

Simplification and automation of the data collection processes of Estonian household surveys

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Session 3: Process Efficiency Management

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Topics

- Creating and updating data collection **processes**
- Introduction of new **tools** for interviewing
- **Innovations** in data collection

Data collection processes

- When producing statistics, it is important that the **processes** are smooth and the participants know their role in it. Process diagrams create process **transparency** and give ideas how to achieve simplification or automate certain activities within the process.
- During the previous strategy period, 2018–2022, Statistics Estonia focused on **describing processes**.
- Process descriptions are **available** to all employees in the Process Manual section on the intranet.

Updates to data collection processes in 2022–2023

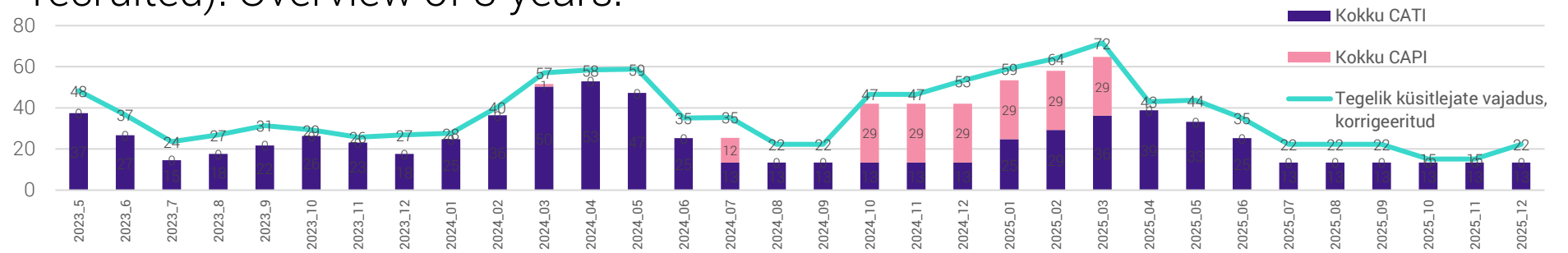
- Quality control activities for data collection in social surveys
- Notifying respondents
 - Updating the roles of different departments in the process of informing respondents
 - Standardisation of the letter content; separate templates for different respondent statuses
 - Sending a message to the respondent's two e-mail addresses – the number of paper letters decreased 3–4 times
 - Making a video of the sampling and adding it to the Smaily letter
 - Replacing one Smaily notification with an **SMS** – a reminder to answer in CAWI
- Reorganisation of **feedback** collection from respondents – feedback about the questionnaire is asked at the end of the questionnaire; this allows quick problem solving

Creation of new process drawings in 2022–2023

- Process of **selecting a data collection method** for different sampling units depending on the availability of contact information (e-mail, telephone):
 - CAWI-CATI – persons with e-mail address, telephone
 - CATI-CAWI – persons without e-mail address and with sample person's or family member's telephone number
 - No CAWI and CATI data collection – persons without contact data. This part of the sample is not distributed to interviewers. The data collection is finished centrally (non-response).
- Process of doing **prize draws** (gift cards) and distributing the prizes
- Process of **removing the roles** of completed surveys in the data collection application VVIS – the application is more understandable and more reliable
- Process of requesting and **paying a fuel advance** – necessary for CAPI if there are many trips to respondents and high expenses over the month
- Process of determining the **fee to be paid for the interview**

New tools in data collection

- It is important that employees have the necessary **tools** for their work, which help to plan surveys and ensure the quality and efficiency of surveys.
- **Smart phones** for interviewers – allows working during any problems with Wildix (virtual phone), the internet or VPN; and allows CAPI route planning
- Brief **survey introduction** for interviewers – helps interviewers quickly find answers to respondents' frequently asked questions
- **Overview of work status** – a survey manager's tool which consolidates all surveys (also those collected in different applications) by team and interviewers and indicates to data collection problems
- Planning the **need for interviewers** – allows to get a quick overview of the need for interviewers by collection method and month. Indicates the low seasons and high seasons (where additional interviewers should be recruited). Overview of 3 years.



Innovations in data collection

- With the help of **innovative techniques**, it is possible to collect data more efficiently without losing data quality.
- Used in the additional survey of the Population Census
 - **Voluntary online responding** and innovative weighting methodology – enabled a large number of people to respond and thereby improved the quality of the data.
 - The CATI and CAPI interviews had the same **remuneration rate**. The interviewer decided whether to collect data by phone or face-to-face – this made it possible to save time and to better plan the survey in an uncertain situation.
 - Sending **automatic e-notifications** – enables the timely notification of respondents and saves time. We are developing a similar solution also for regular surveys.

Innovations in data collection

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- **Changing the data collection method** during the collection period from CAPI to CATI – respondents did not want to meet the interviewer face to face and preferred to answer by phone. A worse option would have been to stop data collection and accept a lower number of responses. This was used during the Covid pandemic and in the gender-based violence survey.
- **Reorganising the work of interviewer teams** (supervisor and interviewers) – an interviewer has one supervisor, regardless of which surveys they collect. Before, each interviewer had one supervisor for regular surveys and another for contract work. This caused confusion and competition between surveys.
- In addition to respondents' homes, CAPI interviews for the PIAAC survey were also conducted in the **premises** of Statistics Estonia and in other public places, e.g. libraries, local and state government buildings. This was agreed with the owners of the premises. The premises of Statistics Estonia were used very intensively.

Conclusions

- It is important to **adapt** to the current situation and changing external conditions while collecting data.
- The **processes** should be smooth and **transparent**; participants and managers need to know the activities and their sequence in the process
- Interviewers, supervisors and managers must have the **necessary tools** for conducting, monitoring and planning data collection.
- Data collection needs **innovation**. The practices of earlier years may not be suitable today.



Thank you!

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