



Survey of CSO Users 2006

National Statistics Board

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Abbreviations

BOP	Balance of International Payments
CIP	Census of Industrial Production
COP	Census of Population
CPI	Consumer Price Index
ED	Electoral Division
ESS	Eirestat Spreadsheet Service
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HBS	Household Budget Survey
NIE	National Income and Expenditure
MRBI	Market Research Bureau of Ireland
QNHS	Quarterly National Household Survey
RSI	Retail Sales Index
SAPS	Small Area Population Statistics
VEC	Vocational Education Committee
WPI	Wholesale Price Index

Chairpersons's Preface

The National Statistics Board (NSB) is responsible to Government for developing its statistical strategy and this is done through the publication of strategic plans, the latest of which is *Strategy for Statistics, 2003-2008*. This responsibility includes setting priorities for the compilation and development of official statistics in Ireland, and for guiding the strategic direction of the Central Statistics Office (CSO). The NSB oversees the implementation of these strategies by the CSO, which is the primary provider of statistical information in Ireland. Progress on implementation of the current strategy was recently reported on¹.

The Board will begin preparation of a new strategy for statistics, covering the period 2009-2014, towards the end of 2007. This strategy will seek to meet new and emerging national demands for data to monitor economic, social and environmental change and increasing national demands for more detailed regional data.

In order to determine the adequacy of the present system from the perspective of users, the Board has undertaken a survey of a representative group of key users of official statistics. The users were invited to comment on the present system and on progress made since the last user survey in 2002. They were also asked to identify the changes and improvements they would wish to see implemented over the next three to five years. The results of this survey are published in this Report to inform discussion and debate by the NSB and the wider community of users of statistics in Ireland.

The responses from users were very encouraging and clearly indicate that the CSO has made significant further progress since 2002. This was particularly clear in the case of providing value for money and in making improved use of technology to disseminate data. New areas of data collection such as the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU SILC), the increase in the number of Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) modules undertaken, new census data on areas such as Irish travellers and disability, and further developments in the availability of National Accounts, Balance of Payments and earnings data were also widely appreciated and have led to increased usage of CSO data. However users were less satisfied with the lack of availability of regional and small area data in particular. The unsuitability of small area units such as Electoral Divisions because of large variations in their population size and the need to develop an appropriate small area geographical unit are acknowledged by the Board and by the CSO. The Board was represented on the National Postcodes Project Board and are very supportive of the initiative by the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources in this area. The need for more data on areas such as small and medium sized enterprises, migration, housing, earnings, taxation, sport, disability and time use were also raised. The CSO is already working on a number of new initiatives to address these deficiencies, and they will be further addressed in the remaining period of the Board's 2003-2008 strategy and in preparation for a new NSB strategy.

Section 1 of the Report briefly describes the respondents to the survey. Section 2 provides an overall analysis of the usage of CSO products and services. Sections 3 and 4 summarise users' opinion on the service delivered by CSO as an organisation and on the quality of the statistical products it produces respectively. Section 5 reviews how complaints to the CSO were handled. Section 6 explores whether respondents regard the CSO as providing value for money. Section 7 summarises the views of data users who also supply survey data to CSO. Section 8 presents the response of the CSO to the findings of the survey. The questionnaire used in the survey is in Appendix 1.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank all the users who contributed to this survey – this type of feedback from users is essential if we are to ensure that official statistics in Ireland develop in tandem with societal needs. The constructive comments and criticisms are invaluable to the Board in its present deliberations and to the CSO in informing its staff in a systematic and open way of the opinions of those who use its products and services.

Brendan Walsh
Chairperson

¹ Implementation of Strategy for Statistics 2003-2008: Progress Report (Stationery Office, Dublin, October 2006)

1 Respondent Profile

This section briefly profiles respondents to the survey.

Detailed questionnaires were issued to 226 organisations and individuals in June 2006. A total of 163 usable questionnaires were returned. These questionnaires relate to 143 organisations (some organisations were sent more than one questionnaire). The responses have been compared with those of the last NSB survey of CSO users, which was undertaken in 2002 and for which there were 170 usable questionnaires. Respondents have been classified into eight categories as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1 Distribution of survey respondents by category

User category	2006	2002
1 Consultants; Market Research	7	12
2 Third Level; Research	13	33
3 Financial; Stockbrokers	10	15
4 Government Departments	23	18
5 Media; Political; Business	9	12
6 Local Administration	39	38
7 Representative Bodies	20	14
8 State Sponsored Bodies	42	28
All returns	163	170

Details regarding each of the user categories are as follows:

Consultants; Market Research:	Organisations such as Fitzpatrick Associates and Goodbody Economic Consultants.
Third Level; Research:	Universities, Institutes of Technology, and Economic and Social Research Institute.
Financial; Stockbrokers:	Banks, insurance companies, building societies and stockbrokers.
Government Departments:	Government Departments only.
Media; Political; Business:	Media, political parties, large manufacturing and distribution concerns.
Local Administration:	County Councils, Health Boards, Dublin Port, City of Dublin VEC, and Regional Authorities.
Representative Bodies:	Industry or business associations, farm organisations, employer organisations, and trade unions.
State-sponsored Bodies:	Organisations such as Fáilte Ireland, Equality Authority, National Council on Ageing and Older People, Environmental Protection Agency, FÁS, National Disability Authority, Combat Poverty Agency, Shannon Development, Teagasc, Údarás na Gaeltachta, and commercial semi-state organisations.

2 Service and Product Usage

This section outlines the CSO products and services most frequently accessed by users, tracks changes in usage of products and services since the last user survey, and discusses the methods by which users access information from the CSO.

2.1 Statistical series used by respondents

Respondents were asked to list the CSO statistical series that they use. The Census of Population (96), Quarterly National Household Survey (72), Consumer Price Index (45) and National Accounts (38) were the specific statistical series most frequently used by the respondents in the 2006 survey. In comparison with the 2002 user survey, respondents reported increased usage of the Census. This was expected given the availability of the 2002 census results and the availability of updated regional data and new census data on areas such as travellers and disability. There was also significantly increased usage of the annual Population Projections (see Table 2).

Table 2 CSO statistical series used by survey respondents

Statistical series	2006	2002
All organisations	634	556
Census of Population	96	53
Quarterly National Household Survey	72	63
Consumer Price Index	45	50
National Accounts	38	39
Population or Labour Force Projections	22	4
Census of Industrial Production	20	12
Vital Statistics	20	17
External Trade	20	22
Live Register analyses	17	18
Small Area Population Statistics	16	11
Tourism and Travel	15	9
EU-SILC	14	–
Household Budget Survey	13	17
Industrial Production	12	10
Industrial Earnings/Hours Worked	11	9
Earnings	11	15
Census of Agriculture	10	5
Agriculture Output, Input and Income	9	4
Statistical Yearbook	9	4
Building and Construction	9	0
Annual Population and Migration	8	9
Retail Sales Index	8	16
Housing	8	0
Planning permissions	8	7
Public Sector Employment and Earnings	7	–
Vehicle Licensing	6	3
Wholesale Price Index	5	10
Other	105	149

2.2 More frequently used CSO products and services

The Census of Population (25), the QNHS² (20) and the CSO website (14) were identified by respondents as the CSO products they were using more frequently now than at the time of the last survey in 2002. The reasons given for increased usage were: the availability of small area statistics (SAPS), the inclusion of new questions on the census, the value of QNHS modules, and a more user friendly website.

Table 3 More frequently used CSO products and services

Product/Service	115
Census of Population	25
QNHS	20
Website	14
CPI	8
National Accounts/Financial Statistics	8
EU-SILC	7
Agriculture	4
Industry	3
External Trade	3
Vital Statistics	3
Earnings	2
Economic Series	2
Building and Construction	2
Other areas	14

2.3 Less frequently used CSO products and services

Very few products or services were identified as less used. A small number of users identified paper publications, agricultural statistics, and the Household Budget Survey as products less in demand now than in the 2002 survey (see Table 4). The launch of EU-SILC has replaced some of the demand for the HBS, and the availability of all publications on the website has reduced the need for paper copies. There were 19 responses identifying services used less frequently in 2006 than in 2002 (see Table 4), compared to 115 indicating services more frequently used (see Table 3), reflecting a significantly increased demand for CSO products and services .

Table 4 Less frequently used CSO products and services

Product/Service	19
Publications	3
Agriculture	2
Household Budget Survey	2
Other Areas	12

² See table of abbreviations on page 5.

2.4 Method of receiving information from CSO

The CSO has made significant progress in electronic dissemination of its products in the last four years. The website was easily the most used means by which respondents obtain CSO statistics (see Table 5).

Table 5 Method of receiving information from CSO

User category	Post	Fax	Disc	CD-ROM	Publications	E-mail	Website
Consultants; Market Research	3	3	0	1	2	5	7
Third Level; Research	5	1	1	4	6	4	11
Financial; Stockbrokers	2	1	1	1	3	7	10
Government Departments	7	2	0	2	10	10	21
Media; Political; Business	0	1	0	1	3	3	8
Local Administration	19	6	6	9	22	17	36
Representative Bodies	7	3	1	1	10	11	18
State Sponsored Bodies	14	3	2	2	26	20	41
All organisations 2006	57	20	11	21	82	77	152

Respondents were most satisfied with using e-mail (rating of 1.8) and the website (1.9) as dissemination methods. In comparison with the last survey, respondents are less satisfied with using post, fax and diskettes as methods of receiving information from the CSO (see Table 6).

Table 6 Average³ satisfaction rating with dissemination method

User category	Post	Fax	Disc	CD-ROM	Publications	E-mail	Website
Consultants; Market Research	1.7	2.7	–	4.0	2.5	2.4	2.4
Third Level; Research	2.5	4.0	5.0	1.3	1.8	1.3	1.6
Financial; Stockbrokers	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.7	1.9	2.7
Government Departments	2.7	1.5	–	1.0	2.2	1.7	2.0
Media; Political; Business	–	3.0	–	3.0	2.3	1.7	1.9
Local Administration	2.8	4.2	5.3	3.6	2.4	2.4	1.9
Representative Bodies	2.1	3.0	7.0	2.0	2.1	1.5	1.7
State Sponsored Bodies	2.1	3.3	2.0	1.5	1.9	1.7	1.6
All organisations 2006	2.4	3.3	4.5	2.6	2.1	1.8	1.9
All organisations 2002	2.3	2.3	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.0	2.2

³ Scale of 1 to 7 (1 = 'Extremely good'; 7 = 'Unsatisfactory').

2.5 Information on CSO website

Table 7 shows the responses to a new question on the availability of information on the CSO website. Most users found the information was available on the website (137), was easy to find (118) and was quick to download (137). A number of users recommended that the search and navigation facilities on the website needed development, and that examples of how to download data should be given. It was also recommended that the CSO should provide links to official statistical data held on other websites. Some users proposed that the census small area population profiles should be made available, and that more historical releases and time series data should also be archived.

Table 7 Availability of information on CSO website

Method	Available		Easy to find		Quick to download	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Consultants; Market Research	6	1	6	1	7	0
Third Level; Research	10	1	10	2	12	0
Financial; Stockbrokers	9	0	7	3	6	1
Government Departments	19	1	15	5	18	1
Media; Political; Business	8	1	8	1	9	0
Local Administration	34	1	26	9	32	3
Representative Bodies	15	2	16	2	15	2
State Sponsored Bodies	36	4	30	10	38	0
All organisations 2006	137	11	118	33	137	7

3 Service Delivery

This section reviews the user opinions of various aspects of service delivery by the CSO, including suggestions for where further improvements could be made.

3.1 Quality of service delivery

Table 8 identifies the importance respondents attach to various services and rates their level of satisfaction with the CSO for the same services. All ratings of CSO services were well above the mid-point of the range (4.0) and in nine of the thirteen aspects of service delivery, they were in the top quartile (i.e., a rating of 2.5 or better).

Table 8 Importance of aspects of service delivery and CSO rating

Aspects of service delivery	Importance of service to users ⁵	Level of satisfaction with CSO ⁴		
		2006	2002	Change ⁶ 2002-2006
Staff ability to answer your questions	1.5	2.0	2.0	0.0
Level of understanding of requests	1.6	2.0	2.0	0.0
Ability to meet your requirements	1.6	2.3	2.2	-0.1
Ease of contacting the office	1.7	1.7	1.7	0.0
Speed of delivery on required products	1.8	2.3	2.4	0.1
Speed of response to your queries	1.9	2.1	2.1	0.0
Technical expertise of staff	1.9	1.9	2.0	0.1
Willingness to adapt to meet your needs	2.0	2.5	2.8	0.3
Courtesy shown throughout dealings	2.2	1.6	1.6	0.0
Proactive in providing solutions	2.3	2.8	3.1	0.3
Ability to anticipate customers requirements	2.7	3.0	3.1	0.1
Being kept informed of progress	2.8	2.7	2.9	0.2
Level of contact maintained	2.9	2.6	2.9	0.3

The overall satisfaction with CSO services remains much the same as in 2002 with an overall rating of 2.3 in 2006 which was better than the 2002 rating of 2.4 (see Table 9). There was a decrease in the rating from Consultants (see Table 1) but a sizeable improvement in the ratings from Representative Bodies.

⁴ Scale of 1 to 7 (1 = 'Very satisfactory', 7 = 'Totally unsatisfactory')

⁵ Scale of 1 to 7 (1 = 'Very important', 7 = 'Totally unimportant')

⁶ A positive figure in this column represents an improvement.

Table 9 Overall satisfaction with CSO services by user category

User category	Level of satisfaction with CSO ⁴		
	2006	2002	Change ⁷ 2002-2006
Consultants; Market Research	3.0	2.1	-0.9
Third Level; Research	2.3	2.5	0.2
Financial; Stockbrokers	2.7	2.5	-0.2
Government Departments	2.2	2.0	-0.2
Media; Political; Business	1.9	2.3	0.4
Local Administration	2.3	2.4	0.1
Representative Bodies	2.1	3.0	0.9
State Sponsored Bodies	2.1	2.1	0.0
All organisations 2006	2.3	2.4	0.1

3.2 Change in the level of service from CSO

Most respondents (97) stated that the overall service had improved since the last survey (see Table 10). Only two respondents felt that there had been a deterioration. The website was cited as being the main reason for the perceived improvement (see Table 11). Other reasons mentioned as improvements in the level of service from CSO were better timeliness and more customer focus.

Table 10 Change in level of overall service from CSO

User category	Improved	Remained the same	Deteriorated
Consultants; Market Research	5	2	0
Third Level; Research	6	4	0
Financial; Stockbrokers	6	3	0
Government Departments	11	10	1
Media; Political; Business	5	2	0
Local Administration	21	11	1
Representative Bodies	13	5	0
State Sponsored Bodies	30	7	0
All organisations 2006	97	44	2

⁷ A positive figure in this column represents an improvement

Table 11 Reasons for change in level of service from CSO

Reasons for improvement	94	Reasons for deterioration	2
Website	38	Timeliness	2
Timeliness	12		
Staff; Customer focus	8		
More open or approachable	7		
Better dissemination or presentation	6		
Automation; computerisation; e-mail	4		
Wider range of statistics	4		
Easier to contact	4		
More flexible, adaptive or responsive	4		
More detail	4		
Ability to do special runs	3		

3.3 Suggested improvements to CSO services

Users were asked to make suggestions as to how the CSO could improve its level and range of services. In some cases, these services were already available but the respondent was not aware of them. The suggestions included:

- ◆ The development of a more user-friendly website
- ◆ The provision of more timely releases and preliminary headline figures
- ◆ The provision of more statistics in graph form
- ◆ The availability of tables and graphs in Word or Excel format
- ◆ The insertion of more transport questions in the Census and HBS
- ◆ The provision of more data at regional, county and ED level
- ◆ The provision of more archived historical data on the website
- ◆ The establishment of a help-desk
- ◆ The creation of email accounts and alerts for specific publications of interest on the website
- ◆ Continue to develop social statistics and provide state agencies with advice on how to maximise the statistical potential of their administrative records
- ◆ Benchmark the service given by our office against our international colleagues; and
- ◆ Greater consultation via user focus groups; and work in partnership with our stakeholders.

4 Quality of CSO Products

This section reviews the user perceptions of the quality of CSO products, the capacity of the CSO to meet changing needs of users and the adequacy of mechanisms by which users can provide feedback to the CSO.

4.1 CSO products in general

Table 12 shows that users were most satisfied with the accuracy of CSO's statistics (1.9) and least satisfied with their timeliness (2.6). The table shows that CSO had in all categories either made further progress or maintained its standard since 2002. A new category in the 2006 survey was the clarity of CSO methodology documents. This category received an overall rating of 2.5.

Table 12 Average rating of level of satisfaction with the quality of CSO products⁸

User category	Level of detail	Timeliness	Accuracy	Relevance	Style of presentation	Methodology documents	Overall cost	Requirements fulfilled
Consultants; Market Research	2.4	2.7	2.3	1.9	2.6	3.1	2.0	2.4
Third Level; Research	2.2	2.5	1.9	2.1	2.5	2.8	2.7	2.5
Financial; Stockbrokers	2.4	3.4	2.1	2.2	3.0	2.9	2.0	2.6
Government Departments	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.1	2.4	2.4	2.1	2.2
Media; Political; Business	2.6	2.7	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.6
Local Administration	2.4	2.7	1.8	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.4	2.8
Representative Bodies	1.9	2.3	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.3	1.9	2.4
State Sponsored Bodies	2.1	2.6	1.8	2.0	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.2
All organisations 2006	2.2	2.6	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.5	2.2	2.5
All organisations 2002	2.2	2.9	1.9	2.3	2.4	-	2.2	2.5

4.2 Perceived change in quality of CSO products

Most responses (81) indicated that there had been an improvement in the quality of CSO products since 2002 and no users indicated that the quality had deteriorated (see Table 13). There was some variation between user categories in the responses. Representative Bodies, State Sponsored Bodies, Local Administration and Media, Political and Business indicated strongly that improvements had occurred.

⁸ Scale of 1 to 7 (1 = 'Very good', 7 = 'Very poor')

Table 13 Change in quality of CSO products since 2002

User category	Improved	Remained the same	Deteriorated
Consultants; Market Research	2	4	0
Third Level; Research	5	6	0
Financial; Stockbrokers	4	5	0
Government Departments	10	10	0
Media; Political; Business	5	2	0
Local Administration	20	13	0
Representative Bodies	12	4	0
State Sponsored Bodies	23	14	0
All organisations 2006	81	58	0

Table 14 outlines the reasons respondents gave to explain the change in the quality of CSO products. Positive comments made by respondents included the following: new publications such as Measuring Ireland's Progress and Women and Men in Ireland, a more user-friendly website, and the availability of higher quality and more detailed statistics in a variety of data formats. Some respondents who indicated that things had remained the same gave examples of things that had improved and things that had not improved. Unfavourable comments included the need for better regional and county data; difficulties in obtaining historical time series; and a need for more information on costs, earnings and migration.

Table 14 Reasons for change in quality of CSO products

Reasons for improvement	61	Reasons for deterioration	0
More information available	17		
Timeliness	9		
Improved presentation	8		
Website	6		
Better access or availability	6		
More data available electronically	5		
Greater relevance	3		
Better quality	2		
Other	5		

4.3 Special statistical requirements

Most special statistical requests to the CSO related to Demography (29). Prices (12), QNHS (9), and Regional data (8) were the next most common requests (see Table 15).

Table 15 Distribution of special statistical requests

Statistical topics	111
Demography	29
Prices	12
QNHS	9
Regional data	8
External trade	7
Vital Statistics	6
National Accounts	5
CIP/Industry	5
Agriculture	4
EU-SILC	4
Tourism and Transport	3
Education	3
Other	16

The average level of satisfaction with the responses to special statistical requests in 2006 at 1.7 was much the same as the 1.6 recorded in the 2002 survey (see Table 16). However, there was a wide variation among the different user categories with Local Administration, Representative Bodies and State Sponsored Bodies all reporting significant improvement whereas Media, Political and Business, and Government Departments reported a large decrease in satisfaction.

Table 16 Level of satisfaction with response to special statistical requests

User category	Special requirements asked	Level of satisfaction⁹ with CSO		
		2006	2002	Change¹⁰ 2002-2006
Consultants; Market Research	5	2.0	1.4	-0.6
Third Level; Research	8	1.8	1.3	-0.5
Financial; Stockbrokers	8	1.9	1.6	-0.3
Government Departments	16	2.1	1.2	-0.9
Media; Political; Business	6	2.2	1.0	-1.2
Local Administration	19	1.5	2.1	0.6
Representative Bodies	13	1.5	2.3	0.8
State Sponsored Bodies	27	1.3	2.1	0.8
All organisations 2006	102	1.7	1.6	-0.1

⁹ Scale of 1 to 5 (1 = 'Completely satisfied', 5 = 'Completely dissatisfied')

¹⁰ A positive figure in this column represents an improvement.

4.4 Adequacy of feedback mechanisms

Most respondents reported that CSO user feedback mechanisms were adequate (87). However 31 respondents indicated that they were not adequate – a number of these wrote that they were unaware of the existence of any feedback mechanisms despite there being a feedback link for users on the CSO homepage. The Board has asked the CSO to examine opportunities for inviting users to give feedback to the CSO such as in statistical releases.

Table 17 Adequacy of feedback mechanisms

User category	Yes	No
Consultants; Market Research	4	3
Third Level; Research	2	6
Financial; Stockbrokers	5	3
Government Departments	11	2
Media; Political; Business	6	1
Local Administration	20	7
Representative Bodies	6	7
State Sponsored Bodies	33	2
All organisations 2006	87	31
All organisations 2002	66	41

4.5 Change in requirements

Almost half of respondents reported that their requirements have changed since the last survey in 2002 (see Table 18). Improved timeliness was a major requirement. Other changes in requirements were the need for more regional, county and local level data based on more suitable spatial units of analysis than Electoral Divisions, and the publication of county statistical profiles. More data on migrants, vulnerable social groups (e.g. the elderly and disabled), health, housing and micro data on households were also emphasised by respondents. Another requirement mentioned was the need for better information on small and medium sized enterprises.

Table 18 Changing user requirements since 2002

User category	Yes	No
Consultants; Market Research	1	5
Third Level; Research	4	5
Financial; Stockbrokers	3	6
Government Departments	6	14
Media; Political; Business	1	6
Local Administration	17	16
Representative Bodies	11	7
State Sponsored Bodies	22	16
All organisations 2006	65	75

4.6 Ability of the CSO to meet changing requirements

Around two-thirds of respondents said that the CSO had been able to meet their changing requirements (see Table 19). Among the new requirements raised: were the need for data on ethnicity, ageing, time use, and the publication of a report on small enterprises.

Table 19 Ability of CSO to meet changing user requirements

User category	Yes	No
Consultants; Market Research	1	0
Third Level; Research	1	2
Financial; Stockbrokers	2	1
Government Departments	4	1
Media; Political; Business	1	0
Local Administration	8	8
Representative Bodies	4	3
State Sponsored Bodies	14	4
All organisations 2006	35	19
All organisations 2002	71	26

4.7 Specific shortcomings of CSO statistics

Specific shortcomings were identified in respect of the shortage of data available at administrative county level and small area data generally in CSO statistics, poor timeliness in HBS, CIP and County Income and Regional GVA (see Table 20). Other areas mentioned were a lack of data on productivity, immigration, taxation, housing and small and medium enterprises; the inadequate coverage of earnings statistics; and the absence of a long-series of historic data tables on the website.

Table 20 Specific shortcomings of CSO statistics, 2006

Shortcoming	66
QNHS	12
Census	11
Industry	8
Regional data	7
Services	6
National Accounts	4
Agriculture	3
Education	3
Tourism and Transport	2
Trade	2
Other	8

4.8 General shortcomings of CSO statistics

The shortcoming most frequently mentioned was a lack of data or detail (31). Timeliness was the next most mentioned shortcoming (26). Other shortcomings mentioned include the need for a more frequent Census of Agriculture and the need for more assistance in navigating the website (see Table 21). One user noted the increasing commitment of Local Authorities to use statistical data as a basis for planning and monitoring of progress, and requested that CSO increase the level of assistance it provides to such users to develop their level of statistical competence.

Table 21 General shortcomings of CSO statistics

Shortcoming	100
Not enough data or detail	31
Timeliness	26
Not enough regional or local area information	19
Surveys too infrequent	5
Other	19

4.9 Statistical needs that are not currently being met

Table 22 indicates the broad areas where users identified unmet statistical needs. A wide variety of specific statistical needs were expressed and many of them have already been referred to such as small area data. New areas mentioned were culture, sport, and crime statistics. The need for more thematic reports on groups such as the homeless, children, and foreign nationals was also raised.

Table 22 Areas where user statistical needs are not being met

Areas	106
Regional data	18
Social	13
Industry	11
Labour Market	11
Services	7
Census	7
Building and Construction	6
Tourism and Transport	4
Education	4
Agriculture	4
Other	21

4.10 Comparison with other EU National Statistical Offices

A new question in the 2006 user survey asked respondents to compare the performance of the CSO against other EU national statistical offices. The CSO was ranked very favourably in comparison with other EU national statistical institutes. In all cases, the CSO was ranked in the top half (lower than 4.0). In quality of presentation and data accuracy, the office was ranked around the top quartile.

Table 23 Comparisons with other EU Statistical Offices¹¹

User category	Time- liness	Quality of presentation	Range of data	Data accuracy	Other
Consultants; Market Research	4.5	3.3	5.0	3.5	1.0
Third Level; Research	2.3	2.7	2.9	2.4	3.0
Financial; Stockbrokers	3.6	3.1	3.8	3.0	-
Government Departments	3.0	2.3	2.7	2.7	3.7
Media; Political; Business	2.0	1.7	2.3	1.8	-
Local Administration	2.8	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.8
Representative Bodies	3.1	2.7	3.6	3.1	-
State Sponsored Bodies	2.9	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.6
All organisations 2006	2.9	2.6	3.0	2.7	3.3

¹¹ Scale of 1 to 7 (1 = 'Much better', 7 = 'Much worse')

5 Complaint Handling

This section describes problems encountered by users when accessing CSO services and the manner in which users make contact with the CSO.

5.1 Problems with service

A total of 111 respondents indicated that they had no problems with the service from the CSO. In the 2006 survey, 19 problems were brought to the attention of staff compared to 12 in the 2002 survey (see Table 24). The average satisfaction level with the handling of the complaints was 2.4 which was the same as that reported in the 2002 survey.

Table 24 Problems with service from CSO

User category	Problem brought to attention of staff		Average satisfaction with handling of problem ¹²	
	Yes	No	2006	2002
Consultants; Market Research	1	0	3.0	-
Third Level; Research	3	2	3.7	1.0
Financial; Stockbrokers	3	0	2.0	3.0
Government Departments	1	0	3.0	-
Media; Political; Business	1	0	3.0	-
Local Administration	5	0	1.8	3.0
Representative Bodies	2	1	2.0	3.0
State Sponsored Bodies	3	1	2.3	2.2
All organisations 2006	19	4	2.4	2.4
All organisations 2002	12	2		

¹² Scale of 1 to 5 (1 = 'Completely satisfied', 5 = 'Completely dissatisfied')

5.2 Difficulties in trying to contact the CSO

Most users still make contact with CSO using the telephone (see Table 25). However, a significant number now use e-mail. Eight respondents gave details of difficulties encountered in contacting the CSO (see Table 26). These mainly related to making contact with the right person.

Table 25 Normal methods of contacting the CSO

Normal method of contacting the office	298
Telephone	131
E-mail	86
Website	68
Calling into the Office	5
Post	4
Fax	3
Other	1

Table 26 Difficulties encountered in contacting the CSO

Difficulties in trying to contact the CSO	8
Difficult to get to the right person	4
Telephone unattended	2
Other	2

6 Value for Money

This section examines whether users regard CSO as providing value for money services.

Table 27 shows that over 90 per cent of respondents in 2006 classified the CSO as giving very good or good value for money, this was slightly better than the level reported in the 2002 survey. Responses included the following: “well done”; “it is a top class service”; CSO products and delivery are “invaluable”; staff are “efficient, courteous and helpful”; and they are to be complimented on their customer focus. Many respondents emphasised that most information is provided free of charge by the CSO and data are easily available on the website.

Table 27 Evaluation of CSO services

User category	Value for money				
	Very good	Good	Middle	Bad	Very bad
Consultants; Market Research	2	3	1	0	0
Third Level; Research	8	2	1	0	0
Financial; Stockbrokers	4	3	2	0	0
Government Departments	5	13	0	0	0
Media; Political; Business	3	4	2	0	0
Local Administration	13	21	4	0	0
Representative Bodies	8	8	1	0	0
State Sponsored Bodies	19	16	2	0	0
All organisations 2006	62	70	13	0	0
All organisations 2002	34	92	10	3	2

7 Data Supplied to the CSO

This section reviews users preferred methods of supplying data to the CSO and includes users' suggestions on how the burden of reporting might be alleviated.

7.1 Users who supply data to the CSO

Around 77 per cent of respondents to the survey did not supply data to the CSO (see Table 28). Of those who did, half were in Government Departments or Local Administration.

Table 28 Distribution of users who supplied data to the CSO

User category	Yes	No
Consultants; Market Research	0	6
Third Level; Research	0	9
Financial; Stockbrokers	2	8
Government Departments	8	11
Media; Political; Business	2	5
Local Administration	7	24
Representative Bodies	3	10
State Sponsored Bodies	7	24
All organisations 2006	29	97
All organisations 2002	27	113

7.2 Suggestions for streamlining data collection

This question related to methods by which data providers could supply data to the CSO. Computerisation was the most mentioned method (7). The suggestions related to increasing efficiency and to reducing the cost of providing data to the CSO (see Table 29).

Table 29 Proposals for streamlining data collection methods

Method	12
Computerisation	7
E-mail	2
Website	2
Other	1

8 CSO Commentary on User Survey Findings

This section presents a brief response from the CSO to the findings of the survey.

General remarks

The comments of users will provide very useful input into the development of the CSO's Statement of Strategy 2007-2009. The time taken by users to make these remarks is much appreciated. Some brief remarks from CSO on these comments and some information on recent and imminent developments are also provided.

Dissemination and CSO Website developments

The CSO has greatly enhanced its website since the 2002 user survey report and this has attracted favourable user feedback. The comments made by users will provide guidance in further developments. We have started work on developing a portal that would provide easy access for users to official statistics held by other Bodies. The portal will provide a single point of access to all Irish official statistics, and hold documentation on all Irish official statistics with links to the associated statistics. A new Really Simple Syndication service was launched on the CSO website in September 2005 and has been favourably referred to in some of the user survey responses.

Regional and small area data

The CSO fully appreciates the need for more detailed regional information and for small area statistical profiling. However primary data collection at regional level is relatively expensive. We have participated very actively in a number of initiatives in this area: preliminary examination in conjunction with the Irish Spatial Data Initiative of the Department of Environment of the development of a new small area unit for statistical output. This work was overtaken by the work of the National Postcodes Project Board and we are fully supportive of the recommendation of this group for the introduction of a new small area system of postcodes for Ireland. We have attended a number of Local Authority data seminars and will continue to work with these Bodies in an attempt to respond to some user needs.

New and recent statistical developments

In the period since the last user survey was undertaken, the CSO assumed responsibility for statistics on income and living conditions. We recently published our third set of annual EU SILC results. We are increasingly using the QNHS as a vehicle for undertaking special statistical modules in certain key social spheres and for regularly updating the key indicators from these modules on an annual basis.

The CSO has published a number of thematic reports in recent years (Construction and Housing in Ireland, Measuring Ireland's Progress, Women and Men in Ireland) and have plans to publish further reports on areas such as small industry in Ireland, ageing, children, and regional development.

Using the 2006 Census of Population as a filter, the CSO recently undertook a National Disability Survey. Results from this survey will be published in Autumn 2007 and will provide a comprehensive analysis of the situation of persons with a disability. Using the Census as a means of identifying a sample for the survey allowed the CSO to focus on a specific sub-sample of the population in an effective and cost-efficient manner.

The CSO has also been active in producing new statistics in many other areas since the last user survey was conducted: the first set of data on headline crime statistics using the PULSE system were published in October 2006; earnings data from the National Employment Survey were published in May 2006; and a new series on Service exports and imports was also published in May 2006.

Appendix

Appendix 1 NSB Survey of CSO Users 2006 Questionnaire

National Statistics Board

Survey of users of CSO Statistics

1. ORGANISATION INFORMATION

Organisation Name:

Contact Person:

Telephone:

Email:

Type of Organisation (please tick the most appropriate category):

- Government Department
- Local Administration
- Semi-State Body
- Third Level; Research
- Consultants; Market Research
- Financial; Stockbroker
- Media
- Politics
- Business
- Representative Organisation
- Other: please specify ()

2. SERVICE & PRODUCT USAGE

2.1 Please state the statistical release/publication you use and RANK the top 5 in order of importance:

<i>Statistical release/publication</i>	<i>Rank (1=most important, 5=least important)</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	

2.2 If there are CSO products or services that you are using MORE frequently now than four years ago, please list the top 4 more used and state why:

<i>Product or service area</i>	<i>Reason</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

2.3 If there are CSO products or services that you are using LESS frequently now than four years ago, please list the 4 main areas less used and state why:

<i>Product or service area</i>	<i>Reason</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

2.4 How do you usually get information from the CSO?

<i>Dissemination method</i> <i>(tick)</i>	<i>Rate dissemination method</i>							<i>Rank method in order of importance to you</i> <i>(1=most important, 7=least important)</i>
	Extremely good			Very unsatisfactory				
	<i>(circle as appropriate)</i>							
Website <input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Post <input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Publications <input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Email <input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
CD ROM <input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Floppy Disk <input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Fax <input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

2.5 If you use the CSO website, is the information you require:

(tick as appropriate)

Information usually:	Yes	No
Available on the site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Easy to find	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quick to download	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please state any suggestions that you have for improving the CSO website:

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

- 3.1 **When dealing with any company or organisation, there may be certain aspects of service that you feel are more important than others. Please rate the following aspects of service in terms of how important they are to you generally:**

<i>Organisations in general</i>	<i>Very important</i> <i>Totally unimportant</i>						
	<i>(circle as appropriate)</i>						
Ease of contacting the office	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The level of understanding of your requests	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The ability to meet your requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The speed of response to your queries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Technical expertise of staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Courtesy shown throughout dealings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The level of contact maintained	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being kept informed of progress	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ability to anticipate customers requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proactive in providing solutions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The speed of delivery on required products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Staff ability to answer your questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Willingness to adapt to meet your needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3.2 Central Statistics Office: How would you rate your satisfaction with CSO performance on the following service aspects ?

CSO	<i>Very satisfactory</i> <i>Totally unsatisfactory</i>						
	<i>(circle as appropriate)</i>						
Ease of contacting the office	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The level of understanding of your requests	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The ability to meet your requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The speed of response to your queries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Technical expertise of staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Courtesy shown throughout dealings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The level of contact maintained	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being kept informed of progress	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Ability to anticipate customers requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proactive in providing solutions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The speed of delivery on required products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Staff ability to answer your questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Willingness to adapt to meet your needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3.3 How has the level of Service from the CSO changed since 2002?

(tick as appropriate)

Improved

Remained the same

Disimproved

Please state why:

3.4 Do you have any suggestions as to how the CSO could improve its level of service?

4. PRODUCTS

4.1 Please rate your level of satisfaction with the CSO's products in terms of the following points:

<i>CSO products in general</i>	Very good	(circle as appropriate)				Very poor	
Level of detail provided	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Timeliness of the data	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Accuracy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Relevance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Style of presentation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Clarity of methodology documents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Overall cost of the product	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The product fulfilling your requirements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4.2 How has the quality of the products from the CSO changed since 2002?

(tick as appropriate)

Improved

Remained the same

Disimproved

Please state why:

4.3 Have you ever had any special statistical requirements that you have asked the CSO to fulfil in the past four years?

Yes

No

If yes, what was the nature of this requirement?

How satisfied were you with the way in which the CSO dealt with this specific requirement?

- (circle as appropriate)*
- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Completely satisfied | 1 |
| Satisfied | 2 |
| Partly satisfied/partly dissatisfied | 3 |
| Dissatisfied | 4 |
| Completely dissatisfied | 5 |

4.4 Do adequate mechanisms exist for the CSO to receive feedback from the users of its products?

Yes No

Please give details:

4.5 Since 2002, have your requirements for CSO products changed in any way?

Yes No

If yes, in what way have your requirements changed?

Has the CSO been able to meet your changing requirements?

Yes No

Please give details:

--

4.6 Please identify shortcomings with existing CSO statistics:

<i>Shortcoming</i>	<i>Explanatory text</i>

4.7 What statistical needs do you have that are not currently being met?

<i>Need not met</i>	<i>Explanatory text</i>

4.8 How does the quality of the CSO's products compare with other statistical offices in the European Union?

<i>International comparison</i>	<i>Much better (circle as appropriate) Much worse</i>						
Timeliness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Quality of presentation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Range of products	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Data accuracy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Other (please specify) (_____)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. Complaint Handling and Contact Difficulties

5.1 Have you ever encountered any problems with the service provided by the CSO?

Yes No

If so, did you bring this problem to the attention of the staff?

Yes No

What was the nature of your complaint or problem?

Overall, how satisfied were you with the way the problem was handled by the office?

(circle as appropriate)

- Completely satisfied 1
- Satisfied 2
- Partly satisfied/partly dissatisfied 3
- Dissatisfied 4
- Completely dissatisfied 5

5.2 How would you normally make contact with the office when enquiring about products or services?

(tick as appropriate)

- Telephone
- Email
- Website
- Post
- Calling into office
- Fax
- Other (please specify _____)

Have you ever encountered any difficulties in trying to contact the CSO?

Yes No

If so, please give details:

6. VALUE FOR MONEY

6.1 Overall, how would you rate the service and products of the CSO in terms of value for money?

(tick as appropriate)

- Very good value
- Good value
- Not good value/Not bad value
- Bad value
- Very bad value

Please give a reason for your answer:

7. VIEWS AS A SUPPLIER OF DATA TO THE CSO

7.1 Do you supply data to the CSO?

Yes No

If yes, please complete the sections below.

7.2 Reporting burden

Please list the following information for the CSO inquiries that you complete:

<i>Inquiry name</i>	<i>Do you use the results? (circle as appropriate)</i>	
	Yes	No
	Yes	No
	Yes	No
	Yes	No
	Yes	No
	Yes	No

7.3 Could technology be used to streamline the data collection process in your case?

7.4 General suggestions for alleviating the reporting burden:

**Please return the completed questionnaire to:
Secretary, NSB, c/o CSO, Ardee Road, Dublin 6;
or electronically to nsb@csso.ie**

Thank you for participating in this survey