

### 3. Users of the statistical metadata system

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A primary challenge for the SMS is to cope with the requirements of diverse groups of metadata users. The use of evolving information and communication technologies has resulted in more users of statistics and a diversification of needs. Efforts should be made to understand who the users are, as their requirements for data and metadata may vary substantially.

Potential groups of statistical metadata users are illustrated in Figure 1. Each group is described below and the benefits an SMS will provide them are outlined in Section 4.

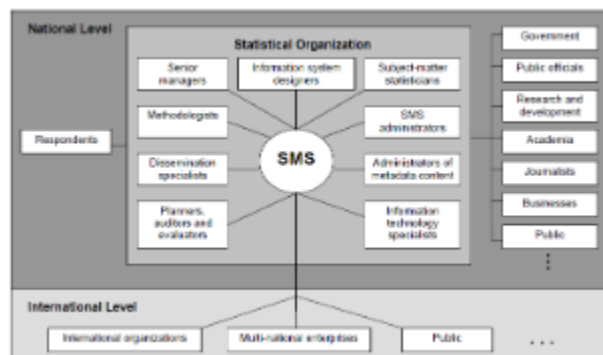


Figure 1: Metadata users (click to enlarge)

#### Users within the statistical organization

This group of metadata users encompasses the many professions involved in the phases of preparation, production and dissemination of official statistics and the functioning of the statistical information system.

These include the following metadata users:

- Senior managers
- Information system designers
- Subject-matter statisticians
- Methodologists
- Administrators of metadata content
- SMS administrators
- Information technology specialists
- Dissemination specialists
- Planners, auditors and evaluators

#### Respondents

Respondents are individuals or organizations that supply statistical data to the statistical information system. Responding to data requests often involves interpreting definitions and other metadata, in order to provide the required information. In this sense, respondents are important users, but where they provide additional information about the data they supply, they can also be considered as suppliers of metadata.

#### End users at the national level

This group includes: government institutions, political decision makers, researchers, public officials, archivists, academics, librarians, journalists, businesses and the general public. As the number of end users grows, so does the range of their needs. In the past, data dissemination methods assumed a certain level of knowledge about economic and statistical concepts. Frequently, users' knowledge of a given set of statistics was comparable to the knowledge of the subject-matter statisticians involved in producing it. This is no longer the case. The audience for economic statistics, for example, can range from professional economists and policy makers, to interested members of the general public, to students working on school assignments. An understanding of economic and statistical concepts can no longer be taken for granted. Improving statistical literacy is part of the work programme of many statistical organizations.

#### International users

International users of statistics, such as multi-national enterprises, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and others, are important users of statistical metadata. International standards, such as the Metadata Common Vocabulary, increase the usability of statistical information for these types of users. International standards also help to reduce the burden on national statistical systems when reporting to international and intergovernmental organizations.