
INTRODUCTION

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France's Business Survey on the Situation and Outlook in Industry (Enquête sur la Situation et les Perspectives dans l'Industrie: hereafter "Industry Survey" or simply "Survey") tracks recent activity and short-term expectations of industrialists by recording their qualitative opinion on a monthly basis. The survey covers manufacturing, food industries, and oil refineries.

Business and consumer surveys—such as the Industry Survey—provide invaluable information for short-term analysis and forecasting. As a rule, the data supplied by these surveys on the recent past are of very high quality. But the crucial advantage of this information source is that the data are gathered far more rapidly than the quantitative statistics. The main users of the results are economists, forecasters, decision-makers, and journalists¹. At last, results are subject to small revisions.

The Industry Survey meets demand from official organisations both nationally and internationally. Like most INSEE business surveys, it forms part of the Joint Harmonised European Union (EU) Programme of Business and Consumer Surveys. Its questionnaire is thus consistent with those of France's EU partners. Its main results form the French source for European Commission publications on industry-survey results in Member States.

Of all the consumer and business surveys conducted by INSEE, the Industry Survey is the one that has undergone the fewest significant changes since its launch. However, it was redesigned in the early 1990s. Since 1991, its scope of coverage has been harmonised and enterprises with fewer than 20 employees have been excluded from the sample. Also since 1991, the Survey's quarterly waves have been conducted in January, April, July, and October. In July 1997, the questions on total demand and international demand were simplified and new questions on competitiveness were added. In January 2004, the questionnaires were revised for consistency with advances in the harmonisation of European business surveys. In January 2004, the Survey became compulsory.

The Survey results are disseminated nationally via the INSEE Macroeconomic Database (Banque de Données Macroéconomiques: BDM), the *Informations Rapides* bulletin, and the online publication of the latter on the INSEE website (<http://www.insee.fr>).

The present volume of *INSEE Méthodes* describes the main characteristics of the Industry Survey and provides a framework for interpreting its results.

¹ For more details, see the summary technical description of the Industry Survey in Appendix 1 (item 9).