SURVEY OF USERS OF JUSTICE STATISTICS WEBSITE

Introduction

1.   A survey was conducted in late 2010 of the Justice Statistics section of the Scottish Government website (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice). The purpose of this survey was to obtain the views of users on various aspects of the website (including the content and format) and any ways in which they felt it could be improved.

2.   A wide group of justice stakeholders (including those who had registered an interest in justice matters through the ScotStat website - http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/scotstat) were informed in early November 2010 that the survey was available to be completed. A total of 43 responses to the survey were received in the period up to Christmas 2010 - the Scottish Government Justice Analytical Services (JAS) is very grateful to those stakeholders who took the time to complete the questionnaire. This report provides a summary of the responses to the survey and how some of the actions identified as a result have been / will be taken forward.

Type of respondents

3.   As can be been in Chart 1, there was a relatively equal split of respondents by the type of customer they were. While there were more from the Scottish Government (27 per cent) than anywhere else, there were around 20 per cent from each of the academic, local authority and other public sector categories.

**Chart 1 – Respondents to survey by customer type**
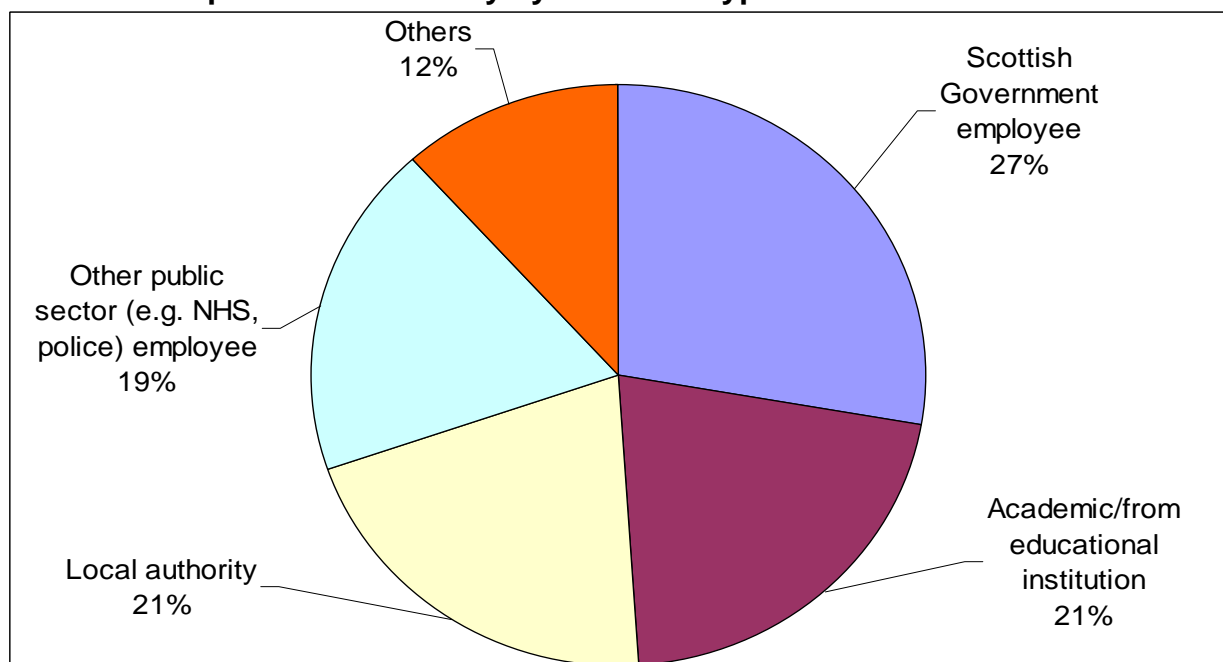
Frequency of use and topics accessed

4.   More respondents advised that they visited the Justice Statistics section of the website (hereafter referred to in this report as "the website") one to three times a month

(35 per cent) than any other category. A further 26 per cent visited less often, while 30 per cent visited once or twice a week, with only 9 per cent accessing the site every/most days.

5.   The survey asked respondent to tick up to three boxes to show the statistical topics they were most interested in. As can be seen in Chart 2, the topics which were of most interest were the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (63 per cent), recorded crime (56 per cent), criminal proceedings (47 per cent) and criminal justice social work (40 per cent).

Chart 2 – Statistical Products used the most by respondents
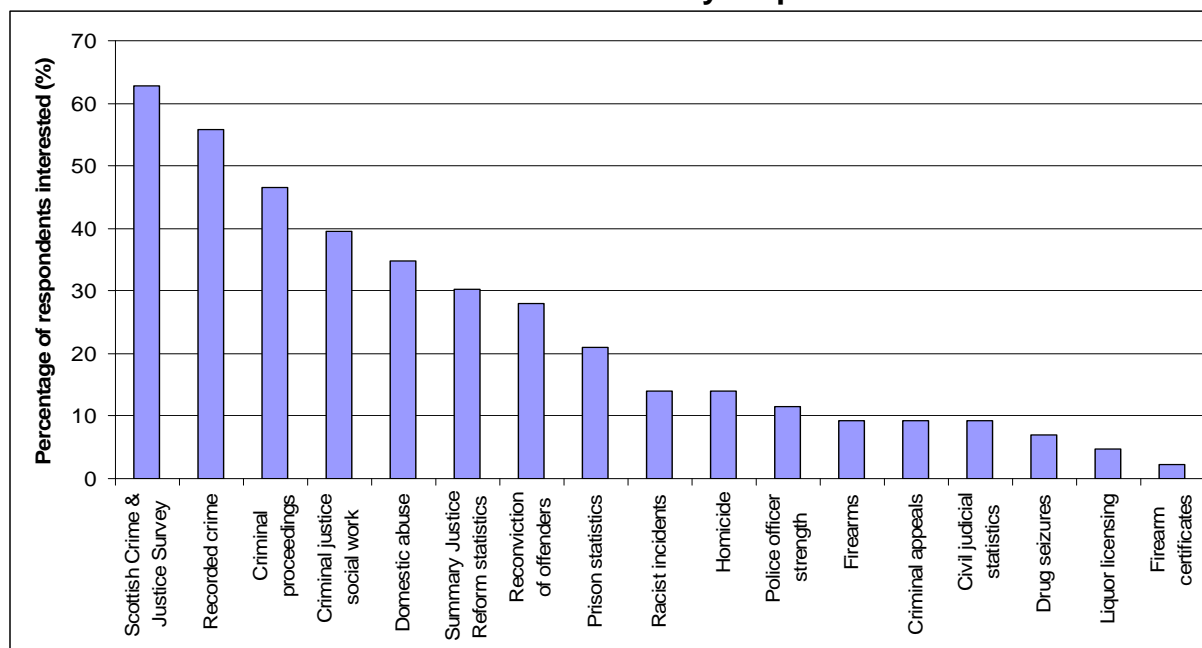
6.   Table 1 shows how frequency of access varied for different topics. Due to the relatively small number of respondents to the survey, this table has been restricted to those justice topic areas where at least 12 respondents said they used statistics from that area. While overall, 40 per cent of all respondents said they visited the website at least as frequently as once or twice a week, this varied greatly by topic area. Users of statistics on criminal justice social work (59 per cent) and criminal proceedings (50 per cent) tended to be more frequent users. However, those accessing the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (26 per cent), Domestic Abuse statistics (27 per cent) and recorded crime statistics (29 per cent) reported that they accessed the website less often.

Table 1 – Percentage of respondents who visited the website at least as frequently as "once or twice a week"

All respondents	*40*
Respondents who advised that they used:	
Scottish Crime & Justice Survey	*26*
Recorded crime	*29*
Criminal proceedings	*50*
Criminal justice social work	*59*
Domestic abuse	*27*
Summary Justice Reform statistics	*38*
Reconviction of offenders	*42*

Opinions on website

7. The survey asked some questions about the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with different statements about the website. Chart 3 provides details of the responses to these questions.

Chart 3 – Opinions on various aspects of the website
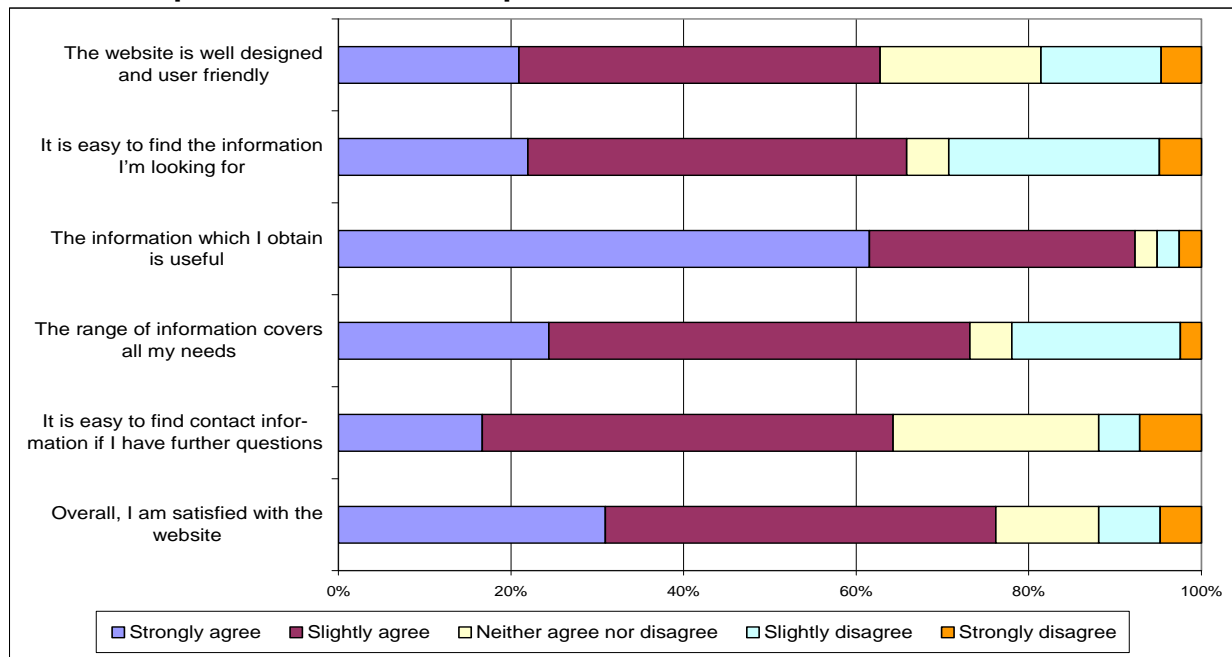
8. Sixty-three per cent of respondents said they agreed that the website was well designed and user friendly (with 21 per cent strongly agreeing this was the case). Just under a fifth of people disagreed with this, with the same proportion having no opinion on this issue.

9. An interesting further finding was that the proportion who agreed the website was well designed and user friendly was lower amongst those who visited the website the most often. While 71 per cent of those who visited the website at least as frequently as once or twice a week (and who expressed an opinion either way) agreed with this statement, this was the case for 81 per cent of those who visited less frequently. The small number of respondents to this survey mean this should be interpreted with caution although the difference may perhaps reflect the more complex data requirements of those who use the website more frequently, resulting in them having to dig deeper to find the data they are looking for.

10. Almost two-thirds of respondents agreed that it was easy to find the information they were looking for on the website, although almost 30 per cent disagreed.

11. Of all the "agree/disagree" questions, the one giving the most positive opinions was where respondents were asked whether they agreed that the information they obtained from the website was useful. Ninety-two per cent said they agreed with this statement, with 62 per cent strongly agreeing. This illustrates that, while users are very satisfied with the information they obtain from the website, JAS should look to help make it more straightforward for them to find the information they need.

12.   There were also a high proportion of people who agreed that the range of information on the website covered all their needs (73 per cent) and that overall they were satisfied with the website (76 per cent). A lower proportion (64 per cent) felt it was easy to find contact information if they had any further questions and the numbers who strongly agreed this was the case (17 per cent) was lower than for any of the "agree/ disagree" questions. JAS should therefore look at ways of assisting users to be able to contact them for more information.

Views on volume and content of website

13.   Almost everyone said that they either felt the amount of material on the website was about right (74 per cent) or too little (24 per cent). Amongst those who used the four most popular statistical products (Scottish Crime & Justice Survey, recorded crime, criminal proceedings and criminal justice social work), the proportion who thought the amount of material was about right was higher for those who used data from each of Scottish Crime & Justice Survey, recorded crime and criminal justice social work (each on or just above 80 per cent) but was lower for criminal proceedings data (68 per cent). It is, however, worth adding that a stakeholder consultation has since been done for criminal proceedings which has resulted in changes to the volume and type of material being published on this topic (see section 29 later in this report).

14.   The most popular ways in which respondents viewed published data were by reading the PDF [1] version online (55 per cent) and by looking at online datasets in Excel format (also 55 per cent). Slightly smaller proportions viewed by accessing and printing off the PDF bulletin (35 per cent) and accessing the HTML [2] version of the bulletin (33 per cent).

15.   Looking at how easily people were able to find the information they were looking for, this was highest (around 80 per cent) for those accessing PDFs of the bulletins and lowest for online datasets (60 per cent) and those accessing HTML versions of bulletins (54 per cent). The low proportion for datasets is likely to reflect the fact that the Datasets page on the website was still a relatively new and expanding page at the time the survey was conducted.

16.   The majority (60 per cent) of respondents reported that they access the published bulletins the most, with just under a quarter accessing the extra datasets which accompany the publications. The remaining sixth said the main pages they accessed were either for the high level trends data or information about the statistics.

17.   For almost all publications on the website, an Excel version of the tables in the publication itself are made available on the Datasets web page. Just over four-fifths of respondents advised that they made use of these tables. Of those who did, 47 per cent said they found these tables very useful with a further 41 per cent describing their availability as "useful".

18.   The website now contains Datasets pages for each Justice topic. As well as containing the Excel version of the tables in the bulletins, a number of these pages also

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[1] Portable Document Format
[2] Hyper Text Markup Language

contain additional, more detailed, data which is not included in the bulletin. Around three-quarters of respondents reported that they had made use of this additional data. Amongst those who did report usage, 69 per cent said they had made "some use" of the data, with the remainder split equally between those who had made "a lot of use" and "little" use of the extra information.

19.   Users were asked which (up to two) enhancements they would most like to see made to the website. Forty-four per cent said they would like to see more publications on specific topics of interest (e.g. knife crime) while only slightly fewer (39 per cent) said they would like a facility to enable them to customise and create their own outputs.

20.   Thirty-four per cent wanted to see more data tables / datasets additional to the ones in the bulletins. For those who advised that criminal proceedings and criminal justice social work were among the products they used the most often, lower proportions (25 and 29 per cent, respectively) said they wanted to see more data tables / datasets. This is consistent with the fact that, at the time the survey was conducted, these two topic areas were among those with the largest volume of extra datasets available on the website. On the other hand, 46 per cent of those who used recorded crime data said they would like to be able to access more data tables / datasets. This suggests that JAS should consider whether more datasets can be added to the website for different topics, perhaps particularly involving sub-Scotland breakdowns.

21.   Only around a sixth of respondents wanted to see more tables or more detail in the published bulletins

22.   The most common purposes for which information on the website is used are monitoring trends (53 per cent), research (50 per cent) and policy research and development (48 per cent). Amongst other findings, 23 per cent reported using the data for educational purposes while only 5 per cent used the data to make international comparisons.

Chart 4 – Uses for information on the website
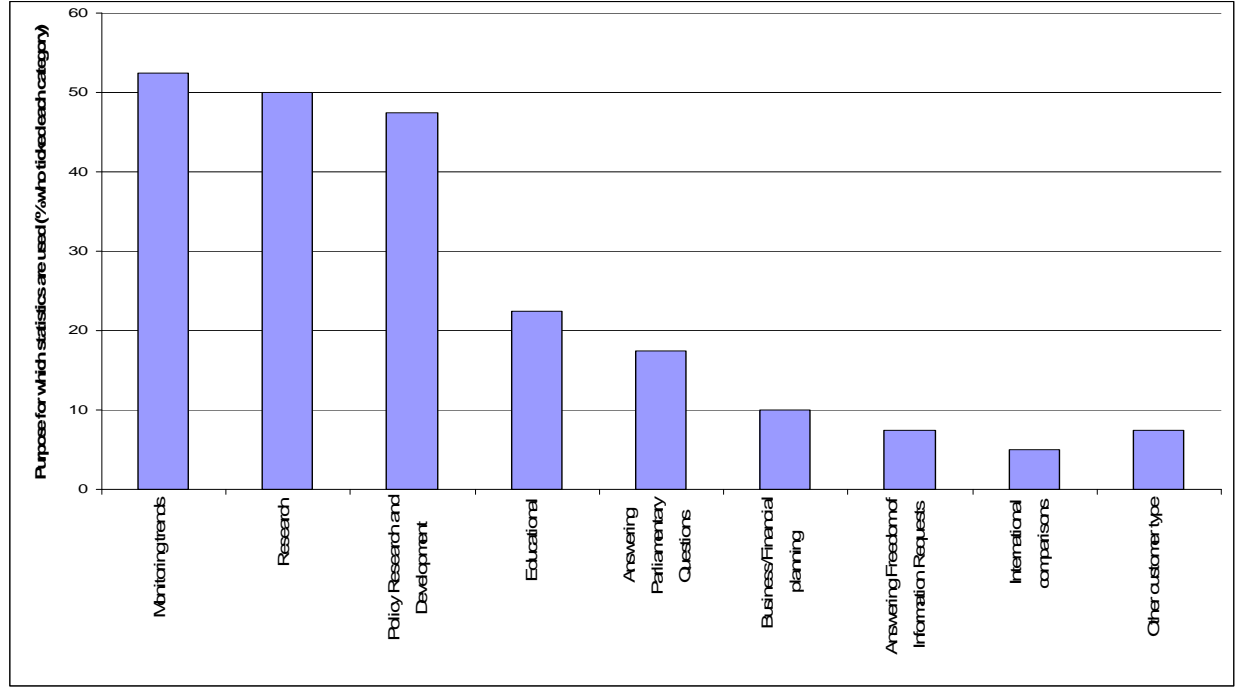
23.   Amongst those who used the four most popular statistical products, some interesting patterns could be seen. A high proportion of respondents who used recorded crime and criminal justice social work products reported using information from the website for monitoring trends (63 and 59 per cent respectively). However, those who used criminal proceedings data were much less likely to use information for this purpose (40 per cent).

24.   Similarly, very few (only 25 per cent) of those who used criminal proceedings data used information for general research purposes. Those who used data from recorded crime and the Scottish Crime & Justice Survey were substantially more likely to use information for general research purposes (58 and 59 per cent respectively).

25.   Further analysis showed that the type of user most likely to use the data for the most common purposes was:
-    For monitoring trends, local authority users.
-    For policy research and development, other public sector employees.
-    For general research purposes, academic/educational users.

26.   At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to give details of:
-    Additional information not currently on the website which they would like to see go on.
-    Information currently on the website which they felt should be taken off.

27.   Respondents had no suggestions of any material which should be removed from the website. There were, however, a number of suggestions of possible new information to go onto the website. These included:
-    A breakdown of some information to local authority level instead of police force area.
-    More by way of up to date Civil Judicial Statistics; covering not just courts but also administrative and other tribunal justice (since this survey was conducted, civil statistics covering the three years up to 2010-11 have been published)
-    More detail on outputs, such as crime clear up rates.
-    Expected publication dates for key data and updates about delays.
-    Consistent information about what breakdowns will be published as a matter of course.
-    The facility to create reports from multiple datasets across police, social work, fire etc..
-    The facility to request additional information if required.
-    It would be useful to know in detail the number of offenders with mental health, drug dependence, brain injury or related problems.
-    A very clear statement of the counting bases for the different data sources and the relationships between them e.g. crimes versus criminals.
-    Links to other publications which have used the data.

28.   These suggestions and the other findings detailed in this report will be used by the Scottish Government in assessing the areas in which it would like to further improve the content, structure and ease of use of the website.

29.   Separate work has been done to assess user needs for a number of topic specific areas of crime and justice. These stakeholder consultations have been conducted over the last few years and have also helped feed into identifying appropriate website data

needs for the areas of work in question (some of which have been implemented since this survey was conducted). More details are available at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/scotstatcrime/StakeCon.

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