

USERS' OPINION ABOUT US AND OUR ACTIVITY

RESULTS OF THE 2014 SURVEY

In 2014 the Hungarian Central Statistical Office conducted a comprehensive opinion survey with the assistance of an independent external partner (the Forsense Kft.), among its users interested in HCSO data, publications and other products. The overall focus of the survey was users' satisfaction was, with special emphasis on data quality. (As the European Statistics Code of Practice requires interim examination of data quality.) On the other hand we were eager to learn more about demands regarding regional data and the feedback concerning their quality. We used several data collection methods for the survey, such as online questionnaires, so-called thematic interview technique and focus group research.

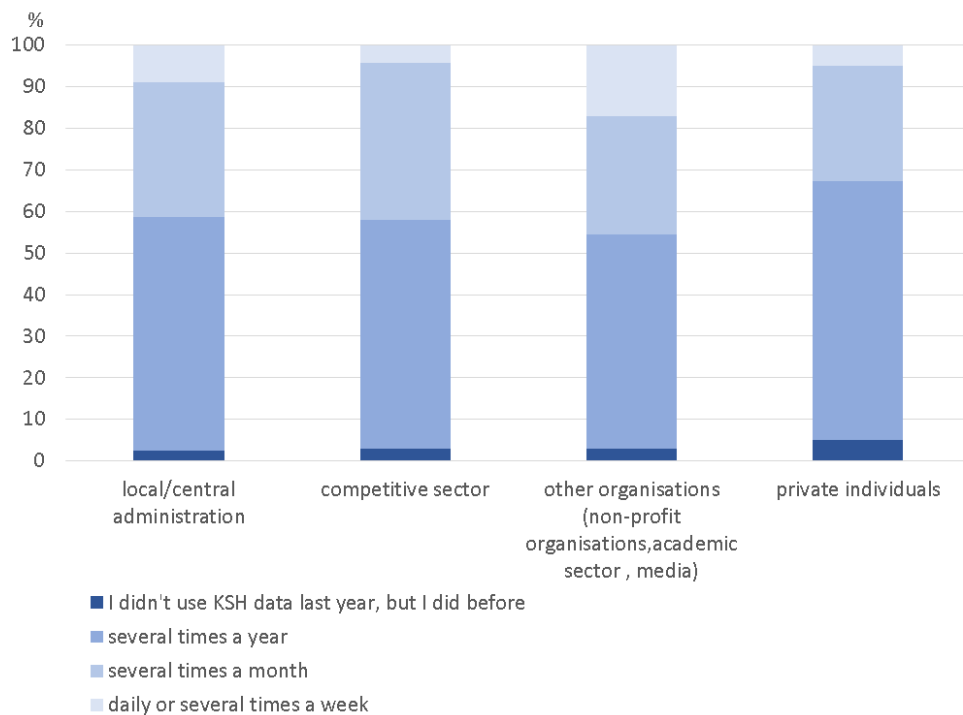
The online questionnaire has been sent out to 12 thousand addresses (to companies, researchers, administrative offices, journalists, private individuals), and we obtained about 1500 usable responses (out of the 2000 thousand received replies 1500 so many used HCSO data). This proportion of fulfilment materialization is consistent with the expectations related to this genre. The majority of respondents, one third, came from local administration, one tenth from the central administration, more than one quarter from the competitive sector. Private individuals represented more than one tenth of the sample. We treated all the other user groups as a consolidated one, most of the time, including non-profit organisations and the academic sector (higher education and research sites), too. Beside the online questionnaire survey we conducted 32 interviews and had three focus groups (one in the capital and two in the country) with the support of the external partner.

The majority of the participants in the questionnaire part were from the 40s- 50s age group, the average age of the respondents was 46 years of age. The youngest user group was that of students (average age 33 years), the oldest one was the "other organisations" group including libraries and public education institutions, too, (average age 52 years). Women were somewhat overrepresented with a proportion of 63%. Compared to the national data, as expected, municipalities were slightly underrepresented: 17% of respondents lived in the capital, 29% in towns of county rank, 34% in other cities, and 20% represented the municipalities (1 person lived abroad). Users have usually higher education, 75% with a degree, (within it 5% have a PhD degree), 13% higher vocational education, 12% a high school graduation at most. From regional point of view Pest, Békés and Hajdú-Bihar counties were overrepresented as far as population ratio is concerned.

Majority of users from the competitive sector and representatives from the media are using HCSO statistics for more than 5 years. Students, higher education students and private individuals used the statistics for at most one year prior to the survey.

Central government users (not local government ones), media representatives and researchers, as well as those employed in higher education use our data more often. Compared to the total sample among private individuals those using data just a few times a year are overrepresented.

Data use frequency by user groups



The use of data- and information is due in the largest proportion (27%) for gathering background information (e.g. data on inflation for contracts or other purposes). Policy or business decisions as well as defining strategies represent a similar proportion (24%). Overall information gathering (e.g. private discussions, including reading newspapers – 20%) are also high on the list. 19% is scientific research, analysis, writing essays for tenders and other purposes. In comparison the proportion of school research papers (6%) and communication (3%) is modest.

The research revealed that the Dissemination database is the most popular among the HCSO “products”, followed by the downloadable analysing publications and the fixed STADAT tables. Download data shows that fixed tables are being used somewhat more often than the interactive Dissemination database.

The overwhelming majority of respondents – nine tenth – obtain the necessary information by using the tables, databases and publications available on the website. There are users who get the information through the Information services or libraries – among others the HCSO Library – but they represent a significantly smaller proportion. Naturally, some users purchase our publications, too. A relatively smaller proportion is interested in using the HCSO Safe Centre. While the website is used by many users from all age groups for obtaining information, the use of library is particularly intensive at the young – under 30 – age group, buying publications is the characteristic of the old, over 60 age group, but it is present among the youngest users, too. The use of the HCSO Safe Centre is most intensive at the under 30- and 30s age group.

Among the different statistics the most often used one is the prices (inflation) field, earnings, living conditions as well as finances are on the second and third place. Labour market, population, vital events and national accounts are popular topics, too.

One of the most important conclusions of the survey is that data quality is basically good, according to the users. It stands its ground in international comparison as well, however improvement in the reputation might follow the closer adjustment of certain special users’ demands. It also turned out

that satisfaction with the HCSO work, products – data, analyses – is linked with product use frequency and the familiarity with the data production process of the Office.

We measured data quality satisfaction on different dimensions. These are relevance, accuracy-reliability, relevancy, comparability, availability and intelligibility. Data quality of different statistical fields have been estimated overall as 4.1 on average by the users, there were hardly any differences among the different survey dimensions. The most satisfied user group was the central and local government, private individuals seemed to be the least satisfied. Among the user groups there were significant differences only along the accuracy-reliability dimension. Among the different statistical fields housing, public utilities, culture, sports, information, communication, business and non-profit organisations, as well as population and vital events received the highest grades. The younger age group (in their 30s and 40s) was characteristically more satisfied with the statistics than the rest. Satisfaction was significantly higher among women, than among men.

In the case of regional statistics the differences in evaluation were somewhat higher among certain data quality dimensions than in the case of thematic statistics. Relevance (data provides the information I am looking for) and accuracy-reliability gained the highest appreciation, availability came in the lowest place. Availability for different territorial level data (region, county, district, settlement) was significantly different, county level data was easily accessible, settlement level data not so much. We must state that availability of regional data is limited on district and settlement level, as reliability significantly decreases among decreasing territorial levels, may they come from estimated (macroeconomic) or population surveys. Therefore HCSO does not publish such data. Only relevancy and accuracy-reliability dimensions showed significant differences at regional data among different user groups. In case of these two dimensions central and local government user groups were the most satisfied. The least satisfied were the competitive sector and “other organisations”, neck to neck.

Beside data use we inquired about the familiarity with the services offered by HCSO and their use. The most widely known were the classifications, reference number providing, and Information services, the least known ones being the EU-INFO statistical service, the press room, the RSS news service and the HCSO Safe Centre. The familiarity with and the use of the classifications, reference number providing services was the highest among the representatives of the competitive sector, while the familiarity with and the use of the HCSO library, Information services, and the HCSO Safe Centre had a leading rank among researchers, university professors, students and university students, the “other organisations” including the media and public education institutions category.

Interview experiences confirmed that users’ attitude toward HCSO is determined by how intensely (meaning depth and frequency) the information, data gained from HCSO is embedded in their work. Majority of the survey participants assessed data published by HCSO as good quality, reliable, in international comparison too. At the same time some users, considered HCSO communication channels as somewhat outdated. A number of users mentioned that the website search engine is not very feasible and some considered the data query interface as difficult to work with. Mostly journalists think that HCSO data are easily accessible. Representatives of the academic sphere (researchers, professors) have individual data requirements. They often use microdata in their analyses, this is the reason why it is more difficult for them to cooperate with us, yet there are satisfied users among them. Researchers’ individual demands are not met fast enough or with enough flexibility. Strict data protection regulations have been mentioned and the institutional framework, as cooperation impeding factors. HCSO communication was mostly evaluated as positive, by those, in the first place, who had personal contacts with HCSO colleagues. There is a demand for up to date communication channels – Facebook, Twitter, blogs. Interviews mentioned as a negative development that earlier the name of the colleagues appeared on the reports, but lately only the contact info of the Press- and

communication department is shown in the publications. Regardless of these comments media workers' opinion is mostly positive, on HCSO communication.

Focus group surveys took place in Budapest, Győr, Szeged with 8-9 participants in a group. The main topics were: familiarity with regional data, publications, their use and quality. Users are relatively content with the quality of regional data, however the speed of their publication is slower than expected. Even if many of them are familiar with data production processes and they seemed to be understanding – moreover they do not consider the publication as slow in international comparison – they emphasized that this speed is not fast enough for decision preparing and supporting for the public sector decision making mechanisms. It may be used at best for follow-up monitoring. As such those researching on regional level with no special data demand were the most satisfied customers, while analysts interested in urban development, small settlements' statistics or journalists at county newspapers were less content with the possibilities. Demand for analyses differs by user groups. Offices' employees and some journalists prefer ready-made analyses, while researchers do not use textual interpretations for own purpose, but they use them in their teaching. Printed publications represent primarily a quick information retrieval option for them. Regardless of user group, participants mentioned they mostly use the CD appendix of the database-type books. At the same time they hardly knew the many paper base analyses, special databases displayed during the focus group activity.