Trade and Development Board
Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget
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Item 3 of the provisional agenda
Review of the implementation of the communications
strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD

Report on the readership survey of main publications of UNCTAD in 2013

Executive summary

The UNCTAD publications policy provides that the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget review the results of a survey of publications issued during the previous year. For this sixth systematic survey, eight publications were selected for the general review and six for the in-depth review. A brief and user-friendly online questionnaire was disseminated. The total number of responses to the questionnaires was 192 (42 for the general survey and 150 for the in-depth survey), of which 20 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 38 per cent from academic and research institutions, 16 per cent from the private sector, 11 per cent from international organizations, 5 per cent from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the rest from the media, public enterprises and others. The results indicate that the readers have rated the publications positively, the average for the overall assessment for the general survey being 4.1 out of 5 and for the in-depth survey 3.9 out of 5.

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Contents

I. Mandate and purpose of the readership survey

1.   The UNCTAD publications policy provides that the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget review the results of a survey of publications issued during the previous year, as well as any in-depth readership surveys of selected publications that have been conducted. Readership surveys should be conducted annually, and in the light of recent experience the secretariat should seek to improve the design, methodology and scope of the surveys so that they fulfil their crucial role. In line with that mandate, readership surveys were carried out in respect of major 2013 publications of UNCTAD to (a) analyse readers' evaluation of the main publications in terms of a number of attributes; (b) facilitate continuous improvements in UNCTAD's publications; and (c) draw lessons for conducting future readership surveys.

II. Methodology

A. Coverage

2.   The 2013 readership survey covers the main UNCTAD publications plus a selection of publications covering the work of the different divisions. Specifically, the following eight publications were included in the general survey: (a) *Trade and Development Report, 2013: Adjusting to the Changing Dynamics of the World Economy*; (b) *Trade and Environment Review 2013: Wake Up before It Is Too Late – Make Agriculture Truly Sustainable Now for Food Security in a Changing Climate*; (c) *Non-tariff Measures to Trade: Economic and Policy Issues for Developing Countries*; (d) *Key Trends in International Merchandise Trade*; (e) *Global Supply Chains: Trade and Economic Policies for Developing Countries*; (f) *Voluntary Peer Review of Competition Law and Policy: Ukraine*; (g) *Services Policy Review: Lesotho*; (h) *Examen de la politique d'investissement: Djibouti* (French only).

3.   Six publications were subject to in-depth reviews in which readers were asked additional questions: (a) *Trade and Development Report, 2013: Adjusting to the Changing Dynamics of the World Economy*; (b) *World Investment Report 2013: Global Value Chains – Investment and Trade for Development*; (c) *The Least Developed Countries Report 2013: Growth with Employment for Inclusive and Sustainable Development*; (d) *Economic Development in Africa Report 2013: Intra-African Trade – Unlocking Private Sector Dynamism*; (e) *Information Economy Report 2013: The Cloud Economy and Developing Countries*; and (f) *Review of Maritime Transport Report 2013*.

B. Questionnaire

4.   A brief and user-friendly questionnaire was prepared, containing multiple rating responses to a number of attributes on a scale of 1 to 5. The attributes for the general survey were the following: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) analytical quality; (c) enhancement of readers' understanding of issues; (d) assessment of policy conclusions; and (e) presentation. For the in-depth survey the attributes were the following: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) the publications' analytical quality; (c) usefulness of information on emerging and timely issues; (d) understanding of the issues; (e) enhancement of understanding of policy choices; (f) usefulness of the publication; and (g) overall presentation.

5.   The online survey questionnaire was launched via the notifications mechanism and sent to member States, accredited NGOs and international organizations. A specific highlight box was also posted prominently on the home page of the UNCTAD website. It was also disseminated through the mailing list of the Virtual Institute. While the survey was conducted for the purpose of this report for eight weeks, from 13 December 2013 to 9 February 2014, the questionnaire remains available on the UNCTAD website so that author divisions may continue to profit from readers' comments.

C.   Ratings

6.   Numerical data were obtained on the basis of ratings on a scale of 1 to 5 contained in the individual response to the different attributes for each publication (1 = minimum rating, 5 = best rating). An average of ratings was calculated for each attribute, using the following formula:

Average ratings = sum of all ratings/number of respondents

7.   Average ratings calculated for all attributes pertaining to each publication were rounded off to the nearest decimal point. The results for all attributes are presented in a figure. It should be noted here that the publications in the readership survey are not necessarily comparable in terms of content, and the respondents were not the same for all publications.

D.   Respondents

8.   The total number of responses received for this survey was 192, from 63 countries. Of these responses, 20 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 38 per cent from academic and research institutions, 16 per cent from the private sector, 11 per cent from international organizations, 5 per cent from NGOs and the rest from the media, public enterprises and others (see annex).

III.   Results of the readership survey

A.   General survey

9.   The general survey covered the following publications:

(a)   *Trade and Development Report, 2013: Adjusting to the Changing Dynamics of the World Economy*;

(b)   *Trade and Environment Review 2013: Wake Up before It Is Too Late – Make Agriculture Truly Sustainable Now for Food Security in a Changing Climate*;

(c)   *Non-tariff Measures to Trade: Economic and Policy Issues for Developing Countries;*

(d)   *Key Trends in International Merchandise Trade;*

(e)   *Global Supply Chains: Trade and Economic Policies for Developing Countries*;

(f)   *Voluntary Peer Review of Competition Law and Policy: Ukraine*;

(g)   *Services Policy Review: Lesotho;*

(h)   *Examen de la politique d'investissement: Djibouti.*

The general survey was carried out on the basis of five attributes: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) analytical quality; (c) enhancement of readers' understanding; (d) assessment of policy conclusions; and (e) presentation.

1. *Trade and Development Report, 2013: Adjusting to the Changing Dynamics of the World Economy*

10.   A total of 28 responses were received for this publication. Average ratings are presented in figure 1. The ratings range was from 3.9 to 4.4.

Figure 1
**General survey results for the *Trade and Development Report, 2013***
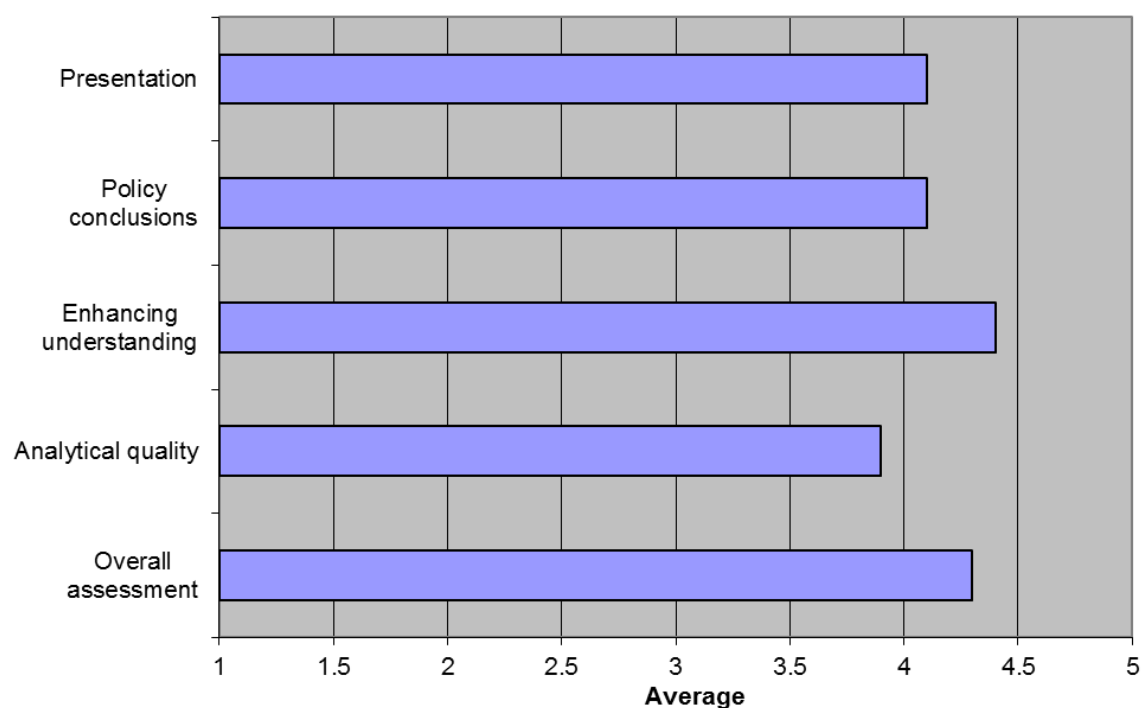
2. *Trade and Environment Review 2013: Wake Up before It Is Too Late – Make Agriculture Truly Sustainable Now for Food Security in a Changing Climate*

11. A total of 17 responses were received for this publication. The average ratings of attributes are presented in figure 2. The ratings range was from 4.1 to 4.2.

Figure 2
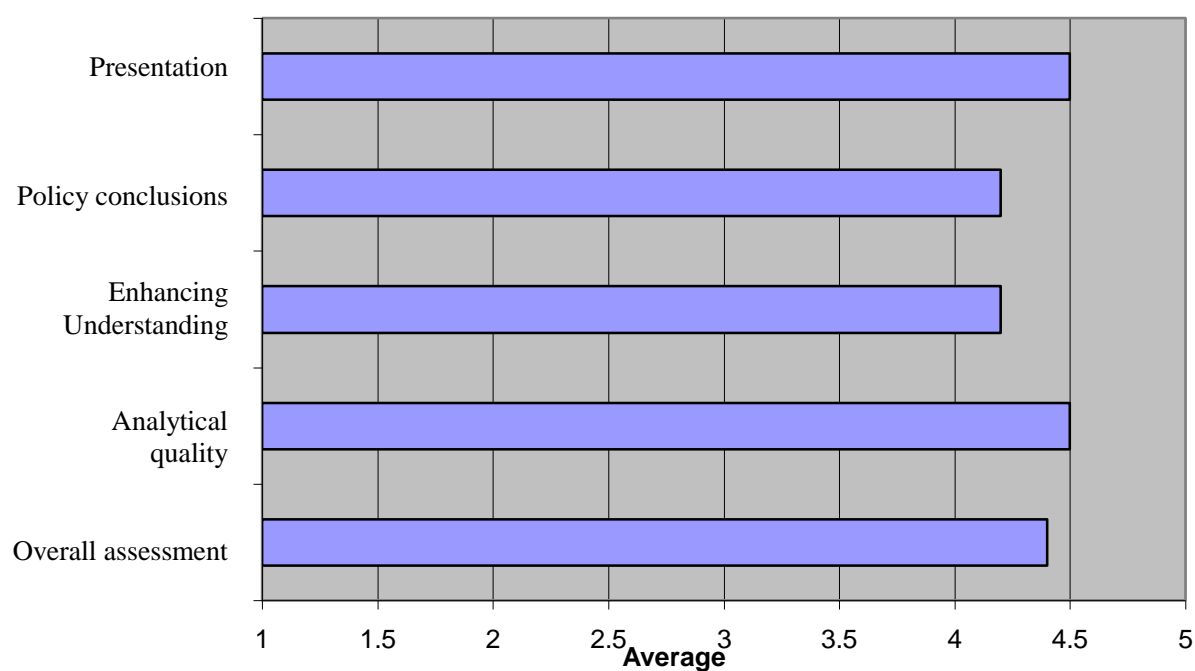**General survey results for *Trade and Environment Review 2013***
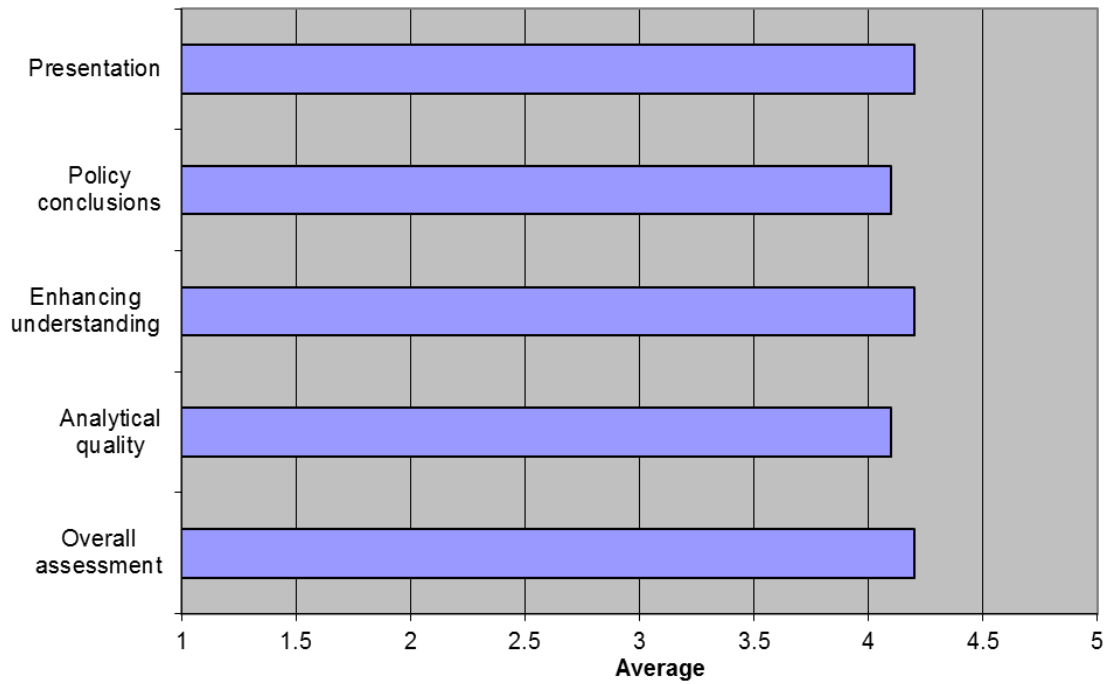
3. *Non-tariff Measures to Trade: Economic and Policy Issues for Developing Countries*

12.   A total of 17 responses were received for this publication. Average ratings in respect of the five attributes are presented in figure 3 below. The ratings range was from 4.2 to 4.5.

Figure 3
General survey results for *Non-tariff Measures to Trade: Economic and Policy Issues for Developing Countries*
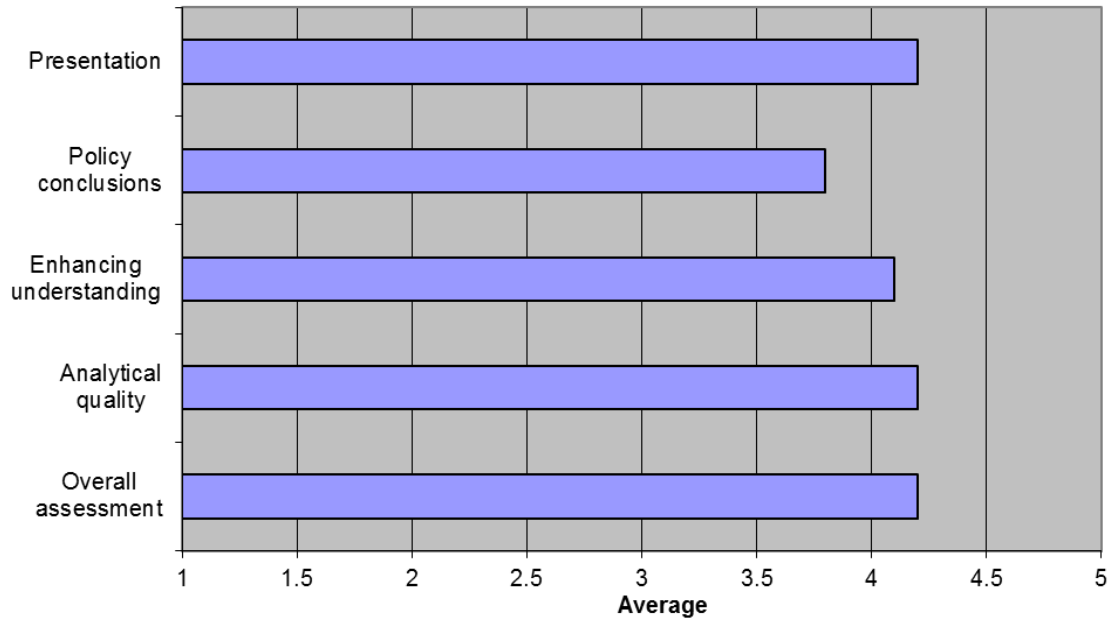
4.   *Key Trends in International Merchandise Trade*

13.   The total number of responses received for this report was 17. Average ratings are presented in figure 4. The ratings range was from 3.8 to 4.2.

Figure 4
**General survey results for *Key Trends in International Merchandise Trade***

5. *Global Supply Chains: Trade and Economic Policies for Developing Countries*

14.   The total number of responses received for this publication was 19. Average ratings are presented in figure 5. The ratings were consistently 4.2.

Figure 5
General survey results for *Global Supply Chains: Trade and Economic Policies for Developing Countries*
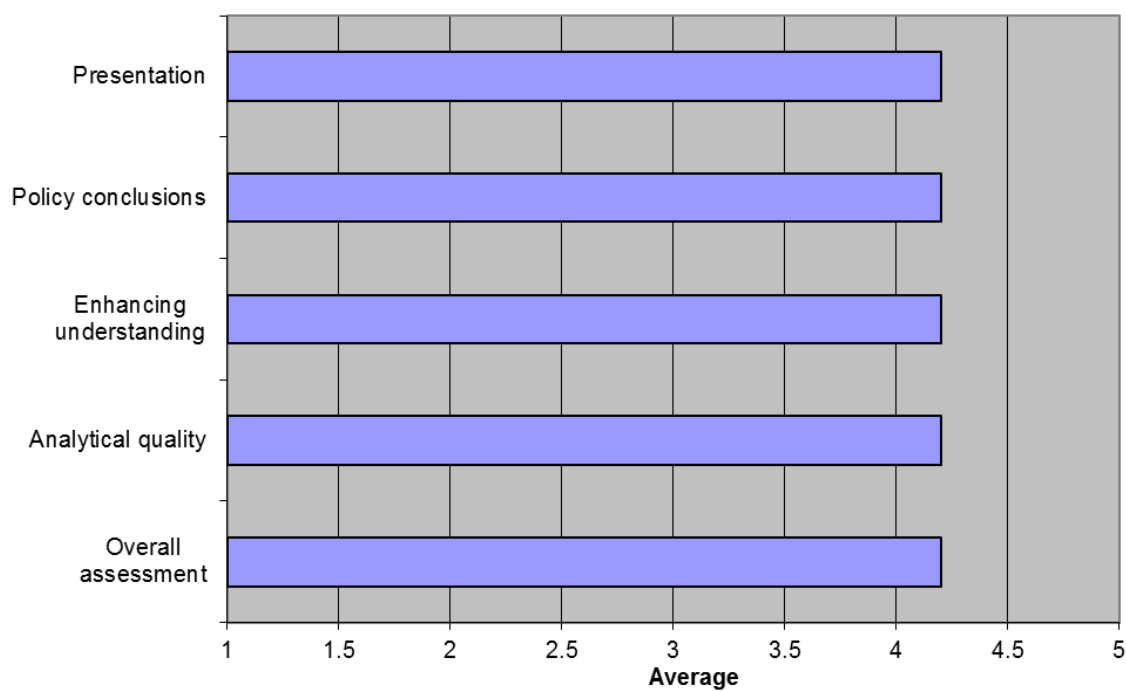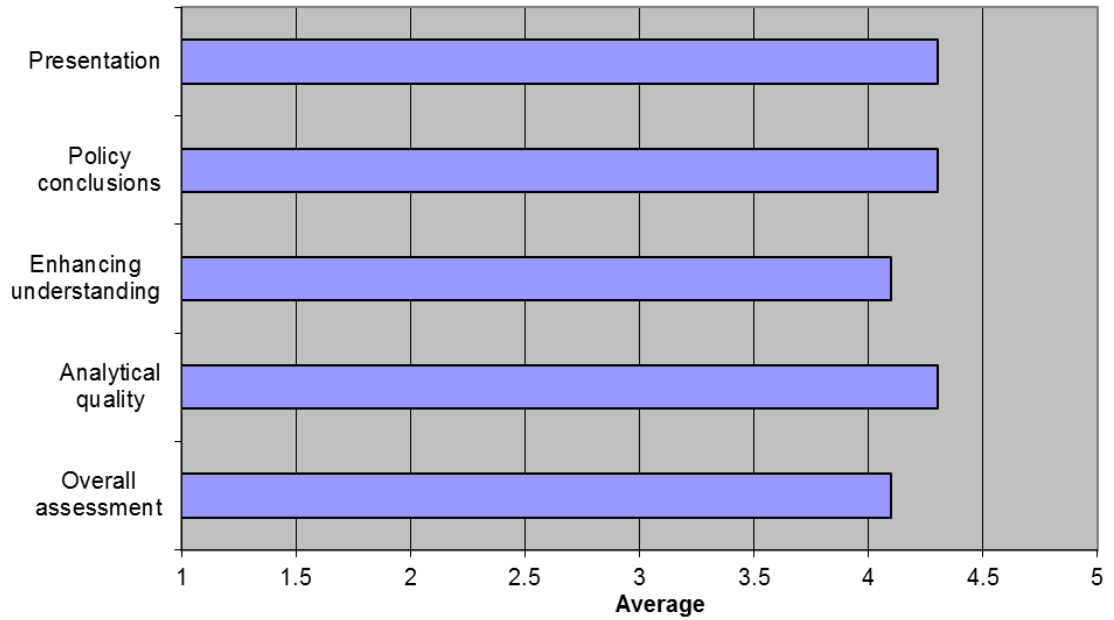
6. *Voluntary Peer Review of Competition Law and Policy: Ukraine*

15.   A total of 10 responses were received for this publication. Average ratings are presented in figure 6 below. The ratings range was from 4.1 to 4.3.

Figure 6
**General survey results for** *Voluntary Peer Review of Competition Law and Policy: Ukraine*

7. *Services Policy Review: Lesotho*

16.   A total of 10 responses were received for this publication. Average ratings in respect of all five attributes are presented in figure 7 below. The ratings range was from 3.7 to 3.9.

Figure 7
**General survey results for** *Services Policy Review: Lesotho*
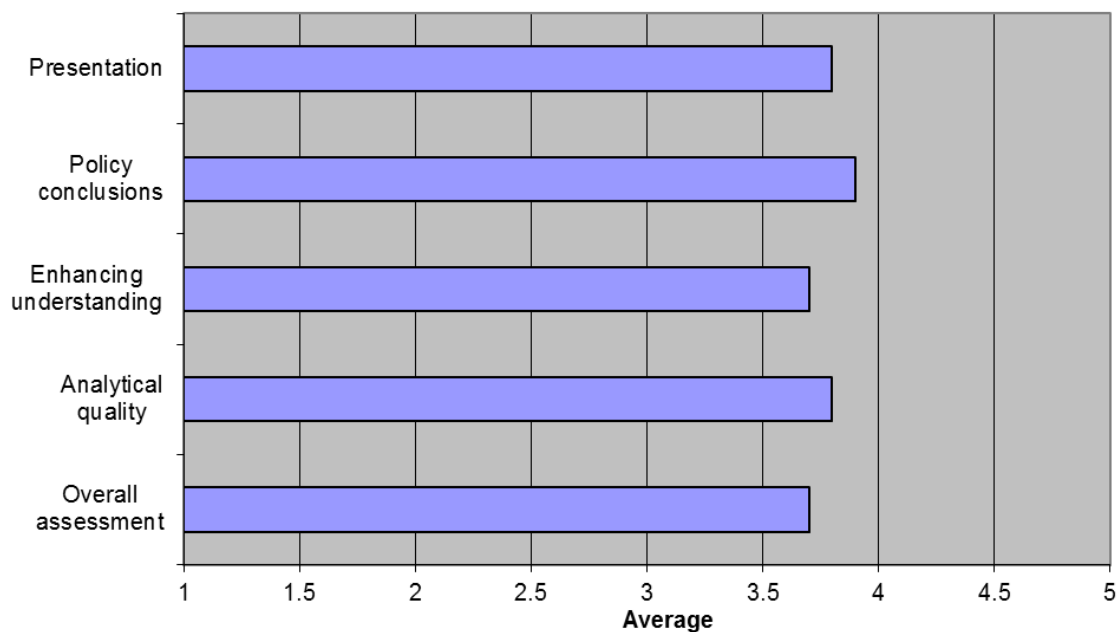
8. *Examen de la politique d'investissement: Djibouti*

17.   A total of 7 responses were received for this publication. Average ratings in respect of all five attributes are presented in figure 8 below. The ratings range was from 4 to 4.3.

Figure 8
General survey results for *Examen de la politique d'investissement: Djibouti*
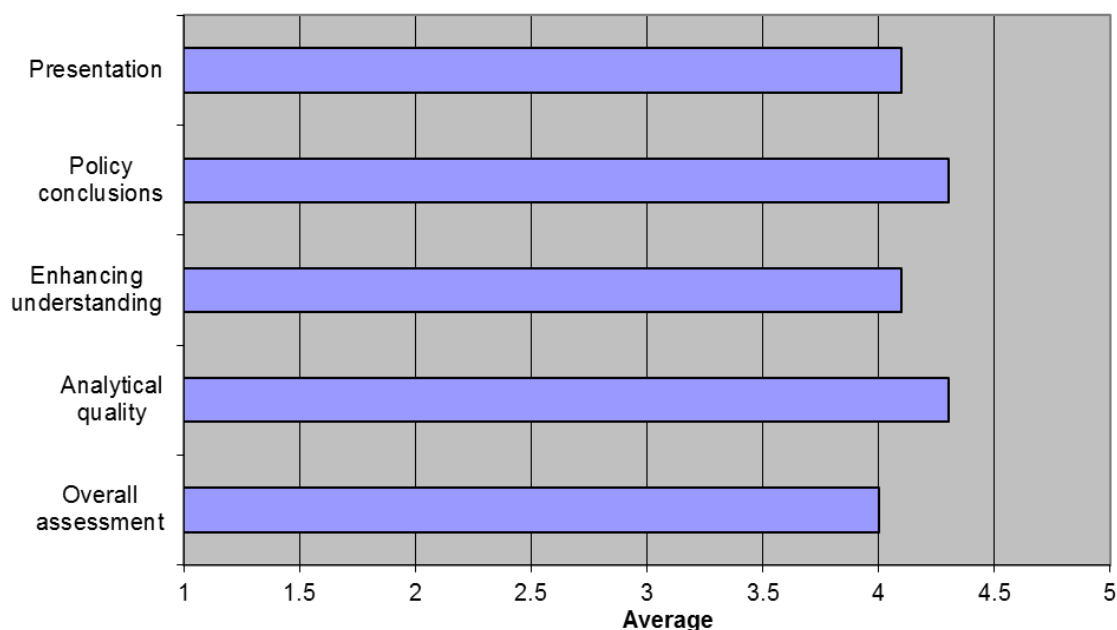
B.   In-depth readership survey

18.   The in-depth survey covered the following publications:

          (a)   *Trade and Development Report, 2013: Adjusting to the Changing Dynamics of the World Economy*;

          (b)   *World Investment Report 2013: Global Value Chains – Investment and Trade for Development*;

          (c)   *The Least Developed Countries Report 2013: Growth with Employment for Inclusive and Sustainable Development*;

          (d)   *Economic Development in Africa Report 2013: Intra-African Trade – Unlocking Private Sector Dynamism*;

          (e)   *Information Economy Report 2013: The Cloud Economy and Developing Countries*;

          (f)   *Review of Maritime Transport Report 2013*.

19.   The in-depth surveys were carried out on the basis of questions on seven attributes: (a) overall assessment of the publication; (b) the publications' analytical quality; (c) usefulness of information on emerging and timely issues; (d) understanding of the issues; (e) enhancement of understanding of policy choices; (f) usefulness of the publication; and (g) overall presentation.

1. *Trade and Development Report, 2013: Adjusting to the Changing Dynamics of the World Economy*
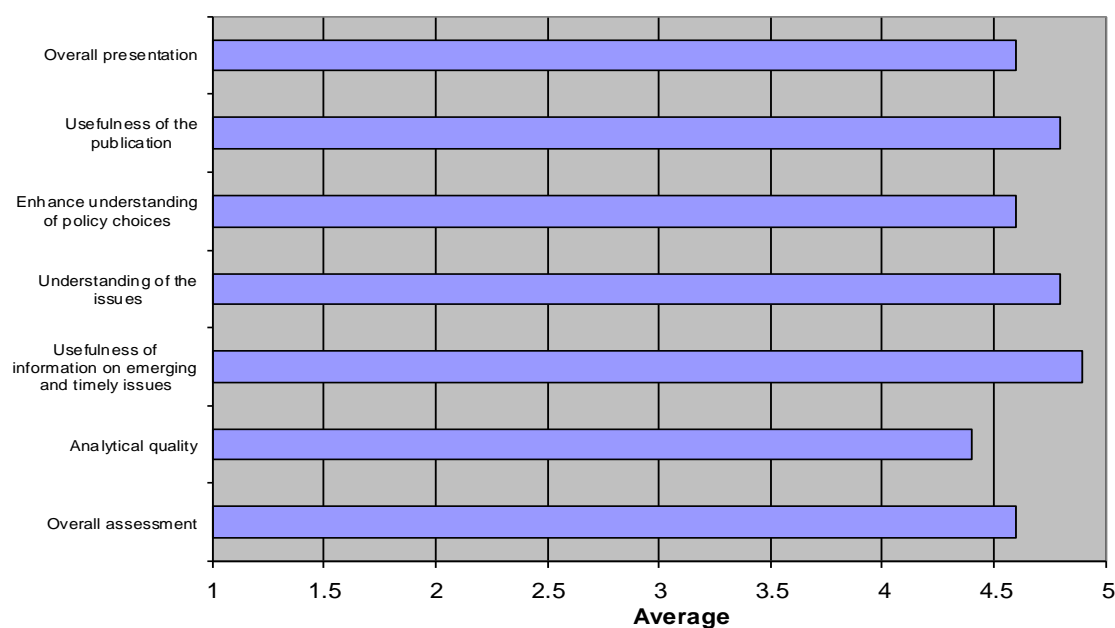
(a) *Respondents*

20. A total of 12 responses were received for the in-depth readership survey for this publication. Out of these, 25 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 58 per cent from academic or research institutions and the rest were from international organizations and media.

(b) *Average ratings*

21. Eight out of the 12 respondents answered the questions concerning the seven attributes. Average ratings for each of the seven attributes are presented in figure 9. The ratings range was from 4.4 to 4.9.

Figure 9
In-depth survey results for *Trade and Development Report, 2013: Adjusting to the Changing Dynamics of the World Economy*

(c) *Qualitative responses*

22. **The purposes for which respondents use the report.** The survey indicates that the publication is used simultaneously for multiple purposes by its readers. Out of the total respondents, 25 per cent used it for analysis and research, 17 per cent used it for policy formulation and 58 per cent used it for education and training.

23. **The frequency with which respondents consult the report.** The in-depth survey indicates that 83 per cent consulted the report three or more times during the past year for their related work. In terms of receiving the publication in the future, most wished to receive an electronic copy.

2. *World Investment Report 2013: Global Value Chains – Investment and Trade for Development*
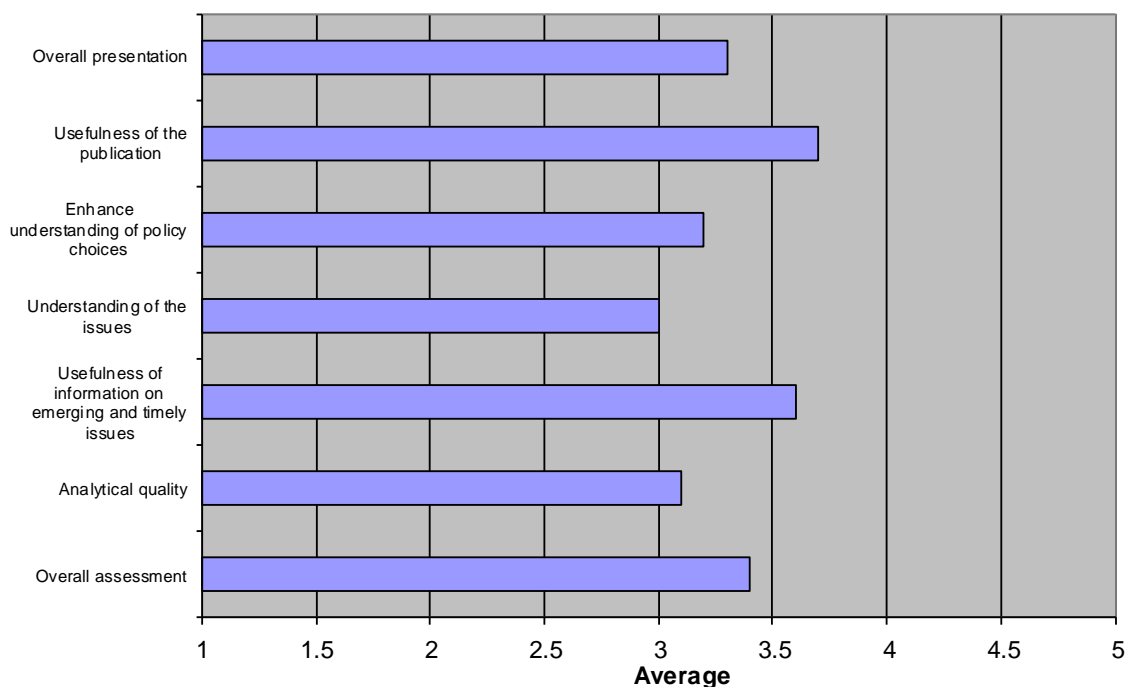
(a) Respondents

24. A total of 10 responses were received for the in-depth readership survey for this publication. Out of these, 20 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 40 per cent were from academic or research institutions, 30 per cent were from international organizations and 10 per cent from private enterprise.

(b) Average ratings

25. Seven out of the 10 respondents answered the questions concerning the seven attributes. Average ratings for each of the seven attributes are presented in figure 10. The ratings range was from 3 to 3.7.

Figure 10

In-depth survey results for *World Investment Report 2013: Global Value Chains – Investment and Trade for Development*

(c) Qualitative responses

26. **The purposes for which respondents use the report.** The survey indicates that the publication is used simultaneously for multiple purposes by its readers. Out of the total respondents, 60 per cent used the report for analysis and research, and 20 per cent used the knowledge and analyses obtained from the publication for education and training.

27. **The frequency with which respondents consult the report.** The in-depth survey indicates that 43 per cent had consulted the report three or more times during the past year for their related work. Most respondents had a web version of the report. In terms of receiving the publication in the future, all wished to receive it via a weblink.

3. ***The Least Developed Countries Report 2013: Growth with Employment for Inclusive and Sustainable Development***
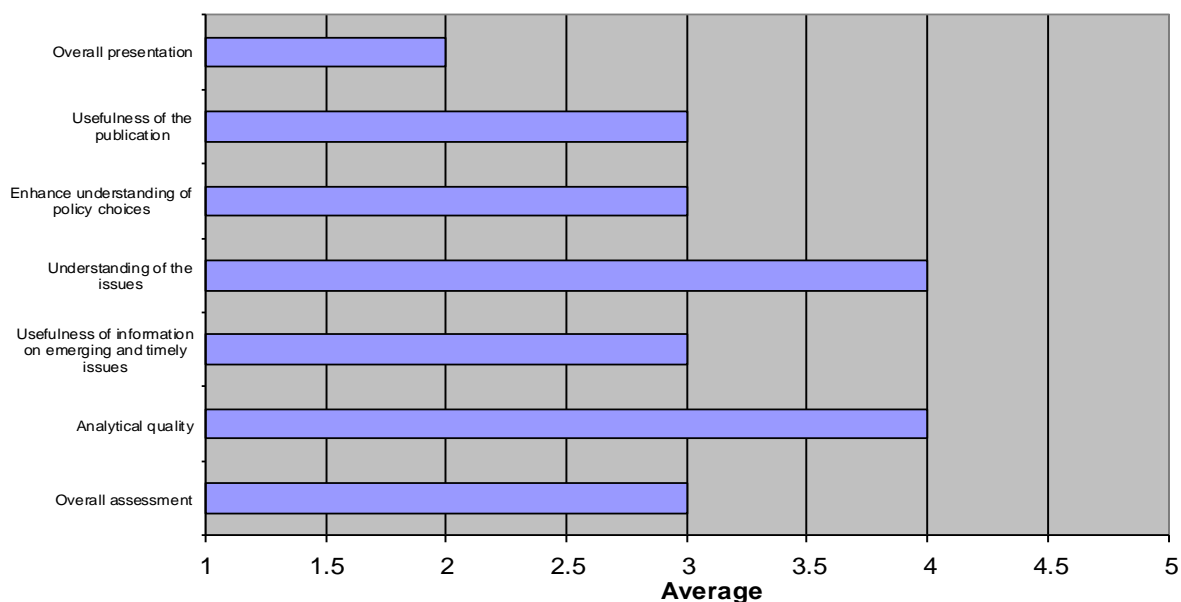
(a) *Respondents*

28. A total of three responses were received from academic or research institutions for the in-depth readership survey for this publication.

(b) *Average ratings*

29. Only one out of the three respondents answered the questions concerning the seven attributes. Ratings for each of the seven attributes are presented in figure 11. The ratings range was from 2 to 4.

Figure 11

In-depth survey results for *The Least Developed Countries Report 2013: Growth with Employment for Inclusive and Sustainable Development*

(c) *Qualitative responses*

30. **The purposes for which respondents use the report.** All three respondents indicated that the report was used for analysis and research.

31. **The frequency with which respondents consult the report.** The in-depth survey indicates that respondents had consulted the report one or two times during the past year for their related work. All respondents had hard copies of the report. In terms of receiving the publication in the future, they wished to receive a hard copy.

4. *Economic Development in Africa Report 2013: Intra-African Trade – Unlocking Private Sector Dynamism*
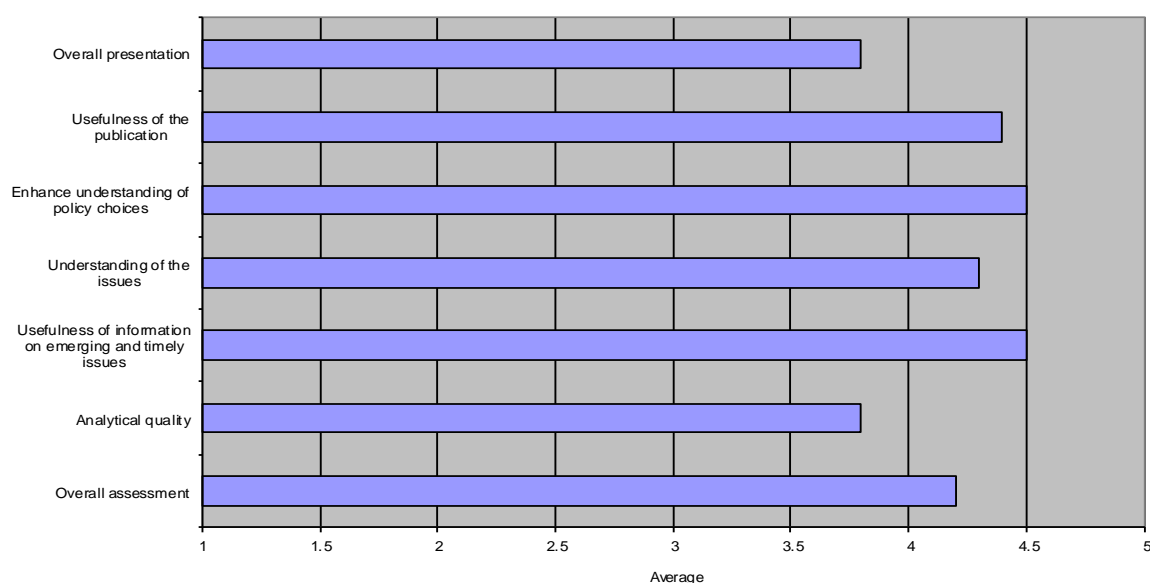
(a) *Respondents*

32.   A total of eight responses were received for the in-depth readership survey for this publication. Out of these, 50 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 25 per cent were from academic or research institutions and the rest were from private enterprise and others.

(b) *Average ratings*

33.   Five out of the eight respondents answered the questions concerning the seven attributes. Average ratings for each of the seven attributes are presented in figure 12. The ratings range was from 3.8 to 4.5.

Figure 12
In-depth survey results for *Economic Development in Africa Report 2013: Intra-African Trade – Unlocking Private Sector Dynamism*

(c) *Qualitative responses*

34.   **The purposes for which respondents use the report.** The survey indicates that the report is used simultaneously for multiple purposes by its readers. Out of the total respondents, 43 per cent used it for policy formulation, 29 per cent for analysis and research, 14 per cent for education and training and 14 per cent for negotiations.

35.   **The frequency with which respondents consult the report.** The in-depth survey indicates that 50 per cent had consulted the report three or more times and 25 per cent once or twice during the past year for their related work. Most respondents had hard copies of the report. In terms of receiving the publication in the future, 67 per cent wished to receive a hard copy.

5. *Information Economy Report 2013: The Cloud Economy and Developing Countries*
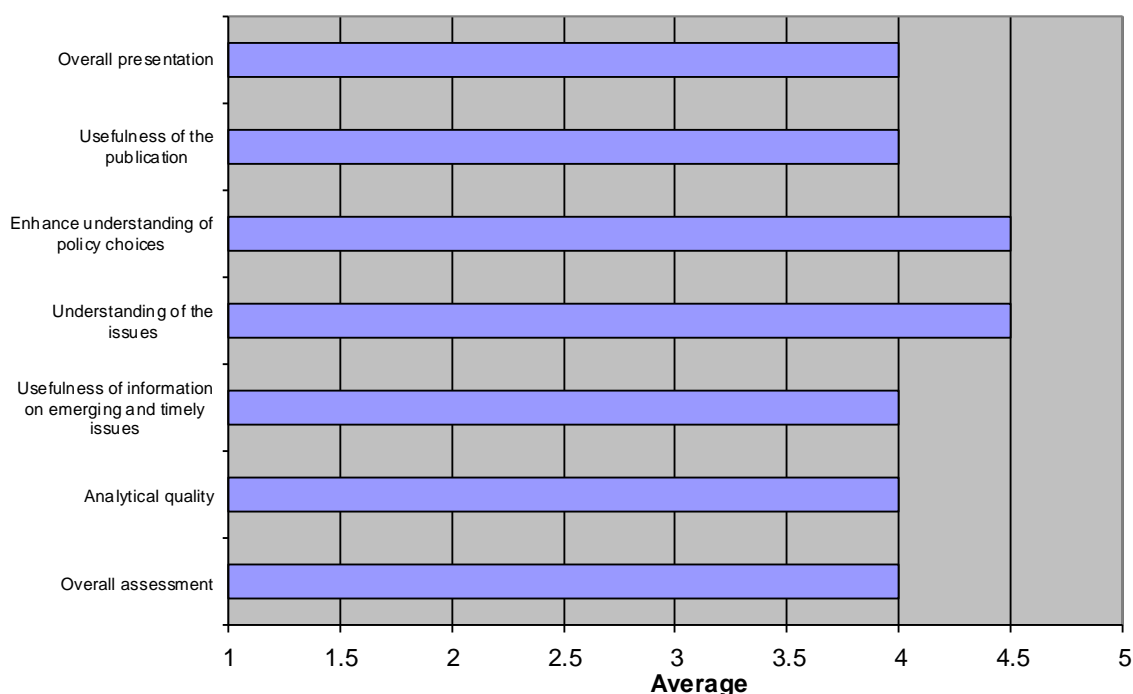
(a) *Respondents*

36.   A total of six responses were received for the in-depth readership survey for this publication. Out of these, 33 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 50 per cent were from academic and research institutions and the rest were from NGOs.

(b) *Average ratings*

37.   Only two out of the six respondents answered the questions concerning the seven attributes. Average ratings for each of the seven attributes are presented in figure 13. The ratings range was from 4 to 4.5.

Figure 13

In-depth survey results for *Information Economy Report 2013: The Cloud Economy and Developing Countries*

(c) *Qualitative responses*

38.   **The purposes for which respondents use the report.** The survey indicates that the publication is used for analysis and research.

39.   **The frequency with which respondents consult the report.** The in-depth survey indicates that 50 per cent had consulted the report three or more times during the past year for their related work. Half of the respondents consulted the web version. In terms of receiving the publication in the future, some wished to receive electronic copies while others wished to receive it via a weblink.

**6.** *Review of Maritime Transport Report 2013*

(a)   Respondents

40.   A total of 111 responses were received for the in-depth readership survey for the *Review of Maritime Transport Report 2013*. Out of these, 13 per cent were from respondents affiliated with Governments, 36 per cent from academic or research institutions, 25 per cent from private enterprise, 11 per cent from international organizations and the rest from NGOs, public enterprise, media and others.

(b)   Average ratings

41.   Ninety-six out of the 111 respondents answered the questions concerning the seven attributes. Average ratings for each of the seven attributes are presented in figure 14. The ratings range was from 4 to 4.2.

Figure 14
In-depth survey results for the *Review of Maritime Transport Report 2013*
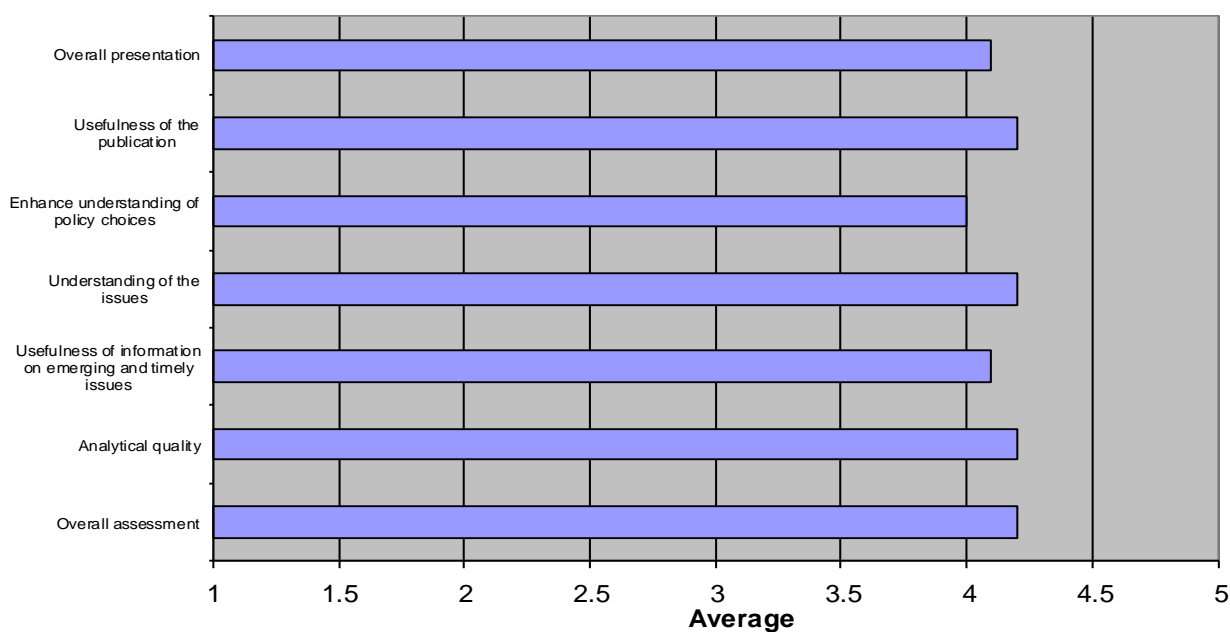
(c)   Qualitative responses

42.   **The purposes for which respondents use the report.** The survey indicates that the publication is used simultaneously for multiple purposes by its readers. Out of the total number of respondents, 69 per cent used the report for analysis and research, 29 per cent used the knowledge and analyses obtained from the report for education and training, and 6 per cent used it for policy formulation.

43.   **The frequency with which respondents consult the report.** The in-depth survey indicates that 34 per cent consulted the report three or more times and 35 per cent once or twice during the past year for their related work. Seventy per cent of respondents had a web

version. In terms of receiving the publication in the future, 47 per cent wished to receive electronic copies and 34 per cent preferred a weblink.

IV. Concluding comments

44. The following are some general comments on the results of the survey:

(a) The survey received a total of 192 responses – slightly more than the total responses for the survey of the previous year (184) – although the survey was conducted for a period of more than eight weeks, compared with four weeks for the previous survey. There was an increase in the number of responses to the in-depth survey, increasing to 150, mainly due to the relatively high response rate for one publication. While responses were received from various groups of readers (see annex) – international organizations, NGOs, private and public enterprises – the majority of respondents (38 per cent) associated themselves with academic or research institutions. Approximately 20 per cent of responses came from respondents affiliated with Governments, which is slightly less than the figure for the last survey (21 per cent). This indicates that there is a continuous need to consider ways of improving the response rate, particularly from Governments, which are the primary target group for UNCTAD publications.

(b) In general, respondents evaluated the publications positively. The average overall assessment for the publications included in the general survey was 4.1 and for the publications included in the in-depth survey, 3.9.

(c) As shown by the in-depth survey, publications are used for different purposes: analyses and research (prevailing), education and training, and policy formulation.

(d) The in-depth survey shows that while many readers indicated their interest in receiving publications via a weblink or electronically, there is also a demand for hard copies.

(e) With one exception, responses to the in-depth surveys were very limited (in one case, there was only one response to the questions concerning the seven attributes). Therefore, the data received may not be representative for some publications. Efforts need to be made to improve the response rate to the in-depth surveys. The positive experience of a high number of responses concerning the *Review of Maritime Transport Report 2013* will be examined for future surveys.

Annex

Distribution of responses by category of respondent