

Results from the LTA survey

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WHAT

at the end of March, Science Support distributed a link to a web form with a questionnaire about the LTA web interface.

WHO

- astronomy PhD students and potsdocs at the universities of Groningen, Leiden and Nijmegen
- PIs of all LOFAR projects (asking them to forward it to their collaborators)

WHY

- evaluate how user-friendly the LTA web interface is seen by astronomers
- identify actions for improvement

The questionnaire was made up of questions with multiple answers and some open questions, where the users were free to give their answers.

LOFAR Long Term Archive usage survey

This short survey is meant to estimate the level of user friendliness of the LTA web interface and the overall user experience when retrieving data from the archive.

The LOFAR Long Term Archive (LTA) web page can be found at <http://lofar.target.rug.nl>
A user account is not needed to complete the survey.

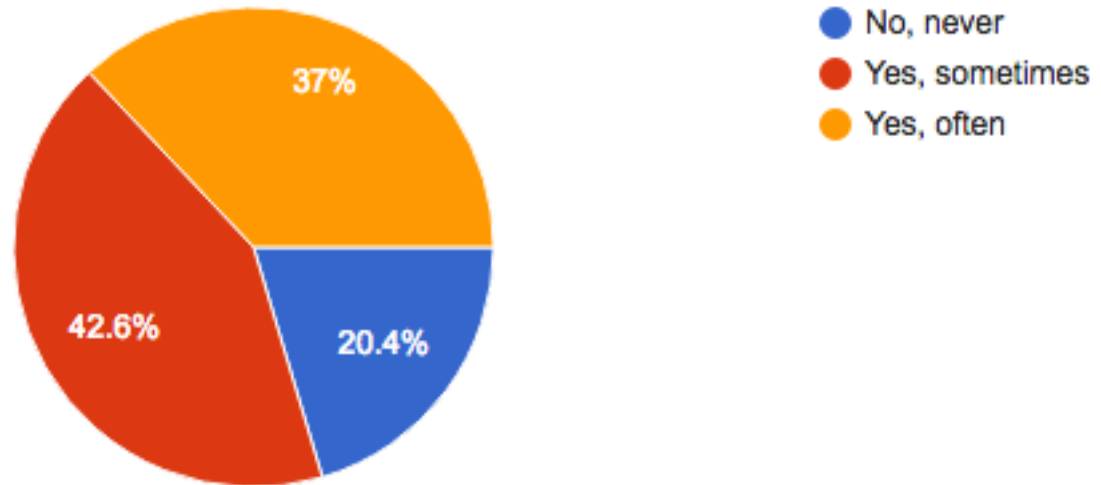
Have you ever used the LOFAR LTA web page?

- No, never
- Yes, sometimes
- Yes, often

The survey was not meant only for astronomers who are familiar with it, but also those who don't use it much or even had never used it before.

New users give feedback on general the intuitiveness of the interface.

Have you ever used the LOFAR LTA web page?



A total of 54 people submitted their answers

About 80% were LOFAR users and 20% had never searched the archive

Users were asked to do a “simple” exercise: find a certain subband, given the time when it was observed, the target, and the frequency.

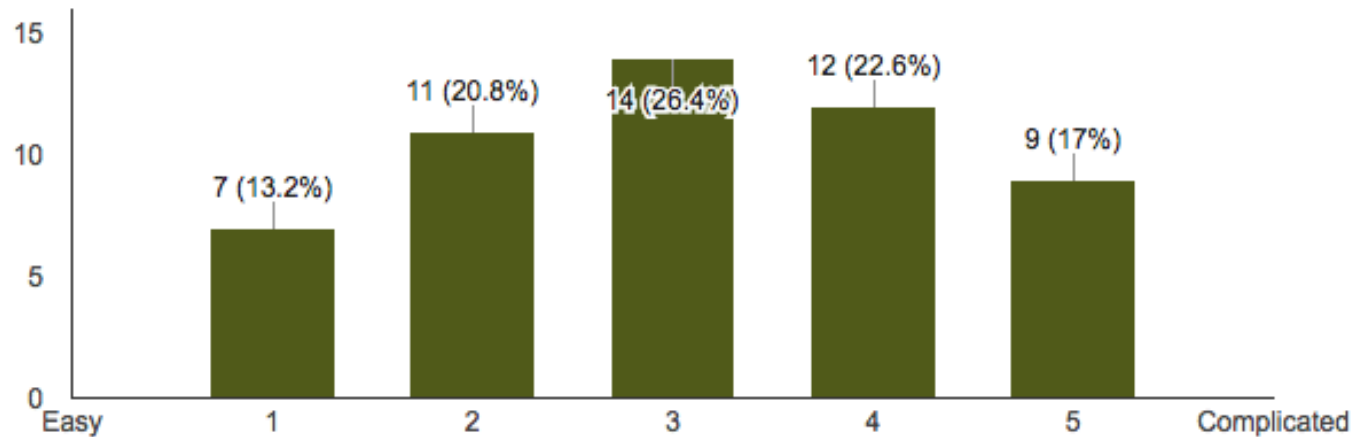
As an exercise, we kindly ask you to browse the archive and find the subband observed on 2012-12-16 pointing to 3C196 at 118.16 MHz. What is the Data Product Identifier of the subband? Be aware that it is not necessary to log in the archive, to do this exercise.

Only 44 people responded to this question (6 wrong answers). The others were trying to write a wrong answer (the form was rejecting wrong answers at first).

Problems:

- not using advanced search boxes
- not using “filter data products” link
- incorrectly using the time box

On a scale 1 to 5, how difficult was to find the right subband in the previous question?



Though 44 responded to the previous question, 53 responded to the following one.

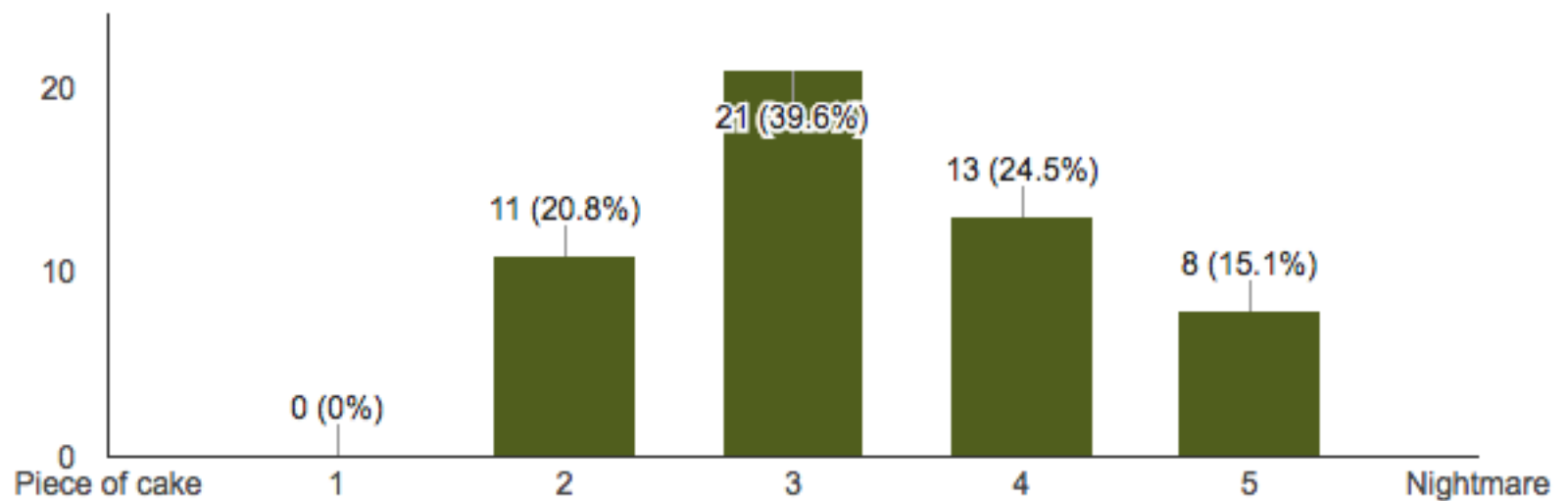
This implies that 9 people were trying to give a wrong answer when the form was rejecting this and decided to leave the previous one blank.

Overall, the exercise was not considered very difficult.

About 60% of the users consider the interface acceptably user-friendly.

The fact that 40% find it complicated is a concern.

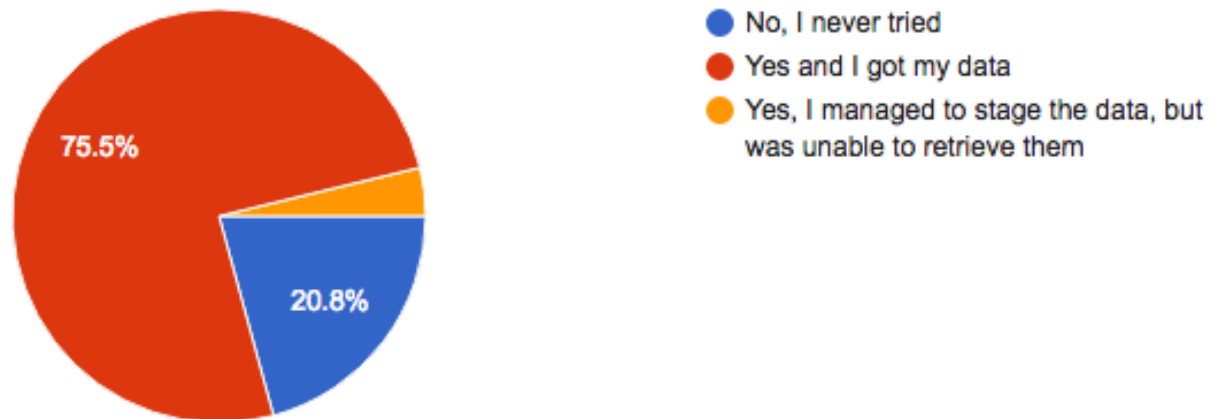
How user friendly do you find the LTA interface?



The last two questions dealt with staging data. Most users had staged data in the past.

They provided feedback on retrieving data from the archive, which is often felt as too slow (both staging and downloading).

Did you ever stage or retrieve data using the LTA ?



If you tried, but could not stage or retrieve your data, please explain what was the issue

Summary of possible improvements identified through the survey

- advanced search boxes more easily reachable
- clarify difference between observation and pipeline products
- shift/ctrl for multiple selections available but browser-dependent
- terminology can be confusing: glossary?
- perform searches on a list of targets
- export search output as a csv file
- search over a set of projects instead of one project only
- output distance from searched source to phase centre
- parse input in “search-engine” style
- general review of the interface with VO technology

- apply corrections of known issues on-the-fly when staging