

Barbados Statistical Service

Development of Official Statistics in Barbados

Introduction

Barbados is a small coral limestone island, 166 square miles, located the most easterly of the Caribbean chain of islands – at latitude 13° 10' North and longitude 59° 32' West. The island had the distinction of remaining under British rule, from the first British settlement in 1627. The island also served as the administrative headquarters of the Windward Islands, until it became a separate colony in 1885. Barbados was a member of the Federation of the West Indies from 1958 to 1962. It gained its independence from Britain on 30th November 1966 and became a parliamentary democracy within the Commonwealth.

Origin of the Statistical Department

Professor Dudley Sears, eminent economist of Sussex University came to Barbados in 1955 to begin preparation for the setting up of the Statistical Department. The Barbados Statistical Service (BSS) was established in early 1956 and its first location was in the Ministerial Building on Bay Street, which is now known as Government Headquarters.

The Statistics Act Chapter 192 was passed in 1958. This provided the Department with the legal authority to carry out its function. The Act empowers the Department to take any census in the island and to collect, compile and publish statistics on a wide range of topics. The Act, in addition to making it mandatory for the respondent to supply information, also protects the respondent; by requiring that the confidentiality of all particulars pertaining to any individual undertaking or establishment, be maintained.

The Department was originally divided into sections; such as, Trade, Finance Statistics, Population/Migration, Vital Statistics and Social and Labour Statistics. However, the organization has evolved over the years into its current structure; organized under 4 divisions, along subject matter areas. These are as follows:

- Business Surveys Division – responsible for the conduct of establishment surveys;
- Censuses and Surveys Division – responsible for the conduct of household surveys;
- Trade and National Accounts Division – responsible for the compilation of mercantile trade and national accounts statistics;
- Socio-Economic Statistics Division – responsible for the compilation of tourism and vital statistics, along with the preparation of population estimates.

First Publications

The first Abstract of Statistics was prepared in 1956. Although it was the only one for that period, it was a comprehensive publication; with information dating from as far back as 1936. It was significant because it presented a wide range of statistical data in one publication (reference Abstract of Statistics No. 1, 1956).

Another first recorded for the Department was the conduct of a Household Budget Survey in 1960 to 1961. This was the origin of the weights for the new Index of Retail Prices, towards the end of 1965 – viz. October 1965 = 100 (reference Abstract of Statistics No. 6, 1969, pg. 92).

From 1957, the Barbados Statistical Service became the official source of trade data, on imports and exports; replacing information obtained from the annual reports of the Comptroller of Customs.

Population Census

A major undertaking for the Department was the 1970 Population Census. This was conducted in collaboration with the University of the West Indies (U.W.I.). Professor G. W. Roberts, a respected demographer of U.W.I., Jamaica, led the Department through this regional exercise – reference Census Research Programme, U.W.I. (1973).

Prior to this, Barbados was included in the Eastern Caribbean Population Census of April 1960; under the aegis of the Federal Government, which was based in Trinidad. There has been a history of Census taking in Barbados since the 1800's.

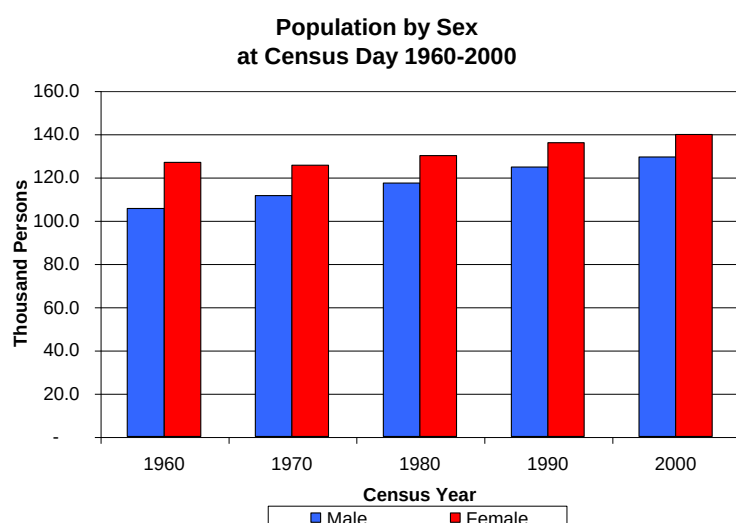
Subsequently, Population Censuses were conducted during the years 1980, 1990 and 2000. The latest Population and Housing Census was conducted during May - July 2010. A summary of past population census results is shown in Table 1 and Chart 1 below.

Table 1

**POPULATION BY SEX
at Census Dates 1960 - 2000**
(in Thousands)

CENSUS YEAR	SEX		
	Male	Female	Total
1960	105.5	126.8	232.3
1970	111.4	125.5	236.9
1980	117.2	129.9	247.1
1990	124.6	135.9	260.5
2000	129.2	139.6	268.8

Chart 1



Development of Other Statistics

During the 1970s, the Department was again breaking new ground in the development of its statistics, with the help of Ms. Ione Marshall, who was contracted in 1976 for two years by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. She was attached to the Department to set up a National Accounts Section and she started a series of estimates for **Gross Domestic Product** for Barbados. Ms Marshall conceptualized the measurement of a Tourism Industry.

In October 1975, the **Continuous Household Sample Survey** was started. This was under the consultancy of Dr. Desraj, who provided technical assistance through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This facilitated the establishment of a survey programme for the collection, compilation, analysis and publication of Labour Force statistics, on a quarterly basis (reference the Continuous Labour Force Sample Survey Report 1996-2001). It continued each quarter, with short breaks in 1980, 1990 and 2000, during the conduct of the Population Censuses.

A few years after Barbados' independence, the Central Bank of Barbados was instituted (in May 1972 - according to the Bank's Web Site). Thus began a period of collaboration between the Bank and the Department, evident even today. Statistics such as Balance of Payments and constant price GDP were subsequently generated by the Bank. However, the Department remains the source of much data published by the Bank.

Statistics generated by the 4 Divisions of the Department are published in its Monthly Digest of Statistics. Other publications of the Department include annual reports on trade, labour force and tourism statistics, along with a number of bulletins. Most of the bulletins are now accessible on the Department's Web Site - <http://www.barstats.gov.bb> .

Provision of Technical Advice to Others

The Department gave technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture in the conduct of the Agriculture Census, in 1989 – reference Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (1992). An Agriculture Census was also conducted in 1971, with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture; and a large sample Census of Agriculture was conducted in 1961, under the then Federal Government, based in Trinidad.

The Department has also collaborated with a number of other organizations in the conduct of various surveys.

Period of Further Development - 1989 to date

The Office of National Statistics of the United Kingdom did a study of the Department and suggested a number of improvements. One of these was to develop a strategic plan for the Department. It was recommended that the goals of the Department for the future were to provide a better focus for the users; to make better use of its resources, and be more accountable for the service that it provided. At this time, a Mission Statement was developed.

The Mission Statement is “To provide reliable and timely key economic and social statistics which decision makers and other users need.”

During the 1990s, a number of surveys were conducted:

- In 1996 – 1997, the Department conducted a Poverty Survey, which was carried out with the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank. This was administered as a module attached to the continuous Labour Force Survey. The resulting report (which was not published), provided a diagnosis of the extent and nature of poverty in Barbados, and provided the country with its first poverty line.
- In 1997 – 1998, an Informal Sector Survey was conducted, as a module attached to the Labour Force Survey. Technical assistance for the former survey was provided by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The ‘new millennium’ (i.e. 2000) was heralded in the Barbados Statistical Service by the appointment of the first female Director, Mrs. Angela Hunte. She introduced the first Statistics Week in 2001 and this week has been celebrated every year subsequently – to promote the importance and use of Statistics, to encourage greater response to BSS surveys and to recognize the work of BSS staff. She proceeded on pre-retirement leave on 4th August 2010 and will be retiring from the public service on 14th November 2010.

From its inception, the title of the Head of Department was Government Statistician. The first appointed Government Statistician was the late Mr. Robert Christopher Springer, who held the post from 1959-1963. The title was changed in 1966 to that of Director. The next appointed Head of Department was Mr. Charles Alleyne, who served as Government

Statistician from 1964 to 1966 and continued as Director until 1977. Mr. Keith Padmore acted as Director during the interim before the appointment of Mr. Eric Straughn, who held the post from 1980-1999.

Towards the end of 2008, the Government of Barbados received a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) toward the Modernization of the Barbados Statistical Service System. One of the objectives of this project is to strengthen the relationship between the Department and other statistics producing units in the island, to make BSS the hub of all official statistics. The aim is also to improve the dissemination of and access to these official statistics.

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