

**Joint UNECE/OECD Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication**  
(14-15 February 2005, Henley-on-Thames, United Kingdom)

Topic (i): Reputation management for target audiences

**REPUTATION MONITORING**

**Supporting Paper**

Submitted by Statistics Denmark<sup>1</sup>

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. There is a growing awareness among national statistical institutions (NSI) that a good reputation cannot be taken for granted and that the reputation of an institution demands management attention and effort.
2. The first prerequisite of reputation management is solid information about the actual reputation of the NSI. Unfortunately, even within institutions that, in all other matters, are devoted to hardcore facts, such information is not always collected in a systematic manner.
3. This paper describes the reputation monitoring system of Statistics Denmark and some of the primary results of the reputation measurements carried out since 2000.

**II. BACKGROUND**

1. Before 2000, we had done several opinion surveys with our various user groups but not with the general public or “the taxpayers”. When we decided to improve and professionalize our communication strategy in 2000, however, it was decided to implement the first so-called “Citizen Survey”. The purpose of measuring the reputation of the institution was to create a framework for specifying the profile that Statistics Denmark wanted to attain in the general public.
2. As inspiration, we used the survey *Bilden av verket* (“The picture of the agency”), which had been done by Statistics Sweden since 1996. It was decided to measure reputation by three attributes:
  - Credibility
  - Efficiency
  - Quality
3. The proposal of the Dissemination Centre was at the outset to measure reputation on the basis of these three attributes through a survey of 15 questions conducted by a commercial opinion poll agency. For economic reasons, however, the survey was reduced to 10 questions and conducted by our own telephone interviewers. This has an impact on the quality of the answers, since the survey was conducted by the same agency that is the object of inquiry.

---

<sup>1</sup> Prepared by Leon Østergaard, loe@dst.dk.

4. The proposal of the Dissemination Centre at the outset was to have the respondents compare the reputation of Statistics Denmark to other “comparable” Danish institutions - for example, The National Bank and other public or private organizations. This suggestion, however, was turned down by Management for strategic reasons.

### **III. FIRST RESULTS FROM THE 2000 SURVEY**

1. Prior to the first survey in 2000, we conducted a pilot survey with 200 respondents to test the questionnaire. This resulted in some modifications to the questionnaire.

2. The Citizen Survey was carried out in October 2000 as a part of our normal monthly “omnibus” survey containing questions on other subjects as well. The sample consisted of 1,500 people, aged 16-74 years, and the response rate was 63 pct., providing 948 answers. The questionnaire comprised 10 questions, divided in three groups:

- Attitudes toward statistics in general
- Knowledge of Statistics Denmark
- Attitudes toward Statistics Denmark

Three questions were comparable to questions asked by Statistics Sweden in their survey.

3. The results showed a high awareness of the importance of statistics among the general public. 75 pct. of the respondents claimed that statistics are “very important” or “fairly important” to public decision-making, debate, etc., and 60 pct. felt that statistics are important for them personally to understand social developments. These figures seemed surprisingly high to us, but they are comparable to the Swedish results, collected by similar methods.

4. 30 pct. of the respondents claimed to know us pretty well, and a total of 86 pct. claimed to have, at least, some knowledge of Statistics Denmark. Of these, 39 pct. had had some contact with us during the last couple of years, primarily through interviews or the use of our publications.

5. Among respondents with some knowledge of us, 57 pct. knew that we are a government body; whereas, 13 pct. thought we were a private organization.

6. The respondents were asked: “Do you think Statistics Denmark is objective and non-partisan, or do you think the figures are subject to political interests”? To this question, 70 pct. answered “objective and non-partisan”, 6 pct. answered “subject to political interests” and 11 pct. answered “partly objective and non-partisan, partly subject to political interests”.

### **IV QUALIFICATIONS OF THE RESULTS**

1. These preliminary results must be viewed with some care. First, because the survey was conducted by the same organization that was the object of the inquiry, and the answers of respondents will probably be influenced by this fact. To measure the magnitude of this “interviewer error”, we had an independent organization - in this instance, The Danish National Institute of Social Research - ask two of the key questions to a comparable sample of the population, when the survey was repeated in 2001.

2. These “control questions” showed that the error introduced by conducting the survey ourselves was in the order of 6-8 percentage points. Or put another way: If the survey had been conducted entirely by an independent organization, the answers would probably have been negatively affected by around 6-8 percentage points with respect to statistics in general and Statistics Denmark in particular than what was found in our own survey.

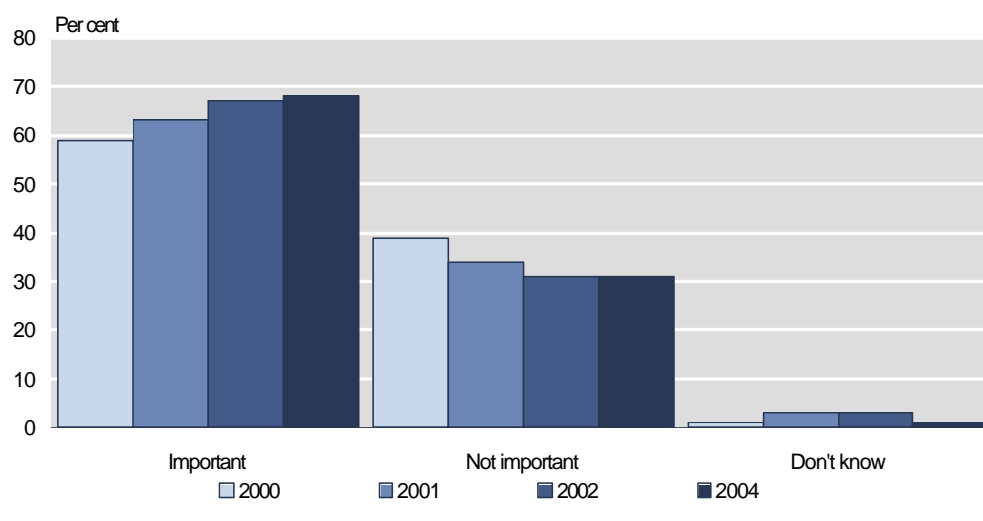
3. To further qualify the investigation, we subsequently asked a university senior professor of media and opinion research to evaluate the survey method and questions. As a result of this independent examination, some of the questions were omitted in later surveys and some were modified to improve understanding and interpretation among the respondents.

4 Another point to notice is that results such as these are only really interesting when presented as time series data. It is difficult to judge whether a level of knowledge or opinion is high or low, if you cannot compare it to other similar organizations. Changes over a span of years, however, are extremely interesting, as they can point to overall changes in the general public, some of which may be the result of planned action in reputation management undertaken by the organization.

5 Hence, we decided to conduct an identical survey again in 2002 and every other year from then on. The latest survey was carried out in the fall of 2004, and we now have comparable time series for the period 2000-2004.

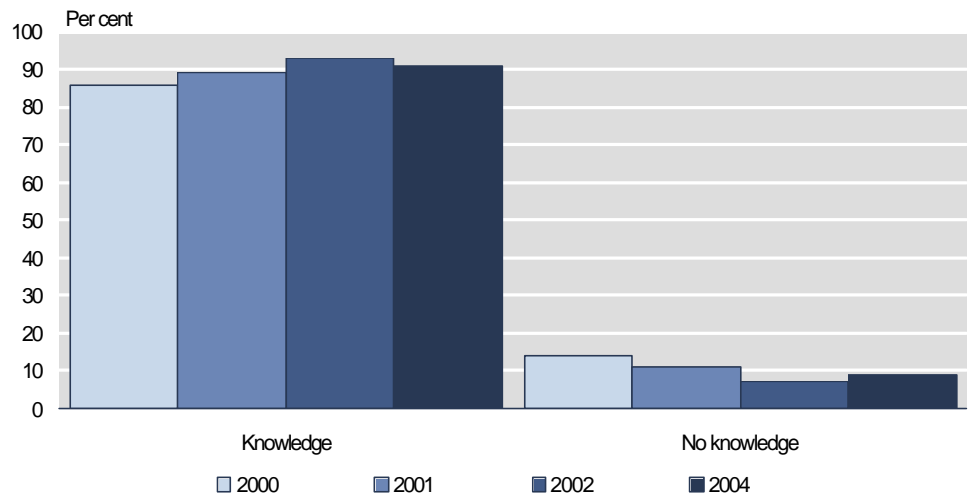
## V TIME SERIES RESULTS

1. Question: “How important are statistics for you personally to understand how the society is functioning and developing?” The answers “Very important” and “Fairly important” are grouped as “Important”. The answers “Not so important” and “Unimportant” are grouped as “Not important”.



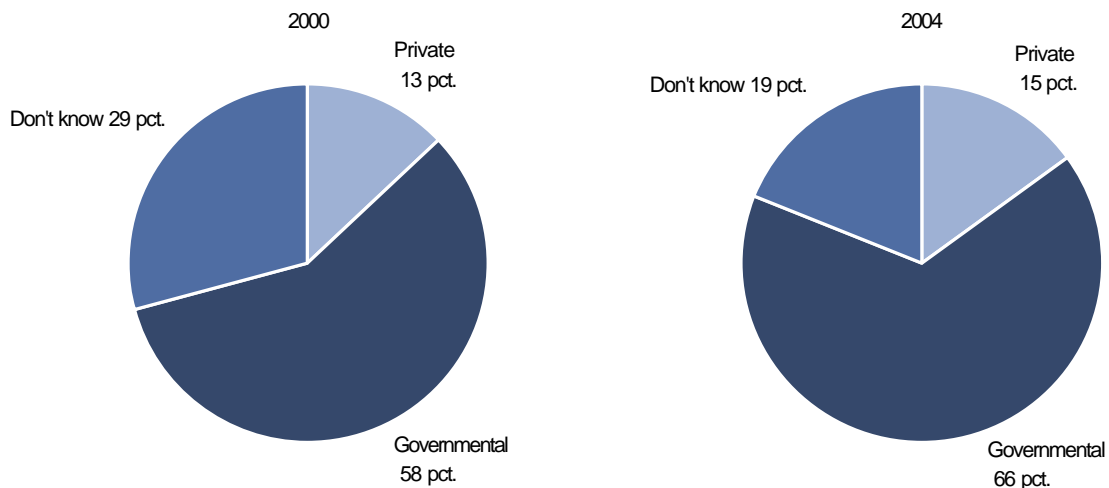
2. More than two thirds of the adult population think that statistics are important for them to understand how society is functioning and developing. This group has increased by 9 percentage points since 2000. The figures are comparable to the results in Sweden. In general, more importance is attached to statistics among younger persons and the well-educated. Employees think that statistics are more important than employers and the unemployed.

3. Question: “Did you have any knowledge of Statistics Denmark before this interview?”



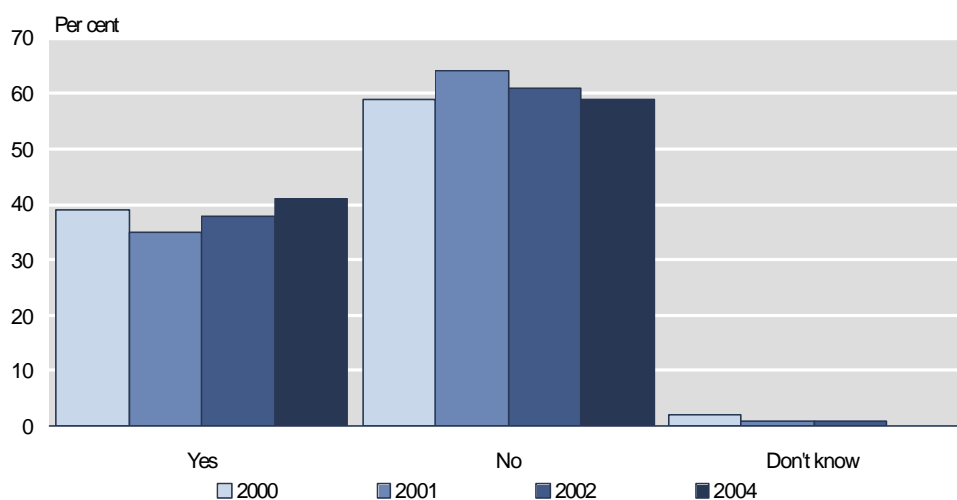
4. 91 pct. of the adult population has some knowledge of Statistics Denmark - an increase of 5 percentage points since 2000. The increase is primarily in the category of superficial knowledge of the institution - the percentage who know us pretty well is unchanged. Knowledge of Statistics Denmark increases with age until the age of 65 – then, it drops off sharply. More men than women claim to know us pretty well. Knowledge increases with educational level.

5. Question: “Do you know whether Statistics Denmark is a governmental body or a private organization?” The question is only put to persons who claim to have some knowledge of us.



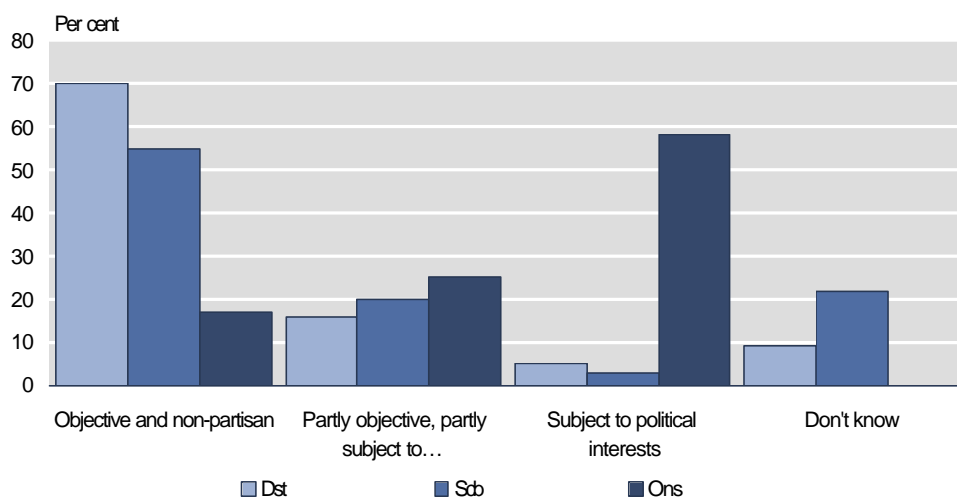
6. The knowledge that Statistics Denmark is a governmental body has increased by almost 10 percentage points since 2000. The percentage of those responding that we are a private organization is unchanged at around 15 percent. Thus, it is the “don’t know” category that has been reduced in numbers. This answer is particularly common among younger persons; whereas, the elderly are more aware that we are a government body.

7. Question: “Apart from this interview, have you had contact with Statistics Denmark in any way during the last couple of years?” The question is only put to persons who claim to have some knowledge of us.



8. 41 pct. of the adults claiming to have some knowledge of us have had some kind of contact with us during the last couple of years - this percentage seems to be increasing slightly in recent years. Employers and students are the two groups that have had the most frequent contact with Statistics Denmark - the first group probably as data providers, the second group through visits to our website. Contact increases with educational level.

9. Question: “Do you think Statistics Denmark is objective and non-partisan or do you think the figures are subject to political interests?” The responses to this question have not changed much over time, but we have tried to include in the figure comparable Swedish and British results:



10. Even taking into account the fact that the British question was put slightly differently, it is obvious that the results in Britain are dramatically different from the Danish and Swedish results. In Scandinavia, the great majority generally trust the statistical institution; whereas, the result is completely the opposite in Britain. Danes are slightly more positive than Swedes. In Denmark, trust increases with age and education.

## **VI PERSPECTIVES**

1. Reputation monitoring in Denmark has proved to be a useful tool in reputation management. The results have been used in planning press and profile activities, and we can see that the large increase in positive press coverage during recent years is beginning to show results in the Citizen Survey.
2. The surveys will continue to be carried out by Statistics Denmark every other year. New questions may be added, and we are very interested in exchanging experiences with other countries that pose comparable questions in similar surveys.
3. On our wish list is a new assessment of the “interviewer effect” by an independent body in order to further qualify the results.