

Happy Birthday to Stats M



Did you know that Stats M saw the day on 1 July 1945? How about the circumstances underlying its creation? Here's the story of our office.

Stats M was initially known as the Statistical Bureau. It was set up following a recommendation made by the "Commission of Enquiry into the disturbances which occurred in the North of Mauritius". At that time, the Office was staffed with eight persons and was located in the Town Hall of the Municipality of Beau Bassin / Rose-Hill.

Sixty seven years on, the office is now staffed with nearly 200 officers, of whom 42 are professionals. Most staff work at the head office at L.I.C. Building in John Kennedy Street, Port-Louis and 45 are posted in some 15 ministries/departments where they provide services in statistical matters.

What about the statistical outputs? Initially, official statistics were published in a "Yearbook of Statistics" which first appeared in 1946. Presently, in 2012 Stats M is disseminating its data through 18 Digests of Statistics, 67 issues of Economic and Social Indicators covering 26 subject areas and the pocket-sized publication 'Mauritius in Figures' as well as some ad hoc reports. In addition, data dissemination is done through the website of the office, created in July 2001. The website is a showcase of the office's statistical outputs which can be accessed free of charge by users.

Concerning legislation governing the activities of the office, the first Statistics Act was first passed in 1951. In 2000, it was replaced by a modern 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. Further improvements followed in August 2011 when the Statistics Act 2000 was amended to include, among others, the setting up of the Statistics Board whose function is to approve, coordinate and monitor statistical programmes of producers of official statistics as well as promote and protect the integrity of official statistics including professional independence. August 2011, was also the date when the office got its current name of **Statistics Mauritius**.

On 28 February 2012, thanks to the efforts of Stats M together with Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED), Bank of Mauritius (BOM), Financial Services Commission (FSC) and Stock Exchange of Mauritius (SEM), IMF recognized our good practices in terms of

- data coverage, periodicity and timeliness;
- public access to those data;
- data integrity; and
- data quality.

The country then graduated to the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS) and joined the elite group of 70 countries that made it to the SDDS; it was the 2nd Sub-Saharan country after South Africa to subscribe to the SDDS.

Other milestones of the office include:

- the conduct of the first Housing and Population Census by the office in 1952;
- the conduct of the first Household Budget Survey in 1961;
- the conduct of the first Census of Economic Activities in 1985;
- the development of the National Strategy for the development of Statistics in 2006.

Narain Lalljee, the 'doyen' of Stats M recalls:

"When I joined office 40 years back, all data were compiled manually but today all staff work on a computer. The volume of work has considerably increased, more statistical outputs are now produced and they are timelier. I'm also happy that people are now more aware of statistics."

And last but not least, Aimee Cheung, Stats M director, has the following to say:

"It's undeniable that we have made significant progress since our office was created. This is thanks to a dedicated staff under the strong leadership of various directors. However, we must not rest our laurels, there are many challenges ahead. We need to build capacity to measure the complex social and economic phenomena brought about by globalisation. We need to address the issue of respondent burden and make efforts to put in place a reliable Business and Population Register. Our dissemination and communication practices have to be revamped and we have to make efforts to keep pace with developments in IT to become a modern Stats office responsive to users' needs."