

# **STATES OF JERSEY**



## **CENSUSES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF OFFICIAL STATISTICS FOR JERSEY**

---

**Lodged au Greffe on 29th November 2005  
by the Policy and Resources Committee**

---

**STATES GREFFE**

## **PROPOSITION**

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

to refer to their Act dated 6th July 2005, in which they agreed that a census should be held in 2006, to rescind that decision and to agree that the next census should be held in 2011.

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

## REPORT

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In bringing this Report and Proposition to the States now, the Policy and Resources Committee is fully aware that it cannot be debated until 2006, when it will be for the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers to decide whether to proceed with the proposition. However, the Committee wish to provide a clear recommendation to the Council of Ministers and a statement of its position to the House. The Committee also believes that, given the urgency for a decision to be made by the States in the light of the extensive planning period required in order to undertake a census, the early tabling of the Report and Proposition will allow the full time as set out in the House's new Standing Orders should the Chief Minister decide to proceed with the proposition. It will also allow those interested in the topic to discuss it with the Statistics Unit and propose any amendments.
- 1.2 Over the past 18 months Jersey has seen a welcome improvement and expansion in the amount of high quality data available to inform debate. We now have, for the first time, accurate data on the size of the economy and more timely data on the finance sector. At the same time, data are now more accessible via the Statistics Unit website and its new publications.
- 1.3 We also now have an annual estimate of the size of our population. By bringing together data on employment, school age and pre-school children from education and health (all of which are censuses in their own right) and other data, the Statistics Unit now produces an annual estimate of the Island's resident population. This annual measure is as reliable as the census measure, because it is simply the change in the population (a number of hundreds) that needs to be measured and not the whole number (some tens of thousands). Thus, far from hiding information about changes in the size of the population, we are now more informed than previously.
- 1.4 But we still need more timely information, specifically on social issues and on key economic factors such as trade, investment and short-term indicators of economic health. The issue the Head of Statistics faces, therefore, is how best to use the finite professional statistical resources we have in order to further expand statistics.
- 1.5 Running each census costs around half a million pounds. By increasing the interval between censuses to 10 years the States of Jersey could save itself that amount every 10 years. However, simply not doing census is not what is being proposed. Rather by reinvesting some of the money set aside for censuses into more efficient ways of collecting and compiling data we will have more information, and more timely updates of census variables, and still achieve a saving to the States of £300,000.
- 1.6 It is because we need to develop more statistics, have better informed debate and use our resources more efficiently that the Policy and Resources Committee fully supports and recommends to the States the proposal from the Head of Statistics, supported by the independent Statistics Users Group (a statement from SUG is at the Annex attached), to move to a 10 year census cycle, with the next census occurring in 2011.
- 1.7 The position held by the Committee is based on the independent advice of the Head of Statistics, supported by the Statistics Users Group. This independent advice will not change simply because we have a different structure to our government.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Censuses provide, and will continue to provide, a very useful benchmark covering a small number of topics. But censuses, even at a frequency of 5 years, cannot provide data that can quickly identify key changes in our society or economy. To do this we need more timely and more comprehensive data. For example via a census we can know how many cars are owned in Jersey, but through a more detailed annual survey we can understand how and when they are used and what factors influence their use, to help improve our transport planning. Similarly a census will tell us how many people live in a Parish but

an annual survey can inform us about issues that affect them including the determinants of their health, the use they make of public facilities and their views on public services, all of which mean we are better informed to make policy.

- 2.2 That is why the move to 10 year census is needed, as it will enable the re-prioritisation of professional statistical resources towards the development of new annual surveys, greater use of existing administrative data and an enhanced ability to undertake analysis with the data collected, including greater utilisation of census data, than is currently possible.
- 2.3 Moving to 10 yearly censuses means that we will have more information, not less. Such a change will allow the development and annual production of new data sources such as the Jersey Annual Social Survey (JASS) and a new Business Inquiry. JASS will cover the key variables included in the census on the demographic make-up of the population (including age, place of birth, and length of residency), economic activity and household structure. A Business Inquiry will provide vital data on trade and investment. As we face change driven by recently adopted policies, including the Economic Growth Plan, Fiscal reform and Migration, the advantage of having more information on an annual basis is a compelling reason why now is the time to make the change to a 10 yearly census cycle.
- 2.4 Following the decision taken by the States on 6th July 2005, the Statistics Unit held a briefing meeting for all States Members on 3rd October 2005 to discuss the frequency of censuses and the need to develop statistics. At this meeting it was also explained why it was not now possible to run a census in 2006, the earliest feasible date being spring 2007 which, given the need and desire to run a census in 2011, would not be an optimal use of resources. The meeting was unfortunately only attended by 8 States Members, but did include those who had voted in favour and against the proposition to run a census in 2006. However, no-one present raised any arguments against the case as set out by the Head of Statistics. The case, which the Policy and Resources Committee believes provides a compelling case to move to 10 year censuses, is outlined below.

### **3. Frequency of censuses and the development of statistics**

- 3.1 In considering the frequency of censuses it is important to remember how the provision of statistics has developed in Jersey. Looking back 20 years or so, there is little doubt that, given the lack of other sources of information, a 5 yearly census was vital to have even the smallest insight into social issues. But through better use of technology, utilising administrative data and the application of sound statistical techniques, there are now better means of providing comprehensive data than relying on expensive and resource intensive censuses.
- 3.2 The development of survey methodology over the past few decades has been one of the biggest changes in the field of statistics. It has meant that rather than having to ask everyone the same question, it is possible to get accurate results by asking a sample of the population. Sample surveys have the advantage of being easier and quicker to run and can lead to results in a much shorter space of time. For example, the Statistics Unit plan to publish results of the 2005 JASS survey in February 2006 (4 months after running the survey), compared to the last census report being published over 18 months after census day. Moving to 10 year censuses will allow resources to be better focussed into sample surveys, to provide the timely information that is required.
- 3.3 Of course the results of a survey are only as good as the sample from which they are derived; this is why the Island has a professional team of statisticians to undertake such work. By running surveys such as the Household Expenditure Survey the Statistics Unit has developed a range of tools and approaches which mean that hard to reach elements of our community, such as live-in farm and hotel workers, have been included. Survey results will therefore be more comprehensive and future surveys even more inclusive.
- 3.4 The central argument in proposing that we move to 10 year census is to ensure we are better informed this means ensuring that our professional statisticians can provide us with the information that we need. The Social Survey is proving to be a great success with a response rate of over 50%; a rate which the

Committee is informed is very good for a voluntary postal survey. But the real value from the Social Survey comes from the fact that it can be repeated: to update topics covered this year (for example, providing us with a full internationally comparable measurement of unemployment and economic activity annually rather than every 5 years); to cover new topics; and, crucially, that the data collected are used for cross-analyses so as to better understand the effect of policy intervention and of policy interactions. If the Statistics Unit were to run a census prior to 2011 such work would not be possible and the Island will remain in the situation where, too often, decisions are taken in an information vacuum.

3.5 Coupled to the development of social statistics by survey will be a parallel initiative to make more use of the wealth of administrative data already existing in the Island. As indicated previously, health and education data already play an important role in the annual estimate of the total resident population, whilst aggregate data held by the Employment and Social Security Department can be used for monitoring structural changes in age and gender profiles and of migration flows.

3.6 Whilst much of the focus of the debate about the frequency of censuses is focused on social data, it is vital to acknowledge that Jersey still needs far more economic data if we are to really understand developments and changes in our economy. We are a trading island but have no trade data; we know next to nothing about investment; and we have no information on short-term economic variables such as retail sales.

3.7 From the perspective of economic statistics, moving to a 10 year census cycle will also enable professional statistical resources to be devoted to addressing current gaps in this area. Last year, the Statistics Unit developed a methodology, based on international standards, for determining the magnitude of economic activity in Jersey, overall and by sector. The next step in this regard will be the introduction of a Business Inquiry to facilitate a deeper understanding of the Island's economy and the development of a more comprehensive framework of National Accounts.

3.8 The development of economic statistics is the mechanism for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the policies for economic growth encapsulated by the Strategic Plan and detailed in the Economic Growth Plan.

3.9 One way of meeting the need for additional and more timely data would be to devote additional resources to statistics. However, since the debate of 6th July 2005 no-one has put forward a suggestion as to from where any additional resources should come. Therefore, we have to face the fact that in order to improve our understanding of the issues described above we need to re-prioritise our main statistical resource, i.e. the statisticians we employ, and allow them to move to a 10 year census cycle and to use the resulting freed resources to develop new sources of information.

#### **4. Practicalities of undertaking a census**

4.1 Running a census is not a simple task. It is not merely a case of taking the form used last time and re-issuing it. Following such an approach without proper planning would simply result in a very incomplete picture and half a million pounds being wasted.

4.2 Running a census means collecting information from everyone in the Island. To achieve this requires accurate information on where everyone lives, forms which are clear and easily understood by all members of our population, which will include translations, a large team of around 250 trained enumerators, as well as appropriate IT infrastructure to capture and analyse the data. In short, it takes around 18 months to plan and run an effective census.

4.3 Another requirement, especially due to the seasonal nature of Jersey's employment and thus population, is that censuses are run each time at about the same time of the year, normally in March. Starting in July 2005 it would not have been possible to run a census in March 2006. The earliest a census can now be run is March 2007. However, given the need to run a census in 2011, when there will be a need to provide an updated benchmark from 2001 and, furthermore, it will be when the UK, Guernsey, other EU countries and most other OECD countries will be running censuses, it is hard to see how a 2007 census will be

anything other than a non-optimal use of money and resources. Indeed running a census in 2007 will simply mean resources will not be available to produce the timely economic and social data that we need.

## **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 The Policy and Resources Committee recommends that the next Jersey Census should take place in 2011. This move will not result in any loss of accuracy in the recording of population statistics. However, it will allow statistical resources to be devoted to gathering more meaningful and up-to-date information which will improve our understanding of fundamental social and economic issues. Conducting the next Jersey Census in 2011, coupled with new annual surveys, makes real the principle of robust data providing the basis for evidence-based policy development.
- 5.2 Conducting a census in 2006 is now no longer possible due to the substantial amount of work that is required to plan and undertake a census, whilst a census in 2007 will result in the new initiatives ceasing and hence will result in the loss of the timely information necessary for informed policy making. The Policy and Resources Committee, therefore, fully supports and recommends the proposition to conduct a Census in 2011.

## **6. Financial and manpower implications**

- 6.1 Running a census in both 2007 and in 2011 will require additional funding of £500,000 over the period 2010 to 2012. By not running a census until 2011, but refocusing £200,000 on statistical work over 5 years, to ensure that many census variables are updated annually and that the totality of information available is vastly improved, will result in a real saving to the States of £300,000. This amount could then be carried forward to go a long way to meeting the costs of the 2011 census and thus substantially reduce the need for additional funding in the future. The latter proposal was approved as part of the Policy and Resources carry forward by the Finance and Economics Committee on 14th April 2005. However, following the States decision of 6th July 2005 this agreement has not been implemented and none of the money allocated to the 2006 census has been used for other statistical work.
- 6.2 Running a census requires around 250 staff. Around 230 enumerators and supervisors would be employed for around a month, 18 office staff for a period of 3 to 4 months and 2 full-time census officers for a period of 18 months to 2 years.

## STATISTICS USER GROUP

### Statement on the Proposed Census

The Statistics User Group (the independent advisory group on official statistics) wishes to express its concern about the recent decision of the States to proceed with a five-yearly census against the recommendation of the States of Jersey Statistics Unit which is to move to a ten-yearly cycle for censuses. This matter has been considered in some detail by the User Group.

By way of background the Statistics Unit, like all States departments, undertook an exercise earlier this year to identify possible areas for efficiency improvements in the context of tight budgetary controls and increasing demands from users for new series and for more comprehensive and timely data. It identified the census planned for 2006 as a potential saving. The cost of running the census is around £500,000 and nowadays much of the information it provides can be derived from less onerous surveys – indeed, such surveys can provide more detailed and relevant information than the census itself. Because of their universal scope, census responses inevitably provide relatively low-level information rather than sophisticated data. Targeted surveys can also be conducted more frequently, so that socio-economic trend changes (for example in population profile) and other developments can be identified swiftly.

In particular, to supplement the information yielded by the census, the Statistics Unit has developed an annual household survey and a bi-annual business survey. The data derived from these surveys will be of major importance to States departments as well as to users in the business community, but the funding is dependant on moving to ten-yearly from five-yearly censuses and thus freeing up the resources previously committed to collecting and collating census data.

Ten-yearly censuses are now the norm in almost all jurisdictions. Few run five-yearly censuses because of the heavy resource commitment and the corresponding diversion from other work, and because nowadays the relevant information can be extrapolated from other sources. The Statistics User Group represents a broad range of business and other interests committed to achieving the best possible range and quality of statistics within the resources available. Having considered the various arguments, the User Group unanimously agreed at its 5th April meeting to back the Statistics Unit proposal (minutes of this meeting can be found on the Unit's website [www.gov.je/statistics](http://www.gov.je/statistics)). At a further meeting on 26th July the members expressed their unanimous concern about the States decision to hold a census next year, and its potential impact on the resourcing of other statistical work.

We therefore urge the States to reconsider its position on the timing of the next census. We understand that in any case it would not now be possible because of other commitments to run the census until 2007 at the earliest but even that would cause considerable disruption to the planned work of the Statistics Unit. We therefore strongly support the proposed deferral of the census to 2011.