

## User Survey of Official Statistics Estonia 2008

From 15 September until 3 October 2008 Statistics Estonia (SE) conducted the User Survey of Official Statistics Estonia among the main users of official statistics by using a web-based questionnaire for that purpose. The aim of the survey was to study if and to which extent users are satisfied with and aware of the quality of official statistics.

A similar survey was also conducted in 2006, when the questionnaire was worked out on the basis of the questionnaire recommended by Eurostat, which was elaborated for the 2006 and for the 2008 surveys and to which some additional questions were added for comparability purposes from the user surveys organised by Statistics Estonia in previous years.

The survey questionnaire contained 13 questions, in case of ten questions there was a possibility to further specify, comment on or explain the reply and express opinions in a free form.

All assessments were asked to be presented in a 10-point scale applied to the user surveys of Statistics Estonia.

The main users included:

- institutions that approve the annual work program (official surveys) of Statistics Estonia,
- organisations that have used the products and services of Statistics Estonia during the last two years and
- institutions that participated in the analogous user survey of official statistics for 2006.

The following user groups were included: the public sector ministries and government agencies under their jurisdictions, committees of the *Riigikogu*/Parliament, other public sector organisations, county governments, local governments of two larger cities, also research and educational institutions, international organisations, private enterprises incl. public limited companies (AS) and private limited companies (OÜ), foundations, banks, the media and non-profit associations (MTÜ) (partnerships, associations, unions, etc.).

Notification letters were sent by email to 319 known contact persons, to 164 general email addresses of larger organisations or enterprises with a request to forward the letter to relevant persons having experience in the use of statistical products and services.

Due to a small number of respondents in the 2006 Survey, the reliability of indicators was low in the user group of media at that time, so now a supplementary e-mail was sent to 106 addressees in media enterprises. About 600 users of statistics were informed about the start of survey with a request to fill in the questionnaire. In two weeks' time, a reminder was sent and some users were also followed up via telephone. As a result, 114 filled questionnaires were received by Statistics Estonia (see the table below).

### Sample and respondents by user group, 2008

User group	Sample	Respondents	Response rate, %	Respondents, %
<b>Public sector</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>43.9</b>
ministry, government agency	97	31	32.0	27.2
county government, local government	35	11	31.4	9.6
Parliament	28	8	28.6	7.0
<b>Research and educational institution</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>20.2</b>
<b>Enterprise, bank</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>19.3</b>	<b>24.6</b>
<b>The media</b>	<b>17+106</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>Other institution</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>7.9</b>
non-profit association	57	9	15.8	7.9
international organisation	15	0	-	-
<b>Total in 2008</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>19.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Total in 2006	366	188	51.4	

In comparison with 2006, the number of respondents was considerably smaller in the 2008 Survey. One reason might be that, this time, the suitable contact persons having experience in the use of statistical products and services were not specified beforehand. A follow-up analysis revealed that approximately 300 users outside the computer network of Statistics Estonia and Ministry of Finance had examined (opened) the questionnaire during the survey period, but a part of respondents did not complete the questionnaire up to the end.

The response rate of the 2008 Survey is not comparable with the previous survey as notification of main users was based on different grounds.

The results of survey are presented in per cents and/or as average ratings. In terms of the official statistics quality indicators, the assessments of only the actual users of statistics were taken into account.

In interpreting the results, attention should be paid to the fact that the reliability of media indicators (as well as those of non-profit associations) is low because of the small number of respondents.

## Results

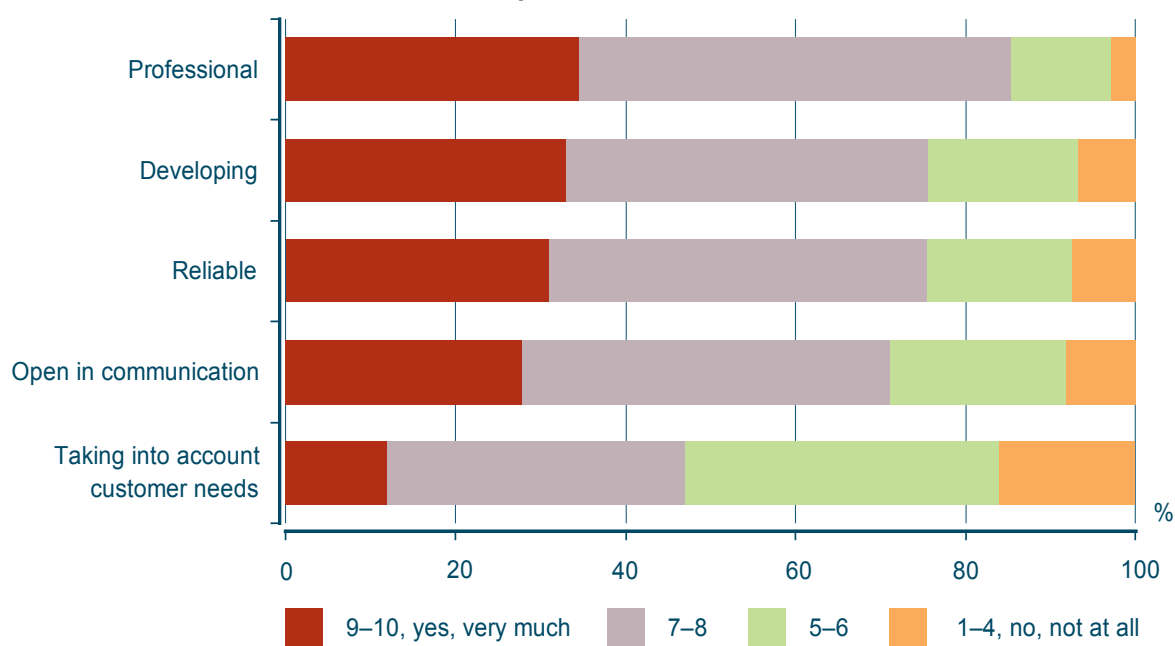
The User Survey of Official Statistics Estonia 2008 proved that, in general, the work of Statistics Estonia is rated higher than in the similar 2006 Survey (the average of grades given on the 10-point scale rose from 6.1 points to 7.3 points), whereas, like in 2006, the majority of grades were in the range of 7 to 10 points).

1. Statistics Estonia was predominantly characterized by positive assessments (87%). Reliability, professionalism and accuracy were pointed out most frequently. Like before, Statistics Estonia was described as a developing, helpful, friendly and open-minded agency.

87% of respondents mentioned the collection of data and 76% of respondents the processing of data as the role of Statistics Estonia. 43% of respondents regarded Statistics Estonia as the provider of information service.

2. Like in the 2006 Survey, Statistics Estonia as a service provider was assessed professional (average grade 7.9), and reliable and developing (average grade 7.5). 86% of respondents assessed professionalism to be 8–10 points. Consideration of the needs of customers (average grade 6.3) was assessed a bit lower than in 2006 (6.7), but this assessment remained within the limits of positive assessments. Research and educational institutions were the most satisfied respondents, and the assessments given by enterprises were the lowest.

### Assessment of Statistics Estonia as the provider of statistical information

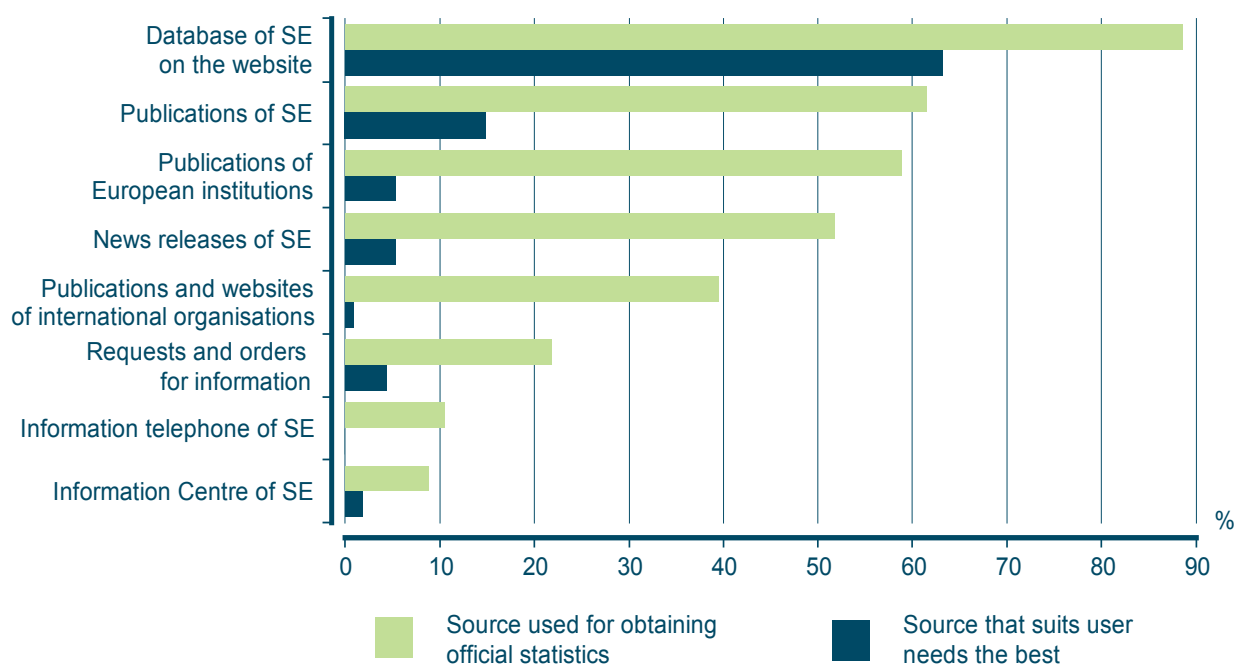


3. When seeking statistical information, the most frequently used source turned out to be the database on the website of Statistics Estonia (89%). More than two thirds of respondents noted that they rely on two to four data sources.

Database on Statistics Estonia's website meets the needs of users best (63%), printed publications follow (15%). By user groups, the website-based database was most often pointed out again by research and educational institutions, and also by the public sector (both of them — over 90%). The use of publications issued by European institutions is especially frequent among research and educational institutions (96%).

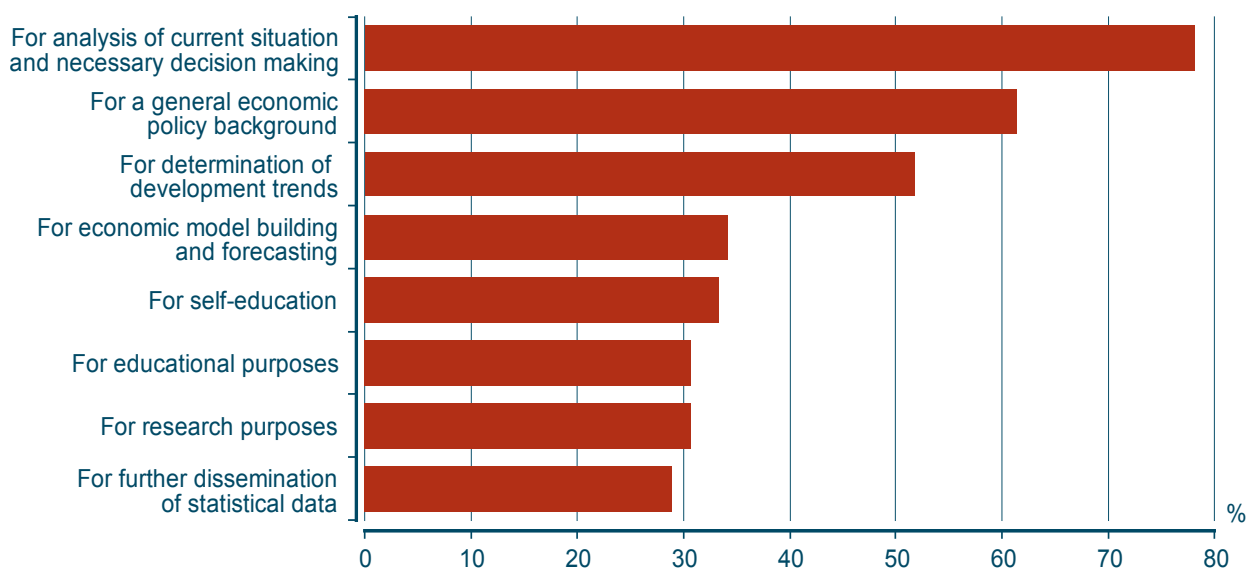
Compared to the 2006 Survey, the largest changes detected were the decrease in the use of Statistics Estonia's (SE) printed publications (from 71 down to 61) and a noticeable increase in the percentage of enterprises using the database (from 78 to 86%).

#### Sources for obtaining official statistics and their suitability for user needs



4. Purposes for the use of statistics are similar with the results of the 2006 Survey. A small increase can be detected in the use of statistics for the purpose of situation analysis and decision making (from 74% to 78%) and for the purpose of educational and research work, but the need to use statistics for determination of development trends has decreased (from 64% down to 52%).

#### Purposes for the use of official statistics

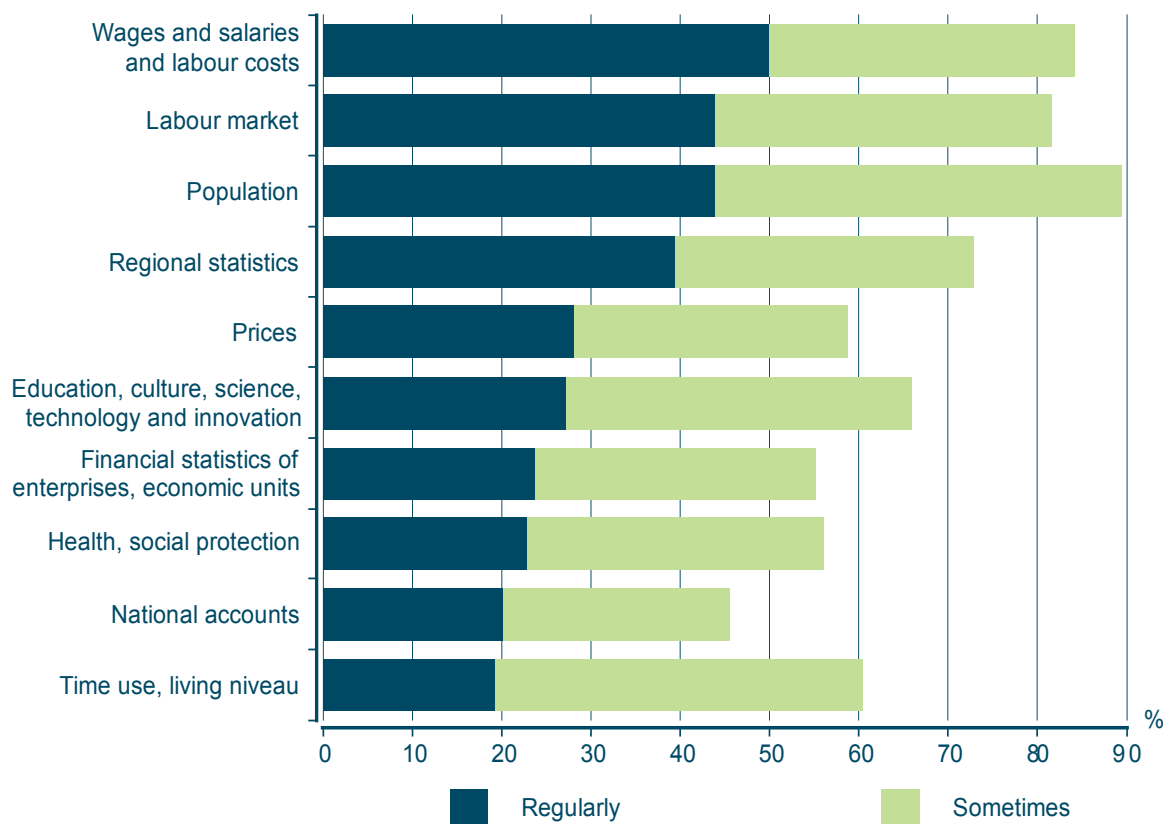


5. Provision of reference to data source when using official statistics was considered elementary in the 2006 Survey as well as in the 2008 Survey. Only very few persons distract from this practice (4%) and one fifth do it sometimes (21%). Like earlier, the most accurate reference providers are the media (100%) and research and educational institutions (96%). Enterprises refer to data sources most rarely — 11% do not refer to data sources at all and more than a third (39%) do it sometimes.

6. All 19 domains of official statistics listed in the questionnaire had their users. The domain “wages and salaries and labour costs” had the highest number of regular users (50% of respondents). Next, “labour market” and “population” (both 44%) and regional statistics (40%) followed. Compared to the 2006 Survey, the domains used most frequently and the frequency of using the data of these domains were rather similar.

Statistics of “environment” (60%), “construction” and “real estate” (50%), and “foreign trade”, “internal trade”, “service activities and catering” (44%) were used for comparison with indicators of other countries.

#### Use of official statistics by domain



7. Like in case of the 2006 Survey, results of the 2008 Survey revealed that more than a half of users were not able to assess the reliability of methodology, the accuracy and timeliness of data. In case of the reliability of methodology, nearly 70% of respondents replied “cannot say”. In case of “environment” 69% and in case of “finance” 67% answered this way. At the same time, the number of those who do not consider methodology reliable had decreased (5%). It appeared that a large proportion of data users (40%) regard the data quality of four main domains of statistics reliable. Overall assessment of data quality by domains remained in the range of 6.4 and 7.5 (on a 10-point scale).

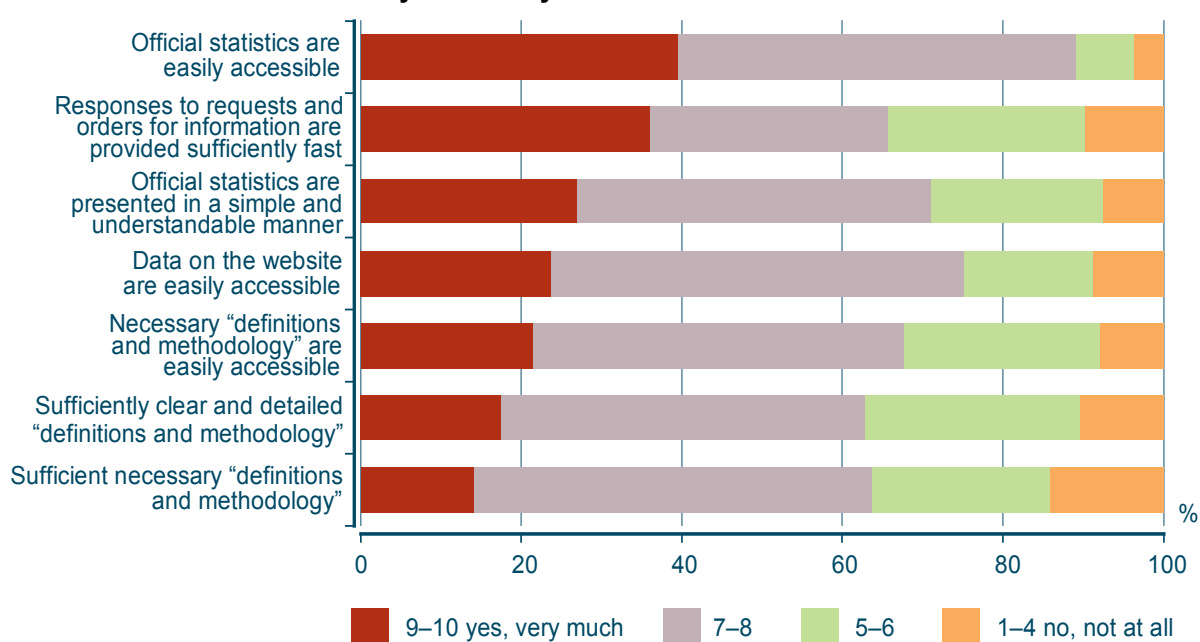
8. Awareness of the statistics dissemination practice has not changed in comparison with 2006: a third of the users of statistics are not aware of release calendars, a half of respondents were sure that data are released on announced dates, the rest lacked relevant experience. A third of users had sufficient information on revisions of official statistics and 40% did not consider it important.

9. Average assessments of the accessibility and clarity of official statistics coincided in both surveys. Contentment is the highest with respect to the fact that statistics can be found easily (average grade 8 points), whereas contentment with the sufficiency and clarity of necessary “definitions and methodology” is lower (6.7 and 6.8, respectively). Thereby, the public sector assessed the accessibility of “definitions and methodology” lowest of all user groups.

In 2008, the media assessed the possibilities of finding data and “definitions and methodology” the highest (in 2006, the media, on the contrary, gave the lowest assessments regarding the abovementioned possibility).

In 2008, users were totally content with dissemination of statistics — 89% of users assessed it by giving 7–10 points, but opinion about the simplicity and understandability of presented information dropped by 10 per cent (from 81% down to 71%). Like before, users are not especially content with the sufficiency of necessary “definitions and methodology”, although a small improvement in contentment could still be noticed compared to the previous survey (from 60% to 64%).

#### Assessment of the accessibility and clarity of official statistics



10. The quality of official statistics of Estonia compared with those of other European countries was assessed as better or as of the same level by 40% of users, whilst 54% of respondents could not provide a clear assessment. Compared to the previous survey, the quality of statistics was considered remarkably better than that of the other countries by research and educational institutions (increase from 10% to 17%) and also by the public sector (increase from 7% to 11%).