

**UNITED NATIONS STATISTICAL COMMISSION  
and ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE  
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

**UNECE Work Session on Statistical Dissemination and Communication**  
(Geneva, 13-15 May 2008)

Topic: Building and maintaining relationships

**SO WHO ARE ALL THESE CUSTOMERS ANYWAY?  
FIRST STEPS TOWARDS EFFECTIVE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS**

Paper submitted by UNECE<sup>1</sup>

**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. Building customer relationships has to start somewhere. The UNECE has traditionally put a lot of effort into building and maintaining good relationships with the different groups of customers for our various services. For example in the areas of technical cooperation, harmonization, standard setting and exchange of knowledge through expert groups, relationships are strong and effective. However there has been one notable exception.
2. Since the launch of the public interface for the UNECE statistical database<sup>2</sup> just over three years ago, user interest, measured in terms of data downloads, has grown steadily. We know that there are people out there interested in our data, but who are they? Where are they? What do they want our data for? Until recently, to put it bluntly, we really didn't have a clue - and we suspect we are not the only statistical organization to face this problem.
3. We realized that this was not a satisfactory state of affairs, so in the autumn of 2005 we launched a database user survey, in parallel with a number of more general marketing activities. Taken together, these initiatives have allowed us to start to build a better picture of this important section of our customers. This paper describes the outcomes of these activities, what we have found out so far about our users, and how we can use this knowledge to improve services and relationships in the future.

**II. WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THE USER SURVEY**

4. The full analysis of the results of the UNECE database user survey is included as an annex to this paper. Despite the limitations of such a survey, it gave us the first real clues about who our users are, and what they want, as well as useful feedback on data quality. For example, we had previously assumed that most of our data users were public sector officials, whereas we found that this group was second (37.6%) behind the academic / research group (45.1%). When we looked at frequency of use, however, the public sector officials were more regular users of data, suggesting that they could be more important in terms of volume of data consumed. This will be explored further in the next user survey.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://w3.unece.org/stats/data>

5. The geographic spread of users was broadly as expected, with responses from almost fifty countries. When responses were aggregated into groups of countries, and weighted by population, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) had the highest proportion of responses per capita. This could be explained by the greater degree of competition from other data providers covering other parts of our region, but also highlights the importance our users attach to having data for CIS countries alongside those for the rest of Europe and North America, and the value of providing a Russian language interface to our database.

6. Regarding types of data required, the results were generally in line with our existing information on downloads per data cube. Demand is highest for macro-economic, socio-economic and demographic indicators. In line with United Nations policy on addressing gender related imbalances, we have introduced the gender dimension throughout our social statistics, and re-branded this collection as “Gender Statistics”. However, our users do not seem to fully relate to this approach, with categories such as “population” and “other social indicators” being more than twice as popular as “gender equality”. This suggests that we may need to re-think how we describe our data, putting more emphasis on terminology familiar to users rather than that preferred by the organization.

7. Concerning data quality, our users give a high priority to timeliness. In the survey, their views on how timely our data are, strongly correlated to their views on overall data quality. As a result, a number of actions have been started to find ways to improve timeliness in our data collection, processing and dissemination activities. Several responses, particularly those from new or infrequent users, requested more explanations of the concepts used to define the data, as well as more detailed metadata on quality. These users also, as could be expected, found most difficulties with the user interface. As even the most prolific users start out as new users, we therefore recognize that it is important to make our web site more accessible to them. Again, a number of activities are under way to improve metadata (such as the recent launch of a glossary of terms), and simplify the user interface.

### **III. WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OTHER SOURCES**

8. Over the last year we have engaged several short-term interns to help find out more about our users, as well as to market our services to potential users. This work has also given us some further valuable insights into our user community. One action was to invite people registered in the UNECE contacts database (mostly attendees at previous UNECE meetings, mainly on non-statistical topics) to visit our database web site, and provide some feedback. Whilst the results of this exercise were largely in line with those from the user survey, or reflected the specific nature of this group (i.e. mostly public sector employees), one additional item covered was previous knowledge of UNECE statistics. The results were surprisingly low, on a scale of zero (knew nothing) to fifty (knew a lot), the average score was only fifteen, suggesting we could do more to raise awareness of our services to this group.

9. We now have around two years of records of data downloads from our web site. This information shows a growing demand for our data, particularly for more general indicators compiled in overview or summary tables. It also shows that whilst the majority of users view the data on screen, just over ten percent download them in various formats (mostly Microsoft Excel) for further analysis.

10. To complement our data on downloads, we recently signed up for the free “Google Analytics” service<sup>3</sup>. This gives a range of metrics concerning web site hits, which complement our existing measures of data downloads. Examples of the sort of information available from this service include the profile of hits over time, sources (i.e. whether users followed links, used bookmarks, or found us via search engines), time on the web site, number of pages viewed, type of web browser, etc. Information on geographic location has helped to confirm that the responses to the user survey were broadly representative of all database users.

11. For the period of mid-March to mid April, interesting results for the database web site from Google Analytics included that around half of those visiting our home page left the site without visiting any other pages, but those that did stay looked at an average of 10.7 pages. The average length of time spent on our site was just over three and a half minutes. Twenty percent of users visited our web site more than once during

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.google.com/analytics/indexu.html>

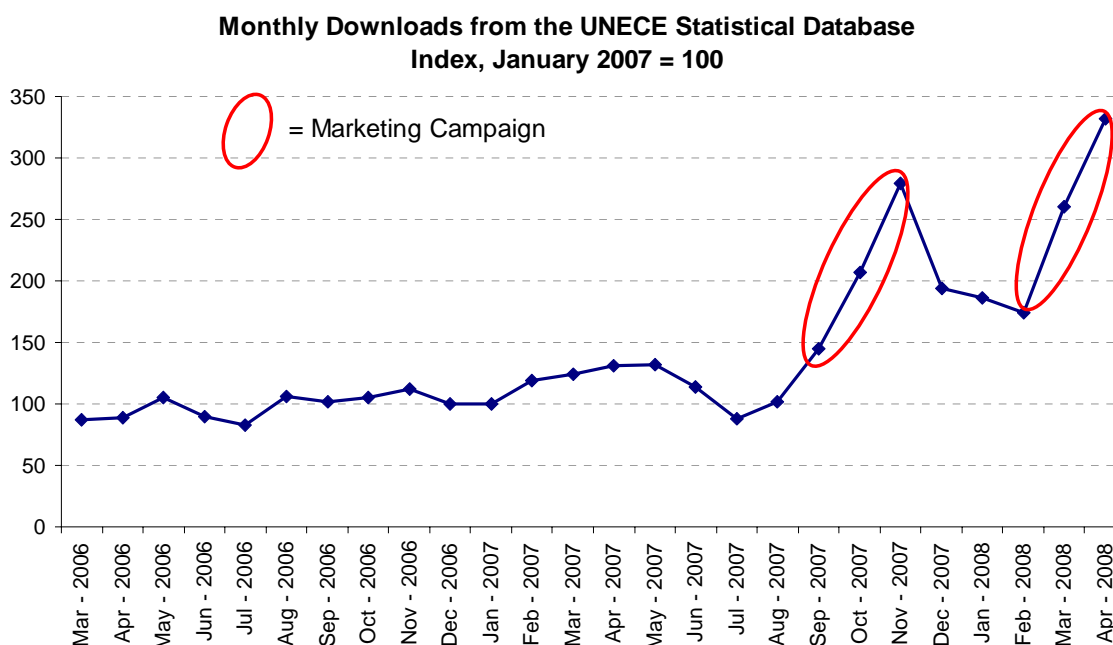
the period, with several visiting more than one hundred times. Unfortunately, we do not as yet have any comparable results from other statistical web sites, so it is difficult to gauge whether these results can be considered as successful or not, so we would be very happy to participate in benchmarking exercises with other organizations using this tool. In the meantime, we can use it to study trends over time, which can help to indicate the impact of any modifications we make to the web site.

#### IV. HOW WE ARE USING THIS KNOWLEDGE

12. We are using our growing, if still rather inadequate, knowledge of our customers to help us improve the range of services we offer, and to help us target potential new customers through marketing exercises. Examples of improvements already made, or to be implemented shortly, as a direct result of this new knowledge include:

- A new “Country Overview” data cube, allowing users to see at a glance key indicators from all statistical domains covered in our database, either to give a picture of conditions in one country, or to allow comparisons between two or more countries. Although this data cube does not include any new data, merely bringing together key figures from other cubes, it has rapidly become the most popular on our web site, adding over one thousand downloads per month.
- Improved metadata – we have recently released a new on-line glossary of statistical terms used in our data sets, we are standardizing the way we display footnotes, and we intend to add more explanatory texts to help improve the statistical literacy of our users.
- Better timeliness – we have put in place a plan to improve the timeliness of our data, following user feedback that they consider timeliness a key dimension of overall data quality.
- Targeted marketing – as our knowledge of existing and potential users increases, we are better able to target our marketing efforts. Two specific marketing campaigns were launched by interns in autumn 2007 and spring 2008. The impact on our data downloads is clearly shown in the spikes in our chart of downloads per month below.

**Chart 1 – The impact of targeted marketing on data downloads**



## **V. FUTURE PLANS TO IMPROVE OUR CUSTOMER KNOWLEDGE**

13. Users of our statistical database web site currently have the option to register with us. This does not give them access to any additional data – an important principle of our database is free access for all – but registered users do have access to additional functionality such as the ability to save pre-defined data selections. This is not much of an incentive to register, except for our most frequent users, and the proportion choosing to register is very low (around 2-3%). We are able to track data downloads by registered users, but at present the proportion is too low to provide any really meaningful information.

14. We plan to make three changes during the second half of 2008. The first is to simplify the registration process, reducing the amount of information we collect about users to just those items that are essential to identify, contact and classify them (e-mail address, country, category of user). The second is to offer a wider range of services to registered users, including the possibility to subscribe to alerts when new data in particular statistical domains are released. The final change will then be to give much more visibility to the registration option on our home page. When these changes are complete, we hope to have a much higher registration rate, and therefore to be better able to track the interests and preferences of our key users.

15. We plan to repeat our database user survey on an annual basis, so are already preparing the next version for release in autumn 2008. We will keep changes to a minimum, so that we can build up a time series of responses, however, as mentioned in Section II above, we do plan to add a question about the volume of data users view or download. This will allow us to give extra weight to the views of the most frequent users.

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

16. We still have a lot to learn about our database users. The little we have learned so far has only served to make us realise how much more we should know, and how useful that knowledge would be. What we have learned has already helped us to better focus our services and target our marketing efforts. The results are clearly visible in the chart in Section IV. Even when the spikes due to specific marketing campaigns have been smoothed out, we have still doubled the number of data downloads per month over the last year.

17. Gathering information about users should involve as many sources as possible. We found a user survey to be a good start, and believe that “Google Analytics” provides a useful tool to study changing patterns over time. We intend to record and store this information in a more systematic way to help us use and understand it more efficiently.

18. In common with many other official statistical organizations, we view our standard data outputs as a service, rather than a market commodity, but that should not be an excuse for ignoring the requirements of our users. The more we meet their needs, the more they will use our services, which in turn will help to improve our visibility and relevance. Without visibility and relevance, organizations cease to add value, something that those who control the finance would be sure to discover sooner or later. Knowledge about customers and their needs, and practical actions to better meet those needs, should therefore be key elements of the future strategy of all official statistical organizations.

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# Annex 1 - Results of the Statistical Database User Survey

## Summary

A user survey was added to the UNECE statistical database home page ([www.unece.org/stats/data](http://www.unece.org/stats/data)) from 20 September to 6 November 2007. Registered users of the database were sent an e-mail inviting them to complete the survey.

There were 162 responses to the survey, of which 154 were complete, and 8 were partial. This report analyzes these responses, and makes recommendations for improvements to the database and the web interface.

### *Key findings:*

- Over 80% of respondents rated the overall quality of our data as good or excellent.
- Over 75% thought the usability of the database web site was good or excellent.
- 48% of respondents found the information in the database to be highly relevant to their needs, whilst 50% found it to be partly relevant.
- 75% of respondents were satisfied with the timeliness of our data, and 90% were satisfied with the metadata provided.
- 45% of respondents were academics, researchers or students. Officials of national governments and international agencies comprised 38%.
- The most sought after data were economic indicators (59% of respondents), followed by population (54%), employment (50%) and National Accounts (49%). Of the domains not currently present in our database, the most requested was trade, followed by housing, telecommunications, energy, environment and the SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) sector.
- Of those respondents that expressed a preference, 88% were looking for data for more than one country, whilst 12% were looking for just one country.

### *Recommendations:*

1. There is a strong link between perceptions of timeliness and overall data quality; therefore actions to improve timeliness should be given a high priority.
2. Metadata, particularly on data quality and comparability, should be improved and made more visible. A glossary of terms should be considered.
3. More links to “recommended databases” in other international organizations should be added, to help users find the data they require more easily.
4. The database interface should be simplified where possible, to make it more intuitive for occasional and first-time users.
5. The Russian interface should be maintained and extended where possible.
6. Introduce the proposed country overview cube to give users more flexibility to combine data from different domains, and to help those looking for data for just one country.
7. This user survey should be repeated in Autumn 2008 to measure any changes.

## *Action Plan*

<b>Recommendation Number</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Success Criteria</b>
1	Increase the focus on timeliness in the review of the quality improvement strategy at the end of 2007.	Better scores for timeliness and overall quality in the 2008 user survey.
1	Ensure all database managers are aware of the high importance users attach to timeliness.	Better scores for timeliness and overall quality in the 2008 user survey.
2	Work to improve and standardize footnotes is continued and accelerated where possible.	All footnotes to conform to the PC-Axis Meta-model, and to follow agreed standards for formatting by June 2008.
2	Links provided to more detailed methodological material and manuals wherever possible.	Links provided in footnotes by March 2008.
2	A glossary of terms is produced, containing at least the terms used in data cube titles. It should include links to the more comprehensive glossaries at OECD and Eurostat, and links to methodological manuals and other relevant documents.	Glossary available on the web site by the end of March 2008.
3	A page containing recommended links by statistical domain will be added to the web site.	Links available by the end of March 2008.
4	The database interface will be reviewed as part of the implementation of the latest version of PC-Axis.	Improved interface available by August 2008.
5	Ensure existing Russian text is kept in line with the English version, and gradually expand Russian interface to cover all data cubes.	All current cubes available in English and Russian versions by end 2008. Mechanisms in place to ensure both language versions are kept in line.
6	The Country Overview cube will be finalized and released on the web site.	Cube available to users by the end of March 2008.
7	The user survey will be repeated annually	The survey is repeated in Autumn 2008.

## Technical Notes

### Representativeness of the results

“It doesn't matter what you "learn" from a survey; you can't trust the data if they don't represent your users.”  
– Jakob Nielsen, web design “guru”, [www.useit.com](http://www.useit.com).

It is difficult to comment on how representative the responses to this survey are, due to our lack of detailed knowledge about our many unregistered users. There are, however, a few hints. For example, there is a moderate correlation between the proportions in the different user categories in this survey, and those of the registered users of the database. It is not clear, however, how representative registered users are of all database users.

The proportion of responses from CIS countries (30%) was rather higher than the typical proportion of data downloads via the Russian language interface (usually 5-10%), however some respondents in these countries were from international agencies, so may prefer the English interface, whereas others may simply not be aware that the Russian interface exists.

Overall, there are no strong signals that the responses are unrepresentative, but similarly no clear proof that they do fully represent the target population. The dangers of drawing firm conclusions from such a small and potentially biased sample are therefore acknowledged, and the results should thus be interpreted with some care.

Despite the above caveats, the fact remains that these results are based on the most detailed data yet collected about the users of our database. They are, therefore, our best measures of the characteristics and satisfaction levels of those users.

### Conventions followed during data analysis

In the analyses on the following pages, item non-response has been ignored. The total number of responses therefore varies slightly from question to question. The percentages for different responses have been calculated based on the number of responses to the specific question concerned.

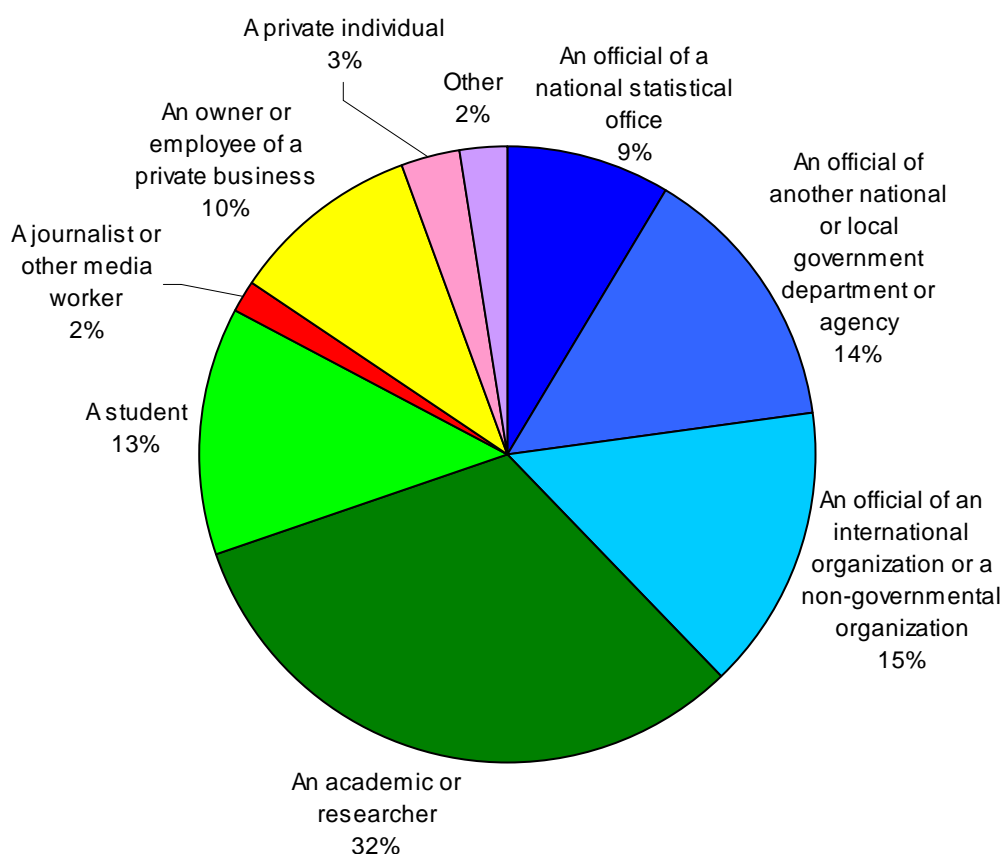
Percentages in tables are given to one decimal place, and those in most charts to no decimal places. Rounding errors may therefore mean that percentages do not always add up to 100.

Text responses have been copied as they were written, with the exception that obvious spelling errors have been corrected for ease of reading.

## Detailed Results

### Question 1 – Category of User

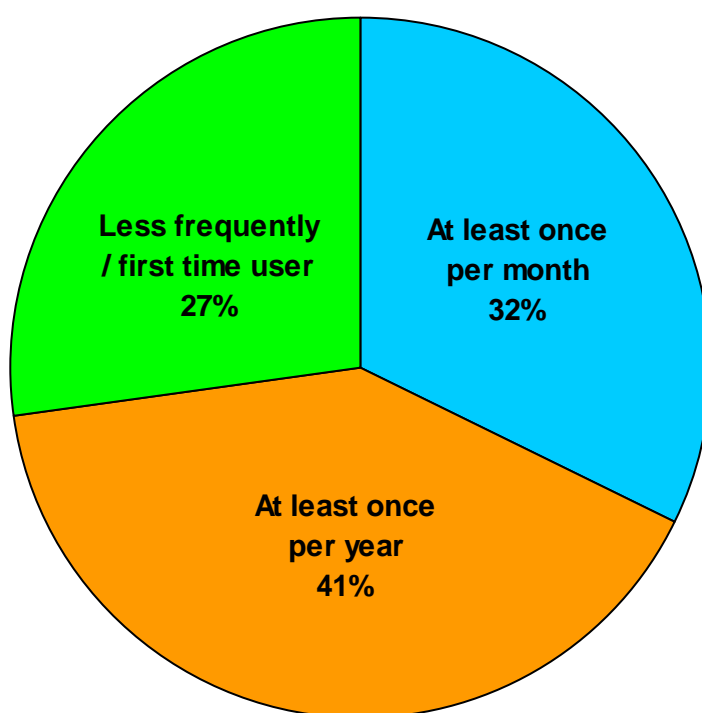
Please select the category that best describes you.		
	Count	%
An official of a national statistical office	14	8.6%
An official of another national or local government department or agency	23	14.2%
An official of an international organization or a non-governmental organization	24	14.8%
An academic or researcher	52	32.1%
A student	21	13.0%
A journalist or other media worker	3	1.9%
An owner or employee of a private business	16	9.9%
A private individual	5	3.1%
Other	4	2.5%
Total	162	100%





## Question 2 – Frequency of Use

How often do you use the UNECE statistical database?		
	Count	%
At least once per month	52	32.1%
At least once per year	66	40.7%
Less frequently / first time user	44	27.2%
Total	162	100%



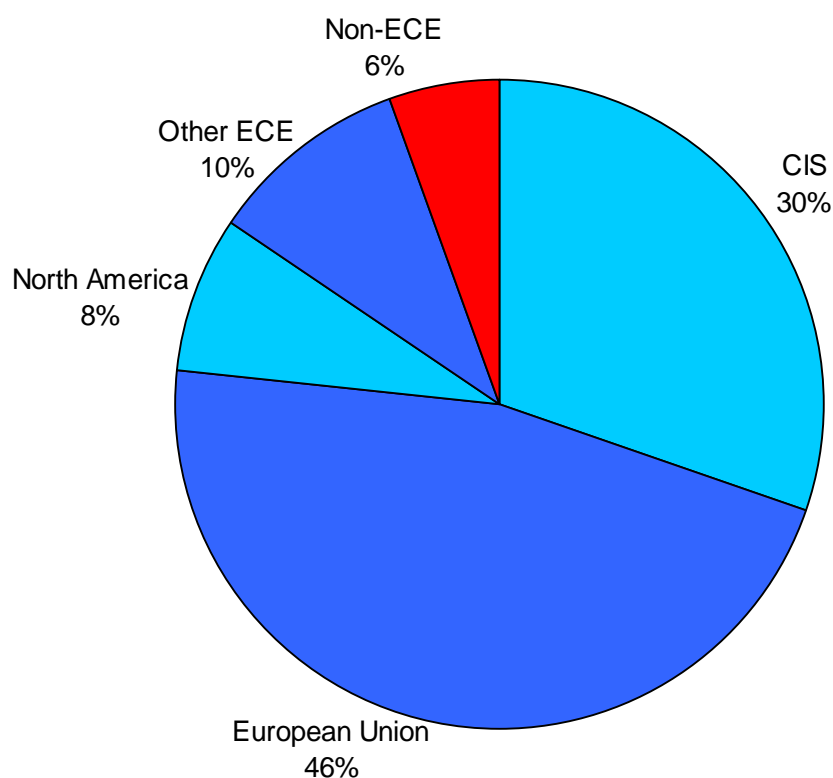
Academics, researchers, students and owners / employees of private businesses were slightly more likely to be infrequent or first-time users, whereas officials of international or non-governmental organizations, and national statistical offices were slightly more likely to be regular users.

### Question 3 – Location

(Top 5 countries highlighted)

Please select the country in which you are located.		
	Count	%
Albania	1	0.6%
Armenia	2	1.2%
Azerbaijan	3	1.9%
Belarus	7	4.3%
Belgium	4	2.5%
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	0.6%
Bulgaria	1	0.6%
Canada	2	1.2%
Chile	1	0.6%
China	1	0.6%
Czech Republic	1	0.6%
Denmark	2	1.2%
Finland	1	0.6%
France	2	1.2%
Georgia	3	1.9%
<b>Germany</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8.0%</b>
Greece	1	0.6%
Hungary	3	1.9%
India	1	0.6%
Ireland	3	1.9%
Israel	1	0.6%
Italy	7	4.3%
Kazakhstan	1	0.6%
Kyrgyzstan	2	1.2%
Lithuania	1	0.6%
Luxembourg	1	0.6%
Mexico	2	1.2%
Moldova	6	3.7%
Netherlands	3	1.9%
Norway	2	1.2%
Peru	1	0.6%
Poland	3	1.9%
Portugal	4	2.5%
Romania	5	3.1%
<b>Russian Federation</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8.0%</b>
Serbia	1	0.6%
Slovenia	3	1.9%
Spain	5	3.1%
Sri Lanka	1	0.6%
Sweden	2	1.2%
<b>Switzerland</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
Tajikistan	1	0.6%
Thailand	1	0.6%
Ukraine	9	5.6%
United Arab Emirates	1	0.6%
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
<b>United States of America</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6.8%</b>
Uzbekistan	2	1.2%
Total	162	100%

<b>Summary</b>				
UNECE Member Countries		153	94.4%	
of which:	<i>Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)</i>	49		30.3%
	<i>European Union</i>	75		46.3%
	<i>North America</i>	13		8.0%
	<i>Other ECE</i>	16		9.9%
Non-members		9	5.6%	
Total		162	100%	



<b>Responses per ten million inhabitants</b>	
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)	1.76
European Union	1.52
North America	0.40
Other ECE	1.42
ECE Total	1.26

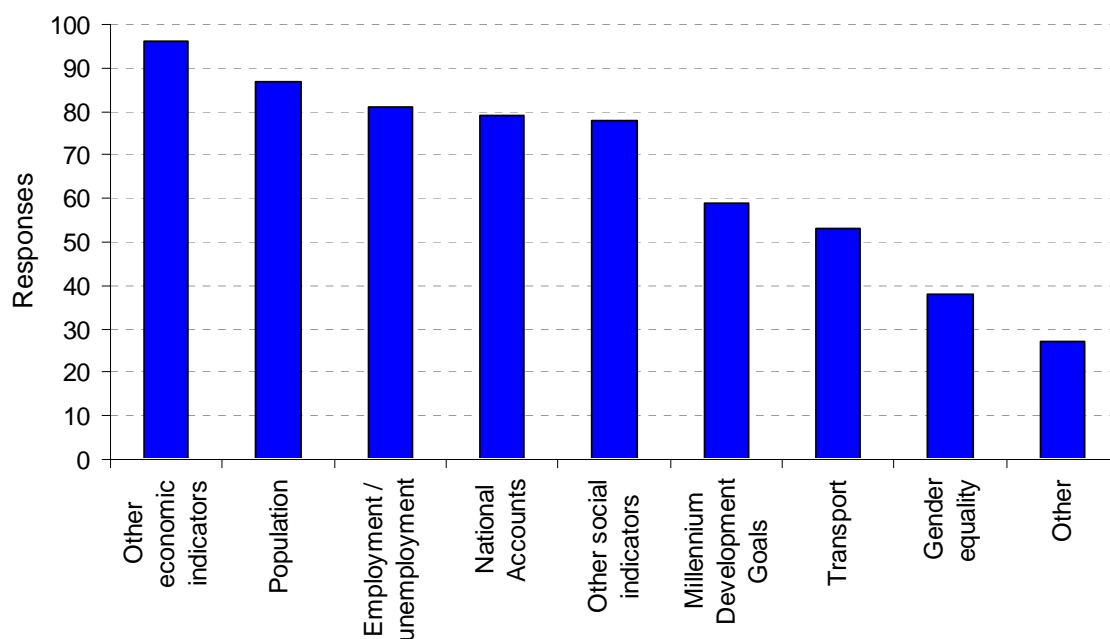
Assuming these response patterns are typical of all database users, it is encouraging to see such a high response from CIS countries, particularly given that the survey questionnaire was only available in English. The relatively low response from the USA and Canada suggests that the UNECE has a rather low profile in these countries, particularly given the high rates of Internet usage in these countries. This low response may be at least partly due to the name – Economic Commission for *Europe* – which may discourage potential database users in North America.

## Question 4 – Data Requirements

### What type of data are you looking for? (Please select all that apply)

	Count	%
National Accounts	79	48.8 %
Employment / unemployment	81	50.0 %
Transport	53	32.7 %
Other economic indicators (wages, prices, exchange rates etc.)	96	59.3 %
Population	87	53.7 %
Gender equality	38	23.5 %
Millennium Development Goals	59	36.4 %
Other social indicators (education, health, crime etc.)	78	48.2 %
One country	15	9.3 %
More than one country	107	66.1 %
Other (Please specify)	27	16.7 %

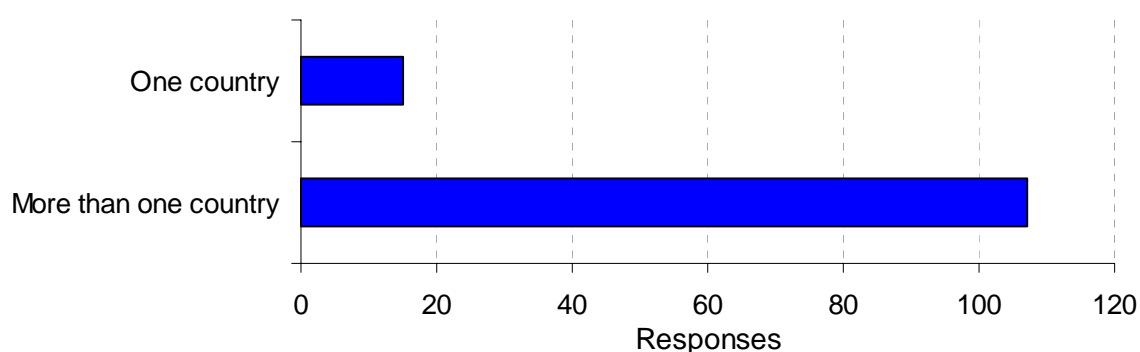
### Data sought by domain



<b>Responses to “Other” by domain</b>	
Domain	Responses
Trade	5
Telecommunications / Internet	3
Housing / real estate	3
SMEs	2
Environment	2
Energy	2
Forestry / timber	1
Agriculture	1
Households	1
“Women in world”	1
Worldwide	1
Regions	1
“Miscellaneous”	1

Note: general responses such as “statistics” and “projects” have been omitted from this table.

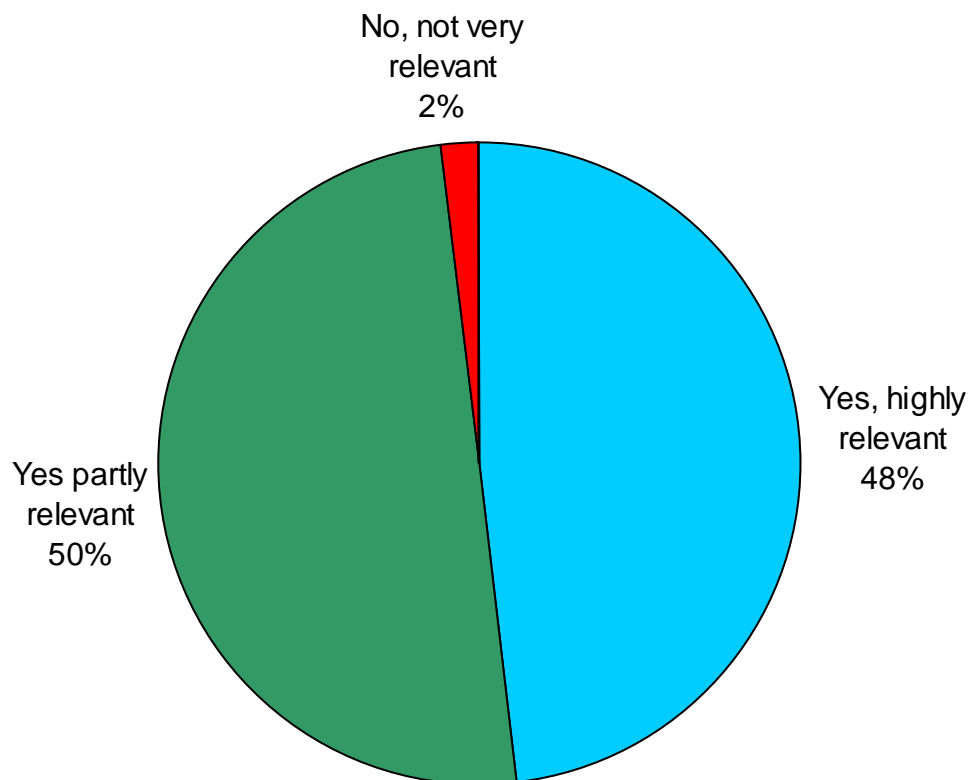
### Data sought by coverage



A clear majority of respondents are more interested in multi-national comparisons than individual country data. However, this should not be particularly surprising given the availability of more comprehensive national data on the web sites of national statistical institutes in most UNECE member countries.

## Question 5 – Relevance

Is the information in our database relevant to you?		
	Count	%
Yes, highly relevant	77	48.1 %
Yes partly relevant	80	50.0 %
No, not very relevant - please tell us why	3	1.9 %
No, not at all relevant - please tell us why	0	0 %
Total	160	100%

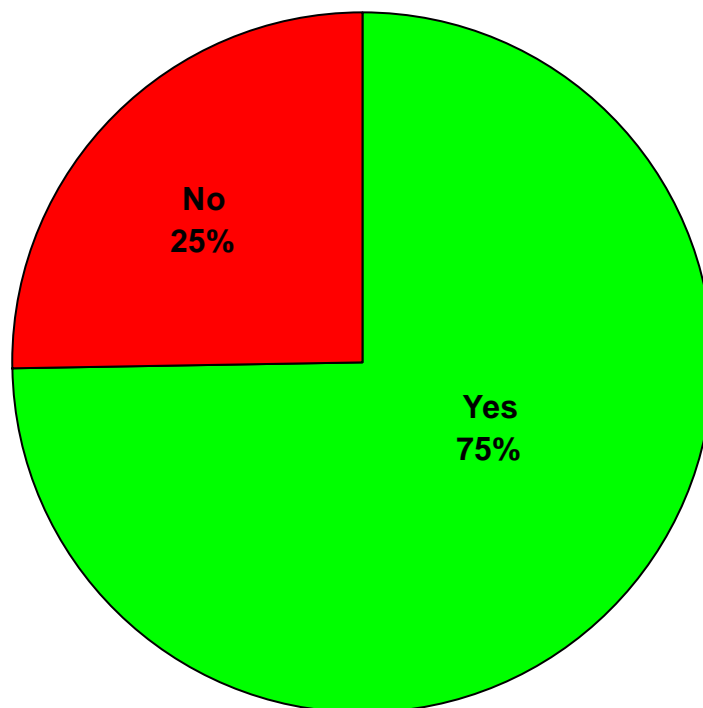


### Responses to “No, not very relevant”

- Now I start to read the informations
- You collect more economical data [*this respondent was looking for environmental data*].
- Insufficient details [*this respondent was looking for population and household data*].

## Question 6 – Timeliness

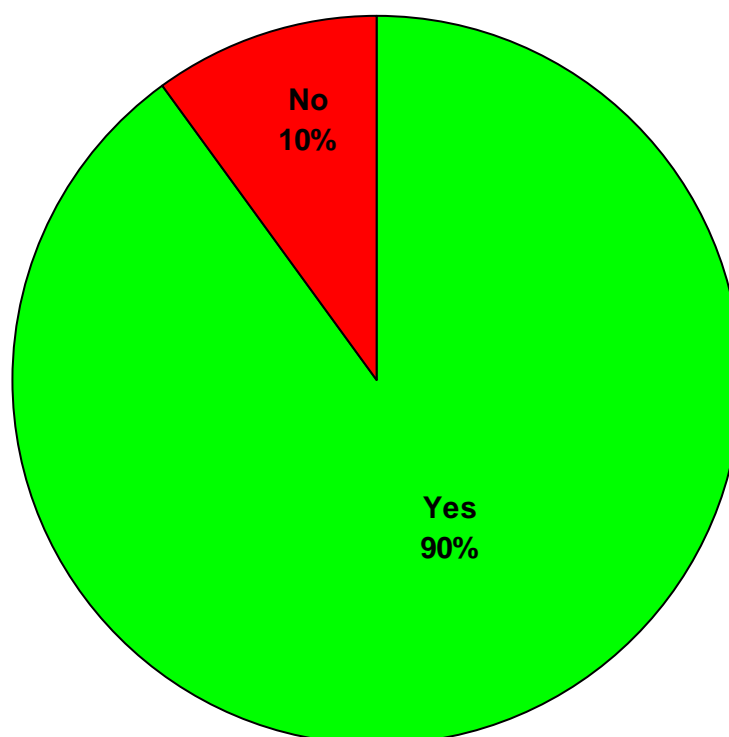
Are our data sufficiently up to date for your purposes?		
	Count	%
Yes	119	74.8 %
No	40	25.2 %
Total	159	100%



There is no clear link between the type of data respondents were looking for and their perception of timeliness. However, respondents from European Union countries were less likely to be satisfied with the timeliness of our data than respondents from other countries. This is perhaps due to recent efforts by Eurostat to improve the timeliness of their statistics, leading to higher expectations amongst users from these countries. All officials of national statistical offices were satisfied with the timeliness of our data. Satisfaction was much lower, however, amongst owners / employees of private businesses, who were much less satisfied than other groups (only 37.5% thought our data were sufficiently up to date).

## Question 7 – Clarity

Do we provide sufficient information (metadata) to help you understand our data?		
	Count	%
Yes	142	89.9 %
No (Please tell us what is missing)	16	10.1 %
Total	158	100%



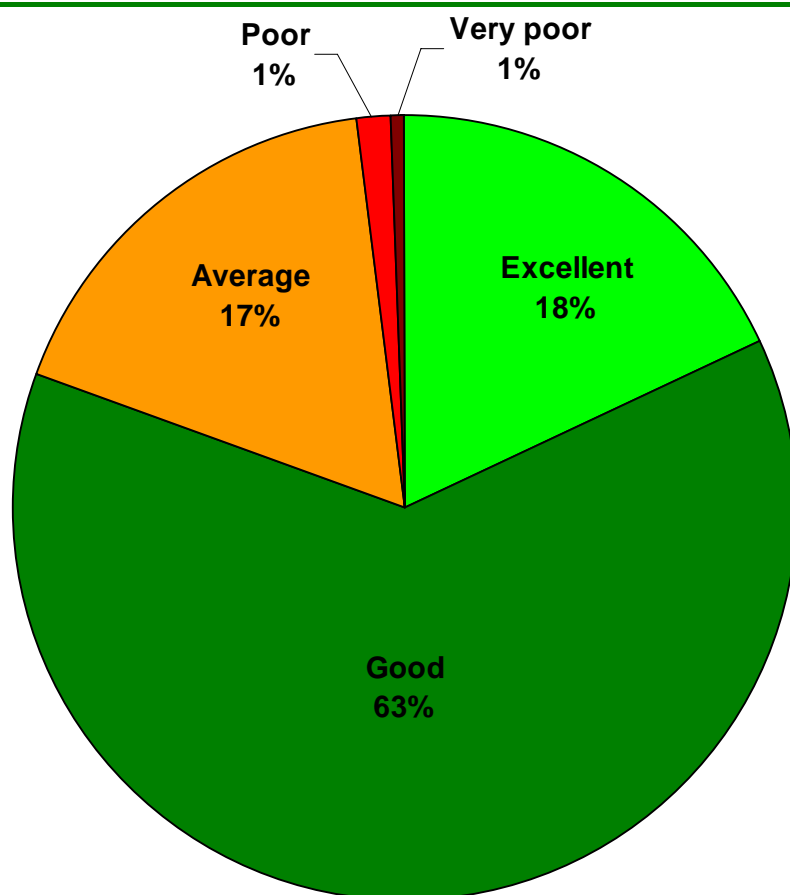
### Responses to “No”

- Not sure
- Now I start to read your data
- The more specified the better!!
- Sometime concrete figures are missing
- GDP description and breakdown
- Could be more precise
- I need more Russian translation
- I have never asked for
- Need glossary for the Economics illiterate users
- I find it hard to understand the difference between the series (GNP/GDP/fixed/current prices)
- More detailed information on data gathering
- In my fields of interest the simple answer could have been Yes. However - my experience using NA data across countries is that definitions might differ or seemingly so. The differences could be due to variations in wording but I am not sure. Removing such uncertainty should on the other side not be a task for the user of the database. My basic point is that if there are real differences in definitions this should be an up front meta-information to the user.
- Actually, I think you do provide sufficient metadata, but it's hard to navigate and get to the needed info (defs. esp. hard to find!)
- Metadata should include the source of the data and preferably any info on data quality
- Unable to understand all these boxes and variable to click on
- More detailed information about problems of data quality and lack of comparability across countries



## Question 8 – Overall Quality

In your opinion, what is the overall quality of our data?		
	Count	%
Excellent	28	18.1 %
Good	97	62.6 %
Average	27	17.4 %
Poor - please tell us why	2	1.3 %
Very poor - please tell us why	1	0.7 %
Total	155	100%



### Responses to “Poor”

- Now I start to read your information
- Variables one would want, like GDP per capita market exchange rates, are not available and the data that is available is not timely. For the aggregates, like CIS, most variables are missing values.

### Response to “Very Poor”

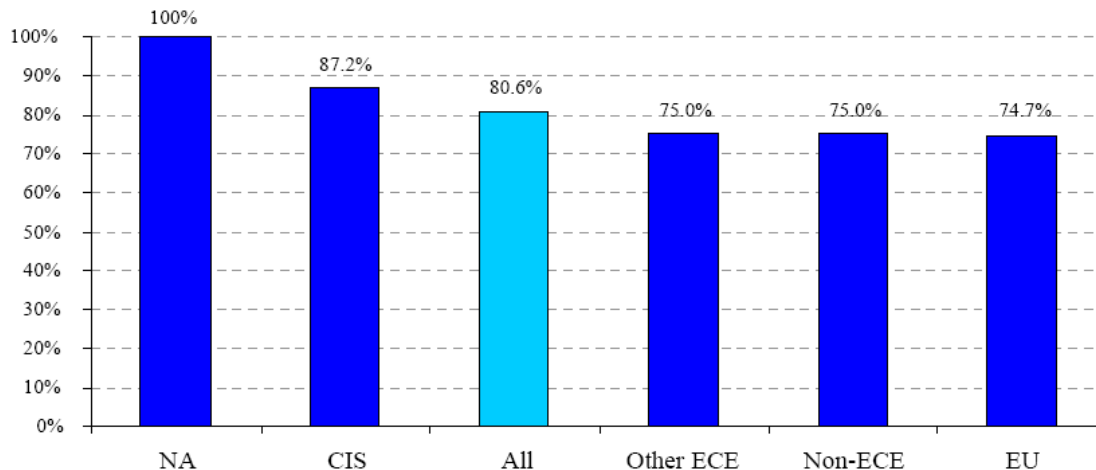
- Unable to understand how to obtain the data fast. [*Note: when this response was followed-up, it was found that temporary technical problems had made access to data much more difficult than usual for this respondent.*]

Officials of national statistical offices and international or non-governmental organizations were slightly more likely to rate our data quality as excellent, whereas academics, researchers, journalists and private individuals gave slightly lower ratings.

The proportion of very infrequent or first-time users rating data quality as excellent was higher than for the population as a whole (27.5% compared to 18.1%), whilst that for regular users (at least once per month) was the same, and that for less regular users (at least once per year) was lower (12.3% compared to 18.1%).

Geographically, respondents in North America (NA) and CIS countries rated overall data quality higher than their counterparts in the other regions, as shown in the chart below (groupings as used for Question 3 above).

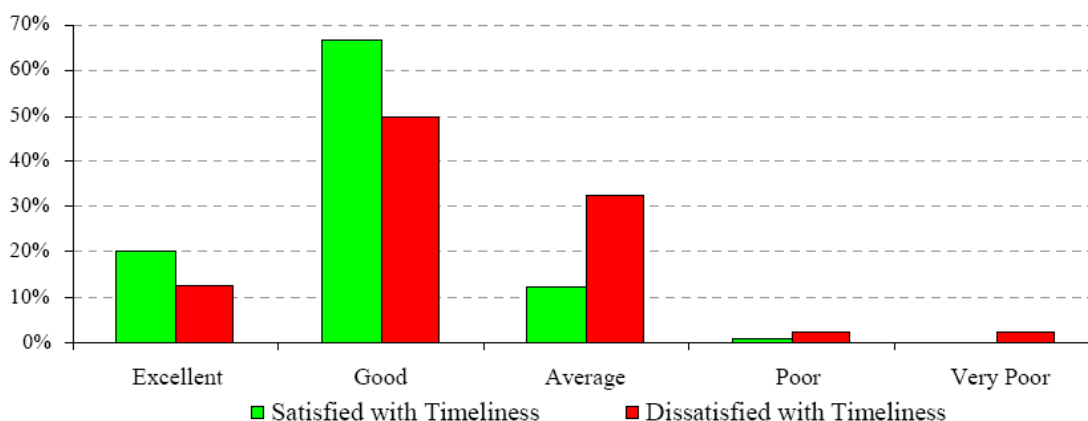
#### Percentage of respondents rating overall data quality good or excellent by region



Respondents looking for data on economic indicators, gender equality and Millennium Development Goals rated our data quality slightly higher than the average for all respondents, whereas those looking for national accounts and transport data rated quality slightly lower.

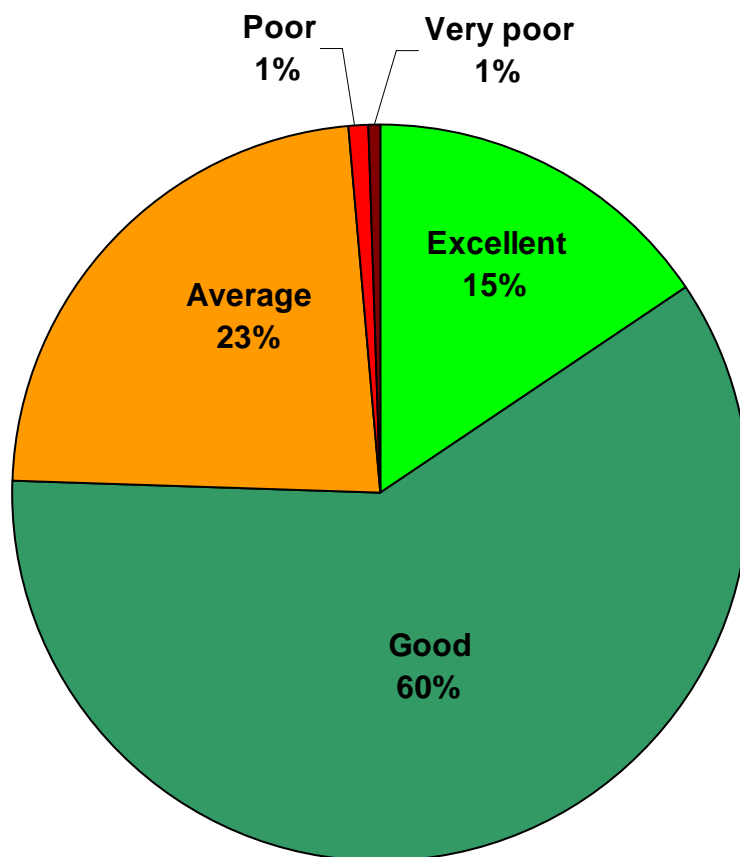
As expected, there is a clear relationship between assessment of overall quality and the separate components of quality. Those respondents giving lower ratings for relevance (Question 5), timeliness (Question 6), clarity (Question 7) and accessibility (Question 9), also tended to give lower ratings for overall quality. This was particularly noticeable for timeliness, as shown in the chart below, suggesting that this aspect of quality is very important for users.

#### Overall quality ratings by satisfaction with timeliness



### Question 9 – Accessibility (via the web site)

How user-friendly is our web site?		
	Count	%
Excellent	24	15.5 %
Good	93	60.0 %
Average	36	23.2 %
Poor - please tell us why	1	0.7 %
Very poor - please tell us why	1	0.7 %
Total	155	100%



#### Response to “Poor”

- Difficult to finalise a research

#### Response to “Very Poor”

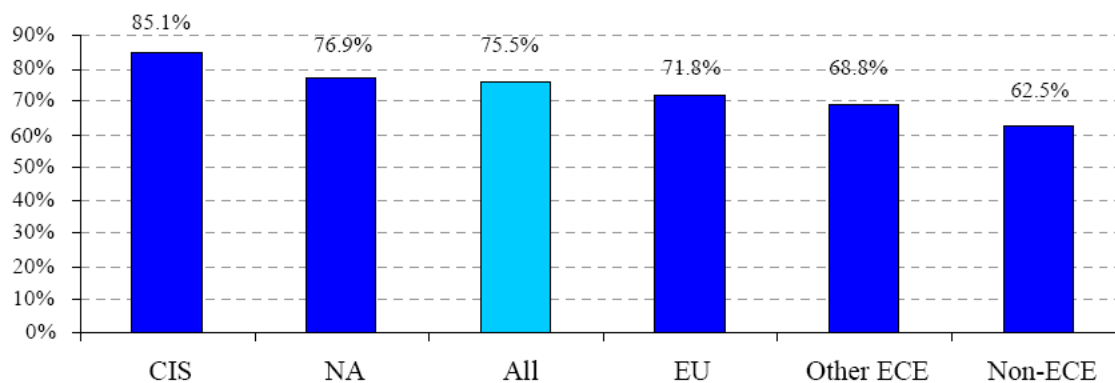
- Very convoluted, it seems to me. Needs to be much simpler to "outsiders" [*Note: when this response was followed-up, it was found that temporary technical problems had made access to data much more difficult than usual for this respondent.*]

Officials of national statistical offices, students and owners / employees of private businesses rated the user friendliness of our website the highest, whereas journalists, officials of international / non-governmental organizations and private individuals were less impressed.

Frequent users of our web site rated user friendliness slightly higher than occasional or new users. This is supported by some of the comments on database functionality under Question 10, suggesting that there is a learning curve for users, and that new users may need more help.

Geographically, respondents in CIS countries and North America rated the user-friendliness of the database web site higher than their counterparts in the other regions, whilst users from outside the ECE region were least satisfied (see chart below - groupings as used for Question 3 above). The high rating from users in CIS countries may be at least partly due to the Russian language interface for data, which is unique for this range of data. However, comments in response to questions 7 and 10 suggest that there is still some room for improvement to the Russian service.

#### **Percentage of respondents rating web site user-friendliness good or excellent by region**



As noted for overall quality above, there is a link between assessments of different aspects of quality. In this case, the relationships were weak, except for the link with clarity, where only 50% of those who thought we did not provide sufficient metadata rated the user-friendliness on the website as good or excellent. This suggests that improvements in clarity (i.e. better metadata) will also have a strong impact on accessibility (web site user-friendliness).

## Question 10 – Comments and Suggestions for Improvements

Responses have been grouped by theme.

### *1) Timeliness / frequency*

- I am usually looking for data on South East European countries for comparison purposes. However, it is generally not available as a rule. Some of the examples are Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina. Even today there is no macroeconomic data about 2006. Otherwise everything seems alright
- It would be helpful if the data is updated more frequently faster
- The website would be more useful if data series were more frequent. Also, there is often a question of consistency when comparing data from two nations.
- I believe that you could provide more actual information, because not all the states are provided with information. It is already finish at the 2007 year, but the database do not provide responses for the 2006 year (MOLDOVA. Hope that for the future this aspect will be taken into consideration.

### *2) More detail / additional data*

- I intend to familiarize myself more with the ECE databases. Besides classes in stochastic demography I am running a GIS for economists and social scientists - am therefore deeply interested in regional data worldwide as less aggregated as possible. Thank you.
- Please present rates if at all possible. For example, the transportation statistics are very valuable for my research in the USA on Motor vehicle injuries and deaths. Your data are very valuable as an easily accessible source of international data for comparing to conditions in my state of New York and the USA in general. But just presenting raw numbers does not allow for comparison. I can readily obtain population estimates for the USA, but not sure where to go for other countries. Plus it requires a lot of extra work. In order to compare countries or to accurately view trends over time, we need population-based rates, such as ...per 100,000 people.... Thank you, as this is a potentially very valuable resource.
- It would be interesting to find more detailed information (city or regional level)
- If we can have data a database at city level then it will be very helpful....
- Include info on telecommunications situation/ opportunities for expansion in the country profile.
- I would like to find more data about welfare state and fiscal policy
- I would like suggest you for improvement of statistics to include data on the global, regional and national GHG emissions, environment indicators and its relations with GDP.
- Maybe it is possible to add the data on poverty and inequality, and some other aspects of HBS (household budget survey) data
- Try to post older data, when available. This will be used for historical purposes.
- I am very interesting data related water transportation, but I can't find any relevant documents related to the water transportation.
- It will be also desirable to have data on innovation performance indicators.

### **3) Access / links to other databases**

- The UNECE/FAO Timber Database is the only serious and authoritative Database in my field, a mine of information on production and policy, and of increasing importance. The service is excellent, continue!
- Difficulties to access data from the GAS Centre database. How to apply?
- How often the data is updated? I checked the Finnish data (all housing indicators) and noticed that there were no observations for 2006. The Finnish data started in 1980. In the future is it possible to get older data of various countries from your databank?
- I would to have more links to Eurostat site, in particular concerning such documents as eEurope, i2010, Council Regulations, etc.

### **4) Database functionality**

- More flexible queries Combination of several characteristics (fields) in queries
- Free access everywhere - for everyone
- Finding information easily is the most important.
- Very difficult to understand how to access the data
- You could make the database more flexible to users by making it possible to construct a single file with data from different domains. For example, it does not seem to be possible to construct a single dataset with data from national accounts, educational attainment and unemployment rates. Also, the general heading on the first page of the website, "Comparable data for Europe, North America and Central Asia", is a bit misleading. In some cases the data are not adjusted for comparability, so it is misleading to present them in the same table. For example, the table for unemployment rates includes some data based on labour force surveys and some data based on administrative records. I don't think you should present data from the two sources in the same table, as some users may treat them as comparable.
- Please, use more international languages (Russian) in your official work
- Continue to improve, may be look for a faster and more appropriate research tool.
- I believe the statistical database should be easier to find. There certainly is a lot of highly valuable information here but it takes a bit of digging to find.
- Naturally, as with any website that is data oriented, navigation is a little confusing for first time users. Otherwise, excellent job :).
- As 1st time user, it is not evident to find and present the data as you want. However, all figures are welcome and very interesting to compare the different countries.

### **5) Metadata**

- A Glossary of the Economics terms please.
- I am collecting road traffic accident data within Europe. Unfortunately the way how the data is collected differs between the different EU countries. I think it would be very helpful to agree Europe wide on a common standard.
- I would like to receive more information about statistical methods applied by you for using in my work. Is it possible for my colleagues and me to participate at the conference organized by UNESCO to discuss the statistical problems?

### **6) Miscellaneous**

- Most of my research is focused on poultry (production, trade, consumption), but I occasionally use population data and I like to review economic background data.
- The more you can aggregate data the easier it is for policy-makers to gain an overview of trends and dynamics. Nevertheless, disaggregation of data is very important, too, so that we can see different country trends and analyse why things happen differently in different areas and different sectors.
- Taking into account that we start to use this database at first time all questions will be next time

### **7) Praise**

- The gender database is a wonderful resource. Should be provided with more resources so that the data can be updated more often and other indicators can be included.
- I love this site! :)
- All in all the UNECE database (macro economic data) has improved a lot during the 24 months. Congratulations!
- Thank you for your work!
- I wish you successes
- First time user and positively surprised, especially with the choices in format to download the data

**End - Thank-you for completing our survey. Your opinions are very important to us. To show our appreciation, we would like to offer you a free copy of our CD-ROM publication "UNECE Countries in Figures - 2007". To get your free copy, please give us your name and full address below.**

142 respondents (88%) gave their name and address details, 20 (12%) preferred to remain anonymous, or did not reach the end of the questionnaire.