

User Survey of Official Statistics 2011

Statistics Estonia conducted the User Survey of Official Statistics among the main users of official statistics from 2 to 25 November 2011. The aim of the survey was to determine if and to what extent users are satisfied with official statistics; how users rate Statistics Estonia and the different subject areas of statistics; and how actively the statistical products and services are used.

A similar survey was also conducted in 2006 and 2008, when the questionnaire was prepared on the basis of the questionnaire recommended by Eurostat. The questionnaire was elaborated for the 2011 survey, and some additional questions from the user surveys organised by Statistics Estonia in previous years were added for comparability purposes.

The web-based questionnaire consisted of 10 questions that asked respondents to rate various aspects on a scale from 1 to 10, including Statistics Estonia, its services and statistical products, the quality of statistics and the reasons for using statistics. In case of four questions, respondents were able to qualify their answer, add a comment or make suggestions.

The web questionnaire (in Estonian) can be found at

<http://www.stat.ee/public/files/uuringud/cop2011/index.php?id=cda73214b64dad51c6e2e9322c486cb8>

The target group of the survey included:

- institutions that approve the annual work programme (planned statistical actions) of Statistics Estonia;
- organisations that have ordered the products and services of Statistics Estonia during the last two years;
- users that have attended information days or conferences organised by Statistics Estonia.

The following user groups were included: ministries and the government agencies under their jurisdiction, committees of the Riigikogu (Parliament), other public sector organisations, county governments, local governments, research and educational institutions, private enterprises and non-profit associations (partnerships, associations, unions, etc), and university students.

Notification letters asking the recipients to complete the questionnaire were sent by e-mail to 2,000 known contact persons. The questionnaire was also available on Statistics Estonia's website where it could be accessed by anyone interested in it. The questionnaire was completed by 510 respondents (incl. 35 respondents that accessed it through the website).

Table 1. Respondents by area of activity, 2008, 2011

Area of activity	2008		2011	
	Number	Share in all respondents, %	Number	Share in all respondents, %
Ministry, government agency	39	34.2	64	12.5
County government, local government	11	9.6	109	21.4
Research and educational institution	23	20.2	127	24.9
Enterprise	28	24.6	107	21.0
The media	4	3.5	18	3.5
Other institution (non-profit association, professional association etc)	9	7.9	55	10.8
Student, private person	0		30	5.9
TOTAL	114	100.0	510	100.0

Compared to 2008, the number of respondents was significantly bigger. One of the reasons is definitely the fact that the questionnaire was sent to statistics users with whom Statistics Estonia has had previous contact. The other reason is that the questionnaire was made simpler and shorter, compared to previous user surveys.

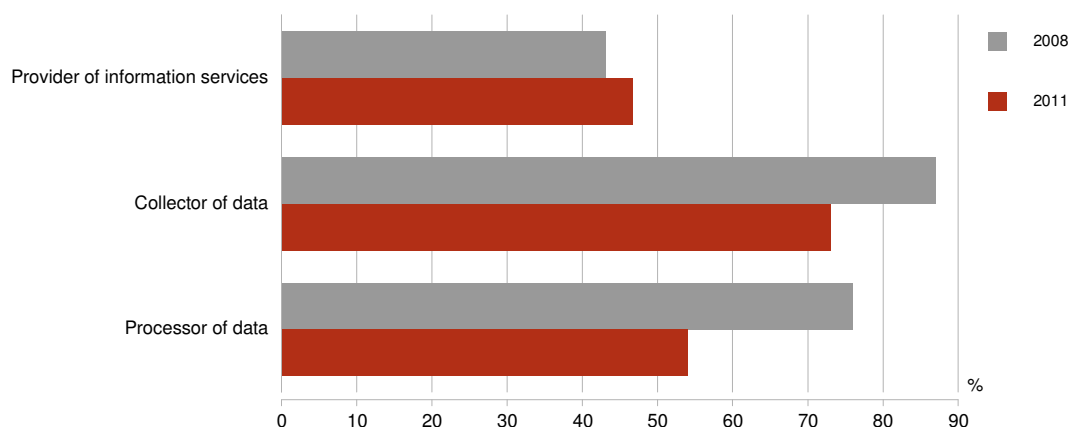
The results of the survey are presented as percentages and/or average ratings.

Results

Compared to 2008, the work of Statistics Estonia was rated a little higher in 2011 (the average rating rose from 7.3 to 7.8 on a scale from 1 to 10).

1. The role most characteristic of Statistics Estonia

73% of the respondents see Statistics Estonia as a collector of data, above all, while more than half of the respondents think of Statistics Estonia as a processor of data and almost half think that 'provider of information services' is Statistics Estonia's most characteristic role. Compared to the previous survey, there is a bigger share of users who see Statistics Estonia as primarily an information service provider, and there are considerably fewer users who think of Statistics Estonia as a collector and processor of data.

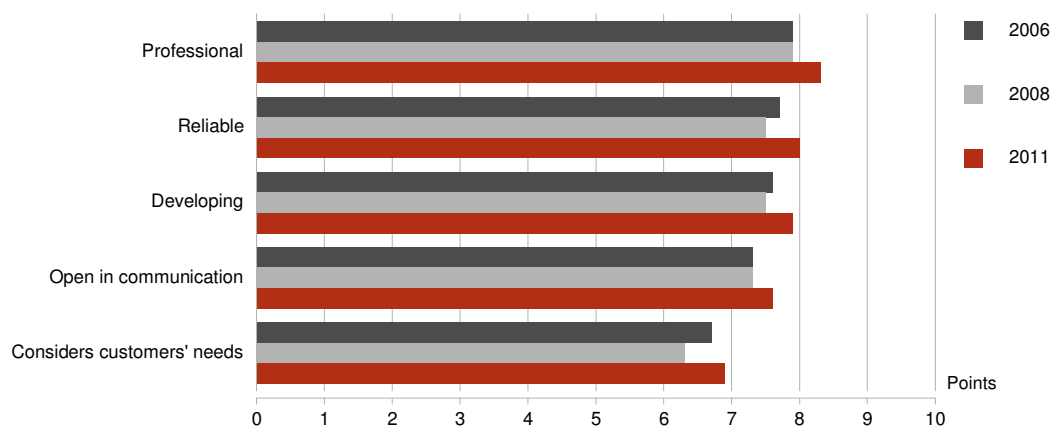
Figure 1. The role most characteristic of Statistics Estonia, 2008, 2011

2. Assessment of Statistics Estonia as a statistical information provider

Compared to previous surveys, the assessment of Statistics Estonia as a statistical information provider has slightly improved in all aspects. The highest rating was given to Statistics Estonia's professionalism: an average score of 8.3 on a scale from 1 to 10, which is a very good result. The ratings given to reliability and development have improved by half a point (average rating 8.0 and 7.9, respectively). Openness in communication also received a slightly higher score. Consideration for customers' needs continues to receive the lowest rating (average rating 6.9), but it has also improved compared to the previous surveys.

Across user groups, Statistics Estonia was rated more highly by media enterprises and ministries (8.2–8.4), and received somewhat lower scores from enterprises and from county and local governments (7.3–7.5).

Figure 2. Assessment of Statistics Estonia, 2006, 2008 and 2011 (on a scale from 1 to 10)



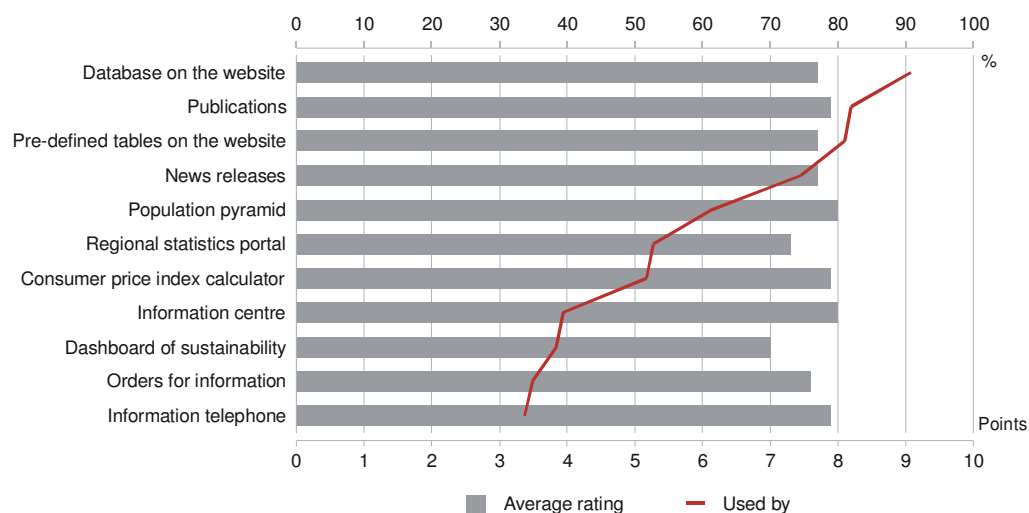
3. Satisfaction with Statistics Estonia's information sources

When seeking statistical information, the most frequently used sources were the database on the website (91%), publications (82%), pre-defined tables (81%) and news releases (75%). The least used sources (30–40%) to get information were the information centre, dashboard of sustainability, orders for information, and the information hotline.

The satisfaction ratings of information sources were high, ranging from 7.0 to 8.0 on a scale from 1 to 10. The information centre, publications, population pyramid, consumer price index calculator and information hotline received the highest ratings (7.9–8.0), while the dashboard of sustainability and regional statistics portal were given slightly lower ratings.

The assessments varied across user groups. Statistics Estonia's information sources were rated higher than average by media and financial enterprises (8.6), compared to other enterprises (average rating 7.2)

Figure 3. Satisfaction with Statistics Estonia's information sources (on a scale from 1 to 10) and amount of users (%)

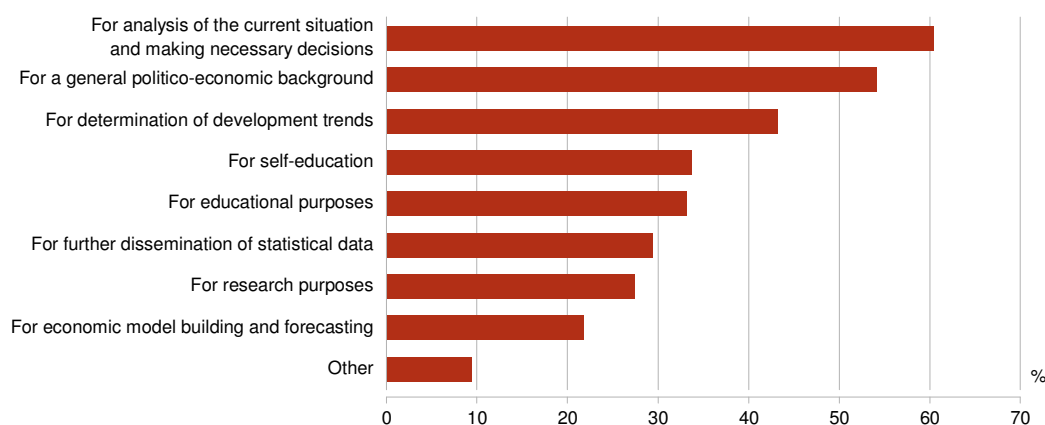


4. Purpose of using official statistics

The purposes of using official statistics have not changed over the years, according to the survey. Similarly to 2006 and 2008, the 2011 results indicate that a great share of the respondents used statistics to analyse the situation and make the necessary decisions (60%) and to establish the general politico-economic background (54%).

The main reason for using statistics depends on the user group. Research and educational institutions use statistics mainly for research purposes (72%) and for educational purposes (60%). The public sector and financial enterprises use statistics mainly to analyse the situation and make the necessary decisions (70% and 89% respectively). Media enterprises primarily use statistics for getting general background information and for further dissemination of the data.

Figure 4. Purposes of using official statistics



5. Assessment of the accessibility and clarity of official statistics

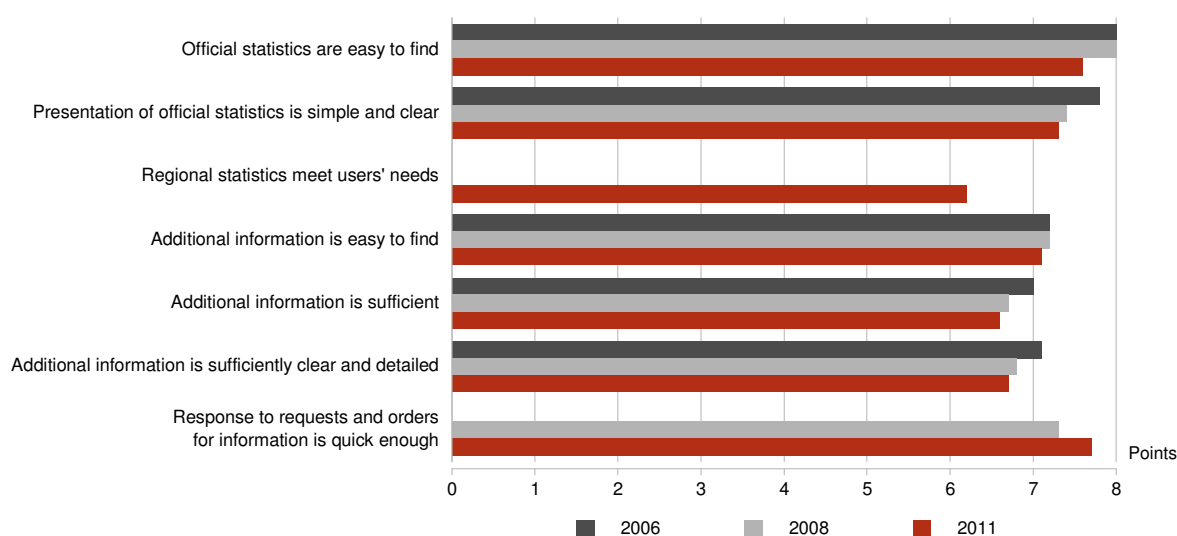
The average scores given to the accessibility and clarity of official statistics have slightly decreased in almost all aspects, compared to the previous surveys. The decrease has been small (0.1–0.4 points), but the downward trend has been steady over the years. Only the rating given to the speed of response to requests and orders for information has improved.

Lower scores were given to the suitability of regional statistics for users' needs (6.2). In case of regional statistics, users would like the published data to be more detailed than currently provided by Statistics Estonia.

The lowest satisfaction ratings were once again given to the sufficiency, clarity and findability of additional information (definitions and methodology) (6.7). Higher ratings were given to the findability of statistics (average rating 7.6 points) and the speed of response to requests and orders for information (7.8).

County and local governments and enterprises were the most dissatisfied users. These groups gave very low scores to the suitability of regional statistics for users' needs (5.3–5.9). Media enterprises, financial institutions and state agencies gave very high ratings – they were most satisfied with the speed of response to requests and orders for information and with the findability of statistics.

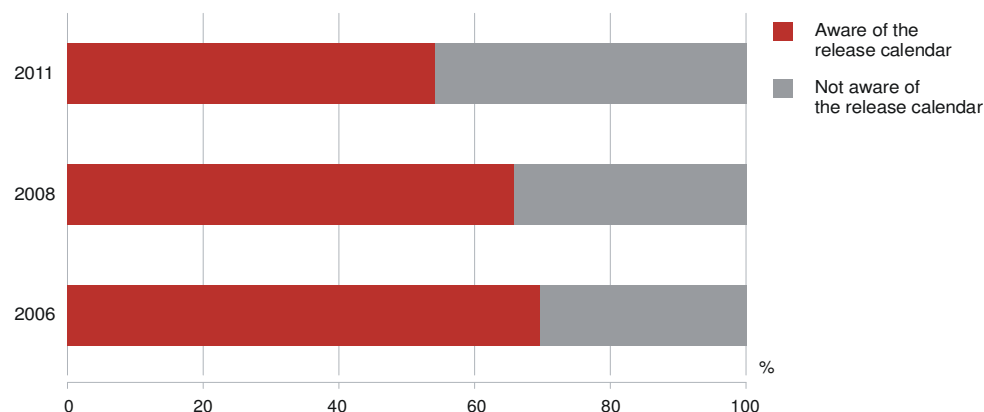
Figure 5. Assessment of official statistics, 2006, 2008 and 2011 (on a scale from 1 to 10)



6. Awareness of the release calendar of statistics

Awareness of the release calendar of statistics has decreased, compared to 2006 and 2008: almost half of the respondents are not aware that there is a release calendar.

Figure 6. Awareness of the release calendar, 2006, 2008 and 2011



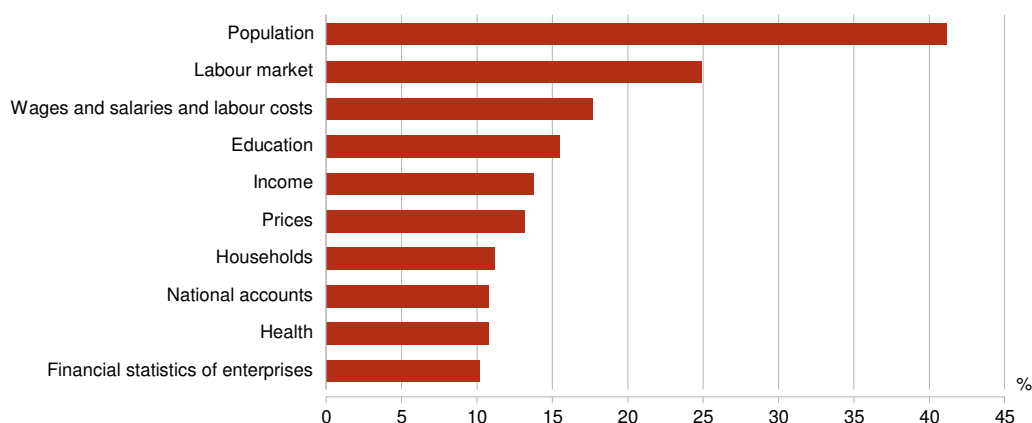
7. Use of statistics and assessment of statistics' quality by domain

In 2011, the methodological formulation of this question was a little different than in previous years. This time, respondents were asked to specify the three most often used domains and to assess three aspects of each of these domains: the reliability of methodology, data accuracy and timeliness. Respondents also assessed quality in comparison with the statistics of other countries.

Most frequently used domains

All 34 statistics domains were mentioned and assessed by users. Population data had the most users (41% of respondents), followed by the following domains (cited by 10% or more respondents): labour market; wages and salaries and labour costs; education; income; prices; households; national accounts; health; financial statistics of enterprises. Other domains were mentioned by less than 10% of the respondents. The top 10 most frequently used domains are very similar to previous surveys. In 2011, 'national accounts' was a new domain in the top 10.

Figure 7. Use of official statistics by domain



Reliability of methodology, data accuracy and timeliness

Among the ten most used statistics domains, the subject areas 'national accounts' and 'prices' were rated as the most reliable. For example, the reliability of the methodology of 'national accounts' received the highest rating (average rating 8.3) among all rated domains. The methodologies of the domains 'foreign trade', 'industry' and 'financial statistics of enterprises' also received high reliability ratings (average rating 7.7–7.9). The methodologies of the domains 'construction' and 'culture' were rated the least reliable (6.0–6.6).

The highest ratings for data accuracy and timeliness were given to the domains 'national accounts', 'prices' and 'finance'. Scores below the average were given to 'wages and salaries and labour costs', 'households' and 'income'. The domain 'construction' was rated very low by users (5.5 for data accuracy and 5.7 for timeliness).

Figure 8. Assessment of the reliability of methodology, data accuracy and timeliness (on a scale from 1 to 10)

Domains	Reliability of methodology	Data accuracy	Timeliness
Population	7.6	7.3	7.3
Labour market	7.5	7.1	7.3
Wages and salaries and labour costs	7.1	7.0	6.9
Education	7.2	7.0	7.1
Income	6.9	6.7	7.1
Prices	7.5	7.5	7.6
Households	7.4	7.1	6.7
National accounts	8.3	7.6	7.5
Health	7.2	7.5	7.2
Financial statistics of enterprises	7.7	7.2	6.9

Use of data for comparison with other European countries, and the quality of official statistics

The statistics on 'national accounts' (89%), 'foreign trade' (79%) and 'industry', 'finance', 'prices' and 'health' (64–74%) were most often used for comparison with other countries.

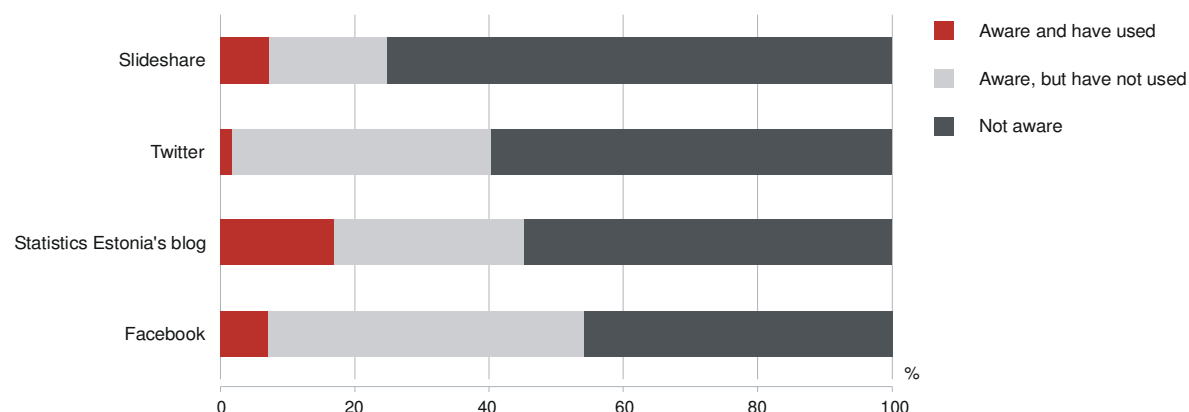
34% of the respondents considered the quality of official statistics (on average) to be better than or the same as in other European countries. 43% of the respondents could not provide a clear assessment, while 7% considered the quality to be worst than in other European countries.

The quality of most of the domains in the top 10 was considered better in Estonia than in other countries, except for just two domains – 'income' and 'health'.

8. Statistics Estonia's new information channels

Statistics Estonia has several new information channels with Facebook being the most popular (54% respondents are aware of it), followed by Statistics Estonia's blog and Twitter. The blog is used the most (by 17% of the respondents), followed by Facebook and Slideshare (7% of the respondents).

Figure 9. Awareness of Statistics Estonia's new information channels



9. Other statistical information that users would like to have

There was an open-ended question for respondents to write what kind of information they would additionally like to have.

More than half of the respondents did not answer this question, while 6% of the respondents did not know what kind of information they would additionally like to have or said that the information published is sufficient.

Users are primarily in need of more detailed information, e.g. on population and wages. Also, users would like to have more detailed regional statistics and would like data to be published faster.

The most frequent suggestions made by users were:

- More detailed regional statistics (village, city district, grid data)
- Labour market statistics (e.g. working abroad)
- Health statistics
- More detailed data on wages and salaries (e.g. by occupation)
- More detailed population data (incl. migration)
- Faster publication of data

Conclusion

- The assessment of Statistics Estonia as an information provider has improved over the years.
- The assessment of the findability, comprehensibility, clarity and level of detail of the statistics has slightly, but steadily declined.
- The purposes of using statistics have not changed over the years.
- Media, financial and insurance enterprises gave more positive ratings, while local governments, county governments and other enterprises were more critical.
- Population statistics is the most frequently used domain.
- 'National accounts' was the domain that received the highest ratings for data accuracy, timeliness, and reliability of the methodology.
- Users still want more detailed and more recent data – primarily on regional statistics, but also on population (migration), wages and salaries, and labour market statistics.