

Statistics on International Development: User Consultation

In order to ascertain whether DFID's key National Statistic, Statistics on International Development (SID), was fit for the purposes of its users, DFID ran a user consultation during the last quarter of 2012. This consultation consisted of an internal user engagement event where DFID's users of the publication could comment on its content and layout, and an online survey that was open to the public and was publicised on DFID's internal and external websites, StatNet and StatsUserNet. As part of this consultation exercise, web hits on SID's website pages were also analysed.

As a result of this consultation, DFID are now looking to make some small changes to the SID publication. The changes below are based on the user feedback received as part of this consultation, as well as internal discussions within DFID.

Changes to the SID publication

The next publication, due to be released in September/October 2013, will consider the following changes for the next publication:

- Provide greater breakdown of Other Government Departments' spend;
- Consider a new disaggregation of aid to exclude global thematic funds in bilateral spend through multilaterals in-country;
- Re-order the tables to give priority to Official Development Assistance figures over Gross Public Expenditure on Development figures;
- Improve the presentation of analysis within SID, using alternatives to large tables where appropriate;
- Improve the navigation of contents within the document by providing better titles, chapter markings and bookmarks, and
- Increase the accessibility of the raw data used to produce SID.
- Consider whether some tables should be moved from the publication to additional tables, so ensure the timeliness of the publication

The sections below document the feedback received via the online survey and through analysis of web metrics.

Results of the User Consultation Survey

The survey ran until 31st December 2012 and received 75 responses. **Figure 1** shows that the majority of responders were from non-governmental organisations or from within DFID. There were also a large number of students, academics and researchers interested in the SID publication.

Approximately 60% of responders read the articles in SID. There was a wide range of responses given to the question of which were the most useful articles, suggesting that the articles do add value for many of SID's users.

Most (70%) of responders had read or used SID before, but 30% of people had never used SID. This 30% did not continue with the rest of this survey. **Figure 2** shows that most people who used SID do so infrequently (43% said that they use SID less than once a month); whilst 13% stated that they use it five times or more every month.

The most common use for SID is the data tables. Eighty-six per cent of responders stated that they used the information in the tables within SID and 75% of those people thought that the tables were easy to use. The 25% that thought they were not easy to use cited reasons such as the fact that they weren't useful in hard copy and they would like to be able to download the data for their own uses. For those who

were aware of the downloadable tables but still found them difficult to use stated that they should be more dynamic and that they should be published in a single data file for ease of analysis.

Figure 1: Responders to the SID user consultation survey

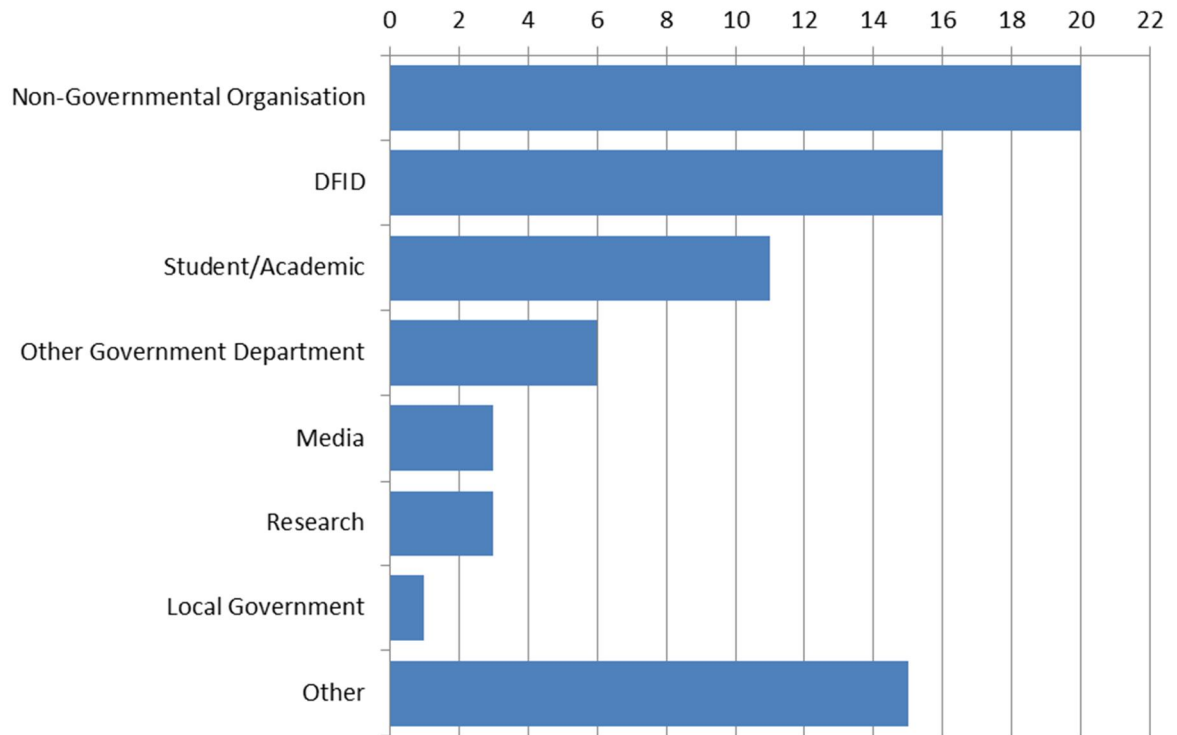
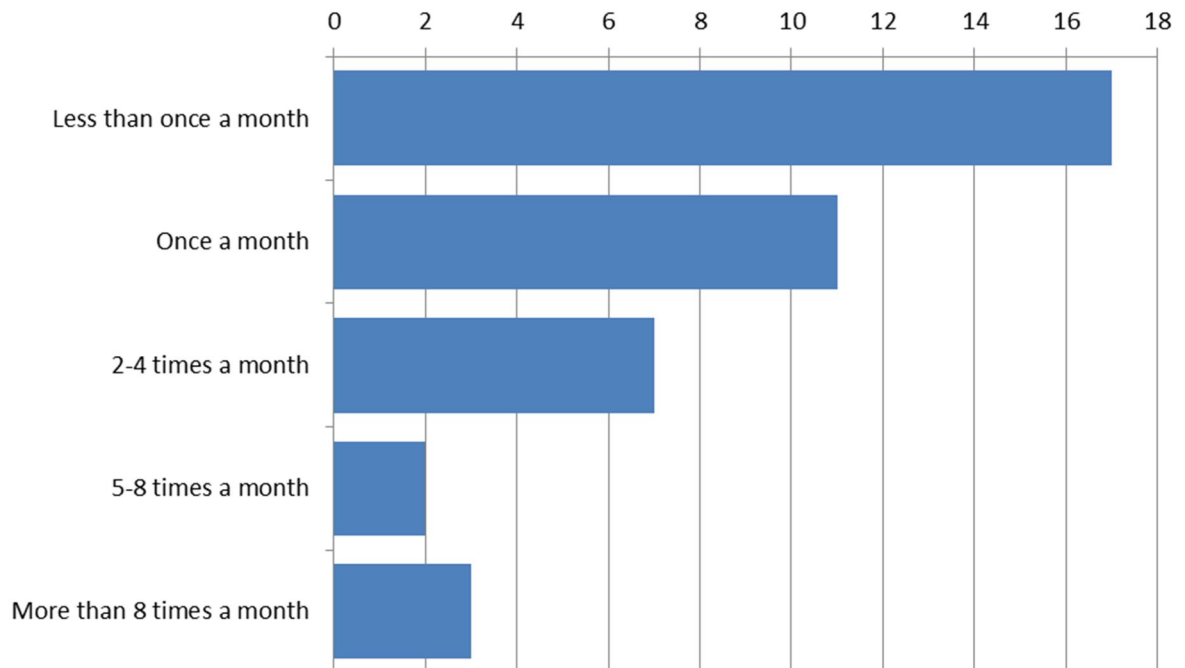


Figure 2: Frequency of SID use



In assessing the use of individual tables, all tables had been marked as essential for use by at least one responder. Tables 1, 3, and 14.1 to 14.5 were most frequently identified as essential. Tables 5, 8, 12, 15, 17 and 19 were only marked as essential by one person each. In answering which tables were never used, the most frequent responses were that tables 5, 6, 12, and 19 were never used. This reinforces the under-use of tables 5 and 19, as these were the least essential and the most “never used”. Tables 1, 3, 9, 13, 14.1, and 16.1 received no marks in the “never used” question. This reinforces the extensive use of tables 1, 3, and 14.1, as these were the most essential and were used by all responders at some point.

Forty per cent of responders thought that the information in SID was difficult to find. Reasons for this were; they thought PDF was not the best format for the publication; it should be more aligned with the annual report; the additional tables are not referenced in the document, and; the titling, contents page and indexing/bookmarking in the document is poor, leading to difficulty in navigating the report and finding the relevant information. These are areas that we will be seeking to address in any changes we make to SID.

Web Metrics

Activity on the DFID external website was monitored from 31st October 2012 to 26 November 2012. This four-week window immediately followed the publication of the 2012 edition of SID.

The most popular page (based on number of page views) was the SID 2012 landing page, with 1,302 page views over the four week period, 896 visits and 826 unique visitors. The second most popular page was the SID 2012 Key Statistics page with 485 page views, 401 visits and 380 unique visitors. After these two, Sections 3 (How much is UK expenditure on international development?) and 4 (Where does UK expenditure on international development go?) were most viewed, followed by the Tables Index, with 182 page views, 154 visits and 135 unique visitors. All activity was strongest closer to the publication date, tailing off towards the end of the four week period.

Most visitors (84%) to the SID pages are internal refers, i.e. they are directed to the SID pages from another page of the DFID website. Eight per cent are direct traffic, i.e. they will have saved a bookmark to a particular page of interest. Five per cent are directed from search engines and 2% are external refers, i.e. from a link on another website. Behaviour tracking with regards to where people go after visiting the Tables Index shows that the most viewed tables are Tables 9 (23% go here), 14.1 (13%), 14.3 (12%) and Table 1 (12%), accounting for 60% first page views.

DFID welcomes feedback on all of its products and will continually review its publications to ensure they are fit for purpose for their users. If you have any queries or comments on SID, or any of DFID’s statistical products, please contact us at statistics@dfid.gov.uk.