

Evaluation of Society’s Interest in the Official Statistics and Calculation of the Society’s Interest Index

Laima Grižaitė (Statistics Lithuania)

laima.grizaitė@stat.gov.lt

GOAL. CRITERIA OF EFFICIENCY

The evaluation of society’s interest in official statistics and calculation of the society’s interest index (SII) was started at Statistics Lithuania in 2013 – in order to have a complex indicator to measure the institution’s importance for the society.

At Statistics Lithuania, this index is used for two purposes:

1. The SII is one of the three institution’s efficiency indicators, annually provided to the Government. Statistics Lithuania as a public institution is measured through 21 criteria, three of which are related to efficiency:
 - user satisfaction level;
 - society’s interest in official statistics and society’s interest index (SII);
 - statistical response burden.

2. The SII is used by the specialists from the Public Relations and Statistical Information Dissemination divisions and a special working group dealing with user-related issues for user analysis, identification of gaps, improvement of services and products.

Figure 1. Criteria of the strategic action plan



USER SATISFACTION

Since 2005, Statistics Lithuania systematically examines user opinion and assesses the user satisfaction level.

Figure 2. User satisfaction level



Recent experience shows that opinion surveys do not show the entire situation. It could even be quite the opposite. We have first noticed this in 2009 – at the beginning of the global crisis, when all sentiment indicators went down, including ours. People’s pessimistic moods strongly influenced the user satisfaction level.

In 2015, we witnessed the euro introduction in Lithuania. Some cheapest products and almost all services went up in price; meanwhile, official statistics recorded deflation or zero inflation caused by a decrease in other prices.

Figure 3. Society’s opinion against official statistics



The society raises questions and discusses whether official statistics are reliable. Many people observe inflation based on their own experience. This mismatch can also influence the users’ opinion. Therefore, opinion surveys cannot be the only tool to measure user satisfaction.

SOCIETY'S INTEREST INDEX (SII)

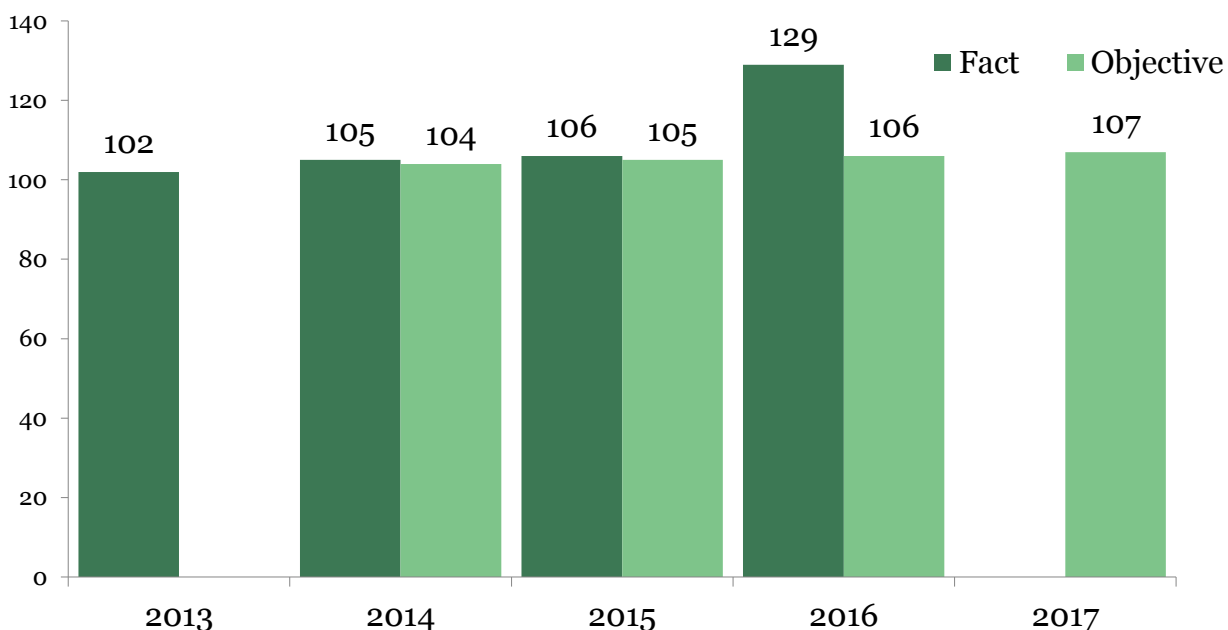
Additionally, the number of unique visits on the website of Statistics Lithuania and subsites has been used up to 2013 as another efficiency indicator (the second criterion). However, this indicator did not show the real society's interest in official statistics. Before 2013, Statistics Lithuania monitored dozens of pieces of information in order to evaluate user needs and keep an eye on changes:

1. Number of unique visits on the website;
2. Number of inquiries;
3. Number of quotations in the main newspapers;
4. Number of publications downloaded;
5. Number of registered users in the database;
6. Number of users subscribed to the alert-me service;
7. Etc.

Despite this, there was no common system for the evaluation of society's interest in official statistics, hence the value of official statistics. For this reason, a group of experts made a decision to observe a complex indicator, comprised of four sub-indexes and showing the number of new registered users in the database, how much information is presented in the media, etc. This indicator shows how efficient is our work with the society. We can produce a lot of very high quality information, but users do not know about its existence or it is not handy.

According to the strategic action plan, the SII should grow by several points every year.

Figure 4. Growth in the SII



CALCULATION

The society's interest index (SII) is an annual indicator (weighted average) calculated from quarterly sub-indexes: number of visits on the website and subsites, new registered users of the OSP, number of inquiries, number of quotations in the national media.

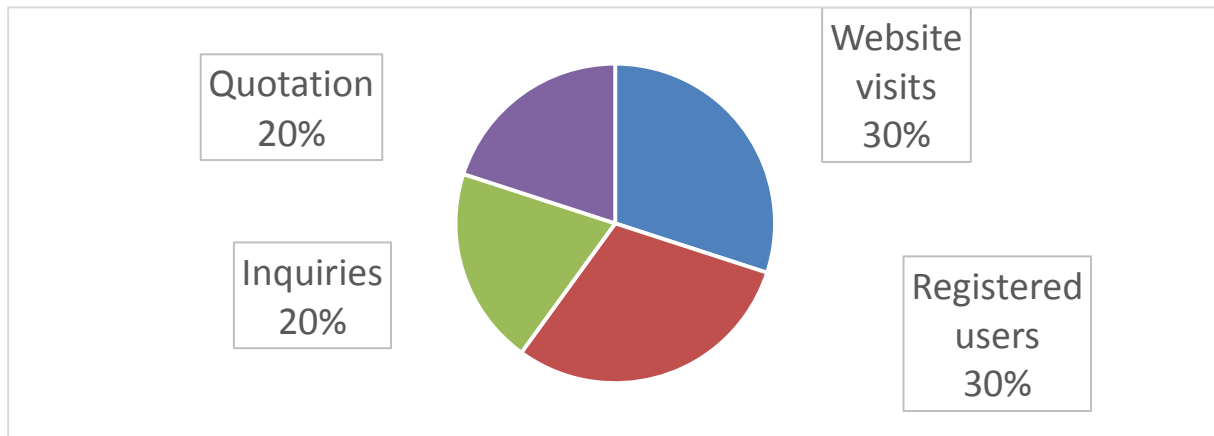
The base period is 2013 and equals 100.

Every sub-index has a different weight (according to importance):

1. Number of visits on the website and subsites – 30 per cent;
2. New registered users of the OSP – 30 per cent;
3. Number of inquiries – 20 per cent;
4. Number of quotations in the national media – 20 per cent.

The annual SII is calculated as a weighted average of sub-indexes on the basis of quarterly data.

Figure 5. Weights



FUTURE CHALLENGES

At present, we are still facing new challenges when evaluating the importance of official statistics in the society. New technologies, new ways of dissemination of statistical information, growing weight of social media, transformations of traditional media channels, education and habits of people, sentiments in the country and around the world make an impact. It is therefore important to keep an eye on all those changes – in order to evaluate user expectations and needs and suggest appropriate products and services.