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Statement from Jamaica^{*}

By

Valerie Nam
Statistical Institute of Jamaica

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I. EXPERIENCES FROM THE 2000 CENSUS DECADE

A. Introduction

1. In 2001 Jamaica conducted its thirteenth census. Like all former British Caribbean colonies Jamaica has a long history of census taking dating back to the nineteenth century. Census Day was September 10, 2001.

B. Coverage, design and methodology

2. This census, like all since 1943, was conducted on a “de jure” basis. The “de jure” count includes all persons, Jamaicans and non-Jamaicans whose usual place of residence was in Jamaica even if they were temporarily (less than six months) abroad at the time of the census.

3. The design for the 2001 Census saw the introduction of sampling for the first time in a census in Jamaica. For Jamaica the decision to sample was largely based on the need to reduce the burden on the respondent and the interviewer and to yield a higher quality of data on some topics, than was previously obtained.

4. The assessment of the experiences of the census of 1991 and the awareness of the numerous obstacles with which the data collection process is confronted, pointed to the need to review the field strategies. Over the years, the increased demand for data from this very important source had resulted in a questionnaire which covered many topics. The decisions taken for 2001 were that there would be full enumeration on items considered basic, and sample enumeration for those subjects that require more intensive interviewing and processing. Sampling allowed for the selection and training of a cadre of well-trained interviewers capable of dealing with the probing that is required for the more difficult questions.

5. Two questionnaires were developed, a short form and a long form. The data collecting method utilised was the “Interviewer Method” and the interviewer worked with either a short form or a long form.

C. Field enumeration

6. Enumeration started slowly on September 11, 2001, as the country was distracted by the tragic events unfolding in the United States of America. The distrust, with which the public historically has viewed censuses, was very evident in 2001. Interviewers were surprised at the level of resistance from the better educated in the society. The inability to gain access to “gated” communities of the more affluent areas posed additional obstacles.

7. At the end of January 2002, work still lagged. The close-out of all census fieldwork was done to coincide with the completion of the Post Enumeration Survey on February 16, 2002.

D. Processing

8. The Statistical Institute was guided in its approach to the processing of the 2001 Census by recent technological developments with the result that there was considerable reduction in the time taken to process this census, compared with previous ones. A private company was

contracted to scan the questionnaires. Scanning of the forms began in December 2001, before the completion of the field work, and by December 2002, data editing and cleaning was 99 per cent complete.

9. On the basis of the Post Enumeration Survey and standard demographic techniques the coverage (the number of questionnaires completed) was estimated at 80 per cent. There was actual contact with about 90 percent of the population but 10 per cent refused to be interviewed.

E. Dissemination

10. A Country Report presenting a summary of the main findings from the short form and a number of Subject Reports (7 of 14 planned) presenting tabulations based on the final adjusted data are being published. Tables in Excel format are provided on an ongoing basis to data users.

II. CRITICAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

11. Like many countries, Jamaica is faced with the challenges of increased costliness of census taking, against the background of limited financial resources and diminished assistance from international funding agencies. In the meantime though, there is much pressure on the statistical office to produce and disseminate an ever-increasing range of relevant statistics.

12. Not to be under-estimated are the changes in the economic environment which have resulted in an apathetic public which continues to view all government's data collection efforts with suspicion and even hostility. There is an apparent refusal to accept that data collected are used as the basis for any planning which is likely to result in improvement in the well-being of the population.

13. Technological changes have led to an increased ability of users to utilize census data stored in electronic formats and there is a growing demand for the census database as well as for electronic mapping products. Resource limitations have however prevented the development of appropriate systems for making this available.

III. TOPICS

A. Disability

14. While there is much demand for data on disability, there is concern that the census is still not able to adequately deal with the topic, which was included for the first time in 1991. Issues related to interpretation of the concepts and definitions are relevant to this problem. A very important factor which contributes to the inadequacy also is the lack of access to the institutional population, in the census, for the purpose of obtaining this type of information.

B. International migration

15. The *Principles and Recommendations* focus on the immigrant stock only. Of greater relevance to many developing countries is the emigrant stock. Since 1991, Jamaica has included

a question which asks the head of the household for the age and sex of any members who have left to live in a foreign country in the calendar year preceding the census. The main limitation of this approach is that entire households which have migrated are missed.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE 2010 PROGRAMME

16. Jamaica will welcome the discussions on, and serious consideration of, the development of alternative approaches to traditional census taking. The challenges described above are not likely to be overcome by that time. Scarce resources must be used efficiently and every effort must be taken to ensure that data quality is not seriously compromised.