



Third International Seminar on Early Warning and Business Cycle Indicators

**17 – 19 November 2010
Moscow, Russian Federation**

**The Chilean Experience Regarding Communication and Dissemination
Strategies for Short-term Official Statistics**

**María Eugenia Oñaden
National Statistical Institute of Chile**



THE CHILEAN EXPERIENCE REGARDING COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION STRATEGIES FOR SHORT-TERM OFFICIAL STATISTICS

María Eugenia Oviden, Economic Statistics Coordinator, INE

Like that of its counterparts in other countries, the mission of the *Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas – INE* (National Statistical Institute of Chile) is to generate, analyze and disseminate official and public statistics.

Prior to 2006, the work of the Institute was focused on the evaluation of public policies, considering that most of its users are public institutions. However, that same year, INE redefined its work, placing the emphasis on open access of statistical information to all citizens.

At present, economic, social, demographic and census information is provided on the basis of transparency and open accessibility, in order that public and private agents, along with researchers and citizens have the statistical data at hand to make informed decisions. The final goal of this process is to strengthen an open and democratic society.

Actions

INE has embarked on a process to secure its projected goals through a combination of concerted effort and work. The first step was the Institute's acknowledgement of the important contribution made by citizens towards a comprehensive definition of the institutional task. This confirms the belief that statistics must be placed at the service of the community and all citizens, with full adherence to the principles of transparency and accessibility.

The adoption of this standpoint involved a complete policy reversal for the Institute, as it entailed an exhaustive revision of the way in which INE was relating to the public, and the form in which citizens had access to the information in which they were interested.

Over a long period, communication policies regarding public statistics concentrated on the dissemination of survey and census results through a range of tools available to end-users, such as bulletins, work documents and methodological information, the purpose of which was to circulate knowledge of statistical work and the data collected through surveys.

However, following a field study and feedback provided by interviewers and field investigators, the need to include respondents in the dissemination process became clear.



According to the law governing the gathering of statistics, people and enterprises are in many ways obliged to respond to questions, and not only once, but periodically. It is they

who sustain field investigations of social and economic information, and who will experience the impact of their contributions on public policies affecting their daily lives. This underlines the necessity to make contributors part of the whole process and, at the same time, preserve the information provided, along with protecting respondents' personal data and privacy.

The approach adopted by INE has generated a greater involvement of respondents, along with a tool that enhances the bond and improves the relationship between citizens and interviewers, the statistical process and, finally, with the institution itself.

Improving communication channels

From the point of view of users, cross-sectional communicational principles have been incorporated, as much to cater to users' needs, as well as to satisfy their increasing requirements.

The principles that guide the communicational process of INE are sustained on:

- a) The quality of the transmitted information, in terms of making the totality of information available to users in a timely manner.
- b) Transparency as regards the communication of the statistical production process, from the initial stages onwards and with enough frequency to incorporate experts, as well as producers, managers, labour unions, students and families in the different stages of this process.
- c) The availability of methods and methodological updates of statistical products, without fees or discrimination.

According to these principles, databases are available to the citizenship free of charge, so that academics and students can use them in their research work. In addition, feedback from this segment of users contributes towards improving statistical products.

Outreach tools

One of the most important dissemination tools used by INE has been its website, which contains all survey and census results, monthly indicators, and other periodic tabulations, along with methodologies and additional information for users, including annual publications and periodical bulletins.

Additionally, half-yearly meetings with specialized users –such as academics, analysts from private organizations and representatives of public utilities– are organized in order to



include these participants in the updating process of indicators, so providing them with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the details, and to carry out consultations to resolve any doubts they may have.

The National Statistical Institute has concentrated efforts to disseminate information through multimedia and interactive tools, so bringing the statistical world closer to citizens, particularly academics, students and teachers. In this sense, teaching has become one of the Institute's priorities, especially concerning all information that outlines present-day Chile. An example of this is the development of a Census Atlas (1992-2002) to be updated with the data gathered by the 2012 Population and Housing Census. This product, as well as others already developed, can be downloaded at the organization's website: www.ine.cl

Short-term economic indicators

Chile's official economic information plays an increasingly important role not only at national level but also internationally. The globalization of economies makes every country an active participant in the world's economic development, in an interactive process that functions in both directions. Actions or developments in one part of the world can affect other areas that are geographically distant.

In acknowledgement of this phenomenon, Chile has placed a high priority on its economic short-term indicators - with the responsibility of producing and publishing official national statistical information given to INE.

As stated previously, transparency and timeliness are important principles of the communication policy adopted by the Institute. In this scenario, economic indicators are released every month according to a day and time established in a calendar issued the previous year. All economic indicators are kept confidential and under embargo prior to their official release date, a practice recognized and respected by the general public, media, researchers, academics and public officials.

Bulletins regarding the indices for consumer prices, earnings and transport costs are released during the first eight days of the month following the month that such information was gathered. For example, the CPI for October 2010 was released on Monday 8 November 2010 at 8:00 am.

In the case of economic indicators, such as the Manufacturing production index, Mining production index, Electricity, gas and water index and the Retail sales index, these are released over the last five days of the following month of the reference period, at 9:00 am.

The Central Bank is responsible for the production and dissemination of macroeconomic statistics. It has a modus operandi that is very similar to the one used by INE, although differences are found in the timeframes adopted. The GDP is released at quarterly intervals according to a pre-established calendar published on the Bank's webpage.



In conclusion

The dissemination policy of the National Statistical Institute, in general terms and as regards short-term indicators, has proven to be a very powerful tool that consolidates a serious and respected image of INE among government agencies, international organizations, academia, businesses and the general public.

It has also provided a solid structure for decision-making processes and has strengthened the relationship with survey respondents.