

Statistics user survey, experience of Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey¹

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Abstract: The Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) aims to provide high quality statistics. In order to measure the degree to which it meets its obligations towards its users, CBRT held its first “Statistics User Survey”. This paper describes the experience of the statistics user survey of CBRT. First, the paper introduces CBRT statistics and the aim of the survey. Second, there is brief information about the European statistics code of practice and related indicators for the survey. Then international organizations and some country sample surveys are discussed. Next, the preparation process and the results of the survey are shared. This papers ends with some conclusions.

Key words: statistics, user survey, quality, dissemination services

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1. Introduction

Developments occurring in the global market in recent years have increased the importance of statistics produced in each area. In addition, these developments have also raised the number of data users. Users' perception of statistics released by the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) is considered to be essential. Observing how data were accessed and how data are perceived by users of statistics is important.

Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) uses No.1211 of the law of our country to collect the necessary data regarding the economy. The compilation of this data, and research and planning activities related to its preparation, produce a range of statistics conforming to international standards. The Statistics are published on the CBRT's website (<http://www.tcmb.gov.tr/wps/wcm/connect/TCMB+EN/TCMB+EN/Main+Menu/STATISTICS>) under these headlines:

- Balance of Payment and Related Statistics
- Monetary and Financial Statistics
- Real Sector Statistics
- Tendency Surveys
- Banking Data
- Markets Data
- Exchange Rates

CBRT aims to fulfill the principles of transparency and accountability. The statistics are produced observing these principles; how they are delivered to users of statistics, whether they meet their users', and how they are perceived by users are of utmost importance. In order to measure the degree to which it meets its obligations towards its users, CBRT held its first "**Statistics User Survey**".

The aim of the survey is to learn why and how our users use CBRT Statistics and what their assessment of the quality of our data and publications is. Also, we want to obtain better knowledge about users, their needs, and their satisfaction with the services provided by CBRT. The results of the survey will help develop strategies to improve the quality, reliability, and availability of CBRT statistics and publications.

2. European Statistics Code of Practice

The European Statistics Code of Practice was first adopted by the European Statistical System Committee (ESSC) in February, 2005, and was revised on 28 September, 2011. The code is based on 15 principles concerning the institutional environment, statistical processes, and outputs (Table 1). It aims to ensure that statistics produced within the European Statistical System (ESS) are not only relevant, timely and accurate but also comply with principles of professional independence, impartiality and objectivity. A set of indicators of good practice for each of the 15 principles provides a reference for measuring the implementation of the code.

Institutional Environment
1. Professional Independence
2. Mandate for data collection
3. Adequacy of resources
4. Commitment to quality
5. Statistical confidentiality
6. Impartiality and objectivity
Statistical Processes
7. Sound methodology
8. Appropriate statistical procedures
9. Non-excessive burden on respondents
10. Cost effectiveness
Statistical Output
11. Relevance
12. Accuracy and reliability
13. Timeliness and punctuality
14. Coherence and comparability
15. Accessibility and clarity

Table 1. The Principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice

In order to assist the implementation of the European Statistics Code of Practice (CoP), as revised by the Sponsorship on Quality, a supporting document – Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System (ESS QAF) – has been prepared. The ESS QAF describes, for each indicator, activities, methods and tools that facilitate the implementation of the CoP.

User satisfaction surveys are described as a method to implement the principles of “4.Commitment to quality” and “11.Relevance”. Product quality is to be regularly monitored, assessed with regard to possible trade-offs, and reported according to the quality criteria for European Statistics (Indicator 4.3). Under this indicator the second method described is “User Satisfaction Surveys”. For the second indicator, user satisfaction should be monitored on a regular basis and systematically followed up (Indicator 11.3).

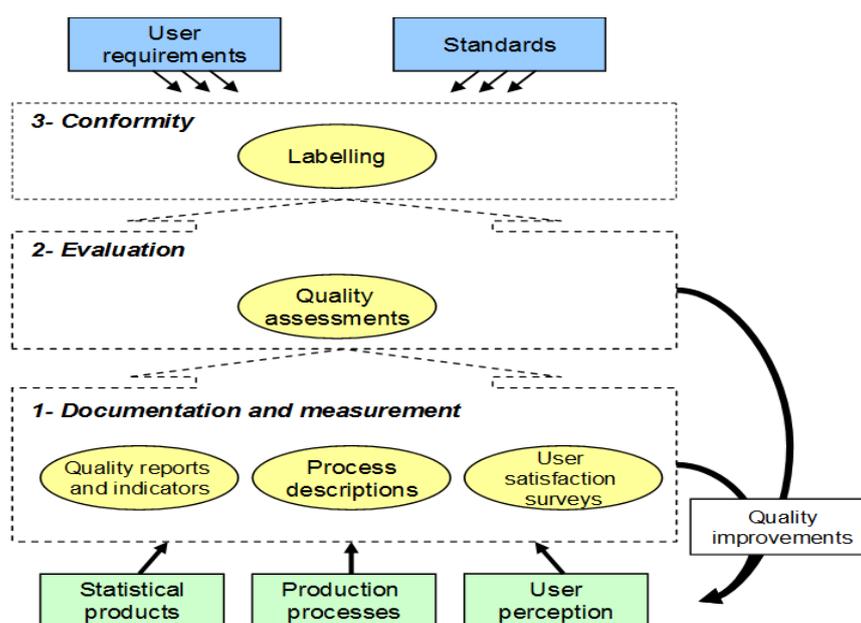


Figure 1: Eurostat quality assurance framework, Source: Matamala, Junker, 2010

3. International Organizations and Some Country Sample Surveys

3.1. Eurostat

Eurostat carries out a general User Satisfaction Survey (USS) which is based on the model questionnaire for the European Statistical System and is designed to obtain better knowledge about users, their needs, and their satisfaction with the services provided by Eurostat. The first survey of this kind was held in 2007 and was then repeated in 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. A total of 207, 1422, 4247, 3101, 3279 and 4839 replies were received, respectively. All of the surveys were carried out online, via a link on Eurostat website.

The surveys included four main parts:

- Information on types of users and uses of European statistics,
- Quality aspects,
- Trust in European statistics,
- Dissemination of statistics.

To gain a better overview of types of users, different user groups were distinguished in the survey. These are:

1. Students, academic and private users
2. EU, international and political organizations
3. Business
4. Government
5. Other users.

3.2. European Central Bank

The European Central Bank (ECB) detected the needs of its users in 5 different channels:

1. Interview with ECB journalists
2. ECB website users
3. International ESCB/IO statisticians
4. Large data users/vendors
5. European banks/European Banking Federation (EBF)

ECB has obtained more than 300 suggestions to improve its statistics. 62 recommendations were taken into account and considered as valuable for central banking.

3.3. Bank of England

Statistical Code of Practice Article 7 of the Bank of England (BOE) is "Cost Effectiveness". Principle 7.3 is further defined as "User Return". Therefore, in the framework of harmonization with the Statistics Code of Practice of BOE, BOE conducted a statistics user survey over their website from June 17 to July 8, 2005. The purposes of the survey were to review and obtain feedback from users and sources of data about BOE publishing performance.

53 users participated in the survey. They were divided into 5 groups:

- Academic
- Analyst
- Data provider
- Media
- Other

13 questions were asked in the survey covering each of the sections of the code. For the data provider sector, participants were asked 6 other questions in addition to the basic 13 questions.

3.4. National Bank of the Republic of Macedonia

The National Bank of Macedonia (NBRM) carried out a user satisfaction survey in June, 2013. The survey questions were divided into 5 sections:

1. Accessibility
2. User habits in using data
3. Data quality
4. Professionalism of staff within the Statistics Department
5. Demographics

The survey was sent to 674 recorded users of NBRM with a response rate of 35%.

3.5. Turkish Statistical Institute

The Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT) conducts user surveys to learn about user ideas concerning the institution and to provide better services to them. The survey is always available on the website of TURKSTAT; there is no beginning or closing date for the survey. It has 4 sections and the numbers of questions depend on users' answers.

3.6. Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

The Statistical Office of Slovenia organized a user satisfaction survey in 2010 to identify user needs. Surveying was seen to be an important element to complete the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice. The survey consisted of 5 chapters and 22 questions. The chapters were:

1. Use of statistical data
2. Overall assessment of Statistical Office of Slovenia
3. Quality assessment of statistics
4. Evaluation of the Statistical Office of Slovenia website
5. Demographics

The survey was carried out from October 25 to November 15, 2010. 11565 registered users were invited to respond to the survey and 2680 of them participated.

3.7. Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia

Article 11 of the European Statistics Code of Practice Principles is "Relevance". In order to fulfill this principle and measure the satisfaction of users, the Statistical Office of Serbia conducted satisfaction surveys in 2010 and 2013. There were 7 sections in the surveys. Both of the surveys were conducted online. In total, 1223 users participated in these surveys.

4. STATISTICS USER SURVEY OF CBRT

4.1. Preparation of the Survey

CBRT statistics user survey questions were prepared after examination of international organizations and country survey examples. None of these sample surveys were translated directly. Mostly, questions were composed relying on the user satisfaction survey conducted by Eurostat. To supplement these, some additional questions were created by CBRT.

The survey had 4 sections:

1. User type
2. General information about the use of CBRT statistics
3. Quality aspects of CBRT statistics
4. Dissemination services

A pilot survey was conducted on the CBRT Monetary Policy Department in order to test how the survey questions were viewed. The Monetary Policy Department was chosen for the pilot survey because it is the department which most uses CBRT statistics. The pilot survey was conducted in paper form. A "Please indicate your opinions and suggestions to the survey" question was added to the end of the survey. The survey was sent to 73 people and 39 of them participated. Thus the survey participation rate was 53,4%.

In accordance with the answers and comments given in the pilot survey, some questions were changed. By the end of this period this survey had 24 final questions.

At this stage a large number of survey web sites were examined. Among these websites, the most appropriate survey site was "www.surveey.com," which is a free survey tool. Statistics user survey questions were prepared using this website. All questions had to be answered except the open ended questions. In addition, there was a welcoming introduction before starting the survey and a closing message at the end of the survey.

CBRT has about 18000 registered website users. These users follow news from CBRT including press releases, reports, research and statistics. Registered users were invited to the survey via an e-mail message (Table 2).

Dear Sir/Madam, Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey (CBRT) holds "Statistics User Survey" to get your assessments on the quality of the data and related publications as users of the CBRT Statistics. Please note that Survey results will help us to improve the quality, reliability and availability of the CBRT Statistics and publications. In this regard, your comments and suggestions are of great importance. Your answers will be analyzed in an aggregated form. Thank you for your participation.

CBRT Statistics Department

To access the survey, please click here: <http://www.surveey.com/SurveyStart.aspx?lang=2&surv=415805dcbeab4f8291b5bd8b291f826b> [The Survey will be open from 6 March until 20 March 2015.]

Contact information for your questions and feedbacks: Tel: +90 (312) 507 6927 E-mail: ika@tcmb.gov.tr

Table 2: Invitation message to registered users.

The survey was open from 6 March to 20 March, 2015. Reminder e-mails were sent to users on 13, 18 and 20 March, 2015. After every reminder e-mail, the number of participants increased. In Total, **675 users** participated in the survey.

4.2. Results of the Survey

There were 5 questions in the "User Type" section. The questions were about "Nationality", "Gender", "Age", "Education" and "User Group". Most of the users were Turkish citizen. 76,7% of users were male. 44,3% of the users' age was between 35 and 44. Besides 61,9% of them had an undergraduate degree (Chart 1). The majority of participants were from financial institutions (Chart 2)

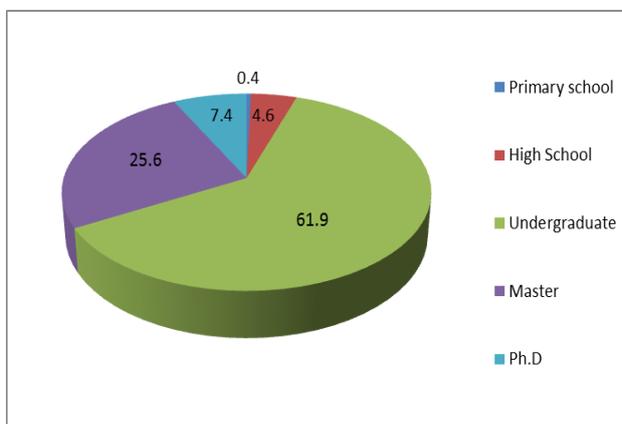


Chart 1. Education.

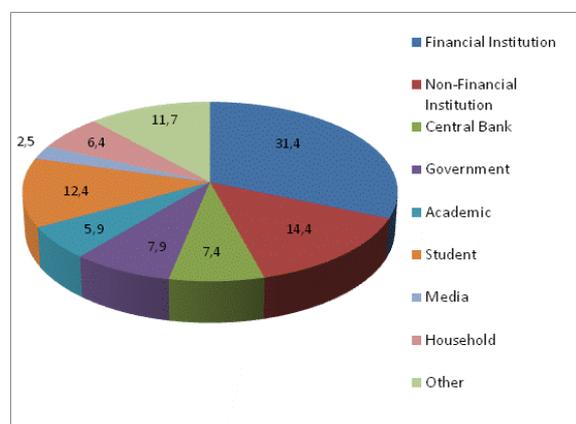


Chart 2. User Group.

The second section, "General Information About the Use of CBRT Statistics," contained 7 questions. Results show that the most used statistics are "Exchange Rates", "Monthly Money and Banking Statistics" and "Markets Data" (Chart 3). Statistics produced by CBRT "Greatly Meets" the requirements of users (Chart 4). In addition there was an open-ended question where participants could write their own ideas concerning statistical requirements which were not produced by CBRT. 122 participants answered this question and indicated their demands.

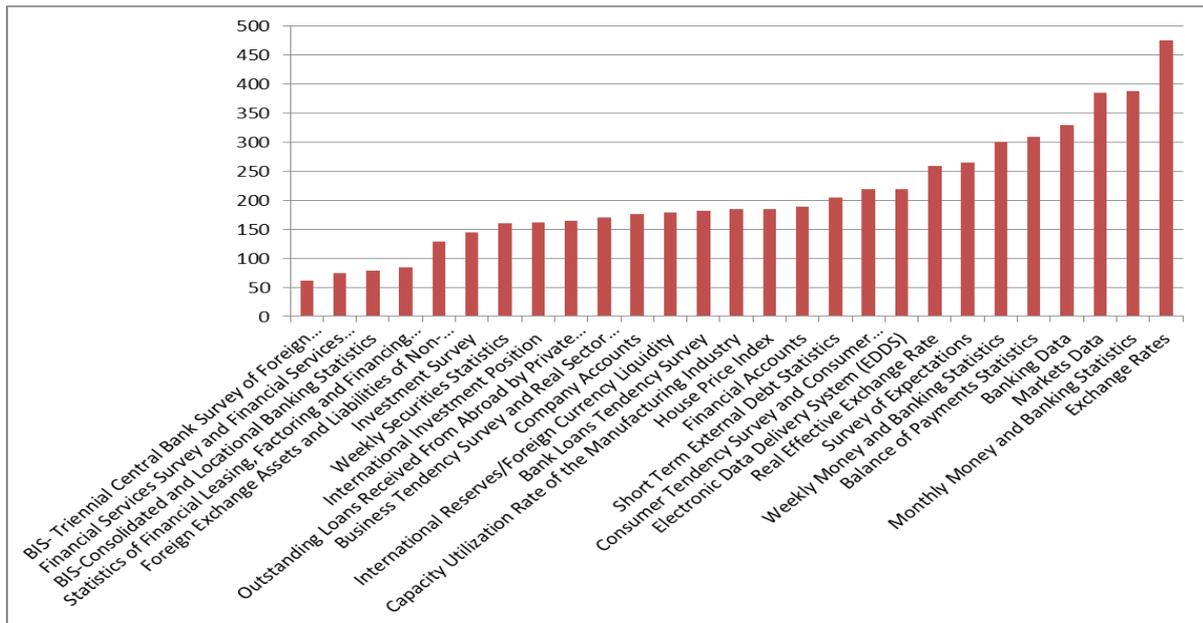


Chart 3. Which CBRT Statistics Do You Use?

29,6% of the users found CBRT’s statistics essential for their work and 36,1% found them important (Chart 4). Most respondents use statistics for “General background information” and for “Research” (Chart 5).

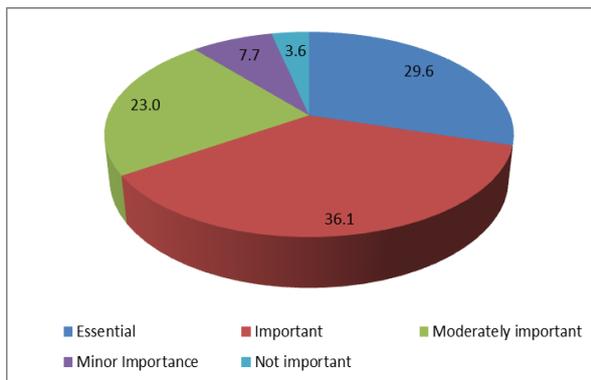


Chart 4. How Do CBRT Statistics Influence Your Work?

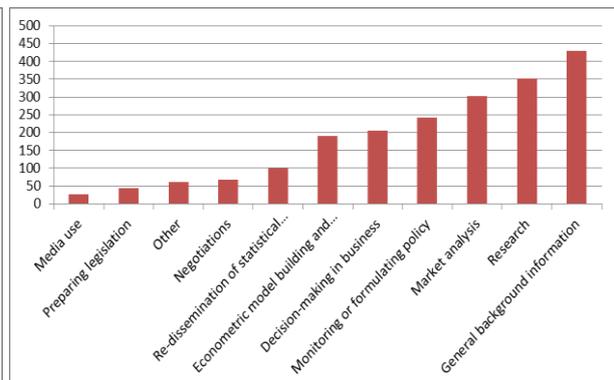


Chart 5. For What Purposes Do You Use CBRT Statistics?

40% of respondents use CBRT’s statistics weekly, 28% of them use the statistics monthly and 23,4% use them daily. (Chart 6)

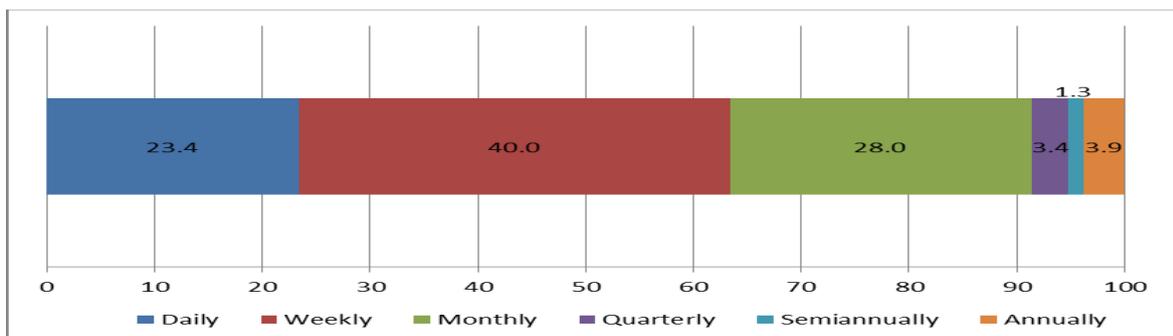


Chart 6. How often do you use CBRT Statistics and EDDS?

The third part of the survey was about “Quality aspects of CBRT Statistics”. Participants rated CBRT statistics on a range between 1 to 5, where 1 represents “very poor” and “5” represents “very good.” The average overall quality of CBRT statistics came in at **4,1 out of 5**. “Exchange Rates”, “Real Effective Exchange Rate” and “Monthly Money and Banking Statistics” have the highest quality ratings (Chart 7).

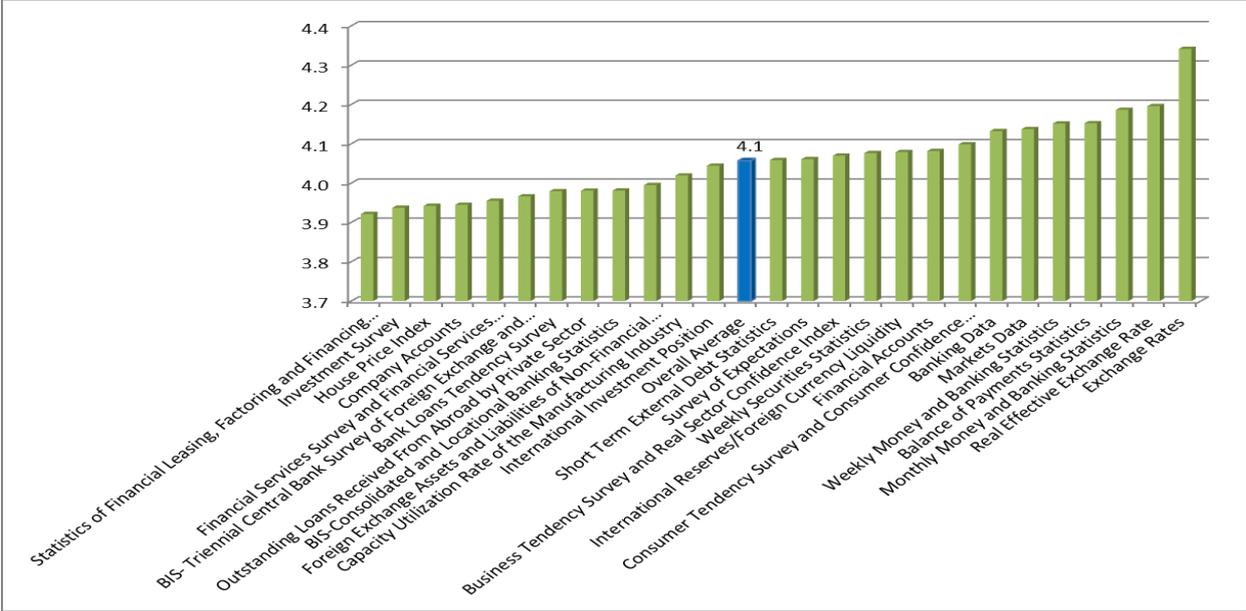


Chart 7. How do you rate the “Overall Quality” of CBRT Statistics?

Most of the respondents (59,6%) find the quality of CBRT statistics better than other domestic official statistics in Turkey (Chart 8). By contrast, 36,6% find the quality of CBRT statistics the same as international organizations’ statistics (ECB, Eurostat, IMF, BIS, OECD etc.) (Chart 9).

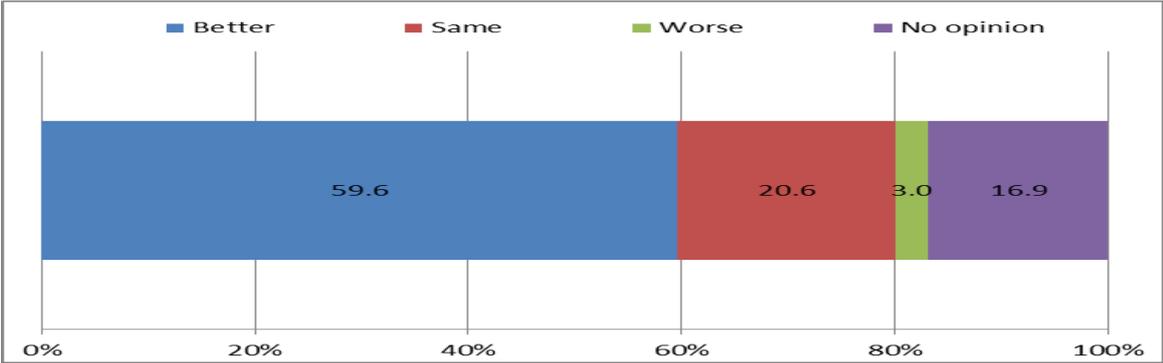


Chart 8. How does the quality of CBRT statistics in comparison with other domestic official statistics in Turkey?

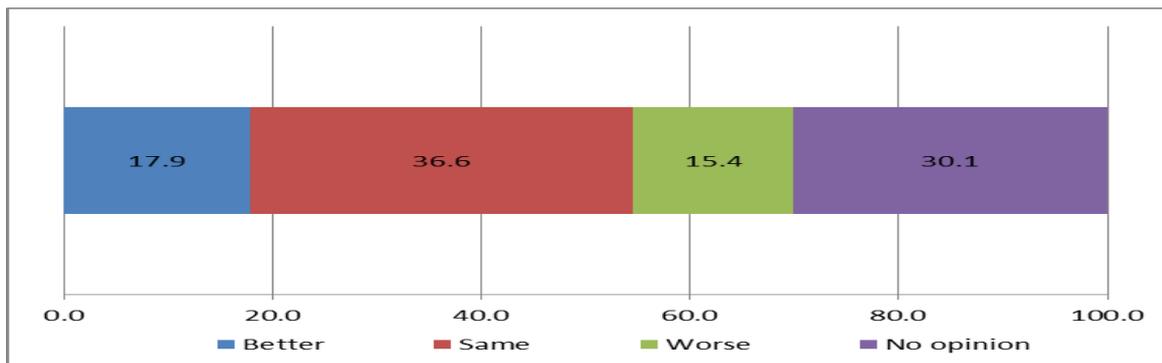


Chart 9. How does the quality of CBRT statistics in comparison with International Organizations' (ECB, Eurostat, IMF, BIS, OECD etc.) statistics?

63,4% of participants trust CBRT statistics greatly and 30,2% tend to trust. Only 3,4% tend not to trust and 1% distrust CBRT statistics (Chart 10).

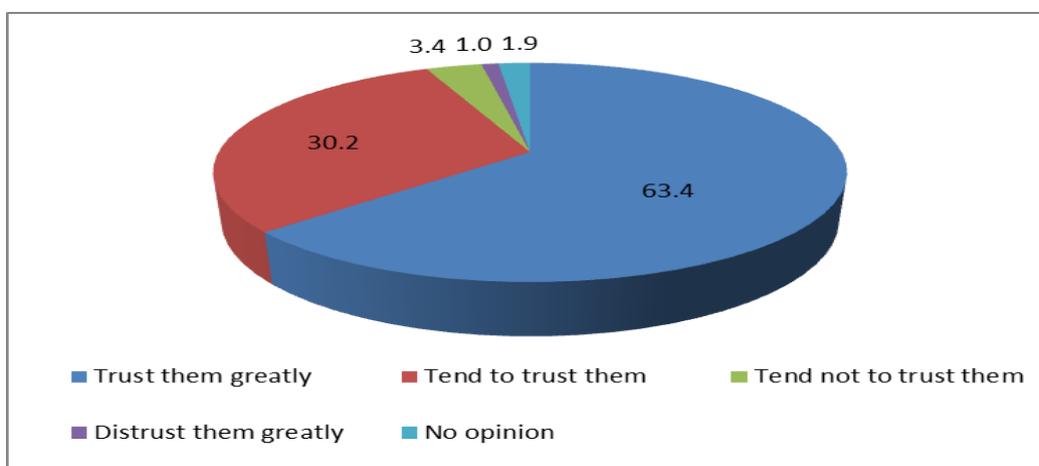


Chart 10. How much do you trust the statistics produced by CBRT?

The last part of the survey is about "Dissemination services". There were 8 questions in this section. More than half (53,4%) of the respondents do not use the "Release calendar" on CBRT's website. 37,9% of the participants find the "Metadata" of CBRT statistics "partly" sufficient for their purpose. In addition, 23,1% doesn't have any opinion about "Metadata". As a result, we can state that about a quarter of the users don't use the "Metadata" of CBRT statistics.

More than half of the respondents access the statistics they need on CBRT's website easily and 36,9% access partly easily (Chart 11). Also, 48,1% find CBRT statistics presented in an easy way to understand (Chart 12).

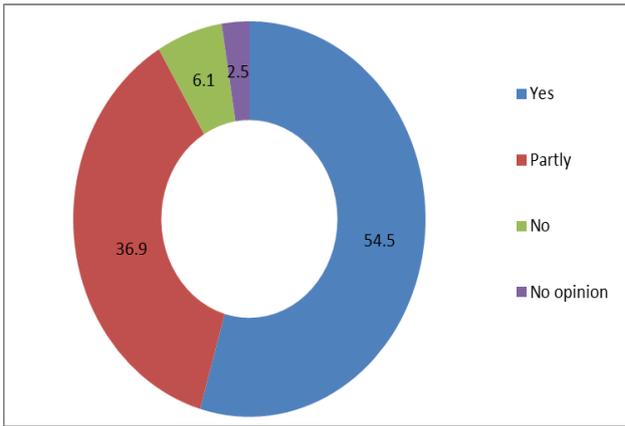


Chart 11. Is it Easy to Access the Statistics You Need on the CBRT's Website?

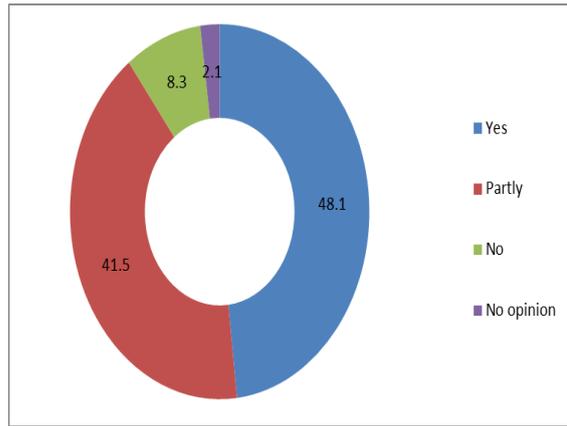


Chart 12. Are CBRT Statistics Presented in a Way that is Easy-to-Understand?

Respondents rated the statistical services of CBRT website between 1 to 5. 1 represents “very poor” and 5 represents “very good.” The overall grade of the statistical services of CBRT’s website is **3,9 out of 5**. “Search facilities” and “Help texts/ help facilities” are the weaker aspects of the CBRT website (Chart 13).

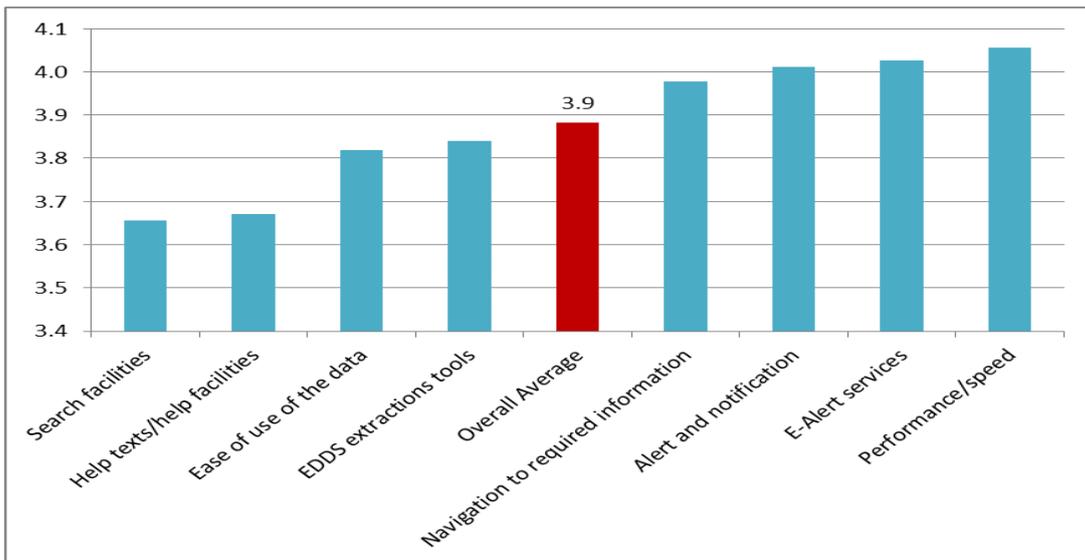


Chart 13. How Would You Rate the Statistics Services of CBRT Website?

About half of the respondents are satisfied with the user support provided by CBRT. In addition, 18,7% are very satisfied and 14,1% don't have any opinion (Chart 14). More than half of the participations (56%) rated the overall quality of the data and services provided by CBRT as very good (Chart 15).

Chart 14. How Satisfied are You With the User Support Provided by CBRT?

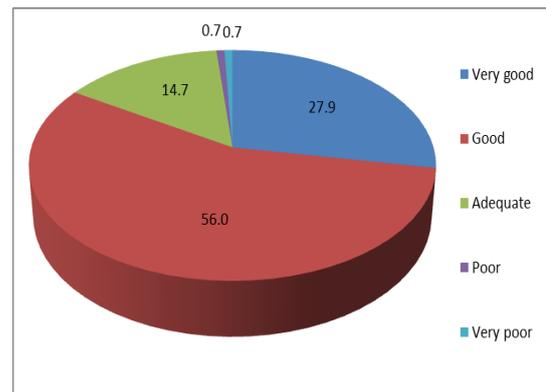
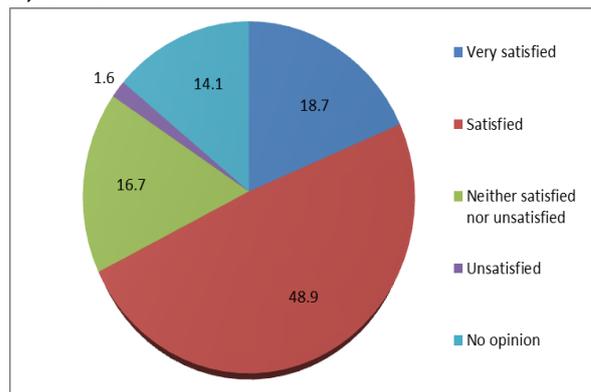


Chart 15. How Do You Rate the Overall Quality of the Data and Services Provided by CBRT?

The last question of the survey is an open-ended question. In this question respondents can write their comments, ideas or concerns about CBRT statistics and Electronic Data Delivery System (EDDS). 139 participants indicated their opinions. These recommendations will be analyzed by the CBRT statistics department and they will help to increase the quality of the statistics and services provided by CBRT.

5. Conclusions

Products which have quality are suitable for use and satisfy the demands and expectations of customers (Hutchins. Introduction to Quality: Management, Assurance and Control, 1991). This means that qualified statistics should satisfy the expectations and demands of their users. According to our statistics user survey, the overall quality of CBRT statistics is 4,1 out of 5. A second statistics user survey will be conducted next year and the two scores will be compared. In addition, the majority of participants (59,6%) find the quality of CBRT statistics better than other domestic official statistics in Turkey and 36,6% find the quality the same as international organizations' statistics.

Official statistics should be published in a clear and understandable manner. This will contribute to their proper interpretation. It can be said that dissemination services are as important as statistics. Respondents rated the statistical services of CBRT's website as 3,9 out of 5. Users think that "Search facilities" and "help texts/help facilities" are the weakest aspects of the CBRT website. On the other side, 91,4% access the statistics easily/partly easily and 89,6% think CBRT statistics are presented in a way that is easy/partly easy to understand.

CBRT announces the release calendar of its statistics at the beginning of every year. However, according to survey results, 53,4% of participants do not use this release calendar.

Trust is considered to be an important topic for official statistics. If users do not trust the institution and its statistics, their use and impact can be very low. As shown by this survey, 93,6% of respondents greatly trust/tend to trust CBRT statistics. Only 1% of respondents distrust CBRT statistics.

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