

## **Response burden in business surveys – how to manage?**

Sofia Rodrigues, Almiro Moreira, Paulo Saraiva (Statistics Portugal)

*e-mail:* [sofia.rodrigues@ine.pt](mailto:sofia.rodrigues@ine.pt), [almiro.moreira@ine.pt](mailto:almiro.moreira@ine.pt), [paulo.saraiva@ine.pt](mailto:paulo.saraiva@ine.pt);

### ***Abstract***

Aware of the effort that the statistical programme imposed to businesses when answering to surveys, in the last few years Statistics Portugal is strongly investing in ways to reduce both real and perceived burden. Respondents and Statistics Portugal must be considered allies in providing a quality service of delivering information to both society and the companies themselves.

Several solutions can be used in order to reduce statistical burden, namely: the more intensive use of administrative and other data; the implementation of the Automated Data Transmission system; the use of new sampling techniques that result in smaller samples; the replacement of collected data by estimates. From 2007, Statistics Portugal has implemented an integrated data collection channel – Webinq – which represents a single point of access to manage electronic questionnaires, which lowered the burden and costs and data collection. Virtually all business survey data are collected using electronic questionnaires, and a file upload feature is also available for some surveys.

Pigtail surveys are an effective way to identify the main issues that respondents have to deal, and that can be addressed further on. In 2017, Statistics Portugal started an initiative on a voluntary ad hoc survey, as an attached component after the end of the main survey, for businesses requested to participate in 75 web questionnaires, covering 60.000 businesses. The survey results provided an overview image of how the statistical reporting is seen by data providers. Subsequently, this initiative became regular, and the information collected every two years, include questions like: degree of difficulty in collecting data and answering the survey; time spent; number of persons involved; the usefulness of the information collected both for society and for companies themselves. With this information, its possible to identify priority surveys to be simplified. These analysis help to establish priorities, especially when dealing with small and medium size businesses.

One of the results from the initial survey was that businesses consider that the statistical information disseminated was very significant for the society, but not for companies. In order to address this issue, Statistics Portugal implemented a very successful action: the personalized feedback reports for each company. Individual information combined with sectoral aggregated data was sent to each company, which was highly appreciated by the respondents and expectedly reduced the perceived burden.

Besides the extension of these personal reports the most relevant surveys, we are exploring the possibility of implementing new features, namely the introduction of dynamic ways to update the report and giving the possibility to the respondents to choose the most appropriate indicators.