



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ECONOMICS AND STATISTICS OFFICE

February 2023



The Economics and Statistics Office

1. Introduction

The ESO is the national statistics office of the Cayman Islands in accordance with its mandate set in the Statistics Act (2016 Revision). It is also the advisory arm of the Government on all matters relating to the collection and dissemination of statistics and economic development of the Cayman Islands and produces economic forecasts as required in the Public Management and Financial Act (2020 Revision).

The ESO is also mandated to coordinate the development of the whole country's statistical system through the National Statistical Coordination Committee.

Like all national statistical offices all over the world, the ESO adheres to the United Nations (UN) Fundamental Principles of Statistics and strives to develop, adopt and implement methodologies, statistical standards, classification systems, and data dissemination standards consistent with those issued by the UN Statistical Commission and its international affiliate organizations including the International Monetary Fund.

In addition to the CIG, ESO also provides information to the general public and global users of the Cayman Islands' socio-economic data through its website, www.eso.ky, or through special requests.

The ESO represents the Cayman Islands in the CARICOM through the Caribbean Chief Statisticians' Standing Committee. It also coordinates with the Economic Commission for America and Latin America (ECLAC) and Caribbean Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC), and UN agencies in regional initiatives.

This document presents the milestones in the development of the ESO over the years.

2. Background

Economic and statistical reporting in the early years

The very first official statistics on the Cayman Islands was the 1802 census, which was conducted by Edward Corbet, a staff aide to the Governor of Jamaica, Lieutenant General George Nugent. At that time, Corbet recorded 933 residents on Grand Cayman, including 545 slaves. He reported that the sister islands of Cayman Brac and Little Cayman were uninhabited, being visited only by turtlers during the summer season.

As a dependency of Jamaica, experts were brought from Kingston to conduct statistical and economic surveys. With the launch of the West Indian Federation in 1959, Cayman ceased to be a dependency of Jamaica and gained its own constitution. During the intervening years, assistance came mainly from the British Development Division in the Caribbean, based in Barbados.

Creation of the Portfolio of Finance

In 1955, the Treasury Department was created from what was previously the Department of Treasury, Customs and Post Office. Mr. Desmond V. Watler was appointed as Cayman's first Treasurer, with Mr. Vassel G. Johnson as Assistant Treasurer.

In 1969, the title of Treasurer was changed to Financial Secretary. Under the new constitution that came into effect in 1972, the Financial Secretary, Mr. Vassel G. Johnson, became an official member of the Executive Council (Cabinet) with responsibilities for the following areas: Treasury, Savings Bank, Currency Board, Companies Registry, Bank Inspection, Development Unit, Exchange Control, Budget, and later Insurance, Statistics and Computers.

3. Evolution of the Economics & Statistics Office

Statistics Section

It was not until 1976 that the Statistics Unit was established in the Portfolio of Finance with Mr. Ned Solomon, Executive Officer and Ms Carolyn Cupidon, Clerical Officer. In 1977, Mr. James A. Hunter was appointed as Sr. Assistant Secretary in the Portfolio of Finance with responsibility for Development and Statistics. The total staff complement at that time was five (5), including the vacant post of Executive Officer.

On the 22nd October 1983, Mr. Graham Jones was seconded by the United Kingdom Statistical Services to become Cayman's first resident Statistician. His successor was Mr. Phillip Turnbull (1985-1990), whose post was upgraded to Chief Statistician in 1989.

Other Chief Statisticians included Mrs. Penny Bassett (1990 -1992), Mr. Brian Boxill (1992-2003), Mr. Christian Lajule (2003 - 2004), Mr. Ronnie Andersson (2007-2009), Mrs. Elizabeth Talbert (2009 - 2015) and Mr. Adolphus Laidlow (2015 - 2019).

Economics Section

In 1986, Mr. D. M. Scott was recruited through the British Executive Services Overseas (BESO) as a short-term Economic Development Advisor. On a more permanent basis, Mr. Rudyard Robinson was appointed as Chief Economist and served in that capacity from 1988 to 1993. He was followed by Mr. Lyndon Martin, who served as Assistant Economist between 1993 and 1995.

Between 1995 and 2000, the Economics & Statistics Office was created with Mr. Brian Boxill as Director and Dr. Elizabeth Parsan as Deputy Director responsible for Economics. The Economics section was separated from Statistics in 2000 and was headed by Dr. Parsan until 2003. The Economics & Statistics Office was finally reconstituted in 2003 under the Directorship of Ms. Catharine Read and with Mr. Christian Lajule as Chief Statistician.

ESO Reorganization in 2007

In 2007, the expansion of the Statistics Section started under a new Director (Maria Zingapan). From a unit of four staff members (Michael Godfrey and Narnia Ebanks for trade statistics; and Nicole Emmanuel Jones and Juliette Wright for consumer price index and labour force surveys), key staff members were hired from outside of Cayman to comprise the System of National Accounts (Yvonne Newland and Selburn Christian from Jamaica and Theodore Thompson from Guyana). Julietta Beaupierre from Dominica also came to head the Balance of Payments Unit, which also comprised Michael Godfrey and Narnia Ebanks. By this time, the Statistics Section evolved into 3 Units - SNA Unit; BOP Unit and the Social Statistics Unit.

The Social Statistics Unit was initially comprised of the then current staff for the consumer price index and labor force surveys, a Statistician 1 (Daisylyn Chin from Jamaica) along with eight (8) enumerators, coders and editors who were recruited locally - Ivan McLean, Cherry Watt, Elena Calzado, Sharon Crawford, Herbert Mitchell, Marcia Robinson, Gregory Watt and George Jones. Ivan McLean has since joined the SNA Unit.

The Economics Unit was initially comprised of three local economists, Shanna Best, Cassandra Connolly and Lidka Scott. This Unit was strengthened by the arrival of Adolphus Laidlow recruited from St. Vincent and the Grenadines as Senior Economist in 2006.

In 2010, the first Senior Statistician for Social Statistician (Crispin Boney) came on board. In 2012, a Statistician III post was added, which was taken by Travis Walters, who was previously an enumerator, coder and editor. As of the end of 2012, the position of enumerators, coders and editors comprised 6 Caymanians - Cherry Watt, Sharon Crawford, Elena Calzado, Vern Mejia, Erika Watler and



Sherlock Farrington.

4. The Statistics Law

A Statistics Law was passed in March of 1970 to replace Law 14 of 1967, which became obsolete as the Cayman Islands separated from Jamaica. It gave legal backing to the census conducted later that year. Despite the successful passage of this Law, the community at large was concerned about Government's increasing need for information. These fears were heightened when the government started looking into the cost of living. Of particular concern was the invasion of privacy. This was echoed in Hon. Annie H. Bodden's address in the Legislative Assembly on 1 May 1970:

...I opposed the Law, not the part of the Census taking, but I opposed the Law which gave the authority to go into a man's or woman's private residence and search up what they know, and also as to their income, what they spent, how much they made, and so on. Now I feel that a part of this Law is a good Law, and my resolution is that the Law be re-examined, not done away with, I'm not advocate that.¹

The Financial Secretary explained why it was important to collect the various economic and social statistics. Key users such as developers and investors were surprised at the lack of information on the economy.

The Statistical Law was revised in 1996. The law is referred to as Statistics Law (1996 Revision). It was amended in August 2010 to expand the coverage of data collection to include those required for the System of National Accounts and the Balance of Payments, update fines for non-compliance, mandate the annual issuance of a Statistical Publication and Dissemination Calendar, and make explicit reference to ESO as the statistics unit under the Ministry of Finance.

In November 2011, the 1996 Revision and the Statistics Law (2010 Amendment) were consolidated into the Statistics Law (2011 Revision) and further amended to Statistical Act (2016 Revision).

¹ Ulf Hannerz, Caymanian Politics: "Structure and Style in a Changing Island Society" in Stockholm Studies in Social Anthropology – 1 (Department of Social Anthropology, University of Stockholm, 1974) 155

5. Development of Statistics

The first statistical activity on record in the Cayman Islands is the 1802 Population Census. Subsequently, censuses were conducted in 1891, 1911, 1921, 1931, 1943, 1960, 1970, 1979, 1989, 1999, 2010 and 2021.

The first household expenditure survey was in 1991, while the first Labour Force Survey was conducted in 1992. The second household survey was in 2007 in conjunction with the first Survey of Living Conditions. The latter was conducted as part of the National Assessment of Living Conditions project of the Ministry of Health and Human Resources with funding support from the Caribbean Development Bank.

In 2008, the first Annual National Accounts Survey covering all establishments listed in the Business Register and government agencies was conducted. Subsequently, the first System of National Accounts Report based on product accounts was published in 2009. The first income accounts report was published in 2011. Additionally, the first Supply and Use Tables (SUT) was produced in

In 2009, the first Balance of Payments (Current Account) Report was published; this was based on secondary data. In 2010, the first Balance of Payments Survey for all establishments in the Business Register with transactions abroad was performed. Subsequent BOP (Current Account) Reports were based on the Survey and secondary data.

In 2011, the first Annual Publication and Dissemination Calendar was prepared in accordance with the Statistics (2010 Amendment) Law.

6. ESO Leadership

The following persons have headed the economics and statistical agencies since their inception¹:

Ned Solomon	1976 -1977	Executive Officer, Statistics Unit
James A Hunter	1977 - 1979	Sr. Assistant Secretary, Development & Statistics Unit
Edward Solomon	1979 - 1980	Higher Executive Officer, Development & Statistics Unit
Susan Toole	1980 - 1981	Higher Executive Officer, Development & Statistics Unit
Carolyn Cupidon	1981 - 1982	Executive Officer, Statistics & Information System
Carolyn Cupidon-Ebanks	1982 - 1984	Assistant Statistician, Statistics Unit
Graham Jones	1983 - 1985	Statistician, Development & Statistics Unit
Phillip Turnbull	1985 - 1989	Statistician, Statistics Unit
D. M. Scott	1986	Economic Development Advisor, British Executive Services Overseas (BESO)
Phillip Turnbull	1989 - 1990	Chief Statistician, Statistics Office
Rudyard L. Robinson	1988-1993	Chief Economist, Portfolio of Finance & Development
Penny Bassett	1990 - 1992	Chief Statistician, Statistics Office
Bryan Boxill	1992 - 2000	Chief Statistician, Statistics Office
Lyndon Martin	1993 - 1995	Assistant Economist, Portfolio of Finance & Development
Bryan Boxill	1995 - 2000	Director, Economics & Statistics Office
Dr. Elizabeth Parsan	1995 - 2000	Deputy Director, Economics & Statistics Office
Bryan Boxill	2000 - 2003	Chief Statistician, Statistics Office
Dr. Elizabeth Parsan	2000 - 2003	Director Economic Research Unit
Catherine Read	2003 - 2004	Director, Economics & Statistics Office
Christian Lajule	2003 - 2004	Chief Statistician, Economics & Statistics Office

Stran Bodden	2005	Acting Director, Economics and Statistics Office
Michael Godfrey	Jan to March 2006	Acting Director, Economics and Statistics Office
Maria Zingapan	April 2006 - 2019	Director, Economics and Statistics Office
Ronnie Andersson	Oct 2007 - August 2009	Deputy Director and Chief Statistician, Economics & Statistics Office
Elizabeth Talbert	August 2009 - 2015	Deputy Director and Chief Statistician, Economics & Statistics Office
Adolphus Laidlow	2015-June 2019	Deputy Director and Chief Statistician, Economics & Statistics Office
Adolphus Laidlow	June 2019-Present	Director, Economics and Statistics Office

¹The persons listed include the most senior person within the office at the time.