015”
*** (Wildcard)**	The asterisk is used as a placeholder within a search term phrase.	"health * law"
OR	Used to search one word/phrase or another	"legislative openness" OR "open parliament"
AND	Used to search two words/phrases (not one or the other but both).	"ILO" AND "informal sector"
Site:	Limits the search to a specific page	"femicide" site:unwomen.org
Filetype:	Limits the results to specific types of files, e.g., PDFs or Power Point Presentations (PPT)	"legislative transparency" filetype:pdf "climate change" AND "policies" filetype:ppt
##..## (Range of numbers)	Limits search results to a determined range, which can include years	“elections * Uruguay * 1980..2014"

Steering Clear of Filter Bubbles

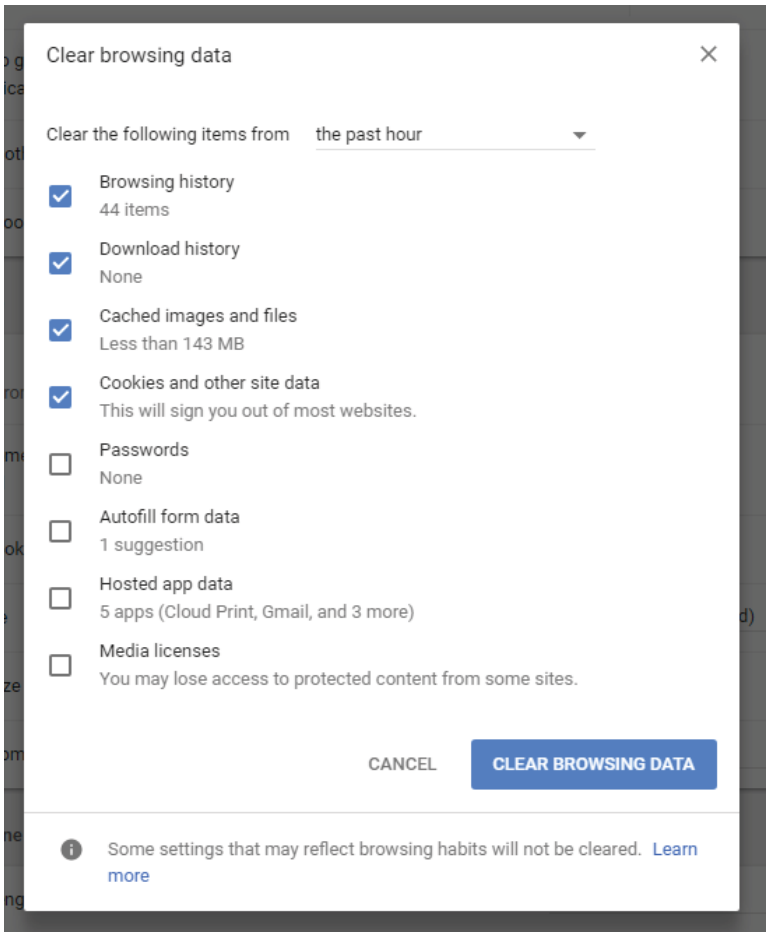
Popular search engines like Google use algorithms to selectively guess what information a user wants to receive based on their past searches. This can result in “filter bubbles” that effectively isolate the user from websites that might present contrasting viewpoints.

Delete Cache and Disable Tracking Cookies

Deleting cached files and tracking cookies from your web browser is one way to avoid filter bubbles.

The below applies to the Chrome browser, however the steps will be similar for all browsers.

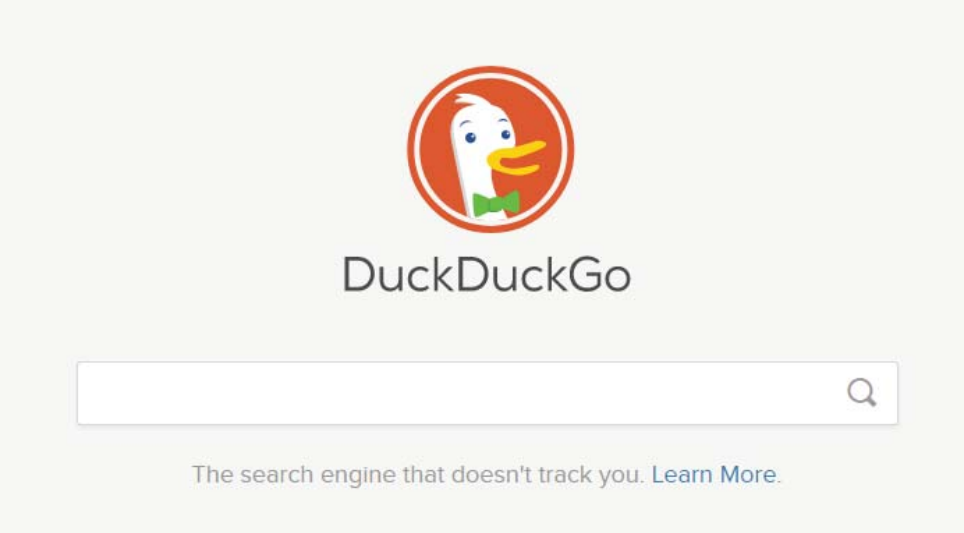
1. On your computer, open Chrome
2. At the top right, click “More”
3. Click “More tools” and then “Clear browsing data”
4. In the box that appears, at the top, choose a time, (e.g., past hour or the past day). To delete everything, select “From the beginning of time”
5. Select the types of information you want to remove
6. Click “Clear browsing data”



Go Anonymous

DuckDuckGo (https://duckduckgo.com/) is an alternative Internet search engine that emphasizes protecting privacy and avoiding the filter bubble of personalized search results. It distinguishes itself from other search engines by not profiling users and by deliberately showing all users the same search results.

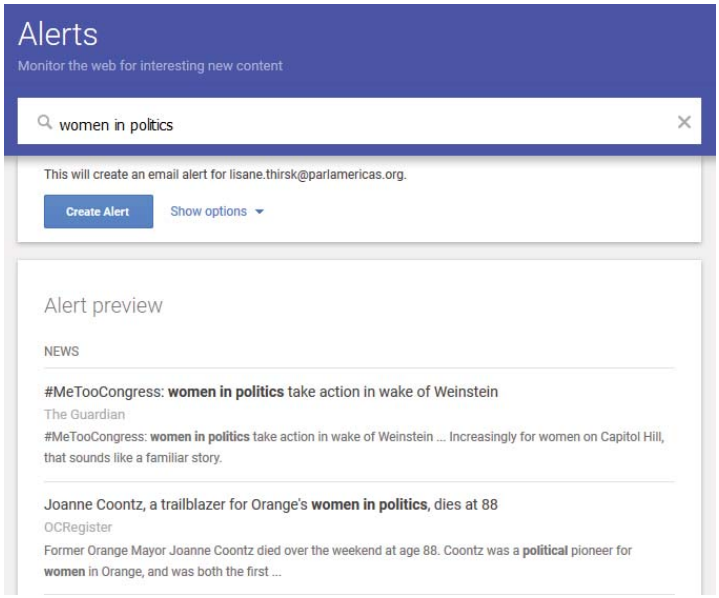
Note: Language preferences can be saved in “Settings.”



Managing Information Collected Online (Beyond Bookmarks)

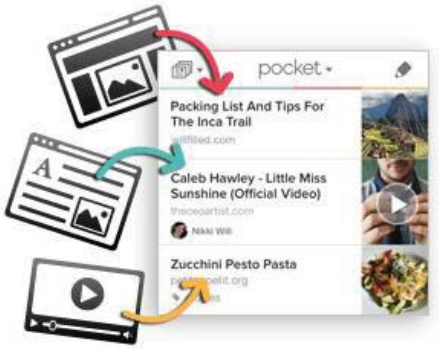
Google Alerts

Google Alerts service (https://www.google.com/alerts) emails you when new results appear (web pages, newspaper articles, blogs, or scientific research) that match your selected search term(s).



Pocket Application

Pocket allows users to save articles and other content from the web for later – making it available on any device, even offline.



Install the desktop extension for one-click saving: https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/save-to-pocket/niloccemoadcdkdjlinkgdfekeahmflj?hl=en

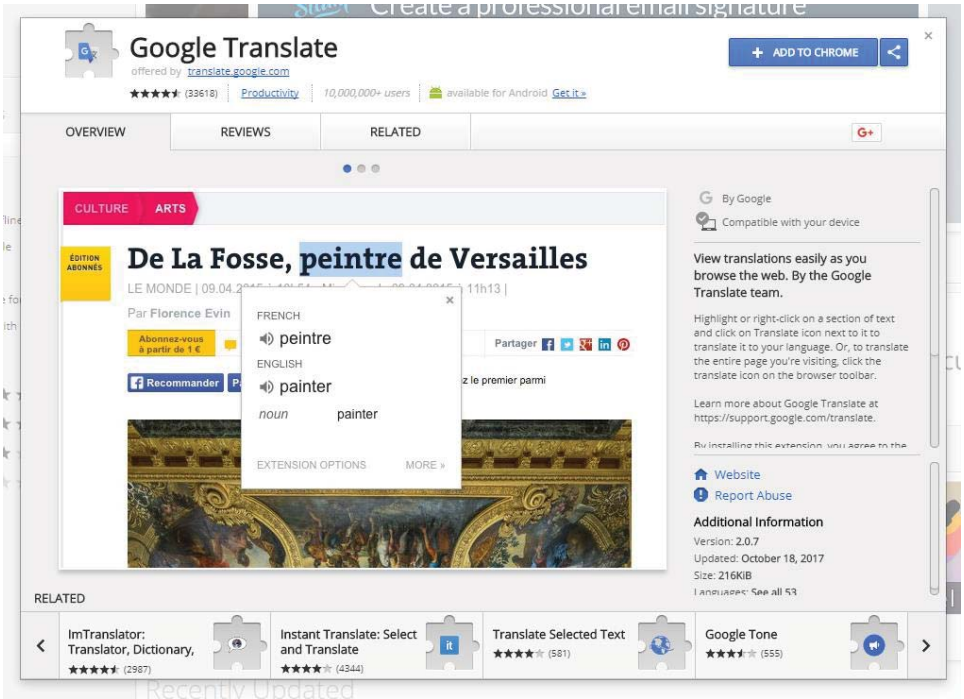
Instructions are available for getting started with Pocket, including how to add tags for organizing your saved content: https://help.getpocket.com/category/857-category

Google translate browser extension

Google Translate (https://translate.google.com) is a free browser-based interface that can be used to instantly translate words, phrases, and web pages across more than 100 languages.

Google Translate can also be downloaded and installed as an extension, so that it remains in the toolbar of your browser for easier access:

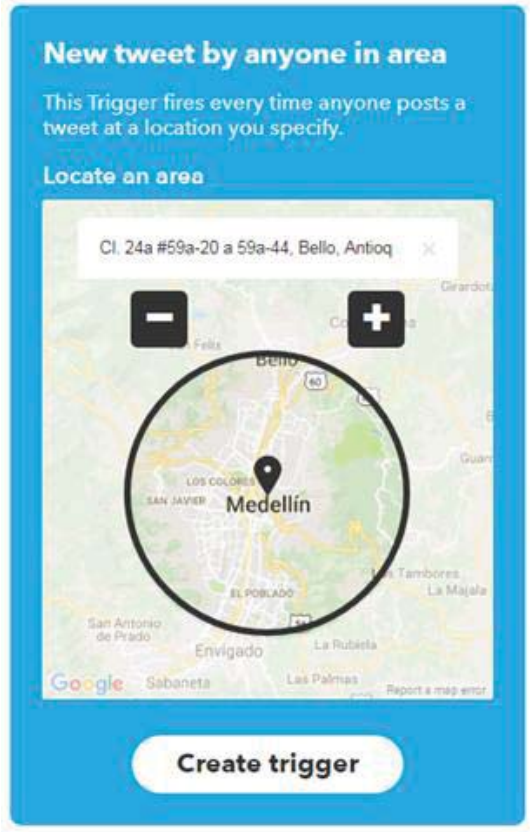
https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/google-translate/aapbdbdomjkkjkaonfhkkikfgjllcleb?hl=en



If This Then That (IFTTT)

IFTTT is a web-based service (https://ifttt.com/) that can help automate tasks across different applications (like Gmail and Facebook) and devices. For example, you can set the command that "if a new tweet is published from a specific geo-location, it is automatically saved into a spreadsheet." Other examples of possible commands that can be automated through IFTTT include: muting your phone during meetings that are scheduled in your Google Calendar, automatically backing-up photos on Facebook you've been tagged in, getting a wake-up call with the day's weather forecast, or creating reminders for starred emails in Gmail.

The table above contains examples of applications in which tasks can be automated through IFFFT



In this screenshot, an IFTTT applet is being created to back-up a copy of any tweet posted by anyone in the geographical area of Medellin in Colombia.

Americas Digital Information System (ADIS)

ADIS (https://adis.oas.org) is the open source information monitoring and analysis tool of the Organization of American States (OAS). It is a highly customizable browser-based interface that systematically scans and stores analytical and news content from across the hemisphere, which can be categorized and searched by country, theme, or keywords in multiple languages.

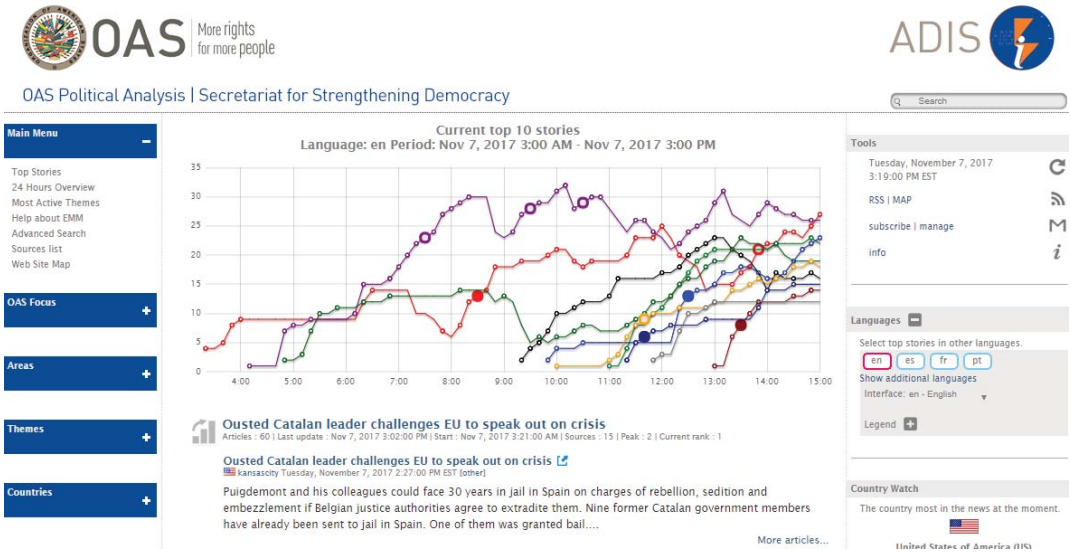


Image Search Analysis

Reverse Google Image Search (https://images.google.com/) can be used to find the original source of photographs if they are being duplicated online.

Drag an image into the Google Image search bar, and you will see other websites where that image is featured – which can help determine its source or veracity (e.g. in the case of fake news). For instance, sometimes photos taken years beforehand are misattributed to a breaking news story; Reverse Google Image Search provides a list of the previous webpages where the image has been posted (and likely, the publication date). Limited search results would indicate that the image has not been posted elsewhere online, and more likely to be original and authentic.

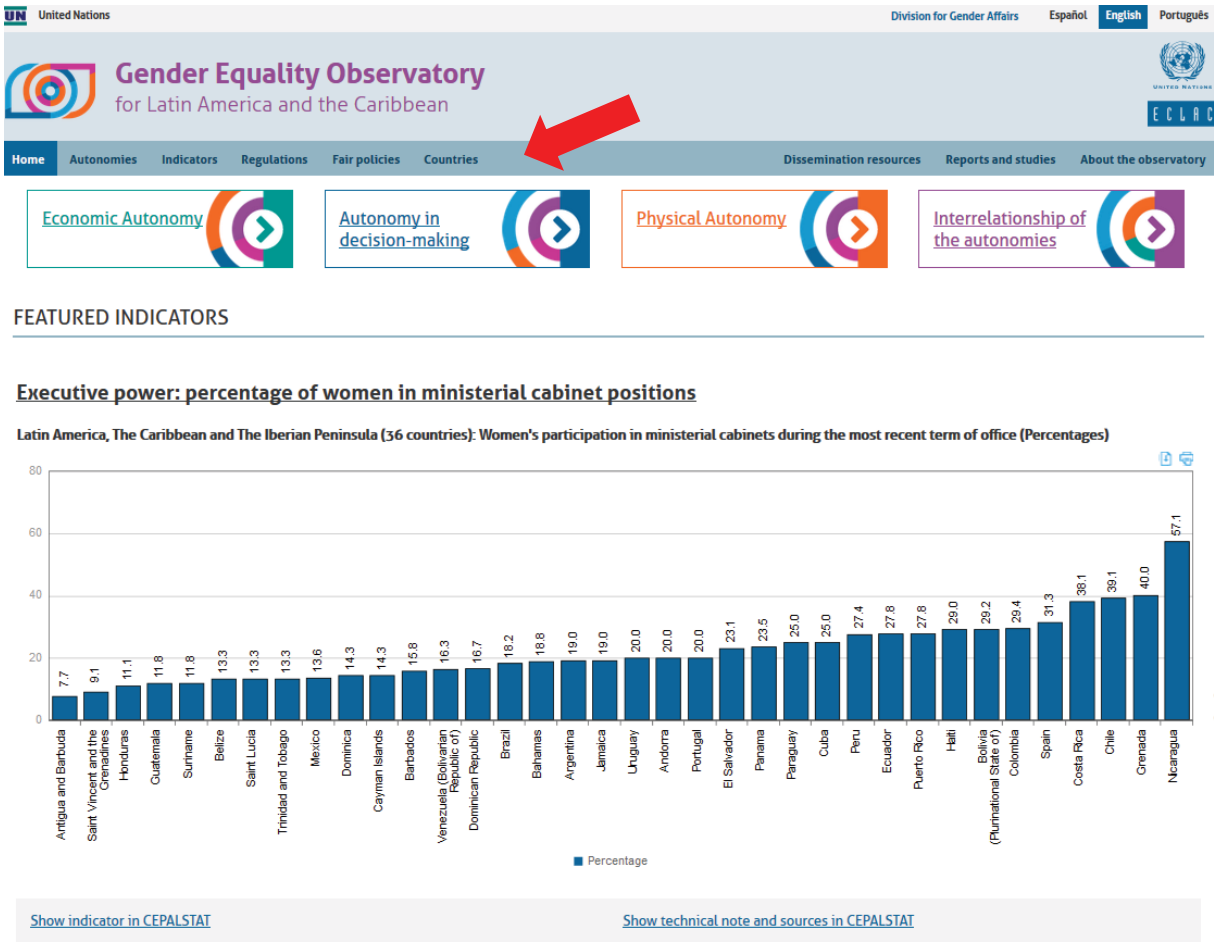
Disaggregated Databases

ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean
https://oig.cepal.org/en

Highlights

- Specific to the Latin America and Caribbean region
- Provides access to data, in addition to relevant legislation from across the region and research/resources to support policymaking on gender equality issues
- Country profiles make database easily accessible for users
    - Can view data available for each country and see what's missing
    - Access information on a country's political and electoral system

Note: There is limited data available for Caribbean countries for certain indicators.



ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (cont'd)

Indicators section

Indicators are grouped into four categories of "Autonomies" and can be browsed by clicking on the "Indicators" button of the homepage toolbar. After selecting a specific indicator, you can view comparative data in different formats.

Physical Autonomy • Femicide or feminicide • Women's deaths at the hands of their intimate partner or former partner • Teenage maternity • Unmet demand for family planning • Maternal mortality • Indicator pages provide details about what is being measured, a brief analysis that summarizes findings and links to more technical information on CEPALSTAT	Autonomy in Decision-Making • Executive power: percentage of women in ministerial cabinet positions • Legislative power: percentage of women in the national legislative body • Judicial power: percentage of women judges in the highest court or Supreme Court • Local power: percentage of elected mayors who are female • Local power: percentage of elected city council members who are female • Countries that have signed and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women • Level within governmental hierarchy of national Machineries for the Advancement of Women
Economic Autonomy • People without incomes of their own • Total work time • Distribution of total employed population by productivity level and sex • Unpaid work time by own income and sex • Feminity index of poor households	Interrelationships of the Autonomies (only available in Spanish) • Explains how transformations must take place in the three spheres of autonomy, and the importance of considering their interrelations

ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (cont'd)

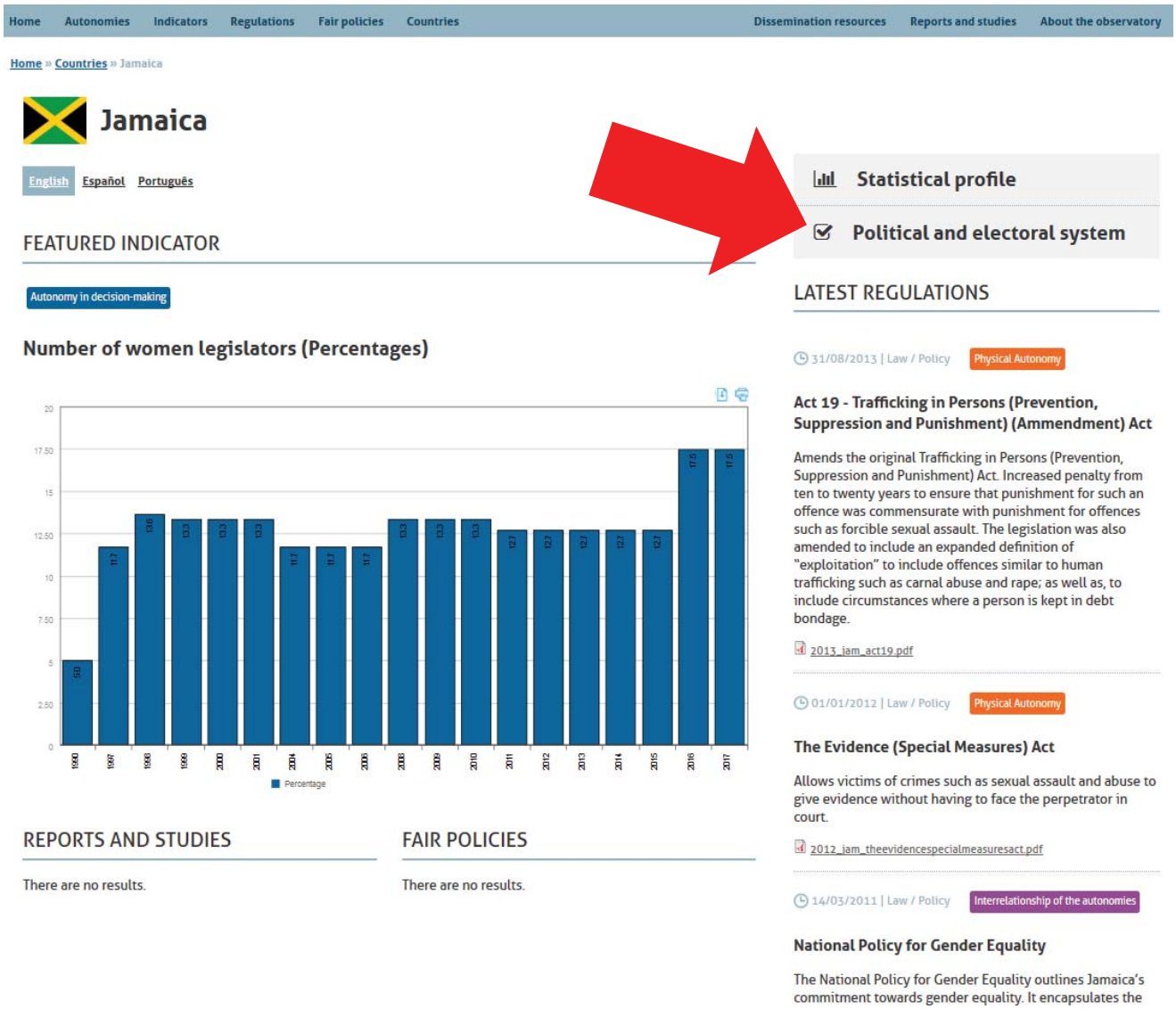
Regulations section

- Up-to-date compilation of legislation related to the areas below
- Available in the language of origin
- Can be sorted by country, chronological order, or by entering information in the search bar

ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (cont'd)

Countries section

- Compiles all indicators for which there is data available, per country, as well as the latest relevant regulations adopted
- "Statistical profile" includes the available historical data (based on the indicator categories mentioned above) in graph formats for downloading or printing
- "Political and electoral system" includes details on: the national parliament, municipal government, duration of terms, representation system, electoral constituency, and quota and parity laws



ECLAC's Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (cont'd)

Other sections

Fair policies, dissemination resources, and reports and studies include additional material to support learning and policy-making on gender equality, based on experiences and research in the region.

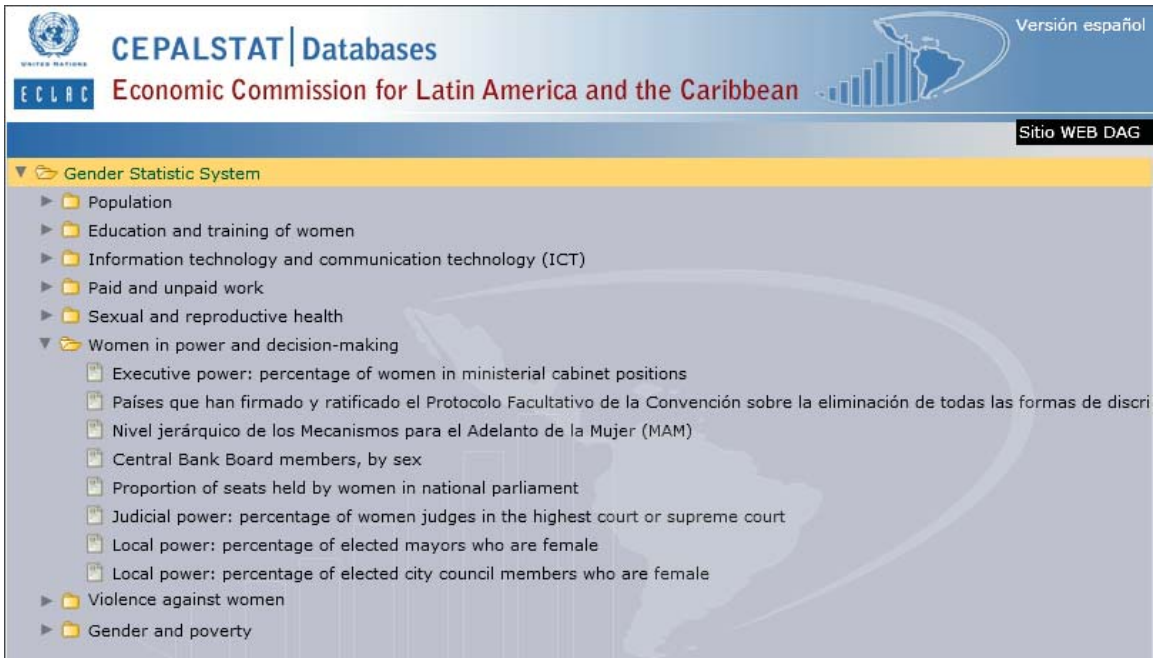
ECLAC's CEPALSTAT, Gender Statistics System

http://interwp.cepal.org/sisgen/ConsultaIntegrada.asp?idAplicacion=11&idioma=i

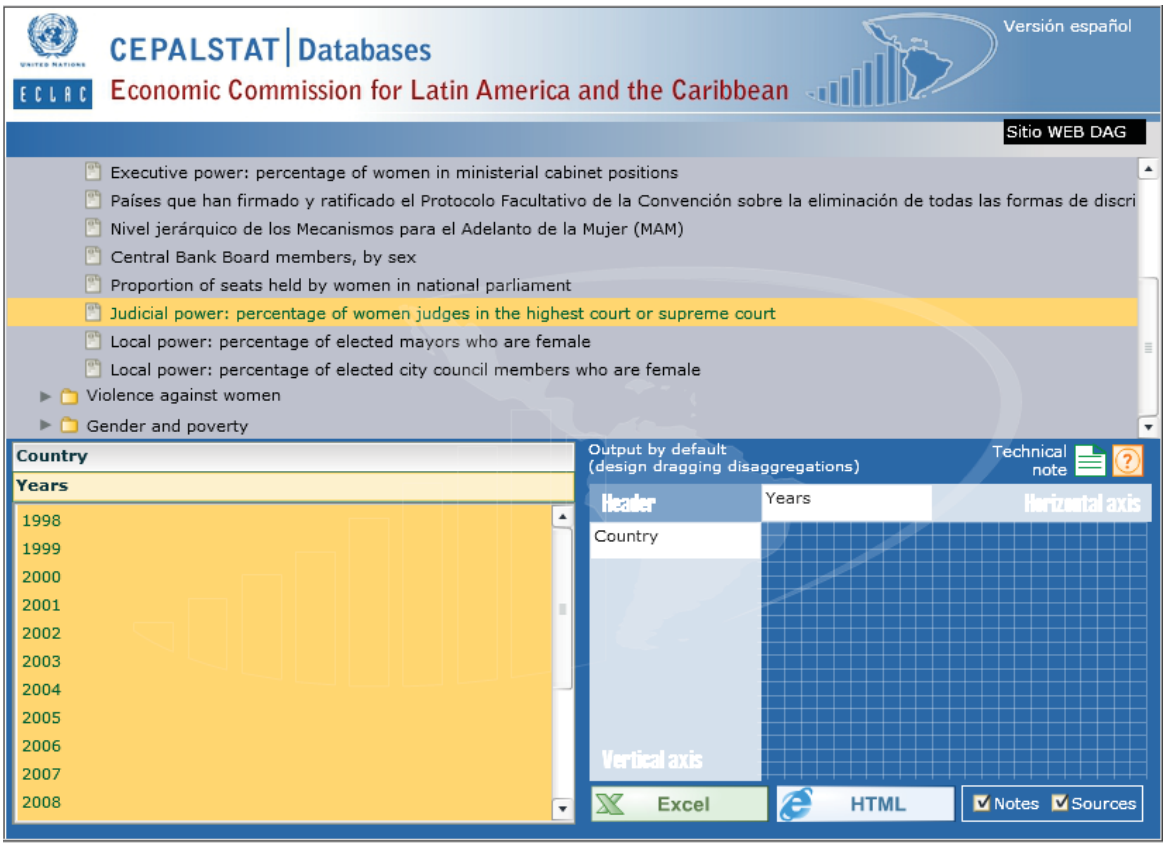
Highlights

- Provides additional statistics and options for manipulating data, with a more technical interface and the option to export data to an Excel spreadsheet
- Can complement the Gender Equality Observatory Database by allowing for further data manipulation (e.g. compare particular countries over a period of time)

Categories of statistical data found in the ECLAC CEPALSTAT Database



Sub-categories of statistical data found in the ECLAC CEPALSTAT Database



Example of data search filters found in in the ECLAC CEPALSTAT Database

World Bank's Gender Databank

https://data.worldbank.org/topic/gender

Highlights

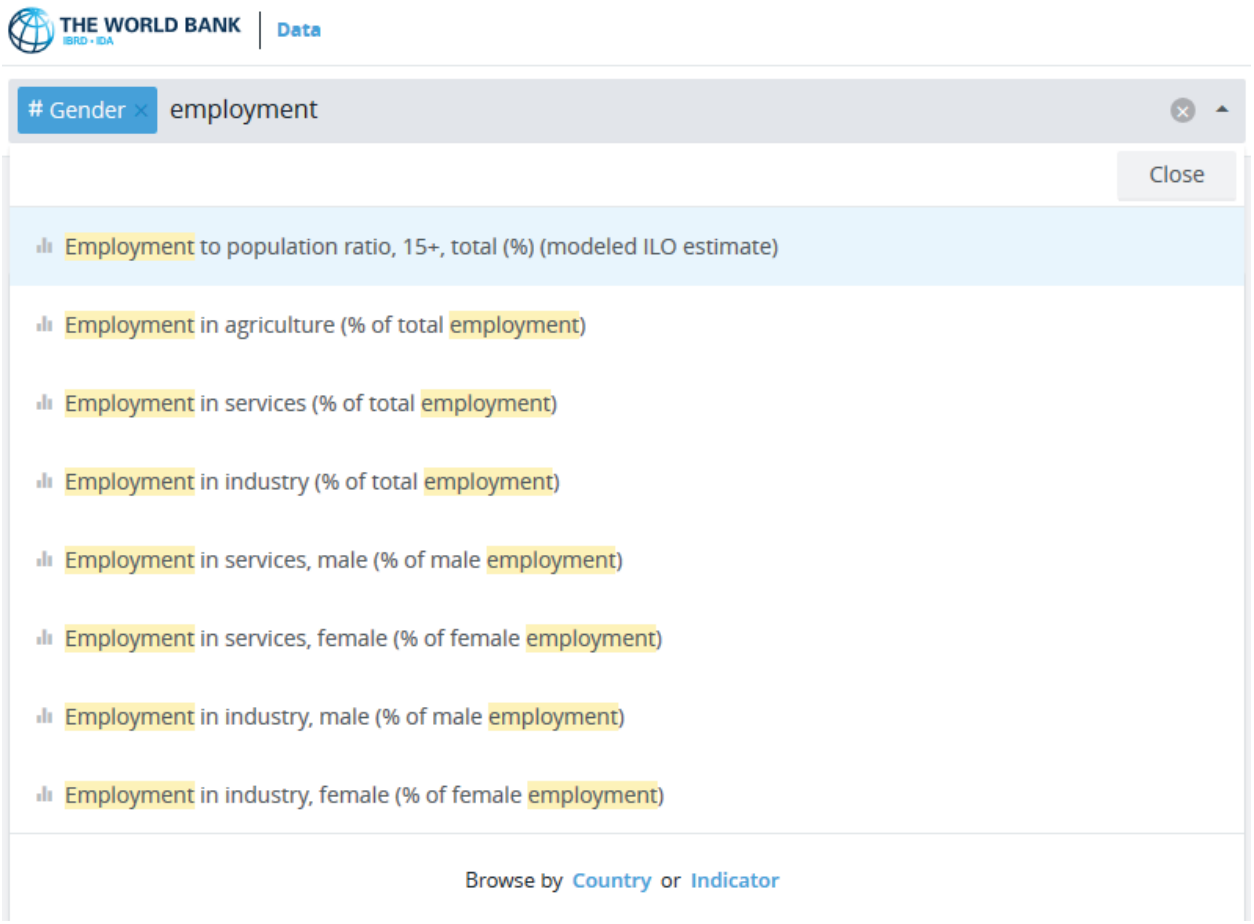
- Provides access to a larger bank of data sources (including the Caribbean region and Canada)
- Features gender-disaggregated data and other relevant information for policy work on socio-economic issues (e.g., public health expenditure as a % of GDP)
- Data is easy to manipulate and can be presented both on a graph and in a table
    - Easily adjust the time period, countries, and indicators you're viewing
    - Compare to other countries / regional averages

Example of search features and graph display options in the World Bank`s Gender Databank

World Bank's Gender Databank (cont'd)

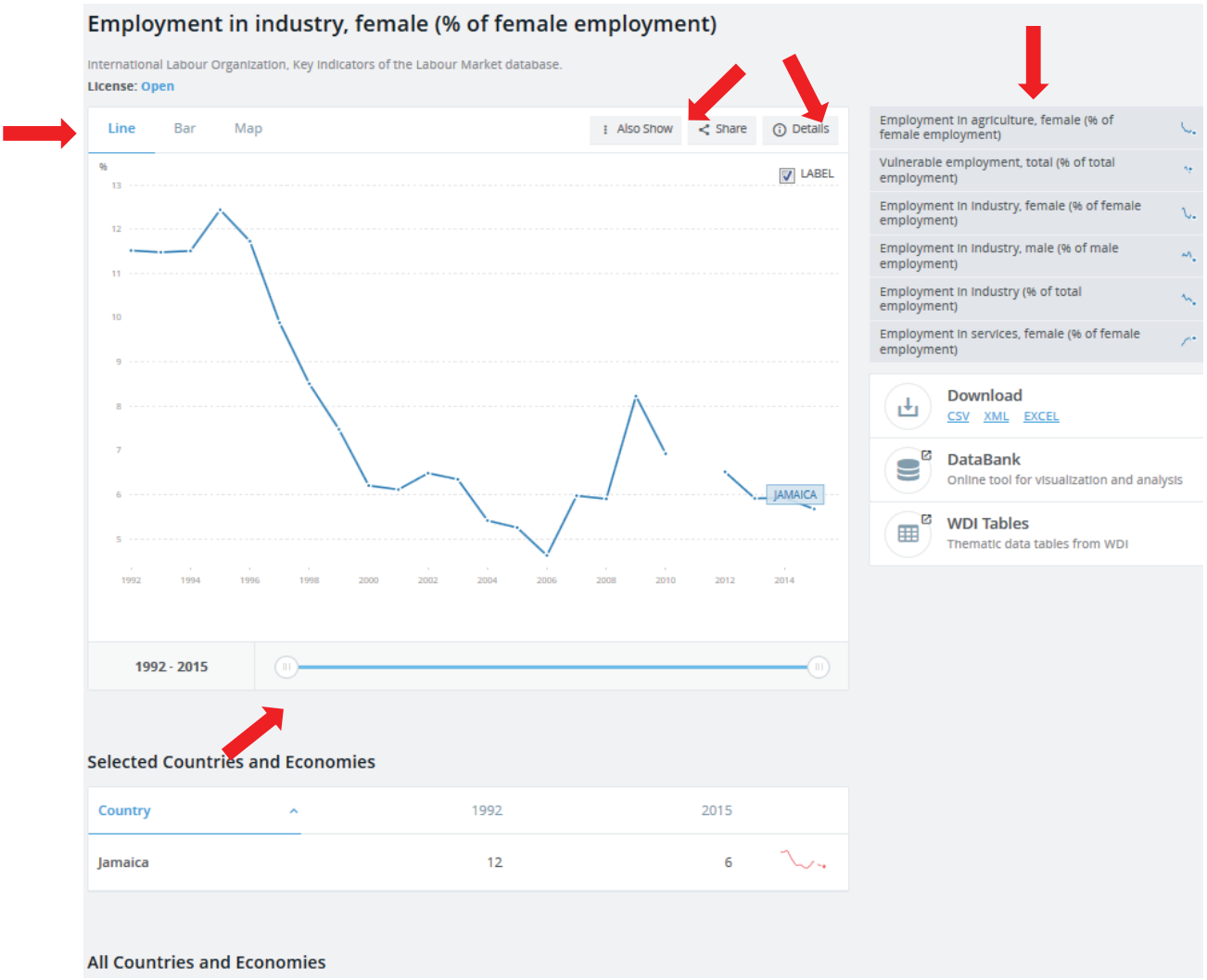
Search Features

- Type what you're looking for in the search bar or type #Gender to see featured gender indicators, or browse by country or from a list of indicators
    - From the indicator list, you can look at the complete list of indicators or a list with featured indicators
    - There is a section focused on gender indicators



- When you select an indicator, you can choose which countries to view by clicking on them in the list below the graph, or by typing the country name in the search bar at the top of the page (the default is the world average)
    - Can view one country or multiple, as well as aggregates that provide an average for a group of countries
    - The complete list of countries remains underneath the chart and table of selected countries and economies
- Data can be displayed as a line graph, bar graph, or a map

    - A table with data points is also included under the graph
    - Can slide the time bar to change the period being looked at (the default is to show all years for which there is available data)
- "Also Show" provides helpful options for data comparison, including showing the data for other countries in the region, those with similar values to the selected country, the highest and lowest values, or other relevant indicators
    - E.g., with the "Employment in industry, female (% of female employment)" indicator, there are options to *Also Show* "female employment by sector"
- "Details" provides information on the metadata and the data source is also included under the title of the indicator
- Data can be downloaded in multiple formats, and graphs can be shared on social media
- Related indicators appear in the side bar on the far right side



Employment in industry, female (% of female employment)

International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

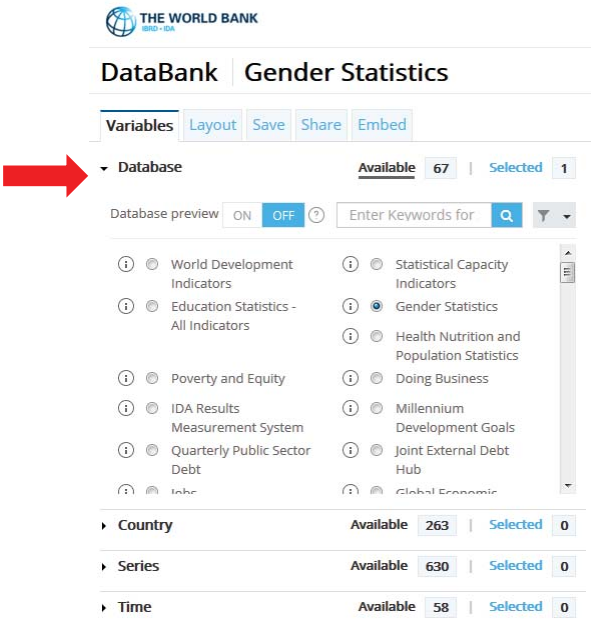
License: Open

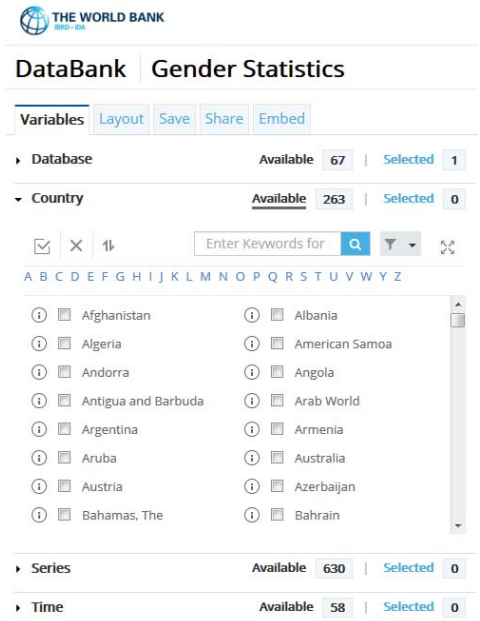
Gender Statistics Data Bank (visualization tool)

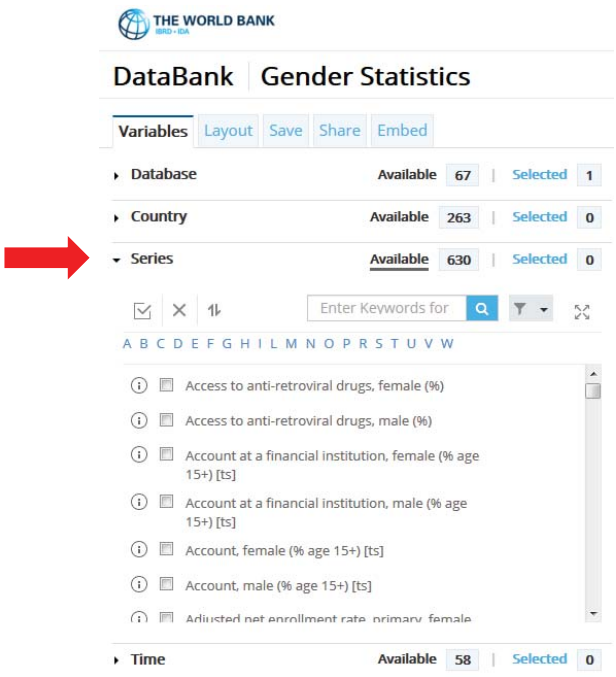
http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=gender-statistics

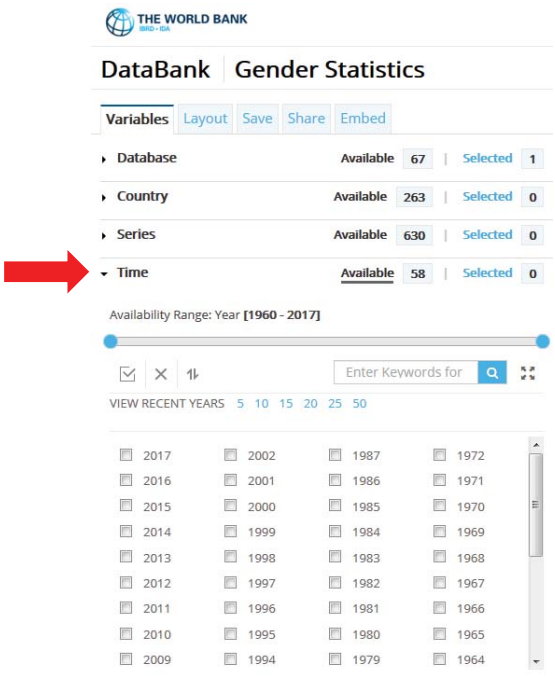
Note: Only available for navigation in English

- Edit the variables sidebar (screenshots below), or the add country/series/time options along the top of the webpage
  - Countries: can select individual countries to compare, look at aggregates to see regional averages, or compare countries to those group averages
  - Series: can sort variables alphabetically or by category (agency, economic and social context, economic opportunities, education, health, public life and decision making)
  - Time: year(s) you wish to include





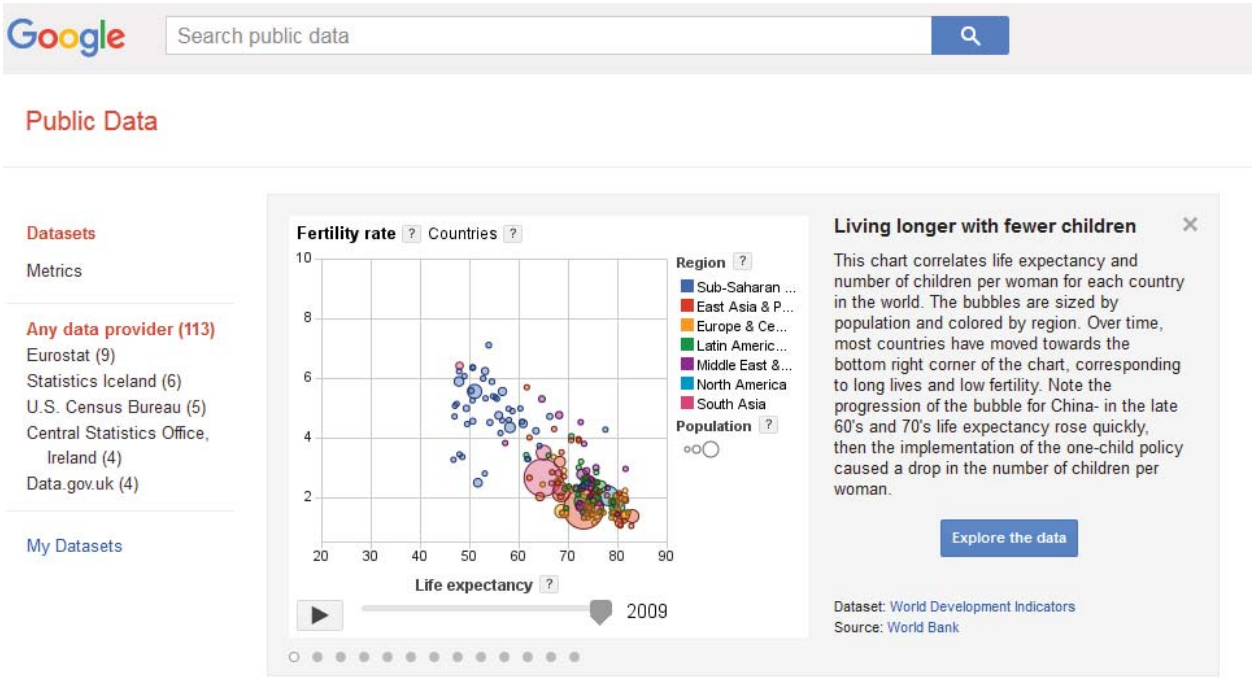




- Changing the orientation under “Layout” in the sidebar allows you to change how you compare data (easiest if in table mode, but keeps your selections when you switch to chart)
  - Make “country” the page and “series” the row to compare multiple variables in that country over time
  - Make “series” the page and “country” the row to compare how multiple countries have changed in one variable over time
- Buttons along the top of the screen
  - The circled “i” icon shows information on the metadata, including a definition for the indicator, how it was calculated, and the source of the data
  - Display data in a table or chart using buttons at the top

Google Public Data Explorer

Google’s database (www.google.com/publicdata/directory) is another useful tool for data visualization and sharing. It compiles public data and forecasts from various international organizations and academic institutions.



Using Twitter for Online Research

Toolbar search filters

To filter within Twitter, click on the following categories in the toolbar located at the top of your search results:

- Top: selected through an algorithm to display the most relevant tweets (based on popularity of a tweet, keywords it contains, etc.)
- Latest: most recently-posted tweets matching your query
- People: displays relevant accounts
- Photos
- Videos
- News: displays tweets linking to news articles
- Broadcasts: displays livestreams

“Search filters” allows you to customize the display of tweet results by:

- From everyone / from people you follow
- From anywhere / near you
- All languages / a particular language

For more information, including saving searches, and settings to hide sensitive content and blocked/muted accounts from search results, visit https://support.twitter.com/articles/131209#.

Twitter operators

As with search engines, operators can also be used in Twitter to help you filter and refine results when searching for tweets. The following table lists examples of several useful operators that are supported by Twitter.

Operator	Description	Example
@	Used to search for tweets which reference a particular account	@CIMOAS (English-language Twitter account of the Inter-American Commission of Women)
#hashtag	Used to search for specific hashtags	#PA14Col
:)	Returns tweets with a positive attitude	“tax reform” :)
:(	Returns tweets with a negative attitude	“tax reform” :(
?	Returns tweets which ask a question	referendum ?
near:	Finds tweets posted close to a particular location	near:medellin
near: within:	Finds geo-tagged tweets posted within a particular distance from a particular location in kilometres (km) or miles (mi)	near:medellin within:10km
lang:	Returns tweets in the language specified (en = English; es = Spanish; fr = French; pt = Portuguese)	from:parlamericas lang:en near:medellin lang:en
“quote marks”	Returns results including the exact combination of words between the quote marks	“Summit of the Americas”
AND	Used to search two words/phrases (not one or the other but both).	"ILO" AND "informal sector"
OR	Used to search for results that contain any of the specified words	“gender equality” OR “gender equity” OR “gender parity”
-	Excludes unwanted keywords	labour -party

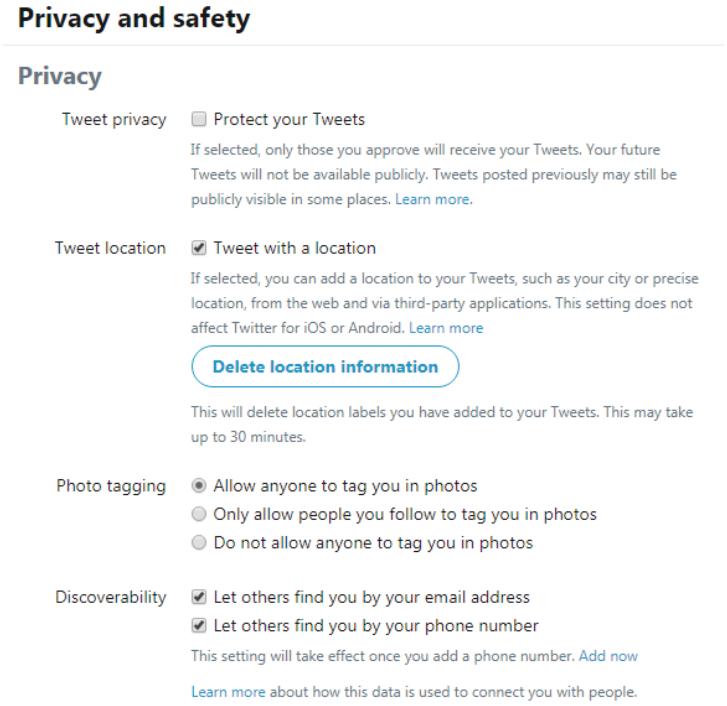
Account Verification

The blue verified badge on Twitter lets people know that an account of public interest is authentic.

The process is simple and instructions on verifying your account are available at: https://support.twitter.com/articles/20174631#.

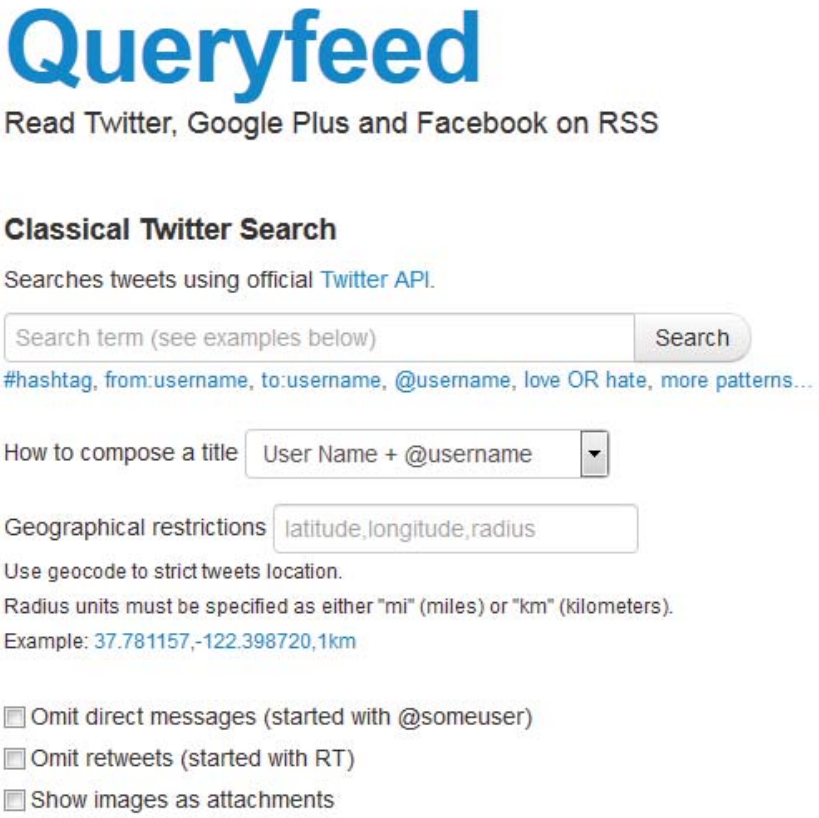
Geo-location

You can choose to add your location to the tweets you send or to keep this information private. Learn more about these settings at: https://support.twitter.com/articles/78525#



Queryfeed

Queryfeed searches social media networks including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram for access to data that cannot be reached within Google or similar search engines. Results are given on RSS (Rich Site Summary), a web feed that presents online content in a standardized and computer-readable format. This allows you to access updates from different websites in a single news aggregator application such as Feedly.



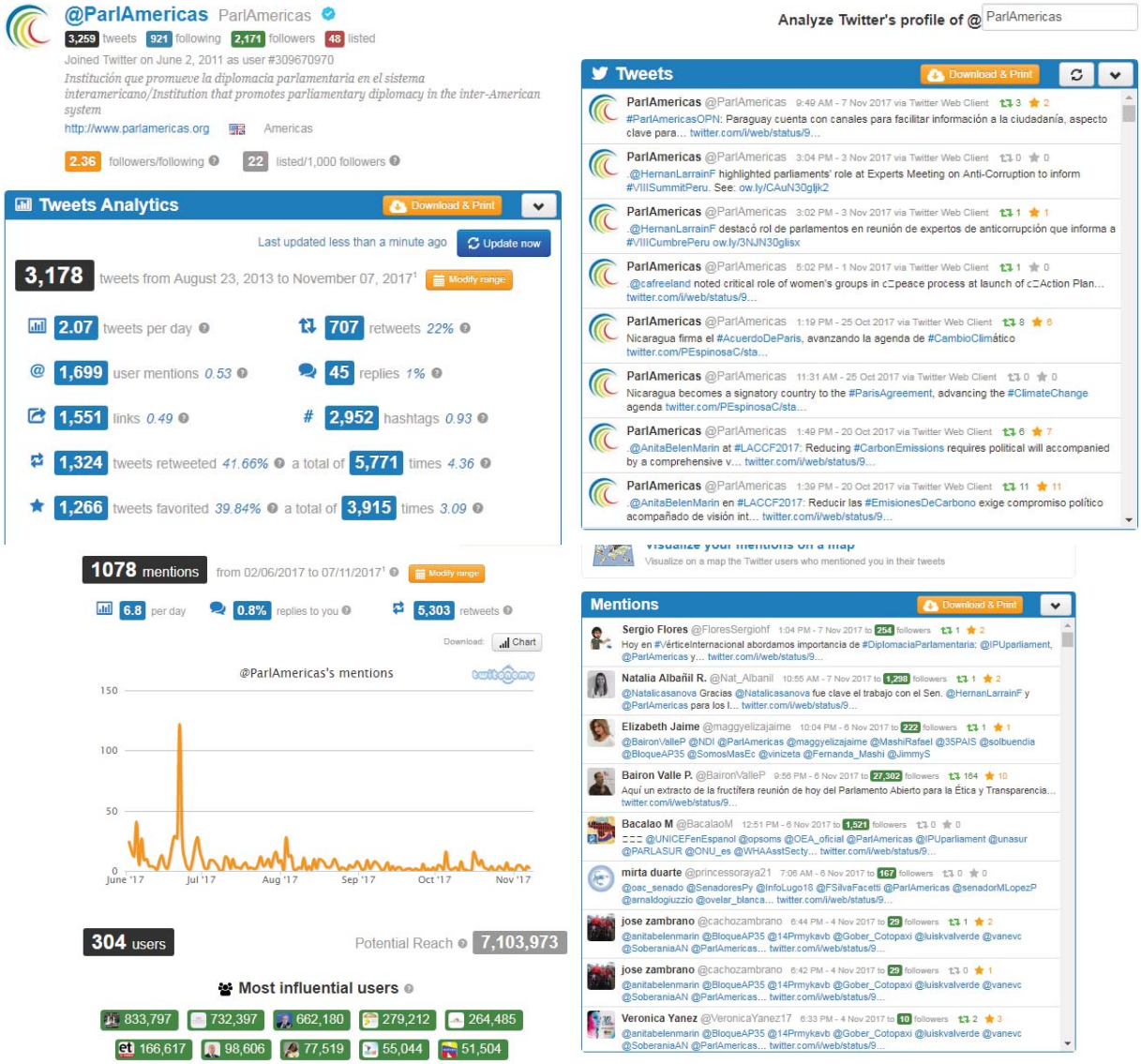
Twitter Analytics

Twitonomy

Twitonomy (https://www.twitonomy.com/) is a Twitter analytics tool that compiles information to help you monitor, manage, track and optimize your activities on Twitter. For example, you can view graphs that help you determine what time of day you should tweet in order to reach the most followers.

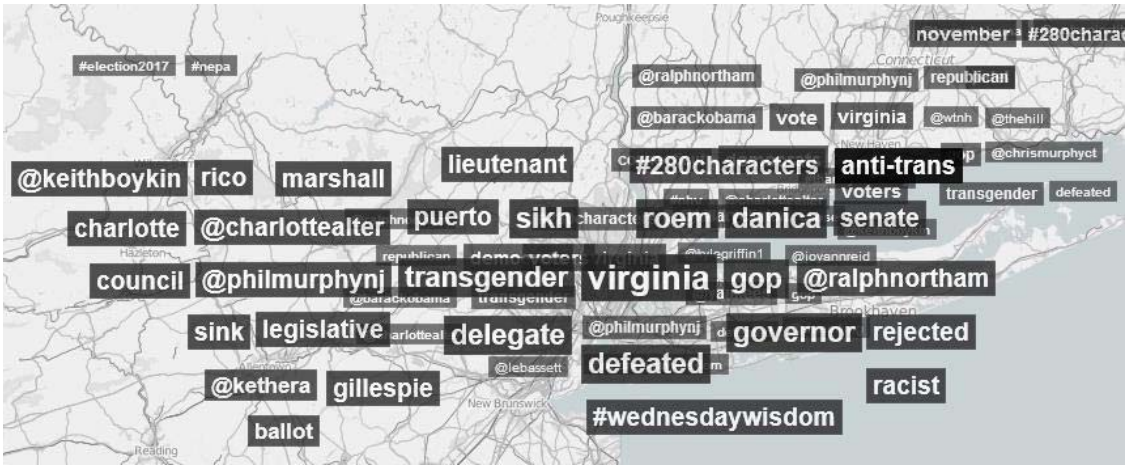
Features include:

- Followers reports with insights on your followers' influence, interests, and locations
- Track the daily growth of your followers, following & tweets counts
- Download tweets, mentions, RTs, favourites and reports to Excel & PDF documents
- Get search analytics on any #hashtag, @user or keyword
- Set custom date ranges to analyze your mentions



Trendsmap

Trendsmap (https://www.trendsmap.com/) merges location-based tweets with a map interface, allowing you to zoom, pan, and jump to locales to see what the trending topics are. Clicking on a trending topic pulls up an expanded menu that gives you additional information about the topic.



International Secretariat of ParlAmericas
710—150 Wellington St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5A4 Canada
Telephone: +1 (613) 594-5222 | Fax: +1 (613) 594-4766
www.parlamericas.org | info@parlamericas.org