

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE CHIEF MINISTER
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER
QUESTION SUBMITTED ON TUESDAY 6th APRIL 2021
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 13th APRIL 2021**

Question

“Will the Chief Minister advise when the report on relative poverty in Jersey will be published by Statistics Jersey to replace, or update, the previous report entitled ‘Jersey Household Income Distribution 2014/2015’, given the need for such information to inform planning for 2022?”

Answer

As members have previously been advised, the 2019/20 round of the Household Living Costs and Income Survey (formerly the Household Spending and Income Survey) commenced in July 2019 and was due to run continuously over the subsequent twelve-month period to July 2020.

However, the developing Covid-19 situation led the Chief Statistician to decide to pause the fieldwork (data-gathering) in March 2020, with a view to re-starting when on-Island conditions were appropriate.

On the basis of information received from the then Chief Statistician, it was anticipated that the results of the analysis of the household income data collected during the pre-Covid nine-month period from July 2019 to March 2020 would be published in Q4 2020.

The Chief Minister subsequently consulted with the Chief Statistician on more than one occasion during Q4 as to the intended date of publication for the 2019/2020 Income Distribution Survey and relayed the results of these meetings to Members on 6/10/2020, 9/11/2020 and 17/11/20.

The summary of the position given to the Chief Minister was that Statistics Jersey intended for the 2019/2020 Income Distribution Survey to be published within Q4 2020.

Unfortunately, Statistics Jersey were unable to confirm a specific date within Q4 2020 as they were still in the process of validating the data which had been accumulated and would only be able to give a response once they were satisfied the analysis was complete.

As Members will be aware, Statistics Jersey is an apolitical body formally constituted under the Statistics and Census (Jersey) Law 2018. Under Article 7(2) of this Law “The (Chief) Minister must not influence any decision of the Chief Statistician in the exercise of his or her responsibilities under Article 3(1)”. Article 3(1) of the Law includes “(g) the form, timing and methods of dissemination of statistics compiled by Statistics Jersey”.

It has recently been clarified to the Chief Minister that only 500 responses had been received by March 2020, a smaller sample size than expected. It had been anticipated to achieve 100 household responses per month from the date of commencement of the fieldwork. As a result of the low response rate, an additional recruitment drive to increase the fieldworker force was undertaken to ensure that the target of 1,000 households could still be met by the summer of 2020. However, progress was subsequently thwarted because of Covid-19 restrictions.

The sample size taken (500) is considered by Statistic Jersey as being an insufficient sample to give granular detail or to provide a full Income and Expenditure report. By way of comparison, the sample size for the 2014/15 fieldwork was 1,250 households. It should be clear, however, that Statistics Jersey do intend to use the data that is available to provide some high-level information on household income distribution and

relative low income in Jersey prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic. This work will be undertaken as soon as resources in Statistics Jersey allow, following the peak of the 2021 Census operations work.

Recognising the need for information on household income distribution, including detail on households and people living in relative low income, Statistics Jersey now plan to restart the income and expenditure survey fieldwork from September 2021. The preferred option under consideration is to arrange the sampling in such a way that work can be concluded to enable a report on household income distribution (and relative low income) to then be available around June 2022 and in time for the production of the next CSP.

The Chief Minister anticipates the view of the Deputy to this news, and indeed shares a similar level of disappointment, albeit recognising that this is due to the extraordinary circumstances created by the Pandemic.