

Current Situation and Future Prospect of Micro-data Use in Japan

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1 Current situation

The current legal framework for official statistics in Japan is mainly comprised of two fundamental laws, namely, "Statistics Law (1947)" which is the fundamental law governing statistical affairs in Japan and "Statistical Reports Coordination Law (1952)" which aims to reduce responding burden of the general public, as well as to improve the efficiency of administrative operating.

In principle, the current legal system does not permit the use of the returned questionnaire forms for the purposes other than producing the designated statistics.

Even in the present legal framework, the framework of use of returned questionnaire forms for purposes other than statistical ones exists. But, use of the returned questionnaire forms is limited only to the research related to public administration, with the procedures of getting the approval of the Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications and of making the public announcement of it.

2 Background and necessity of the reconsideration on the statistical system

Concerning the promotion of use of statistical data, we recognize that the reconsideration on the statistical system is required and it is essential to consider the legal actions for promoting of use of statistical data, taking fully into account securing of confidentiality and confidence of respondents.

Therefore, the Office of Director-General for Policy Planning (Statistical Standards) organized the expert group meeting and deliberated. The meeting considered concretely about the establishment of legal framework of statistics which corresponds to the promotion of the secondary use of statistical data, such as tailor-made compilation and utilization of anonymous micro-data, etc..

3 Future prospect

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications is considering about the establishment of legal framework of statistics in order to promote the secondary use of statistical data, taking fully into account securing of confidentiality and confidence of respondents, and is now drafting the bill of the New Statistics Law which is scheduled to be submitted to the next ordinary Diet session in 2007 to reform the current statistical system drastically.

Specifically, it is under consideration that tailor-made compilation and utilization of anonymous micro-data in the new legal framework are to be expanded in the context of the range of users other than the research related to public administration.
