

THE USER SURVEY OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS ESTONIA

On 4–28 September 2006 the Statistics Estonia conducted a web survey among the main users of official statistics with the aim to obtain information on how key aspects of quality are being perceived for national products forming part of European statistics.

Main users were selected combining the list of institutions that approve the annual work program of Statistics Estonia and list of recent subscribers of our publications. Different user groups were included: national parliament, ministries, public offices, county governments, local governments of two larger cities, national bank, research and academic institutions, international organisations, private enterprises, banks, media.

During August the selected respondents were contacted via e-mail and telephone and asked to provide the contact of person who will answer the questionnaire. More than one person was selected from large organisations. In September 366 representatives of main users were informed via e-mail about the start of survey. One reminder was sent after one week and some users were followed up via telephone. As the result 188 filled questionnaires were sent to the Statistics Estonia (see table 1).

Selected users, respondents and response rate by user group

User group	Selected users	Respondents	Response rate, %
Public sector	104	65	62.5
Ministry, public office	77	46	59.7
County and local government	19	13	68.4
Parliament	8	6	75.0
Research and academic institution	66	31	47.0
Private enterprise	122	58	47.5
Media	17	6	35.3
Other	57	28	49.1
Non-profit organisation	43	19	44.2
International organisation	14	9	64.3
Total	366	188	51.4

Questionnaire was designed based on the suggested questionnaire by Eurostat. Some additional questions were added for comparability with other user surveys of Statistics Estonia. In addition to suggested statistical domains other domains were assessed during the survey. All assessments were asked in 10-point scale as usual for our user surveys.

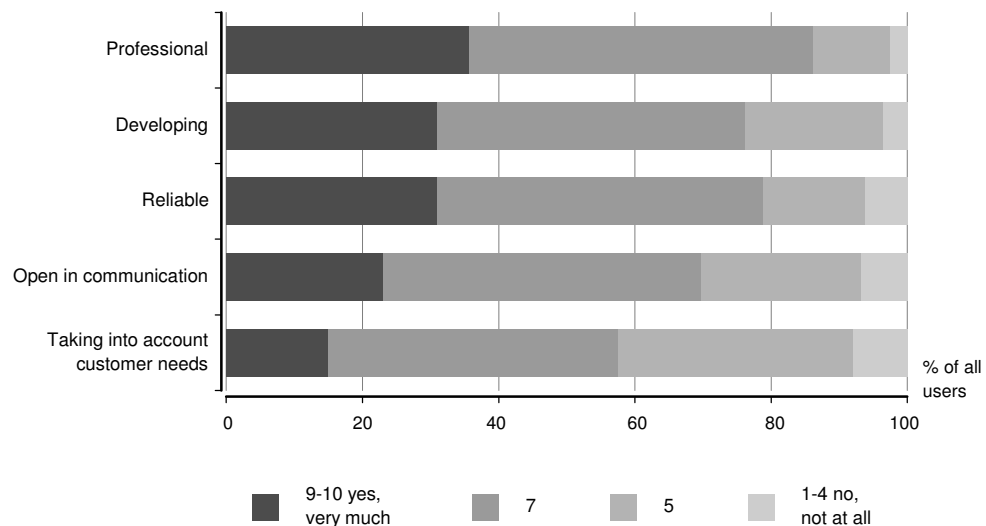
The results of survey are aggregated by main user groups: research and academic institutions, public sector, private enterprises, media and other users. Reliability of answers of media is low because of small number of respondents. The results are presented in percentages or average values from relevant groups. Only assessment of users of specific statistical domains were taken into account estimating assessment of key quality aspects.

The results of the survey:

The Survey of the users of official statistics proved that the work of Statistics Estonia is rated quite high (the averages of marks given on the 10-point scales were above 6, whereas a lot of marks laid in the range of 7-10), the quality of data is also found to be satisfactory. The database of Statistics Estonia is used the most being a source that satisfies all user groups the highest. There is some room for improvement in informing the clients about different aspects of statistical data (release calendars, methodology etc.) though. Educated are the points the users aren't content with. Main reason to be discontented is the duration of data-processing, users of official statistics would like to get the results more quickly. In a few cases the mazziness of the database is pointed out.

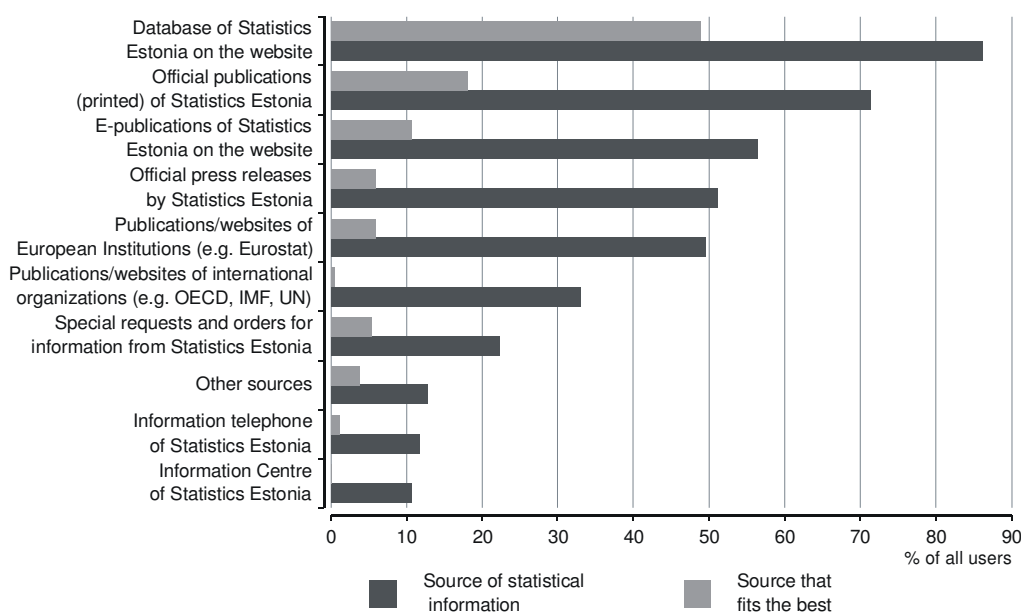
1. The Statistics Estonia as a provider of statistical information was rated as professional (7,9 points), reliable (7,7) and developing (7,6), but the needs of customers are not taken into consideration as much as necessary (6,7). The most satisfied user group is 'research and academic institutions'. Extremely low marks are given quite rarely (less than 10%), while one third of respondents have given the highest marks (9-10 points) and nearly half of them only good marks (7-8 points) assessing credibility, professionalism and developingness of Statistics Estonia.

Assessment of the main values of Statistics Estonia by grade groups,%



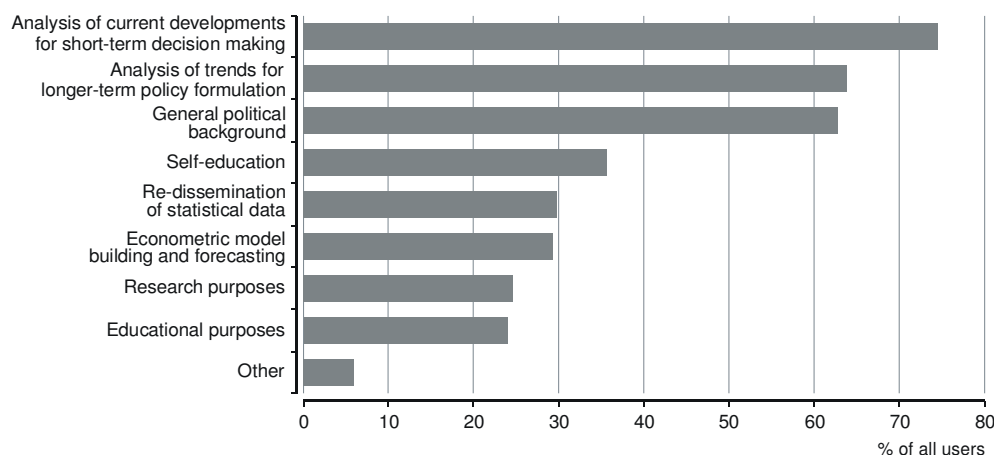
2. When obtaining statistical information the website-based database of Statistics Estonia (86,2% of cases), (printed) publications (71,3%), E-publications of Statistics Estonia on the website (56,4%) and press releases (51,1%) were used. By user groups the use of website-based database was the widest among 'other enterprises, offices, organisations' (92,9%) and 'Research or academic institutions' (90,3%). The narrowest was the website-based database use amongst enterprises. Database of Statistics Estonia on the website also meets the needs of users the fullest and is followed in this respect by publications. The same succession is present in the view by user groups.

Users by the source of statistical information and the source that fits the best for their needs, %



3. The purposes of use of the official statistics were clearly distinctive by user groups. Research or academic institutions use statistics mainly for research purposes (80,6%) and educational purposes (77,4%). Public office, enterprises and 'other enterprises, offices, organisations' use statistics for situation analysis and decision-making, for background info and assessing of trends. Media also uses statistics for re-dissemination.

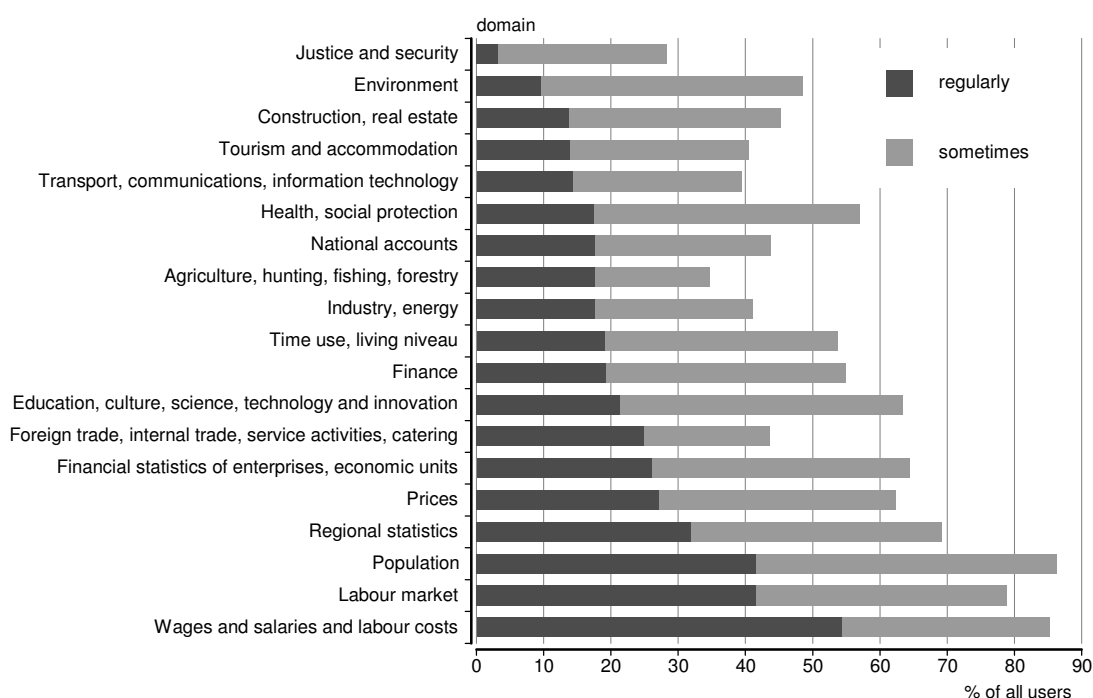
Diagram 4. Users by the purpose of using official statistics, %



4. Referring to the source of data when using official statistics is considered elementary. Only very few (2,7%) distract from this practice and one fifth (20,2%) do this sometimes. The most accurate referrers are media (100%) and research or academic institutions (96,8%). The worst referrers are enterprises, where 6,9% didn't refer at all and more than a third (36,2%) do this sometimes.

5. All of the domains of official statistics had their users. The highest numbers of regular users showed the following domains: Wages and salaries and labour costs (54,3%), Population (41,5%), Labour market (41,5%), Regional statistics (31,9%), Prices (27,1), Financial statistics of enterprises, economic units (26,1%). More than a half of abovementioned domain users use statistics for comparisons with other countries.

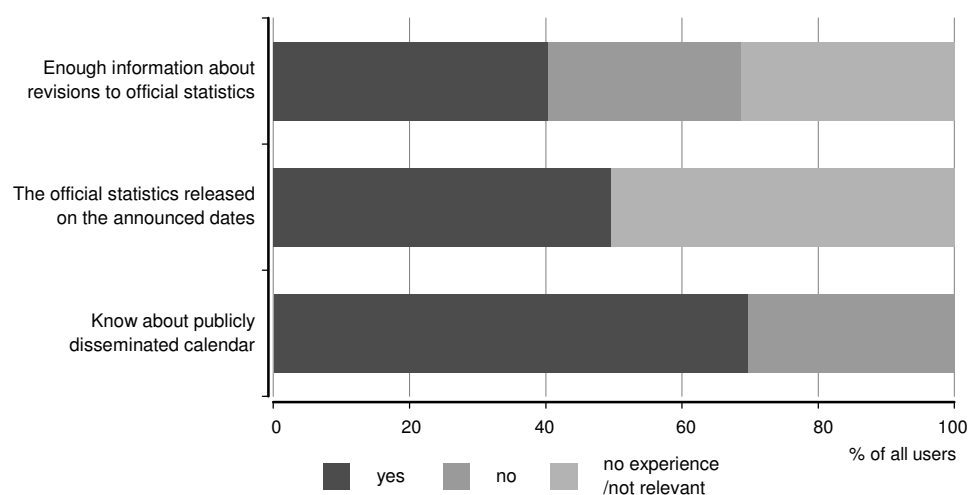
Regularity of the use of official statistics by domain, %



6. More than a half of users are not able to assess the credibility of methodology. At the same time there are a few of those (less than 10%) who do consider used methodology inept. In case of domains with most users 40% of them regarded methodology as appropriate. The answers about accurateness and timeliness are quite similar. The results fluctuate only in range of a couple of percents. Overall assessment of quality of data by domains stays in the range of 6,7 – 7,6 (on a 10-point scale) what can be considered quite a good result.

7. One third of the users of statistics are not aware of release calendars. The most informed are research or academic institutions (80,6%). Half of respondents were sure, that statistical data is released on announced dates, the rest lacked such experience and no respondent had a negative experience. 40% of users had enough information about revisions to official statistics, whereas one third of respondents do not hold it vital.

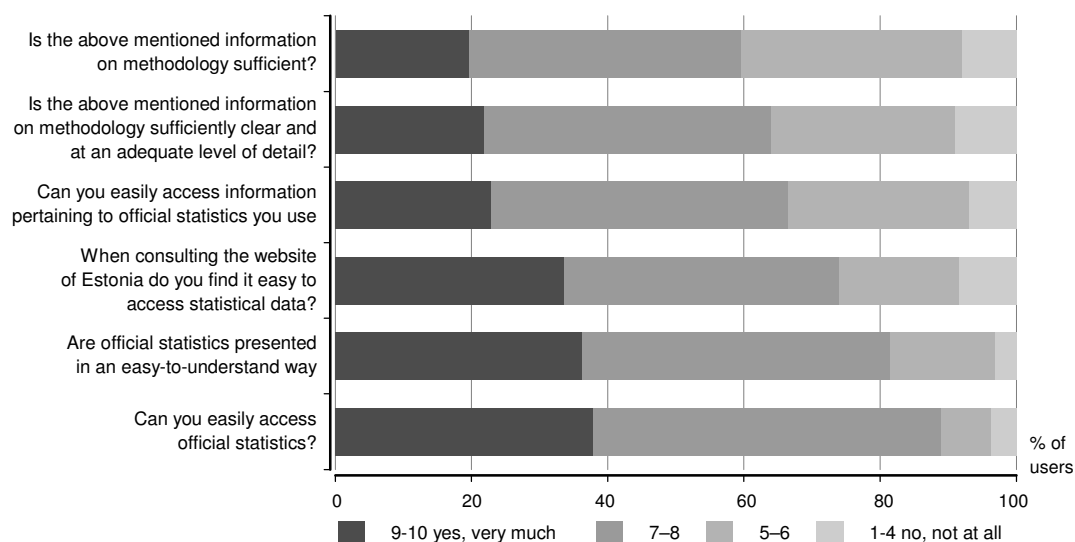
Dissemination practices, %



8. The contentment is the highest with accessibility of official statistics (is easily accessible, average mark 8,0), whereas the least are users content with the accessibility of information pertaining to official statistics they use (7,0). The highest marks are given by research or academic institutions, the lowest by media. With accessibility

and understandability of statistics are content (graded it 7-10) respectively 88,9% and 81,4% of respondents. However, with the accessibility of information pertaining to official statistics they use are content only 60% of users. Furthermore, the grades given to database are somewhat higher than grades given to printed publications. Higher marks compared with other groups were provided by research or academic institutions and by 'other enterprises, offices, organisations'.

Assessment of accessibility and clarity, %



9. The quality of official statistics of Estonia compared with those of other European countries is assessed higher by 7% of users. The widest is this view spread among research or academic institutions (nearly 10% assesses the quality of official statistics better). Quality is considered the same by about one third of respondents, whilst by nearly a half of research or academic institutions. Half of respondents can't give an assessment ('do not know'). It should be taken into consideration, that about a half of users compare statistical data with other European countries. By user groups could not give an assessment one third of research or academic institutions, more than a half of 'Public offices' and 'other enterprises, offices, organisations' and 72,4% of enterprises.

Assessment of the quality of official statistics compared with other European countries by user groups, %

