

Plain Facts

- Social Science Japan Data Archive (SSJDA) does not have any data files of official statistics, but has a few dozen of opinion surveys conducted by a few government ministries.
- In terms of preservation and dissemination of micro data, there exists a clear dividing line between (1) official statistics under the statistical act and (2) those outside the regulation of the statistical act.
- SSJDA only accepts and preserves survey data outside the regulation of the statistical act. Government opinion survey is outside the control of the statistical act.

Background: Legal Change

- The statistical act was completely revised in 2007.
- Under the old statistical act (enacted in 1947), it was very difficult to analyze micro data from official statistics for academic purposes. In the old act, the use of statistical data was legally limited to publishing official statistical report.
- The new statistical act includes the section that explicitly allows academic users to analyze micro data from official statistics for research and educational purposes.
- Japan joined Luxemburg Income Study in October, 2009. The new statistical act made it possible (it was impossible under the old statistical act).

Official Statistical Agencies in Japan



- Japan has a decentralized official statistical system.
- Each ministry has its own statistical division.
- Statistics Bureau at the Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for coordinating statistical activities across the ministries.
- Statistics Bureau is in charge of the important official statistics such as Population Census, Labor Force Survey, Family Income and Expenditure survey, etc.
- The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries also have large statistical divisions.

Classification of statistics

- The statistics act specifies “what is official (government) statistics”.
- It is necessary to follow the procedure prescribed in the statistic act and get approval in advance in order to start data collection for official statistics.
- Opinion surveys, even commissioned by the government agencies, are not “official statistics” under the statistical act.
- Statisticians inside the government assume that statistics only deal with “facts” and “opinion” is not a part of statistics.
- There are many opinion surveys conducted by the national and local governments outside the control of the statistical act (roughly 1000 surveys each year though many of them are by municipalities).

Official Data Archive in Japan (1)

- NSC (National Statistical Center, which has a close relation with Statistics Bureau) is planning to set up a data archive for official statistics for all government ministries.
- NSC started to disseminate a limited number of anonymized official micro data files to academic users.
 - 13 Studies (4 surveys for 3 or 4 different years)
 - The number of datasets provided in FY 2009 is below.
 - There are nominal charges for using anonymized data.

	Inquires	Applications	Permission
National Survey of Family Income and Expenditure	20	6	6(18 files)
Survey on Time Use and Leisure Activities	28	10	10(33 files)
Employment Status Survey	24	7	7(25 files)

Official Data Archive in Japan (2)

- An application for secondary use of official micro data is reviewed and permission is given for a limited time period (extension is possible).
- NSC signed agreements with three universities and one research institute to set up satellite offices to disseminate anonymized micro data for academic purposes more effectively.
- NSC also started tailor made tabulation service in FY 2009. The number of processed tailor made tabulation is given below.

	Inquiries	Application	Provision
Population Census	27	4	4

Preservation of official statistics

- Article 39 of the statistical act specifies that each ministry has to take “an appropriate action” to “manage” statistical data.
- It does not clearly require each ministry to preserve statistical data for a future use.
 - The old statistics law did not have a section on data preservation.
- Statistics Bureau may set a guideline for data preservation and dissemination, but it is up to the other ministries to follow the guideline in practice.

Personal observations (1)

- Most statistical data files are nonetheless preserved by Statistics Bureau for the studies conducted by the Bureau itself.
- It is unclear whether statistical data files at the other government agencies are preserved or not.
- Recently Statistics Bureau announced a standard data layout for micro data (fixed column, CSV, and XML) in order to enhance efficiency in handling statistical data across the ministries.
- No attention is paid to DDI or any other meta data standards.
- It may take a few years to a decade for the number of academic users of official statistics to grow.
- The ministries other than the Internal Affairs seem to be very reluctant to provide anonymized data for academic purposes presumably because the lack of expertise and resources.

Personal Observations (2)

- Even though the opinion survey data have been regulated by neither the old nor new statistical acts, the Public Relation section in the Cabinet Office has been reluctant to provide its opinion data to academic community.
- Somewhat mysteriously, a few of very old surveys by the Cabinet Office have been preserved at the ICPSR (#7073, #7075).
- Perhaps, most public opinion data by the Cabinet Office have been lost. Some of them have been conducted annually for more than thirty years.
- The old statistical act justified the reluctance of the Cabinet Office but the new statistics act does not. SSJDA may approach the Cabinet Office in a very near future.

SSJDA and Statistics Bureau of Japan

- During the first 10 years of SSJDA, it hosted four visiting staff members (3 years for the first two and 2 years for the last two) from Statistics Bureau.
- Those four from Statistics Bureau cooperated with the regular member of Institute of Social Science to set up a system to preserve and disseminate social science micro data to the academic community in Japan.
- From 2006, SSJDA hired someone with academic social science background in stead of inviting an expert from Statistics Bureau.
- We still have informal personal networks and cooperative relationship but there is no joint project or formal partnership.

Thank you for listening!

- I am solely responsible for the content of this presentation.