

Author's Rejoinder by Ramasamy Ramachandran

I would like to thank the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) for their comments on my paper.

I still hold to the essential substance of my views. They are based on my years of working as an official statistician, and as a data user engaged in public policy, market research, and as an advocate. However, the language I used in several places in the paper may be too strongly expressed and sweeping.

For example, in several places in the paper I refer to the lack of "professional competence" of statisticians and statistical agencies, including the DOSM. This would have been better expressed in terms of a critique of insufficient "proactive professionalism" rather than a critique of their "professional competence."

On the dissemination of results, the DOSM asserts that the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) is the custodian of income data and Central Bank of Malaysia holds the authority of releasing GDP data. With respect to the income data reference is made to their confidential nature due to the political sensitivity related to the

sizeable income variations among various ethnic groups in the country. However, nowadays this issue of sensitivity is considerably relaxed but EPU and DOSM still hold to their old perceptions. The irony is that in 1995, I obtained the income data from EPU for estimating housing needs via the Ministry of Housing and Local Government and the same data was not available when approached directly to DOSM. Similar difficulties were encountered in efforts to obtain information communications technology metadata.

Finally, on the issue of statistical integrity, I think the editorial cited in the DOSM response reflects a misunderstanding of my point. In essence I am driving at the concept that an interdisciplinary approach entailing both logical and statistical criteria is good enough to establish validity and reliability of a small area estimate instead of adhering to overly rigorous statistical procedures, as long as the final results are explainable and acceptable by the users.

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