New challenges to Promote Use of Statistics in Japan
- Toward the Creation of Higher Value by Utilizing Official Statistics -

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With the remarkable progress of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the growing demand for data analysis, circumstances surrounding official statistics in Japan have drastically changed in recent years. The government of Japan has faced two pressing issues: how to provide the statistical data so that people can have easier access to them and how to increase human resources with deep analytical skills who are in short supply all over Japan. Therefore, the Statistics Bureau of Japan (SBJ) unveiled several projects to solve these two problems and achieve more convenient and advanced use of official statistics.

As a part of an initiative to boost "Open Data" for official statistics, the SBJ is making continuous efforts to improve the methods of providing statistics. Installation of the Application Programming Interface (API) function and statistical Geographical Information System (GIS) into "e-Stat", a portal site of official statistics of the Japanese government, makes it possible for users to analyze a huge amount of statistical data in an advanced and sophisticated way. By the API function, the most recent data of e-Stat is automatically updated to the user's system. Advanced analysis of statistical data by mash-up with other data of users is also available. By statistical GIS, users can easily visualize statistical data with geographical information and compare data in an arbitrarily designated area. The approaches described above can contribute to empowerment of business activities, development of new businesses, improvement of government services and so on.

To increase the number of deep analytical talent, the SBJ has released two educational websites since 2014. One of these is the "Data Science School" which gives users fundamental knowledge of statistics. The other is "Data Science Online Courses" which provides business people with advanced techniques of statistical analysis through Massive Open Online Course (MOOC).

Although the SBJ's challenges in Japan are just beginning, the SBJ will play a key role not only in providing official statistics but also in achieving more convenient and advanced use of statistics and creating higher value for economics and society by promoting the above mentioned projects.

* This paper presents the opinions of the authors and does not necessarily represent the opinion of the SBJ or the Japanese government.