

Part 3 Efficient and smooth implementation of statistical surveys

1 Response to changes in environment for statistical surveys

<Background and current situation>

This is a time of accelerated change in the social and economic fabric of Japan. Reforms in industrial structure, a changing employment environment, the falling birthrate, an aging population, and the advent of an advanced Information and Telecommunications network society all contribute to a growing need for reliable governmental surveys and statistics. At the same time, the conditions governing statistical surveys are also undergoing major change, as evidenced in the observations below. There is concern that these developments may impose heavier burdens on local governments, and could compromise the accuracy of statistical work.

- (1) Diversification of personal attitudes and values, and people's greater consciousness of privacy issues exacerbate the difficulty of gaining cooperation in statistical survey activities. Falling response rates and rising numbers of uncompleted questionnaires are the significant consequences.
- (2) There is greater variety in residential lifestyles: more nuclear families, more households with all members out at work or school during the day, and increasing number of two-income families and single-occupant domiciles. Combine this with the spread of condominiums with auto-security systems, and a surge in the popularity of studio apartments, and the result is more and more families who are either difficult to contact or are not cooperative in responding to survey questionnaires.
- (3) The extended business slump has engendered an ongoing process of company downsizing, which is most marked at the management level. Short-staffed, time-stressed companies and offices are more reluctant to cooperate in statistical surveys.
- (4) Diversification in lifestyles and proliferation of information communication equipment have led to differing demands in respect of questionnaire collection methods.
- (5) Many corporations have introduced centralized head office management systems, making it increasingly problematic, if not impossible, for branch or local offices to provide data for external surveys.
- (6) The emergence of new business styles and the introduction of information technology make it more difficult to discern the true nature of some businesses, e.g., small-office/home-office (SOHO) professionals.
- (7) There is a growing demand for online surveys based on computerization of administrative services, as outlined in the "e-Japan Priority Policy Program - 2002" (established on June 18, 2002 by the Strategic Headquarters for the promotion of an advanced Information and

Telecommunications network society), and the general trend toward utilization of information technologies in public sectors.

- (8) With the “maturing” of existing statistical enumerators, and increasing difficulty in maintaining required staff numbers, there is an urgent need to take effective steps to boost recruitment. Evening visits are also under consideration, because many families tend to be unavailable during the day.

In order to secure public co-operation in the completion of survey questionnaires, and to obtain accurate information under the above-mentioned circumstances, there is a need to further promote the development of new survey techniques, and to implement publicity and education programs designed to communicate the importance of statistics.

<Basic direction>

- (1) In order to foster appreciation of the significance of statistics, and the importance of citizens’ cooperation, there should be a concentrated campaign of publicity, education and public information on these issues, despite the countervailing conditions.
- (2) To accommodate questionnaire respondents’ differing preferences in respect of statistical surveys, and to address the diversity in lifestyles and residential situations, consideration should be given to the objectives, characteristics and effectiveness of implementing and using a variety of survey methods.

There should also be an effort to introduce online survey systems covering both business enterprises and private households through the development of information technologies, and with reference to examples of foreign online survey systems applied for the 2000 population census.

- (3) Appropriate measures should be implemented to address the growing number of small-scale business operations with no regular employees; the proliferation of companies whose true natures are difficult to discern at face value (e.g., SOHO professionals); and the increasing incidence of centralized business management structures, which constrain survey personnel’s ability to collect data.
- (4) To counter the increase in non-cooperative questionnaire responses and blank questionnaires returned, methods for filling out questionnaires should be devised in such a way as to reduce the burden for respondents, and encourage their cooperation; and efforts should be made to maintain and improve accuracy of the information provided.
- (5) Efforts should be made to implement effective measures for recruiting and retaining statistical enumerators, while taking into account the increasing difficulty of implementing statistical surveys by enumerators, due to changes in survey conditions, aging of enumerators and difficulty in recruiting enumerators.
- (6) Additional efforts should be made to promote measures for assuring the safety of statistical

enumerators, so that they can make evening visits to households whose members are out during the day; and can conduct surveys in more remote or difficult-to-access localities.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) In the case of surveys covering households, the Cabinet Office and ministries should focus on their objectives, characteristics and effectiveness; address the differing circumstances of questionnaire respondents; and encourage participation in surveys through a range of response options, e.g., postal methods, envelope submission, face-to-face interviews, and surveys using separate questionnaires for more complex items. In line with this approach, the MPHPT should make an effort to coordinate with the Cabinet Office and ministries concerned, as required, to consider specific online survey techniques, by fiscal year 2005, and should share its conclusions with the Cabinet Office and ministries.
- (2) In the case of surveys covering establishments and enterprises, the Cabinet Office and ministries should focus on their objectives, characteristics and effectiveness, and should promote surveys that use a range of questionnaire response options, such as online surveys and postal methods.
- (3) To counter the increasing incidence of non-cooperative households, establishments and enterprises, the Cabinet Office and ministries should implement measures to secure cooperation in surveys by reducing reporting burdens, e.g., devising improved methods for filling out questionnaires. They should also research reasons for non-cooperation.
- (4) The MPHPT should, in close liaison with the Cabinet Office and ministries, collate information on the actual status of SOHO professionals, and study survey methods before implementing field studies by fiscal year 2005, while taking into account the proliferation of establishments and enterprises whose true natures are not immediately apparent.
- (5) To cope with organizations whose accounting information is centrally controlled by their head offices, the Cabinet Office and ministries should implement methods that allow those head offices to complete questionnaires on behalf of the total organization.
- (6) As part of measures for ensuring the safety of statistical enumerators, the Cabinet Office and ministries should implement systems based on surveys by plural enumerators.

2 Promotion of statistical surveys using information and communications technologies

<Background and current situation>

Given the countervailing survey conditions, it is critical to apply the fruits of technological innovation in the fields of information processing and telecommunications to the process of

collecting and compiling statistical data, in order to minimize reporting burdens and improve survey efficiency.

With regard to information and communications technologies, the Government has committed to the “e-Japan Strategies” (established on January 22, 2001 by the Strategy Headquarters for the promotion of an advanced Information and Telecommunications network society), for example, and fast-tracking of information infrastructure is underway, e.g., introduction of the Internet and broadband transmission. The “e-Japan Priority Policy Program - 2002” states that “the computerization of administrative services should be promoted, with priority being placed on the revolution of services toward electronic provision of administrative information, further promotion of electronic application and notification procedures, further promotion of paperless management, and the sharing and handling of information via networks, in order to realize administrative services which can equally handle both electronic and paper-based information, by fiscal year 2003”. Thus, there is a need to promote online processes for gathering statistical survey data.

The need for online surveys is also suggested in “New Strategies for Government Statistical Services for the Coming Decade”. As of November 2002, the Cabinet Office and ministries had implemented 23 surveys on 17 systems. There are 14 further surveys scheduled on 7 additional systems (see Table 1).

However, there is a pressing demand from business enterprises to move more aggressively into online statistical surveys, given the widespread introduction of electronic equipment, such as computers, and recent advances in information technology.

Table 1 Online surveys implemented

Division	Medium	Number of systems	Number of surveys under each system mentioned at left
Online surveys underway	Internet	8	14
	Private line	6	6
	Electronic mail	3	3
	Sub-total	17	23
Online surveys scheduled (under development)	Internet	6	13
	Private line	1	1
	Sub-total	7	14
Grand total		24	37

(Source: Data from the survey related to “statistical survey systems utilizing information technologies”, prepared by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts, and Telecommunications, November 2002.)

For online submission of questionnaires, it is important to create a conducive environment that will encourage cooperation by questionnaire respondents, e.g., making the system and forms easier to

use. One major concern that must be addressed is the potential for information leakage.

On the other hand, if online survey systems have differences between surveys, this could cause problems for both questionnaire respondents and survey bureaus, as the respective methodologies for collecting and certifying questionnaires will all be different.

<Basic direction>

- (1) Efforts should be made to further promote online survey systems through the introduction of methods that are most appropriate to questionnaire respondents, while taking account of the most recent developments in information and communications technologies.

Introduction of online survey systems should be accompanied by measures to foster appropriate levels of security through the use of policies designed to gain respondents' appreciation of data protection and leakage prevention issues involved in such systems.

- (2) Research should be conducted into basic issues related to online survey systems (authentication methods, receipt systems, and security measures).

<Concrete measures>

- (1) As for designated statistics, the Cabinet Office and ministries should promote a transition to online implementation of vertical statistical surveys on establishments and enterprises in principle.

The same procedure shall apply to approved statistics and notified statistics.

- (2) The Cabinet Office and ministries should conduct research into not only conventional survey techniques, but also measures required to make introduction of online surveys acceptable to questionnaire respondents, so that online surveys can be designed accordingly.

At the same time, the Cabinet Office and ministries should proceed with research into certification methods relating to online surveys, a standard collection system, and the efficiency of statistical office work by prefectural governments.

- (3) The Cabinet Office and ministries should proceed with technical research into security measures involved in online surveys.

- (4) The Cabinet Office and ministries should urgently establish a unit for collaborative studies with experts in information processing, and examine areas of mutual concern in relation to statistical surveys utilizing information and communications technologies as mentioned in (2) and (3) above.

Primary issues to be studied in the new facility are:

- Research into the receipt system
- Technical studies relating to security measures
- Research into the certification methods how should be

3 Measures for reduction of reporting burdens on respondents

(1) Utilization of administrative records

<Background and current situation>

The utilization of administrative records is very important from the viewpoints of trying to simplify and streamline data collection for statistical surveys, and to reduce the burdens on respondents. Promotion of such utilization is also recommended in “New Strategies for Government Statistical Services over the Coming Decade”.

A study into the utilization of administrative records from statistical surveys and policies relating to such utilization, including investigations into the publication of statistics based on administrative records, is underway with the “Working Group for Studies on Policies to Utilize Administrative Records”, the second study committee of the Conference on Promotion of New Strategies for Government Statistical Services over the Coming Decade. The Cabinet Office and ministries are also looking at ways of simplifying individual statistical surveys by utilizing administrative records.

However, administrative records are data obtained from administrative reports for the purpose of issuing permits and notifications, and thereby prohibited from being used for non-specified purposes. Privacy and confidentiality caveats are in force. The range and contents of data in these records are very diverse. Currently, therefore, utilization of administrative records is seen as limited. On the other hand, there is pressure to utilize administrative records as basic supplementary data to provide information that may be missing from collected questionnaires. The recent development and application of information and communications technologies are expected to make it more feasible to utilize these records.

<Basic direction>

- (1) From the viewpoint of reducing of reporting burdens, efforts should be made to positively utilize administrative records in the preparation of statistical data, while taking all necessary care to maintain confidentiality.
- (2) Research into methods of utilizing administrative records should be implemented in line with the trend toward computerization of administrative records.
- (3) Policies for positively utilizing administrative records should be considered from the viewpoint of compensating for shortfalls in data obtained from questionnaires.
- (4) Efforts should be made to prepare, and update, population information through the utilization of administrative records, thereby reducing the burdens on respondents, and improving the accuracy of survey results.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) The Cabinet Office and ministries should initiate research into policies for positively utilizing administrative records in the preparation of major economic indicators, such as production, equipment investment, and capital assets. At the same time, there should also be a study into the potential for supplementing data shortfalls.
- (2) The Cabinet Office and ministries should proceed with a study into positive utilization of administrative records such as register book information and securities reports, in line with computerization of these records.
- (3) In order to move ahead with the studies mentioned in (1) and (2), above, the Cabinet Office and ministries should establish a research unit which includes responsible members of the Cabinet Office and those ministries that maintain administrative records, and conduct studies into policies for positive utilization of administrative records, by fiscal year 2005.
- (4) The MPHPT, working closely with the Cabinet Office and other ministries, should utilize administrative records to begin preparing and updating population information, of the SFEE, by fiscal year 2005.

(2) Measurement of reporting burdens on respondents and application of the method

<Background and current situation>

In order to conduct efficient and effective surveys and ensure accuracy of data, it is important, given the negative survey environment, to clarify the status of the burdens on respondents. This will provide a better understanding of problems they experience when filling out questionnaires, and help to establish measures for reducing those burdens. Research into methods of understanding and analyzing reporting time are underway with the “Working Group on Utilization of Indicators for Burdens on Responders - focusing on reporting time”, the second study committee of the Conference on Promotion of New Strategies for Government Statistical Services over the Coming Decade (hereinafter referred to as the “Working Group on Utilization of Indicators of the Burdens on Respondents”).

Given the recent trend toward complex and sophisticated survey contents, and the increasing demands on respondents, it is necessary to implement research into ways of measuring specific reporting burdens, and making use of the findings. There must also be an effort to gain an understanding of questionnaire respondents, and to promote reduction of the demands on them, taking into account the results of studies conducted by the Working Group on Utilization of Indicators for Burdens on Respondents. “Time” required for reporting serves as one of the effective measures for respondents’ burdens. However, it is difficult to apply a uniform gauge of reporting time, because respondents differ from one survey to the next. It is necessary, therefore, for the

Cabinet Office and ministries to apply techniques considered appropriate for each statistical survey, taking account of its characteristics.

<Basic direction>

Research should proceed into measurement of the burdens on respondents, and utilization of the findings, from the viewpoint of maintaining and improving the quality of statistics by means of appropriate response to changes in survey conditions, securing citizens' appreciation of the value of statistics, and reduction of the burdens on respondents.

<Concrete measures>

The Cabinet Office, other ministries, and the MPHPT (Statistical Standards Department) should initiate specific research into the measurement of burdens on respondents in respect of major central government statistical surveys, taking into consideration the results of studies carried out by the Working Group on Utilization of Indicators for Burdens, and making effective use of those results.

A research unit should be established, as required, for the purpose of studying and utilizing methods of measuring burdens.

(3) Promotion of data sharing to reduce the burdens on respondents

<Background and current situation>

Sharing data on individual questionnaires between the Cabinet Office and ministries concerned is an effective way of avoiding overlapping survey items, and simplifying these items. Therefore, positive promotion of data sharing is urged, in order to accelerate the process of reducing burdens on respondents, and improve the accuracy of surveys. The "Basic Plan Concerning the Promotion of Streamlining and Efficiency of Administrative Organization" (adopted by Cabinet Decision on April 27, 1999, and hereinafter referred to as the "Streamlining Plan") endorses the belief that sharing data on individual questionnaires will avoid overlapping survey items.

Avoidance of overlapping survey items through sharing data on individual questionnaires between the Cabinet Office and ministries concerned is still lacking, although it should be noted that such data sharing is found to some extent in the utilization of data relating to equipment investment contained in the Survey of Research and Development on the Basic Survey on Japanese Business Structure at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

Meanwhile, promotion of data sharing on individual questionnaires involves technical problems, such as an effective method of linking data for different definitions between surveys, data correction for different time factors, streamlining of required office work processing, etc. It is also necessary to gain citizens' understanding that sharing data on individual questionnaires is

designed to simplify surveys and reduce the burdens on respondents.

<Basic direction>

- (1) Efforts should be made to avoid overlap of respondents through the use of the SFEE. Efforts should also be made to promote the sharing of data on individual questionnaires from the viewpoint of reducing the burdens on respondents through avoiding overlap of survey items, and achieving more efficient surveys.

At the same time, there should be an effort, across the whole Government organization, to gain public understanding of the reasons for sharing data on individual questionnaires.

- (2) A study must be carried out on technical problems involved in resolving the issues of sharing data on individual questionnaires.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) To prepare an appropriate environment for the sharing of data on individual questionnaires, the Cabinet Office, other ministries and the MPHPT (the Statistical Standards Department) should make an effort to gain citizen's understanding of the necessity and utility of sharing governmental statistical data in reducing the burdens on respondents.
- (2) A study should be conducted concerning technical problems specific to data sharing, by the research unit referred to in Section 10 ("Promotion of research on Statistical Survey Technology").

4 Promotion of entrusting statistical works to private contractors, and assuring confidence of respondents

<Background and current situation>

The "Directives Relating to Questionnaire Management", a separate attachment to the "Enforcement of Laws for Revising Part of the Statistics Law and the Statistical Reports Coordination Law", dated September 29, 1989, stipulate procedures for commissioning private sector compilation of questionnaires in such a way as to assure the confidentiality of respondents.

The "Basic Plan concerning the Promotion of Streamlining and Efficiency of Administrative Organization" (Cabinet Decision on April 27, 1999) also states "with regard to statistical office work (compilation, database creation and provision, physical inspections, etc.), entrustment to private sector suppliers, including comprehensive entrustment, should be promoted, in order to reduce the burdens on national administrative organizations. Consequently, ministries and agencies should set out future promotional policies relating to entrustment to private contractors, during the current fiscal year". In response to the above, the Cabinet Office and ministries are expected to promote the entrustment of statistical office work, and to take all possible steps to assure the confidence of respondents when entrusting relevant statistical work to private contractors.

In addition, the document “The Status of Administrative Reform Implementation” (reported by the Headquarters for Administrative Reform on March 31, 2003) involves, as part of the follow-up to the Outline of Administrative Reform, organization and coordination of information on the status of commitment to reducing and streamlining national administrative organizations, and states that “entrustment to private contractors should be further promoted for statistical work (compilation, database creation and provision, field work, etc.)”.

As mentioned above, it is essential to practice strict management of questionnaires, in order to assure the confidence of respondents in situations where there is strong demand for further promotion of entrustment of statistical work to private contractors.

<Basic direction>

Efforts should be made to ensure that work related to statistical surveys will be entrusted to private contractors in a prudent and efficient manner, with emphasis on assuring the confidence of respondents.

<Concrete measures>

A meeting for deliberation should be established within the Cabinet Office and ministries for the purpose of: developing an understanding of the factors involved in outsourcing from private contractors, such as the influence of entrustment, accuracy of surveys and associated problems, minimum survey capabilities required of suppliers, areas and methodology of outsourcing, and establishment of guidelines for contracting of statistical surveys to private suppliers in fiscal 2004, with emphasis on assuring the confidentiality of respondents. This shall be implemented with reference to the above-mentioned “Directives Relating to Questionnaire Management”.

5 Cooperation and coordination for statistical surveys relating to various ministries

<Background and current situation>

In recent years, there has been an increasing need for statistics that have relevance for a range of industries, particularly such emergent fields as scientific technologies, biotechnologies and information technologies. Meeting these demands calls for thorough and accurate preparation of statistics.

Planning and implementation of statistical surveys in those areas of economic activity that affect multiple industries will require liaison and coordination between the authorities concerned. To date, one-to-one coordination has been practiced between the Cabinet Office and ministries concerned, as required, from the initial conceptual stage. However, to realize efficient and effective preparation

of statistical surveys across the whole Government organization, it is necessary to establish rules for collaborating from the outset.

A good example of such coordination between various ministries is the “Basic Survey for Bio-Industry Creation”, conducted jointly by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

<Basic direction and concrete measures>

The Cabinet Office and ministries concerned should promote efficient planning and implementation of statistical surveys that involve multiple ministries (e.g., surveys covering two or more industries) through liaison and coordination from the early conceptual stage.

To achieve this objective,

- (1) At the designing stage of statistical surveys in which several ministries will be involved, the Cabinet Office and ministries should establish a common mechanism for joint research and study between all ministries concerned, including their policy-making departments for the necessary liaison and coordination work.
- (2) In the case of statistical surveys for which a budget application for the next fiscal year is planned, the MPHPT (Statistical Standards Department) should receive brief outlines of those surveys from the Cabinet Office and ministries early in the fiscal year, and refer them to related ministries. Using this reference, related ministries should take steps to initiate appropriate liaison and coordination.

6 Promotion of more streamlined and expeditious procedures for government statistical activities

<Background and current situation>

Under current procedures governing statistical surveys, some cases require a considerable lead-time before final approval or acceptance by the Minister of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications. This results from the sequence of official processes, e.g., submission by the Cabinet Office and ministries of related documents to the Minister of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications (Statistical Standards Department), a hearing, then submission of official documents.

However, from time to time the need arises for swift preparation and delivery of statistics in response to urgent issues.

<Basic direction>

Efforts should be made to clarify examination and approval criteria related to statistical surveys, in order to facilitate more smooth and expeditious official procedures.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) The MPHPT (Statistical Standards Department) should, in pursuit of more smooth and expeditious official procedures, review the official procedure directions relating to statistical surveys (e.g., “The Range of Statistical Reports and Methods of Application for Approval”, handed down by the Conference of Report Coordination Officials on October 9, 1952, and “Description Concerning Notification under Article 8 of the Statistics Law”, prepared by the Secretariat of the Statistical Commission in May 1950), and revise them during fiscal year 2003.
- (2) Approved statistical surveys covering establishments and enterprises involve referral to economic organizations for their opinions by the MPHPT (the Statistical Standards Department), whenever those who wish to conduct surveys apply for approval. However, studies should be carried out during fiscal year 2003 into a standard for such referrals, and into the methodology of handling opinions between concerned parties, to work out a final plan.

7 Enhancement of statistical department of local governments

(1) Prefectural governments

<Background and current situation>

Most of the nation’s large-scale statistical surveys are conducted by prefectural governments, municipal governments, and statistical enumerators. In order to conduct these statistical surveys, local statistical organizations are established within prefectural and municipal governments. Full-time statistical personnel are deployed in the statistical department of prefectural governments, at national expense.

The allocation number of regular statistical survey staff members to be so deployed has been reduced since 1968, under national rationalization plans. The number of deployed personnel deployed for fiscal year 2003 is 2,266, reduced to approximately 70% of the 1968 level.

On the other hand, recent changes in social and economic conditions have led to greater complexity and sophistication in statistical survey activity. Changes in survey conditions, such as the increasing incidence of non-cooperation in surveys, are another area of concern. It should be noted that the main statistical survey sections of prefectural governments have been subject to increasing office workloads.

Amid the above factors, the Cabinet Office and ministries to date have tried to provide more smooth and efficient statistical survey services by conducting large-scale statistical surveys simultaneously, adjusting survey timing to conducting during the same fiscal year, and training dedicated statistical survey personnel.

Some designated statistical surveys conducted through the main statistical survey sections of prefectural governments require expertise pertaining to individual administrative services. Therefore, it is desirable that the implementation of such surveys be undertaken not by main statistical survey sections, but by administrative service departments and agencies.

<Basic direction>

- (1) To ensure that large-scale designated statistical surveys will be conducted efficiently, in an effort to continue to substantiate local statistical survey systems.
- (2) Appropriate support should be provided to local statistical survey sections so that they can efficiently conduct statistical surveys requiring special expertise.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) The MPHPT (the Statistical Standards Department) should make an effort to secure the required allocation number of dedicated statistical survey personnel. At the same time, they should study the preparation of systems for physical inspections at the main statistical survey sections of prefectural governments, including checks on the allocation number of exclusive statistical survey staff members deployed, taking into account opinions from prefectural governments.

The Cabinet Office and ministries concerned should continue to provide more streamlined and efficient statistical services through the statistical department, by conducting large-scale statistical surveys simultaneously, and adjusting survey timing to conduct in the same fiscal year. They should also provide support for training and education to improve the skills and performance of dedicated statistical survey staff members.

- (2) With regard to designated statistical surveys conducted through the main statistical survey sections of prefectural governments, the Cabinet Office and ministries concerned shall ask administrative service departments and agencies, as required, for further cooperation in those statistical surveys that require expertise relating to individual administrative services, prepare a comprehensive guide to statistical surveys, and train relevant statistical survey staff members in advance of actual projects.

(2) Municipal governments

<Background and current situation>

As at April 1, 2002, there were 13 municipal governments throughout the nation operating sections

specialized in statistical services. Only 13.6 percent of a total 12,000 municipal government personnel were engaged in statistical services, as at that date.

A major proportion of the nation's designated statistical surveys conducted through the municipal governments are large-scale periodic surveys. In recent years, the difficulty of recruiting statistical enumerators, increasing incidence of non-cooperation in questionnaires and surveys, and the introduction of sealed envelope-style responses have boosted the office workload for staff, resulting in increased services by statistical service personnel within municipal governments.

As mentioned above, the statistical service sections within municipal governments employ many personnel who are also engaged in other services, thus making it necessary to institute systems for large-scale periodic surveys.

<Basic direction>

To facilitate the operation of large-scale statistical surveys conducted periodically, central government should provide municipal governments with appropriate support.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) The Cabinet Office and ministries concerned should, for the purpose of reducing the office workload at local governments, recheck paperwork relating to large periodic surveys scheduled to be conducted through governments from fiscal year 2004.
- (2) The Cabinet Office and ministries concerned should, by the end of fiscal year 2004, consider the possibility of employing non-governmental supervisors (e.g., retired public employees, etc.) to assist statistical service personnel at the municipal government level.

(3) Statistical Enumerators

<Background and current situation>

Surveys conducted by statistical enumerators are notable for their reliability, the high rate of questionnaires collected, and the accuracy of information contained in the questionnaires. Many of the important and large-scale statistical surveys conducted by the country, including Population Census, are implemented through surveys conducted by statistical enumerators.

In recent years, more complex details in statistical surveys, the diversification of citizens' attitudes and values, increasing incidence of non-cooperative respondents, and proliferation of households with nobody at home during the day (e.g., two-income or single-occupant households) have made survey conditions more difficult. Consequently, the problems encountered by statistical enumerators personnel include, quantitatively: (i) shortage of statistical enumerators for large-scale periodic statistical surveys (Population Census, Establishment and Enterprise Census, Housing and Land Survey, Census of Agriculture and Forestry, and Census of Commerce); and, qualitatively: (ii)

low registration of younger statistical enumerators (see Table 2), and (iii) shortage of statistical enumerator who are familiar with interviewing techniques and/or can manage paperwork properly. Given these situations, it can be seen that there is a pressing need for improvement in both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the statistical enumerators situation.

To address these problems, the government conducts a range of training programs for statistical enumerators applicants being secured by means of advance registration under the “Project for Recruiting Statistical Enumerators” (hereinafter referred to as “registered enumerators”). At present, for budgetary reasons, the project is limited to covering municipal governments that represent populations of 50,000 or greater (484 municipal governments).

Table 2 Number of registered enumerators indexed by gender and age group (for fiscal year 2002)

(Units: persons, age groups, percentage)

	20 and under	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61 and over	Total	Average age
Male	10 (0.0)	645 (2.3)	1,227 (4.3)	3,200 (11.2)	5,547 (19.5)	17,872 (62.7)	28,501 (100.0)	61.6 -
Female	12 (0.0)	932 (1.4)	7,475 (11.2)	17,390 (26.1)	23,586 (35.5)	17,132 (25.8)	66,527 (100.0)	52.6 -
Total	22 (0.0)	1,577 (1.7)	8,702 (9.2)	20,590 (21.7)	29,133 (30.7)	35,004 (36.8)	95,028 (100.0)	55.3 -

(Note: The data in Table 2, above, have been compiled with reference to 47 prefectural governments (main statistical survey sections), surveyed by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts, and Telecommunications. The figures show the number of registered enumerators, as at April 1, 2002, in municipal governments covered by the Project for Recruiting Statistical Enumerators.)

<Basic direction>

To improve the number and quality of statistical enumerators, the Project for Recruiting Statistical Enumerators should be reviewed. Remuneration and accident compensation structures should also be re-checked, with a view to possible improvement.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) The MPHPT(Statistical Standards Department) during fiscal year 2003 should reconsider the standard for registering enumerators and methods for training them, under the Project for Recruiting Statistical Enumerators.
- (2) Through consultation with local governments, the ministry (Statistical Standards Department) should prepare a guideline for securing and improving the number and quality of statistical enumerators (a standard for registration and writing-off of registered enumerators, methods for managing and training them, safety measures, etc.) as early as

possible in fiscal year 2004.

- (3) The Cabinet Office and ministries concerned should establish a meeting for deliberation into remuneration and accident compensation systems, during fiscal year 2003.

8 Training and Education for statistical staff

(1) Enhancement of training and education of statistical staff (of central and local governments)

<Background and current situation>

“The New Strategies for Government Statistical Services over the Coming Decade” states that consideration should be given to the training of staff engaged in statistical surveys, and to fostering specialist statisticians, because the planning, design, and analysis of statistical surveys require dedicated and technical abilities and experience. It also suggests that an effort to conduct comprehensive training programs for statistical staff will result in better performance and more efficient implementation of statistical surveys. To promote the above-mentioned concept, the Cabinet Office and ministries are now reviewing internal training and education programs for statistical staff of local governments.

Some ministries already implement policies and training plans designed to foster the development of statistical staff, set up special systems, and conduct training programs. Other ministries have no such programs in place. Therefore these ministries have been tackling this issue in their own ways. Furthermore, statistical staff in the Cabinet Office and ministries have tended to be transferred more frequently, as part of the wide-ranging personnel transfer rotation program that resulted from a major organizational reshuffle across central government ministries in January 2001. This has made it more difficult to place experienced and knowledgeable statistics personnel in appropriate positions. The Cabinet Office and ministries face a common challenge: to foster the development of specialist statisticians, in order to efficiently conduct statistical surveys in the immediate future.

As at the end of fiscal year 2001, only about 20 percent of the statistical personnel deployed in the main statistical survey sections (departments) of prefectural governments had more than three years’ experience in statistical work, which highlights the difficulty of developing staff who are familiar with statistical service practice, in particular, as specialist statisticians. About 80 percent of statistical staff within municipal governments are also engaged in other services, and they are not afforded adequate opportunities to participate in training programs. Consequently, for the purpose of assuring quality of statistical surveys, there should be greater demand for the planning and implementation of effective training programs that are easily accessible to statistical personnel within local governments.

In order to maintain the technical competence of statistical staff, the Cabinet Office and ministries prepare manuals on the processes of designing and implementing statistical surveys, but there are no existing guidelines for a standard method of controlling and evaluating the quality of statistical personnel.

<Basic direction>

There should be study and reconsideration of the basic policies for fostering statistical staff at both national and local government levels. This should aim at development of those personnel who are best equipped to provide such services as planning and implementation of effective and efficient statistical surveys, and utilization and analysis of the statistical data thus obtained.

<Concrete measures>

(1) Statistical staff within the national government

The Cabinet Office and ministries should compile existing data on currently active training programs for statistical staff within the national government, establish a meeting for deliberation, and, during fiscal year 2003, initiate a study of the basic policy for fostering specialists, and methods for learning dedicated skills.

(2) Statistical staff within local governments

With regard to the ongoing statistical service-related training programs for statistical staff inside local governments, the Cabinet Office and ministries concerned should enable trainees to answer questionnaires about their training programs, then apply the findings to a restructuring of training periods and other aspects of the programs.

The Cabinet Office and ministries during fiscal year 2004 should look at policies to assist local governments in developing and training their statistical staff, and then prepare specific proposals. At the same time, the MPHPT (Statistical Standards Department) should prepare databases, e.g., training data from the Cabinet Office and ministries, in association with its Statistical Research and Training Institute, and should consider the possibility of providing information to the parties concerned.

(3) Standardization of statistics preparation processes

The Cabinet Office and ministries should examine the information in their manuals that relates to processes for designing and implementing statistical surveys, and consider the need to complete a uniform guideline for the common portion of these manuals by fiscal year 2004.

(2) Reinforcement of training functions at the Statistical Research and Training Institute of the MPHPT

<Background and current situation>

The Statistical Research and Training Institute (hereafter SRTI) of the MPHPT functions as both an institution for conducting training programs on statistical services for central and local government officials, and is the only agency for fostering statistical staff, as designated under the Statistics Law. In this capacity, the SRTI conducts a wide range of training programs for novice statistical personnel, supervisors, experienced statistical staff, and analysts, with the clear objective of instilling the know-how required for statistical service work. These training programs will play an important role in fostering the statistical staff required for effective implementation of statistical surveys at both central and local government levels.

However, some issues have been raised by local governments in respect of the training programs provided by the SRTI of the MPHPT.

They include:

- (1) Some training programs last more than a month, and there are concerns about the effect on trainees' primary duties, thereby precluding them from joining the programs.
- (2) Such training programs involve a number of specialist subjects, such as processing and analysis, which are more oriented to personnel from the Cabinet Office and ministries. Therefore, the courses are not really appropriate for local government statistical personnel, who are mainly engaged in practical survey and inspection activities.

<Basic direction>

The SRTI of the MPHPT should, at this stage, establish and review the following training curriculum, while studying the need for training programs; promote the introduction of new training methods; and look into desirable training service strategies for the medium- and long-term future, so that statistical staff at both central and local government levels can have access to courses of SRTI that are worthwhile, practical and relevant to their situations.

<Concrete measures>

The SRTI of the MPHPT should set and review the following training curriculum, in fiscal year 2003, and beyond, taking into account trainees' questionnaire responses and the requirements of the Cabinet Office, ministries and local governments, with the objective of lifting the dedicated abilities and performance of the statistical staff at both central and local government levels.

- (1) The SRTI should seek to accommodate those local governments that are reluctant to have staff participate in long-term training programs by giving thought to shortening or modularizing training periods, or by considering the implementation of localized training programs.
- (2) The SRTI should also take account of those local governments that conduct practical surveys and inspections by making an effort to reconsider the formats and contents of training

programs, with a focus on workplace training courses.

- (3) Starting in fiscal year 2003, the SRTI should try to initiate correspondence training courses via the Internet, for local government statistical staff who cannot easily attend regular training programs. The SRTI should also aim at actually implementing such programs from fiscal year 2004. The SRTI should also begin studying the development of materials for online training courses.

The SRTI of the MPHPT during fiscal year 2003 should organize a liaison meeting comprising the Cabinet Office, ministries and local governments, on the development and training of statistical staff. The liaison meeting would study the concepts for medium- and long-term training services at the training center during fiscal year 2004, while coordinating the training programs for statistical services jointly conducted by the Cabinet Office, ministries and local governments.

9 Securing cooperation for statistical surveys

(1) Promotion of publicity campaign for securing cooperation in statistical survey activities

<Background and current situation>

“New Strategies for Government Statistical Services over the Coming Decade” states that the publicity campaign for statistical services should focus on the utilization of statistical survey results, as well as on reduction of the burdens on respondents. The strategy also urges efforts to improve statistical surveys by using various media to give the public ample information, so that respondents will take more interest in surveys. As one way of increasing the level of citizens’ cooperation in statistical surveys, these plans suggest the consistent use of a “uniform logo” on questionnaires and handouts, which will indicate that the surveys are being conducted as part of a national project.

Publicity activities conducted by the Cabinet Office, ministries and local governments are aimed primarily at enlisting cooperation in carrying out statistical surveys. Up to now, there has been little public relations activity explaining the uses to which statistical survey results are put. Publicity activity covering reporters and their increased pay allowance will also require further study. No study has been conducted, so far, on the proposal of a “uniform logo”, despite the statement of “New Strategies for Government Statistical Services over the Coming Decade”.

<Basic direction>

- (1) A public relations campaign for government statistical survey activities should be further promoted to make respondents aware of the significance of statistical surveys, and enlist their cooperation in the programs.

- (2) There is also a need to study what the rewards for respondents should be.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) To prepare the environment for obtaining cooperation in statistical survey activities, the Cabinet Office and ministries should set up a meeting for deliberation (i) what publicity activities should be used to reach reporters, (ii) What compensation allowances should be paid to respondents, according to different types of statistical surveys, and (iii) the displaying of a “uniform logo” on questionnaires, to indicate that the surveys carried out by the Government. Specific measures should be prepared during fiscal year 2004.
- (2) The Cabinet Office and ministries in fiscal year 2003 and beyond should set out to publicize activities that provide public information which is based on the results of statistical surveys, together with examples of their use and application, at the time of recruiting respondents for cooperation in statistical survey activities.

(2) Education to highlight the importance of statistics

<Background and current situation>

Children and students are required to develop a rich understanding of the humanities, the flexibility to adapt to social change, keen judgment, and the ability to decide what action they should take. Utilization of statistical data is an essential element of making such decisions. Education plays a very important role in cultivating appreciation of the importance of statistical data, through the process of learning how to read and use statistics.

However, in the current education framework, the compulsory curriculum covering statistics has been diminished under the New School Curriculum Guideline. It is, however, possible to cover statistics in periods of comprehensive studies, and in the study of selective subjects. It is important that teachers take the initiative in discussing statistics from the viewpoint of statistical education, during school hours dedicated to individual subjects and comprehensive studies.

In this regard, the MPHPT conducts “statistics instructor workshops” which include teachers; supports national contests for statistic graphs and the national statistics education study conference; and has opened a page for children and students on the website of the Bureau of Statistics and the Statistics Center, to promote its commitment to education highlighting the importance of statistics

<Basic direction>

Statistical information should be proactively provided to teachers and other staff at educational institutions, so that they are encouraged to expand the boundaries of education highlighting the importance of statistics.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) The MPHPT (Statistical Standards Department) should consider expanding the “statistics instructor workshops” for teachers, and look at what is needed to complete the contents of these workshops, during fiscal year 2003, in association with the Cabinet Office and ministries, local governments, and related organizations such as the Council for Statistical Education Studies.
- (2) The ministry should make an effort to prepare and make available teaching materials (reading materials) for comprehensive studies at elementary and junior high schools, and should promote their distribution from fiscal year 2004.
- (3) The Cabinet Office and ministries concerned should, in fiscal year 2003 and beyond, set out to open Internet home pages for children and students, and organize their complete content. It should also look at preparation and provision of reference data and materials associated with statistical education. At the same time, the MPHPT (Statistical Standards Department) should provide the Cabinet Office and ministries concerned with information on teachers’ needs, obtained through liaison with local governments and related organizations such as the Council for Statistical Education Studies.

10 Promotion of research into statistical survey technology

<Background and current situation>

At the same time as the demand for statistics is growing and becoming more diversified, in response to social and economic developments, there is also increasing pressure to reduce the burdens on respondents related to statistical surveys. Thus, it has become important to seek ways to improve the accuracy of statistics and the implementation of more efficient statistical surveys through the development of statistical survey technologies.

It is a matter of urgency to effectively exploit recent advances in information and communications technology. In addition, it is necessary to establish a mechanism for joint research and development within the Cabinet Office and ministries, in order to address the many issues being noted in research and development work for statistical survey technologies. These problems include the succession of sampling technologies, the development of new analysis and processing techniques, and the development of new survey techniques that can be adapted to meet changes in survey conditions.

It is equally important to foster specialist statisticians in the Cabinet Office and ministries, to share information on statistical survey technologies between governmental departments, and to maintain and improve statistical survey know-how.

<Basic direction>

Efforts should be made to share information on statistical survey technologies and information processing between governmental departments, in order to maintain and improve statistical survey know-how at governmental levels.

<Concrete measures>

- (1) A permanent study organization (Expert Group on Statistical Survey Technologies and Information Processing -tentatively) should be established during fiscal year 2003 for investigation and study of statistical survey technologies.
- (2) The major subjects for study shall be as follows:
 - Study of statistical survey techniques
 - Study of advanced statistical analyses
 - Study of the utilization of information and communications technologies in statistics
 - Technical study of the sharing of data from individual questionnaires