



# Stats News & Views

October 2009

Special Issue

## **Message by H.E. Mr. Edwin W. Carrington, Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on the Occasion of Caribbean Statistics Day, 15 October 2009**

As Secretary-General of the Caribbean Community, it is my pleasure to be involved in the activities marking Caribbean Statistics Day 2009.

The observance of Caribbean Statistics Day follows closely on the heels of another important event recently held in Trinidad and Tobago, the High-Level Advocacy Forum on Statistics. That event and today's commemoration both have the commendable goal of raising the profile of statistics in our Community. The statistics profile in our Region has been quite weak, especially bearing in mind that statistics are really at the very core of almost everything we do.

Caribbean Statistics Day, therefore, provides another opportunity to sound a clarion call for more timely and accurate statistics to help our policymakers, our students, members of academia, the business community and other users to arrive at decisions based on fact. From trade to investments to social issues such as health care and culture, statistics are of critical importance to development, and are particularly crucial to developing states such as ours in the Caribbean.

Indeed, the collection, analysis and dissemination of data are of critical importance in this era of financial and economic challenges and in the establishment, performance and monitoring of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, our flagship programme.

Regrettably, however, National Statistical Offices faced as they are with increasing demand for data are experiencing high non-response from data providers. This phenomenon is perhaps caused by a general lack of understanding of why data are being collected and how they will be used to impact the daily operations of the data providers themselves.

It may also be the case that the lack of co-ordination across agencies collecting data leads to burdensome requirements on respondents which contributes to the poor response for information. Put succinctly, in our countries there is a general absence of a statistics culture, while on the other there is an unco-ordinated national statistical system that is largely under-resourced.

It is in the face of these challenges that the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians held in Barbados in October 2008 decided on the annual observance of Caribbean Statistics Day. This year, the theme for that observance takes its cue from the High Level Advocacy Forum: ***Better Statistics***

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*for Better Management and Better Development Outcomes’.*

Across the Region, Member States and Associate Members are observing this day with a variety of activities: a testimony to the fact that there is commitment to invest in Statistics as a priority for our development. I am advised that in some countries, activities and events leading to this day began as early as September. Those activities, led by the National Statistics Offices, ranged from poetry competitions, to publication of articles, to video presentations, to seminars panel discussions and displays of reading material.

Another component of our observances today is the use of statistics by the media in educating and informing the population as to the importance of its contribution to good governance as well as to other issues of significance. As part of our activities to mark Caribbean Statistics Day 2009 here at the Secretariat, we will launch several facilities:

- Census Online, an online portal for data from previous population and housing censuses developed with support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA);
- the Help Desk facility which is a learning/knowledge resource of the CARICOM Statistics Sub-programme’s website developed with support from the European Commission (EC);
- TradSys Online, an online searchable Merchandise Trade Database developed with support from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB)
- CARICOMInfo, online data dissemination software developed with support from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and
- Our new look CARICOM Statistics Website.

These facilities are all geared at improving public access to statistical data.

I am confident that these continuing series of engagements will reverse the current trend and achieve the objectives of:

- Improving awareness of statistics at the national level and across the Region;
- Highlighting information on and insights into the process of production of statistics;
- Promoting the use of statistics in a wide variety of areas;
- Increasing credibility in the statistics produced;
- Establishing new partnerships in the development of statistics;
- Receiving investment resources to reposition and restructure where necessary statistical agencies.

In effect therefore, it is my hope that the emphasis on this vital area for assisting development should result not only in greater awareness but also recognition of the role of statistics as a tool for improving the lives of the citizens of our Community.

## Publications

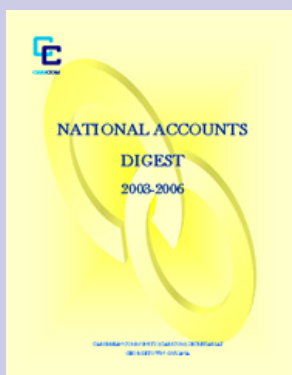
Some of the more recent publications produced by the Regional Statistics Sub-programme can be found below:-



- [CSME Profile](#)



- [CARICOM's Selected Economic Indicators 1997, 2002-2006](#)



- [National Account Digest 2003-2006](#)

## Caribbean Statistics Day Observance at the CARICOM Secretariat

The Regional Statistics Sub-programme of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has planned a week of activities to highlight statistics as part of its observance of **Caribbean Statistics Day 2009**. This week will be launched with an opening ceremony on **Monday 12 October 2009** at **11:00am** in the **Conference Room** of the **CARICOM Secretariat**, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown. It is anticipated that statistical agencies in Member States led by the National Statistical offices will also engage in the observance of this day through their own planned activities. This day as agreed to by the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) at its Thirty-Third Meeting has been planned with the following objectives in mind:-

- to facilitate the placement of statistics high on the development agenda in countries;
- to encourage and develop a culture of statistics among the population – respondents from households and businesses, users in the public and private sectors and in academic and other institutions, and schools and members of the media;
- to foster increased collaboration with data producing/statistical units in line ministries and other agencies and departments of governments;
- to sensitise and inform users, suppliers and producers of the importance of statistics in making informed policy decisions.

In light of these objectives, the Secretariat will be conducting the following activities during the week of Caribbean Statistics Day:-

- The formal launching of various online informational facilities including CARICOMInfo, Census Online, New look CARICOM Statistics Website, the Help Desk Facility and TradSys Online.
- Seminars and power point presentation on various areas of statistics including labour force, health, environment and Information and Communication technologies.
- Open Day where invitations will be extended to various schools and organisations for scheduled visits to the Regional Statistics Sub-programme of the CARICOM Secretariat
- Display of Statistical publications at the Secretariat

**Message by Dr. Philomen Harrison, Project Director,  
Regional Statistics,**

On the occasion of the observance of the First Caribbean Statistics Day, on **October 15 2009**, I take this opportunity to express appreciation to all of the Directors of Statistics and Chief Statisticians for their efforts to build effective statistical systems in their respective countries.

The theme for our First Caribbean Statistics Day is, **Better Statistics, Better Management, Better Development Outcomes** and it strikes at the heart of our raison d'être in statistics which is to make available high-quality statistics that can enable among other things good governance, research and analysis that can redound to the benefit of all the people of the Community as reflected in improved quality of life for all. While this is our first observance of Caribbean Statistics Day across the Region, the Barbados Statistical Service for many years now has been observing a Statistics Week.

Over the years the Standing Committee of Caribbean Statisticians (SCCS) has been the main mechanism through which statisticians of the Region have sought to equalize and harmonise the pattern of statistical development across the Region. It has been the vehicle through which heads of statistical offices, faced with limited resources have been able to share their experiences and best practices, facilitate South-South co-operation and establish relationships with international and regional organizations that led to the endorsement of key statistical capacity- building projects such as the joint United Nations Statistics Division/CARICOM Project on Strengthening Capacity in the Compilation of Social/Gender and Environmental Statistics; the Caribbean Integration Support Programme funded by the European Commission under the Ninth European Development Fund and the Multi-Programme of training in Demographic Analysis funded by the Caribbean Development Bank.

The Region has also seen the development of statistical advisory group(s) as sub-groups of the SCCS that have targeted the development of specific areas of statistics such as Social/Gender and Environmental Statistics, the rolling out of a Regional Statistical Work Programme particularly in the context of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, Statistical Research Seminars and the insertion of PARIS21 within the regional statistical activities which led to the High-Level Advocacy Forum and other advocacy events.

The Advisory Group on Statistics now has before it the task of enabling the implementation of the Regional Statistical

## Recent Meetings and Workshop

In the year 2009, the Regional Statistics Sub-programme continued to pursue statistical capacity building in Member States and Associate Member States of CARICOM in order to ensure the collection of high quality data and metadata in a timely manner. Some of the various meetings and workshops organised included:-

- **Short Course on Principles of Demography**
- **Meeting Of Economic Statistics Experts: Assessment Of Methods In The Production And Compilation Of Key Economic Statistics**
- **Workshop on Census Organisation and Administration**
- **Census Workshop on Adoption of Common Census Methodologies**
- **Fourth Demographic Analysis Workshop**
- **Technical Workshop on National Strategy for Development of Statistics**
- **Eurotrace Training Workshop.**
- **DevInfo 6.0 User and Admin. Module Training**
- **DevInfo Workshop (Beginners and Advanced) and CensusInfo workshop**

## Other Activities

The Regional Statistics Sub-programme will be organizing the following events on its Open Day for the Caribbean Statistics Day on the October 15, 2009:-

- School quiz competition
- Careers in Statistics
- Fun facts about statistics
- Statistics Lecture
- Statistics joke segment;
- Making Statistics Alive - Display

## Statistics Quotes and Sayings



Facts are stubborn, but statistics are more pliable.

Torture numbers, and they'll confess to anything.

A statistical analysis, properly conducted, is a delicate dissection of uncertainties, a surgery of suppositions.

Do not put your faith in what statistics say until you have carefully considered what they do not say.



Work Programme as well as consideration of any needed reform of the SCCS as a forum for statistical development.

Evidently we have come a long way but there is much work left to be done if our statistical offices and systems can produce the statistics at the requisite quality to provide an enabling development for the management of our development process and fulfill the true meaning of the theme for our first commemoration of statistics in the Region. I want to close by thanking my colleagues of CARICOM for their encouragement and to acknowledge the commitment and support of the staff of the Regional Statistics sub-programme.

### The Observance of Caribbean Statistics Day in Member and Associate Member States

Following on the High-Level Advocacy forum, Member States and Associate Members were urged to engage their staff and other statistical agencies in line ministries and other departments in spreading the significance of statistics to the development agenda of the Region through the observance of Caribbean Statistics Day on 15 October 2009. Below, you will out how some of the countries have chosen to observe the day.

#### Caribbean Statistics Day – Barbados

The Barbados Statistical Service has been observing a designated “Statistics Week” for a number of years. This year the Statistics Week celebration has been set to coincide with the observance of Caribbean Statistics Day. The country has also chosen a theme for its celebration that is keeping with the objectives of Caribbean Statistics Day. This year, the theme for Statistics Week will be “Better Statistics, More Informed Policy and Decision Making. A Better Future for Barbados”. Some of the proposed list of activities for the week include:-

- Advocacy Forum on Statistics at The Grande Salle, Central Bank of Barbados
- Statistical Displays at:
  - Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic,
  - U.W.I, Cave Hill Campus
  - Barbados Library Services
  - Barbados Statistical Service
- Presentation by Dr. Frank Alleyne on the importance of Statistics at the Barbados Statistical Service.
- Internal Seminar on the Household Budget Survey and The 2010 Population and Housing Census.

### Caribbean Statistics Day – Guyana

Guyana, the host country of the CARICOM Secretariat, will be observing Caribbean Statistics Day on the 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2009. This country has set out to achieve the following objectives for this day which is in keeping with the advocacy platform for statistics from which the day originated. The main objectives of the national observance are to:-

- Raise awareness at the national level of the importance of statistics in our daily lives.
- Acknowledge the service provided by the statistical system in Guyana.
- Strengthen the trust of the public in official statistics.
- Seek the public's continued support of the data collection entities in Guyana
- Emphasize the coordinative role played by the CARICOM Secretariat in the harmonization of regional work programmes, skills training and development of staff at national statistics offices.

The CARICOM Secretariat will also be collaborating with the Bureau of Statistics in Guyana for at least one joined activity. This will be a joined live appearance on a local television programme advocating the importance of statistics. The Bureau has also arranged pre-recorded presentations about the day for TV and Radio.

The Bureau of Statistics in Guyana will also be conducting outreach activities related to statistics in the various regions of Guyana. Staff of the Bureau will be visiting schools in six selected regions of Guyana to conduct lectures and set up posters describing the field of statistics. They are also encouraging educators to be part of the awareness drive by having discussions at their institutions on the importance of statistics in our daily lives.

### Caribbean Statistics Day – Jamaica

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) will be celebrating **Statistics Week** during the week of October 12 – October 16, 2009 under the theme, **“Statistics Today...The Foundation for Tomorrow”**. Various activities have been planned as part of an overall strategy to inform the Jamaican society of the availability of statistical goods and services as well as to increase awareness of statistics and its value as an important resource in planning and decision-making.

Included among the week's activities is a Newspaper Supplement which will be published on **Wednesday, October 14**, in the Jamaican Business Observer. This supplement will be highlighting the need for supporting the development of regional statistics in light of the Caribbean Single Market Economy. Other activities during the week's celebration will include a presentation of the findings for the Household Expenditure Survey 2004-2005 on **Tuesday, October 13**. There will also be an Open Day on Caribbean Statistics Day, **Thursday, October**

### Caribbean Statistics Day – Anguilla

In observance of this Day, the Anguilla Statistics Department will be organising a number of activities on the 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009 as well as some pre-events commencing on September 27, 2009.

This initiative is in an effort to create greater awareness and appreciation for statistics, as well as raise attention to the role of statistics in national development, by encouraging a comprehensive collaborative approach to the collection, compilation, and dissemination of statistics. In addition, it is also hoped that greater understanding and use of statistics by persons in Anguilla would be

fostered and a culture of statistics promoted in terms of provision of data by respondents.

The theme for this year's events is, 'Produced by Us; for Use by Us' with the focus being, "Why does Anguilla need good statistics".

This year's activities will include following:

- Three competitions; Poem, Word Creation and Statips
- Radio interviews and addresses
- Launching ceremony – Statistics Day

The general public will be invited to the launching ceremony on the 15th of October to be held at the Teachers Resource Centre. This ceremony will be followed later in the day, with a facilitated discussion session entitled, 'The need for collaboration and coordination in government – The case for Statistics.' The target group for this session will permanent secretaries and department heads.

### **Caribbean Statistics Day – Bermuda**

On Tuesday October 13, the Premier Dr. the Hon. Ewart Brown JP, MP, will host the Bermuda Department of Statistics' first annual National Statistics Day.

The theme of National Statistics Day is: ***“Celebrating the Vital Role of Statistics, for better management and better development outcomes”***, and Bermuda will join other CARICOM Member and Associate Member States in acknowledging the day.

The Chief Statistician, Valerie Robinson-James said the purpose of the day is to raise public awareness and highlight the importance of statistics in Bermuda. Mrs. Robinson-James said, “Statisticians are key players in gathering and formulating economic and social development information. They frame the demographic profiles in our society and produce the statistics that become the eyes of policy makers and the heart of the development process.”

She continued, “The Department of Statistics provides a wealth of information about Bermuda; who we are, where we live and what we do. Whether it is statistics focusing on the population of Bermuda, households, income earned, seniors, tourism, literacy levels, employment, economic growth, education, labour productivity or international business activity, the data collected and released provides a sound basis for informed decision-making regarding Bermuda's society, economy and environment.

“The theme chosen for National Statistics Day is significant. The quality of official government statistics depends on the cooperation of businesses, communities and citizens in providing accurate and reliable data. It is against this backdrop that National Statistics Day will primarily focus on the vital role of statistics. The Department's staff will engage our key stakeholders into meaningful discussions about how the data is collected and used. We will also reassure them that the principle of confidentiality of information is greatly respected, and a tenet that the Department of Statistics has rigorously observed since its inception. Additionally, we will seek to obtain feedback from them as to how we can improve to ease the burden of reporting and make the data more useful for their needs. Our overall objective is to strengthen the respondent business relationship and build a culture of trust and appreciation for statistics.”

Some of the events organized to celebrate the day includes:-

- Formal Opening Ceremony.
- Roundtable discussions on Employment and Inflation, Economic Surveys,
- Luncheon with Heads of Government Department with a presentations the Role of Statistics/ Government statisticians, Statistical Consultancy Services.
- Visits by Students

## Caribbean Statistics Day Celebration in Other Member States and Associate Member States

In addition to above the Member States and Associate Member States, Caribbean Statistics Day celebrations will be simultaneously taking place among countries in the rest of the Region. Some of the suggested activities for the day included:-

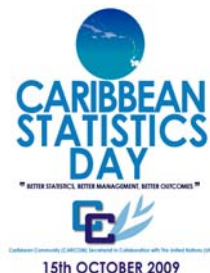
- Open day at the National Statistical Offices where the public can visit and questions can be answered by staff.
- Essay competition among high school students on what statistics mean to them and to policy-making (or other suitable themes).
- Talks/lectures, brochures, handouts, press releases, etc.
- Visits to schools to talk about careers in Statistics.

For more information on Caribbean Statistics Day, please visit our website at [www.caricomstats.org](http://www.caricomstats.org).

**How can we contribute to help make greater use and better sense of statistics?**  
**(Excerpt from “Managing *bad weather* – making greater use and better sense of statistics” by Gerald Haberkorn and Alick Nyasulu)**

What do we need as statisticians – what can we do to collectively lift our game?

Our needs are simple: to paraphrase international development bank lingo, a good start would be to have an **enabling environment with facilitating conditions** to do our jobs; this does not just refer to more than a survival budget to recruit and retain sufficient staff numbers, adequately trained staff, and a realistic budget to do a competent job – but functioning national statistical systems, regular data user-producer dialogue at the highest level, committed leadership, and a growing culture of evidence-based decision making which places good information at the core of good management and governance. True leadership and top managers come through during tough times – not only when trade balances are positive, revenue is up, and approval ratings are not in the red. And good leadership and management work better in the long-run, if guided by facts rather than fiction, and by understanding and managing reality rather than be solely guided by political instinct and expedience.



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