

History of official Statistics in Mauritius

Introduction

1. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) is the official body responsible for the collection, compilation, analysis and dissemination of official statistics relating to various aspects of the economic and social activities and general conditions of the people of Mauritius.
2. It was created in July 1945 in consequence of a recommendation made by the “Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances which occurred in the North of Mauritius in 1943”. It was then known as the Statistical Bureau and its original functions were to collect and compile information as to the remuneration of labour, the number and type of employment in various industries, the level of prices, the computation of cost of living indices, and to supervise and co-ordinate all statistical data collection in various Government Departments.
3. In July 1948, the Statistical Bureau became the Central Statistical Office. The overall framework governing the activities of the office was embodied in the Statistics Act of 7 April 1951. At that time, the Office had a staff of eight persons. It has grown over the years in terms of functions and staffing levels. Currently, it has a work force of around 250 staff, of whom 50 professionals.

Statistics Act 2000

4. In April 2001, the 1951 Statistics Act was replaced by the Statistics Act 2000. The new Act gives more impetus to the status of the Office and broadens the duties and functions of the Director of Statistics. It promotes the coordination of statistical activities across the national statistical system to ensure that approved statistical standards and procedures are applied and that standard concepts, definitions and classifications are used to enhance harmonisation and comparability of statistics, and to minimise unnecessary overlapping and duplication in the collection and publication of statistical information.
5. The Act also provides for a Statistics Advisory Council which brings together all stakeholders including user groups. Its main function is to advise the Minister on any gaps and deficiencies in the provision of statistical services in Mauritius.

Organization

6. The CSO is the main producer of official statistics in the country. Other producers include the Bank of Mauritius, and line Ministries, which produce mainly administrative data. The CSO out posted staff to statistical units of line ministries except the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Fisheries, where for historical reasons, the two ministries have developed their own statistical system.
7. The first statistical unit was created in 1956 at the Customs and Excise Department, and currently, there are around 50 officers of the CSO in various Ministries/Departments.

Dissemination

8. In 1946, the Office published its first edition of the Yearbook of Statistics providing for a vast amount of information about Mauritius. In 1961, the Yearbook was replaced by a quarterly Digest of Statistics embodying statistics of general interest. The frequency of the Digest was reduced to bi-annual in June 1966 and to annual in 1983.
9. The Office also published some 15 subject area reports annually. The first one was published in April 1966 and covered the survey of employment and earnings in large establishments. The survey which was conducted twice a year was undertaken as a response to the need for more frequent and comprehensive statistics on employment and earnings, as the main source of data on employment was the ten-yearly population census.

10. The Office also releases issues of Economic and Social Indicators, a publication that allows for rapid dissemination of main statistical data pending the publication of detailed reports. The first issue was released in 1983. Currently, some 65 issues of Economic and Social Indicators covering some 25 subject areas are published annually.

Key dates and events which have shaped our statistical system

1945 saw the creation of the Statistical Bureau. In July **1948**, the Statistical Bureau was renamed Central Statistical Office, and in April **1951** the Statistics Act governing the activities of the office came into force.

In **1946**, the Office published its first edition of the Year Book of Statistics providing for a vast amount of information about Mauritius. Over the years, publications covering subject areas such as National Accounts, Trade, Demography and Labour were published. To date, some 25 subject areas are covered.

In **1952**, the Office conducted its first Housing and Population Census, a prelude to a ten-yearly programme of census taking. In the same year, it produced its first statistics on National Accounts; the figures were compiled as from year 1948.

In **1961**, the CSO conducted its first Household Budget Survey (HBS) and released its first Consumer Price Index. Three sets of indices (urban, rural and overall) were then produced. The indices were updated in 1976, and subsequently every five years. As from 1976, only one index was published for the whole country as there were no major differences in the three indices.

In April **1966**, the first subject matter digest was published covering the results of the survey of employment and earnings in large establishments. The survey was undertaken as a response to the need for regular statistics on employment and earnings.

In **1985**, the CSO conducted its first Census of Economic Activities (CEA). Since then, the economic censuses are carried out every five years.

In **1990**, for the first time the Office took responsibility for the data processing of the Housing and Population Census using micro-computers. Previously, the processing was done by the Government Department responsible for data processing.

In **1999**, the Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey (CMPHS) was conducted for the first time. This permanent household survey is being carried out continuously to collect information on topics of current interest. As from **2004**, the CMPHS became the dedicated instrument for measuring labour force, employment and unemployment.

In **2000**, the Statistics Act 1951 was replaced by a modern Statistics Act to be more in line with the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, giving more impetus to the status of the Office and broadening the duties and functions of the Director of Statistics. The Act requires for the setting up of a Statistics Advisory Council, which advises the Minister on all statistical matters.

In July **2001**, the CSO created its own website to show case what it is and what it does, and to disseminate rapidly statistics produced to users. As from **2002**, CSO releases all its publications free of charge on its website. A detailed release calendar of publication is also published at the beginning of each year.

In April **2001**, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Mauritius Customs and CSO to formalize the procedures relating to the flow of timely external trade data in order to monitor developments in the economy of Mauritius and also the achievements of Free Trade Area and planned Customs Union in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region.

During the same year, a mission from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conducted an assessment of the quality of selected macro-economic datasets under the Reports on Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) initiative in view of the adherence of Mauritius to the GDDS.

In **2003**, in response to the need felt to restructure the CSO and to reform the National Statistical System, three audits were carried out. These were (i) a national statistical audit under the SADC-EU Statistical Training Project, (ii) an audit of CSO's IT infrastructure by Dr. Phan Tuan Pham, informatics advisor at the UN Statistics Division, and (iii) an audit of the structures and functions of the office by Mr. Bill McLennan, former head of the UK Government Statistical Service. These were followed by a mission on the organization and management of the CSO by Mr. William de Vries, Acting Director of the United Nations Statistics Division, in 2004

In **2005**, CSO published a "Guide to the CSO" to create better awareness and understanding of its mandate and products, and to encourage more effective use of the services it provides. A Customer Charter informing on its responsibilities and the standards of service to its customers was also released during the same year.

In **2006**, with Government commitment to Civil Service reforms and to Performance Based Budgeting, a Performance Management System (PMS) to measure in a systematic manner the performance of the office, both at organisational and individual levels was piloted. The system is now fully embedded in the work culture of the Office.

During the same year (**2006**), based on assessments made earlier, a National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), a five year medium term plan for reforming the National Statistical System to make it more robust, more transparent and better coordinated was developed. The strategy, which provides strategic directions and appropriate mechanisms for the development of sustainable statistical capacity, was adopted by the Statistics Advisory Council in January **2007**.

As part of the strategy, an e-business plan, providing for IT solutions in terms of hardware and application system software was developed in **2006** to raise the performance of CSO's operations to international standards. Implementation started in **2008** and will be completed in **2012**.

A second assessment of the quality of macro-economic datasets under the Reports on Observance of Standards and Codes (ROSC) was conducted in **2007** by IMF, in view of Mauritius subscribing to the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS).

In **2008**, the structure of the office was reviewed from subject-matter to functional basis, in line with the requirements of the NSDS and the Government Performance Based Budgeting. The new structure is based on five programmes, namely (i) economic and financial statistics, (ii) socio-demographic statistics, (iii) analysis and integration of economic and social statistics, (iv) statistical support and technical services, and (v) corporate services.

In March **2009**, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Bank of Mauritius (BOM) and CSO. The objective was to have a more structured collaboration between the two institutions and to avoid overlapping and duplication in the collection and production of statistical information.

In January 2010, Mauritius became the first country to ratify the African Charter of Statistics that serve as an ethical code for building responsibility and an operational framework for statistical development in Africa

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