

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON BUSINESS DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

19-21 SEPTEMBER 2018 – STATISTICS PORTUGAL, LISBON

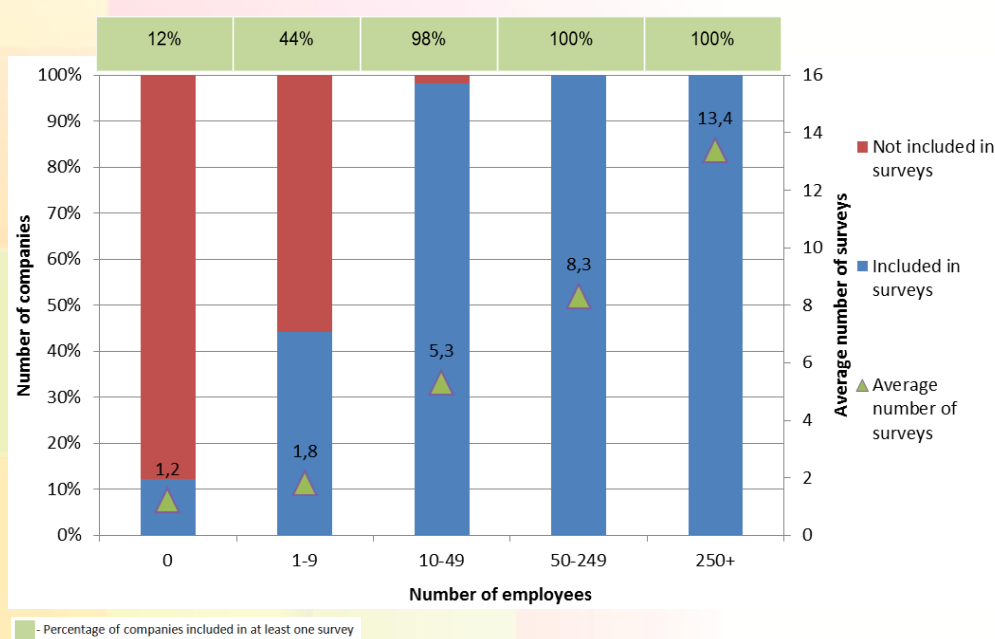
SHOULD WE APPROACH DIFFERENTLY TO DATA COLLECTION FROM LARGE BUSINESSES?

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The inclusion of large businesses in statistical surveys at SURS

In 2016 there were more than 200,000 companies in the Business Register of Slovenia, of which 324 were businesses with more than 250 employees. These large companies are annually on average included in 13.4 statistical surveys, and have to answer on average 190.5 questionnaires, which is much more than the average for all businesses (2.3 surveys and 4.6 questionnaires).



Special approach to different businesses at SURS

When collecting statistical data it is natural to use different approaches for different types of reporters, including when it comes to their size. SURS distinguishes key reporters from other units and gives them greater importance in the data collection and the data control. In data selection partial coordinated sampling is used to reduce multiple inclusions in statistical surveys. SURS also has a system for measuring actual burden of reporting units and a central help desk. In addition, a special project for selective data editing is currently underway in

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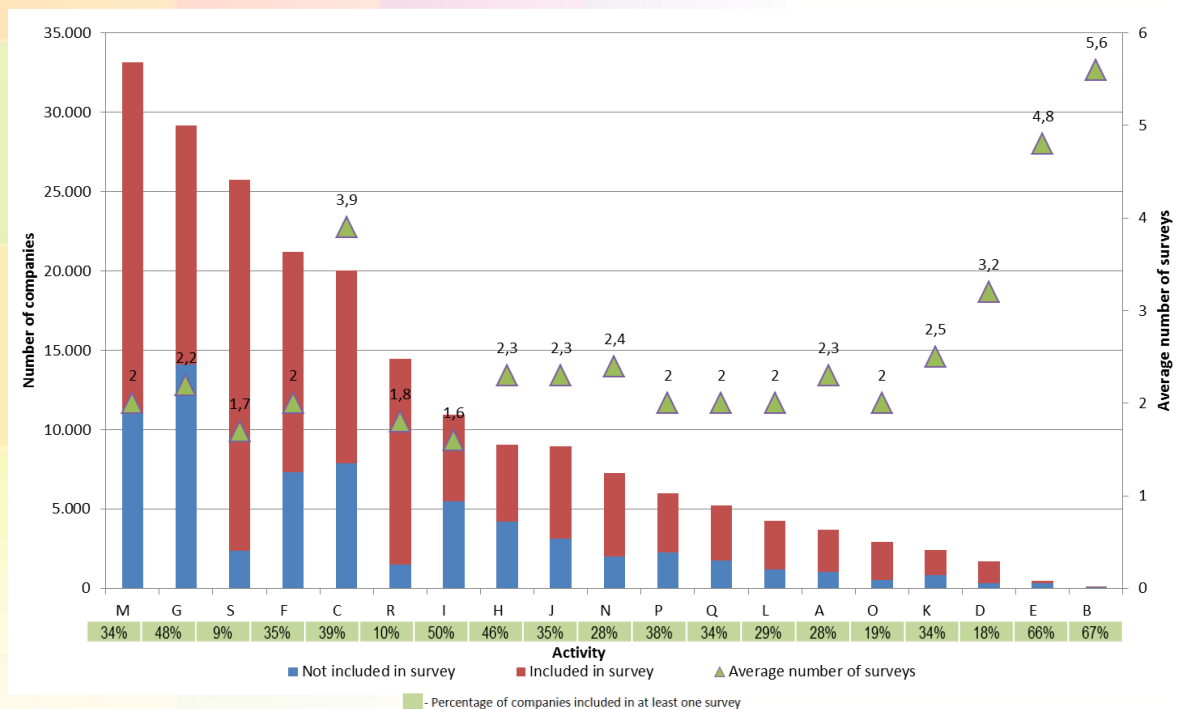
which larger units will have special attention in data editing. However, SURS does not use a special management system for the overall treatment of large businesses.

Additional possibilities for handling larger companies

A special approach to large companies could be considered in all processes of data collection. We can start with sampling and review if large companies could be selected less frequently. The second area is communication, where we could consider an individual approach to large businesses. Data collection itself is a wide area with lots of possibilities, including adjustment of data collection to reporters' systems (pull instead of push approach). Furthermore, if we were to decide for a special strategy for large businesses, we should choose a wider approach, including also the questions of confidentiality, non-response, etc.

Other problematic groups of companies

On the other hand, we have to realise that large businesses are not the only important survey respondents. For example, economic activity is also an important factor of including companies in different surveys.



If we further analyse companies by size and activity, we can see that also smaller companies registered under specific economic activities are heavily burdened (e.g. A – agriculture, forestry and fishing; B – mining and quarrying; C – manufacturing; F – construction), while

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others are burdened moderately regardless of size (e.g. O – public administration; P – education; Q – human health and social work activities; R – arts, entertainment and recreation). Furthermore, individual companies are included in an above-average number of surveys even though they are smaller and registered in activities that are otherwise less burdened.

We are interested in experiences and opinions on additional activities and strategies regarding different approaches to large companies. Some starting points on this subject:

- Identifying large reporters
We could take a bottom-up approach, where we could first identify individual large reporters and try to gather them into homogeneous groups. We could then prepare different strategies for different focus groups. Also different categorization of important businesses could be considered.
- Coordinated approach in communicating with key respondents
This does not mean that one person should always contact an individual business. One person cannot efficiently manage different subject areas for which data are collected and it is usual that in businesses more than one person completes statistical reports.
- Further development of coordinated sampling
- Using predefined datasets instead of web questionnaires
SURS would prepare the structure of an electronic record for individual statistical surveys. Businesses would prepare reports from their information systems. Such a solution would be particularly useful for businesses that are involved in some statistical surveys with certainty.
- Use of data from reporters' information systems
We could, for example, arrange with businesses to export their data from their accounting information systems from which we can obtain authentic information on assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses as shown in the general ledger. It would first be necessary to obtain precise information about the used businesses chart of accounts and internal bookkeeping rules.