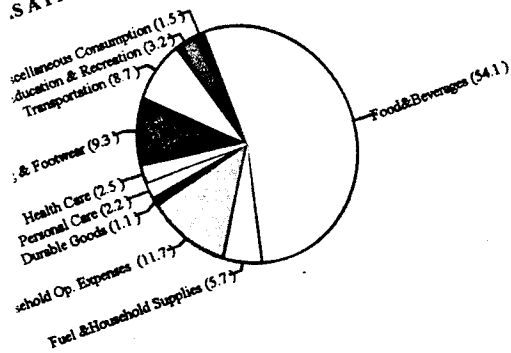
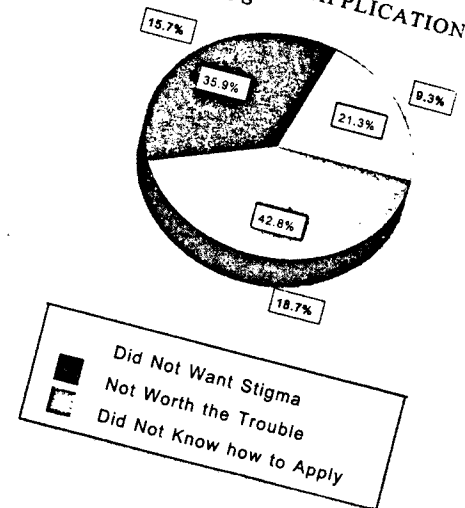


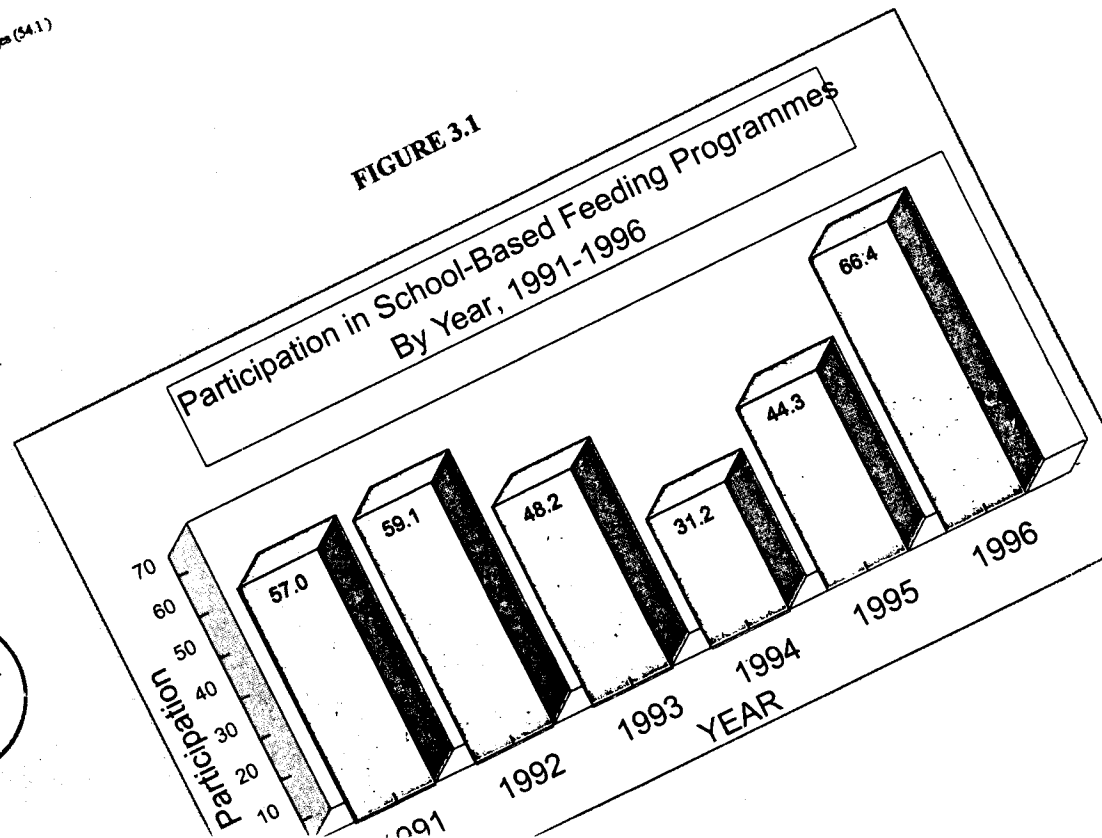
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# **JAMAICA SURVEY OF LIVING CONDITIONS**

## **REPORT 1996**

**A Joint Publication of  
The Statistical Institute of Jamaica  
*and*  
The Planning Institute of Jamaica**

**September 1997**

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# JAMAICA SURVEY OF LIVING CONDITIONS

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## Preface

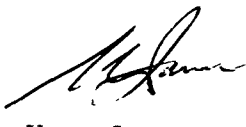
Since its inception in 1988, the data made available by the Survey of Living Conditions have provided an important measure of the manner in which household welfare is affected by the macro-economic policies associated with structural adjustment. The survey gleans household data from a subset of the sample covered by the Labour Force Survey. Information is collected on consumption, health, anthropometrics (children 0-59 months), education, nutrition, housing, demographic characteristics, and the Food Stamp Programme. The data continue to be of vital importance to the formulation of the Government's social policies, and in particular, the targeting and impact-monitoring of the Poverty Eradication Programme.

The 1996 Report presents an analysis of the findings of the survey. In addition to the perspectives mentioned above, this survey collected data on Child Fostering in Jamaica and Customer Satisfaction with Health Services. These additional modules will be analysed in separate working papers.

Gratitude is owed to the Ministries of Health, Education, Youth and Culture, and Labour, Social Security and Sports, the University of the West Indies (Mona), and the World Bank for their contributions to the publication of the report. In addition, the co-operation of the households which participated in the survey is greatly appreciated.

The SLC is a joint effort of the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN).

  
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Director General  
The Planning Institute  
of Jamaica  
September 1997

  
Vernon James  
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September 1997

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This year, the main writers of the chapters are due special mention for the effort to improve the document. These writers are:

Overview	- Dr. Vanus James
Demography	- Mrs. Dawn Johns-Gordon
Household Consumption	- Mr. Hubert Sherrard
Education	- Mrs. Heather Ricketts
Health	- Ms. Anne Marie Chandler/Dr. Andrea Ricketts
Foodstamp Programme	- Mr. Warren Benfield
Housing	- Ms. Pauline McHardy

Computer programming/Data management with Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) was done by Mrs. Karren Goulbourne of the Policy Development Unit.

The support staff of the Policy Development Unit made its usual valuable contribution: Mr. Joseph Richards (Accounting/Administration); Lynthia Henderson and Sophia Jarrett (Secretarial).

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# Overview

## BACKGROUND

This 1996 report on the tenth round of the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) is a continuation of the series of reports providing data on conditions in Jamaica relating to demography, consumption, education, health, nutrition, housing (including utilities) and participation in selected welfare programmes. It describes living conditions in Jamaica in 1996 in particular, and from 1989 to 1996 in general.

The present document is the twelfth SLC report to date.<sup>1</sup> It corresponds to Round 10 of the Survey (May 1996) and is a Combined descriptive report and Standard Tables.

In-depth studies have been conducted on various aspects of the SLC data collected over the year. Further information on the availability of the output from these studies, including those based on the 1996 data, may be obtained from the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

In each round of the survey, with the exception of the first two, a particular sector or area of concern was selected for focus and expanded treatment. The areas of focus in Round 10 were (i) Child Fostering in Jamaica and (ii) Consumer Satisfaction with Health Services.<sup>2</sup>

The Child Fostering Module was designed to capture information on the extent of the practice of 'fostering out' of children as a cultural norm within the society. It sought data on the reasons some children lived in 'other' households and on the characteristics of their parents. The module asked questions of both the household whose child was being fostered elsewhere and the household in which the foster child lived.

The other Special Module (Expanded Health) sought information from the consumers' perspective on the quality of health care services offered in the public and private health system. It also looked at the perceptions regarding

the attitude of care-givers and the cost of health care.

Analysis of the Special Modules is usually undertaken in separate working papers and the data sets are generally available to social researchers and policy makers. Further information on these modules can be obtained from the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

### Survey Sample

In 1996, the Survey continued to utilize the multi-stage stratified random sampling method to select dwellings and households in each Enumeration District (ED). The direct interviewer method is the basis for response and incentives are given to interviewers based on the number of completed questionnaires.

To facilitate linkage and integrated analysis of the data collected, the sample dwellings for the Survey of Living Conditions (SLC) are selected as a random sub-set of the sample for the immediately preceding Labour Force Survey (LFS). Thus, one-third of the LFS sample dwellings were covered in SLC 88, SLC 89-1, SLC 90 and SLC 91, SLC 93, SLC 94 and SLC 95; and two-thirds of the LFS sample dwellings in SLC 89-2. To provide parish estimates in SLC 92, all LFS samples in ten parishes and two-thirds of the samples in Kingston, St. Andrew, Clarendon and St. Catherine were covered. Since 1992, no similar efforts have been made to facilitate parish estimates.

In the Labour Force Survey conducted in April 1996, the sample comprised 468 EDs drawn from 234 sampling regions, with 16 dwellings selected from each ED, a total of 7,488. For the SLC 96, conducted in May 1996, 78 sampling regions were selected from the 234 sampling regions using circular systematic sampling with equal probability of choosing each candidate starting region. From each selected sampling region, two EDs and 32 dwellings were chosen following the method of the April LFS. Thus,

the sample for SLC 96 covered 2,496 dwellings.

In this context, it may be noted that the sample of 78 sampling regions were selected from all the 234 sampling regions in the country for SLC 93 to SLC 96, unlike some of the previous rounds in which the sampling regions were selected separately from each parish giving rise to rounding off errors in the parish proportions. Thus, in SLC 93 to SLC 96, no weighting will be necessary at the parish level to take account of the differences in sampling fractions.

Non-response usually results from refusals, closed and vacant dwellings, and data rejected in the cleaning process. The non-response rate for the 1996 Survey was 24.2 per cent, of which 7.9 per cent were refusals. This refusal rate was the third lowest recorded over the lifetime of the Survey. Only one questionnaire was rejected, so the remaining 16.3 per cent were the results of closed and vacant dwellings.

Non-response re-weighting of the data was done for some EDs where violence made canvassing difficult or impossible. The usual adjustment for non-response is the construction of raising factors for EDs where this occurred.

The methodology for the 1996 Survey remained sound and consistent with international standards and with practice over the years.

### **In this Report**

In the text of the descriptive chapters, references to lettered tables, e.g. Table A-1, indicate the Standard Tables while references to numbered tables, e.g. Table 2.1, indicate those formulated for and included in the chapters themselves.

Differences between values which are reported as being statistically significant have all been tested at the 0.95 level of significance. The data analysis was conducted with continued caution in the use of standard errors for significance testing, particularly where the sample size was too small to facilitate sound inference.

With 8 years of panel data available, this Report presents a fairly extensive evaluation of variations and trends in living conditions since the Survey was first fielded in 1988 and their implications for social policy. In many instances, however, problems of availability of data limit comparison to the years 1990 to 1996. Interpretation of the data is usually guided by the idea that the utility obtained from consumption is taken as the main indicator of human welfare, so a reduction in household expenditure is interpreted as a reduction in household welfare. However, this is supplemented by other indicators of well-being such

as the conditions in health, housing, and education as indexed by schooling. In principle, improvements in all or most of these conditions would signal improvement in the general well-being of the society, with the greatest weight usually given to improvements in real consumption expenditure.

This basic interpretation is tempered by the knowledge that current reductions in consumption (that is saving) might be made deliberately by households or engineered by public policy with expectations of some reward in the future. The freed-up resources could be used to improve education, health, and other social infrastructure which collectively tend to boost the reliability, accuracy and speed of work, as well as to facilitate private investment, all for economic expansion, increased consumption and general welfare in the future. Thus, in contrast to the other SLC indicators, changes in real consumption levels cannot be interpreted independently of changes in investment or investment potential. Especially important here would be information on the types of households which save and invest, and the extent to which the investment is proceeding in sectors in which the country has, or is creating, a competitive advantage.

The SLC provides indicators of some aspects of changing investment and investment potential through its analysis of education, health and housing. Data on other aspects, such as the loci of private saving and capital formation, must be sought elsewhere.

## **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

### **Demography**

The demographics of the country were very stable in 1996 and, generally, over the period 1990 to 1996. Continuing the pattern observed since 1990, mean household size (which had fallen dramatically between 1975 and 1990) tended to remain constant for the country and all the major subgroups analyzed with SLC data.

The proportions of households with 2-4 members and 5 or more members also tended to hold constant between 1995 and 1996 and for the decade to date, while the average household size remained at 3.8 persons, comprising 1.2 adult males, 1.3 adult females and 1.3 children. Mean household size remained largest in the Rural Areas, 4.0 members, while in the KMA and Other Towns it was 3.7 members. Single member households continued to be more evident in the wealthiest quintile at 40.8 per cent and the two poorest quintiles generally continued to have higher percentages of households with 5 or more members. The

mean household size of quintiles 1, 2 and 3, the quintiles which either contained the poor or households in the neighborhood of poverty, was approximately 5 in 1996 and has been at this level since 1990. Moreover, more than 70.0 per cent of households in these quintiles also tended to have households with more than 4 members. In contrast, less than 40.0 per cent of households in quintiles 4 and 5 had more than 4 members.

There was also no significant change in the distribution of households by gender of head. Approximately 43.8 per cent of households were headed by females, not significantly different to the figures for 1995 and 1994, and females continued to head households which were generally of a larger mean size with more adult women and children than those which were headed by males. Further, as was found in all the earlier rounds of the Survey, the proportion of households with females as head was highest in the poorest quintile and lowest in the wealthiest. When compared to male-headed households, a higher proportion of female-headed households also resided in the urban areas of the country and were among all age groups 55 years and over. The higher percentage of female-headed households among the elderly might be explained in part by the longer life expectancy of females.

The distribution of single gender households was much the same as when documented by the SLC for the first time in 1995. The significant findings on this variable are still that a smaller percentage of households contained only females, with 6.8 per cent of these being single member households, and that single member households were predominant in the two wealthiest quintiles.

With respect to the distribution of all respondents by region and consumption quintile, the pattern found in all Surveys continued to prevail with the Rural Areas having the largest proportions of respondents in the two poorest quintiles and the KMA having a majority in the wealthiest.

The more detailed analysis done in 1996 revealed an emerging tendency for the population to age moderately. Between 1995 and 1996, there were only random variations in the percentage of persons in all age groups. The working population (15-64 years) was approximately 56.7 per cent of the population, not significantly different from that of 1995 and indeed not significantly different from the fraction for any year since 1991. At first glance, the data seemed to indicate that the fraction of the working population in the KMA declined significantly over the year, but this in not so since almost all of the change can be explained by higher non-response mostly due to violent events in the KMA during the survey period.

However, since 1991, the proportion of individuals 65 years and over has increased slowly from 7.3 per cent of the population in 1991 to 7.7 per cent in 1995 and 8.1 per cent in 1996, and is the fastest growing segment of the population at 2.0 per cent per year. The share of the aged in the total population also continued to be highest in Rural Areas for both males and females, as did the share of children 0-14 years.

A useful basis for evaluating the extent of the socioeconomic challenge created by aging is the old age dependency ratio which defines the ratio of the elderly population to the population in the optimal economically productive ages of 15-64 years. With a constant fraction in the working population, the old age dependency ratio increased correspondingly from 12.7 in 1991 to 14.3 in 1996.

The emerging tendency for the population to age requires some careful recalibration of programmes to meet the needs of a growing population 65 years and above, most of whom are generally unable to support themselves fully on their retirement incomes. Nevertheless, there is no immediate imperative for this to occur through a shift of resources from efforts to prepare the young for gainful employment. In the final analysis, an adequately prepared and economically more productive population of working age is the surest way to improve the living standard of a growing population of dependent elderly persons.

The findings on various aspects of the size distribution of households suggest that in the design of social policy, especially poverty policy, it was appropriate in 1996 to continue using the social standard of the mean food-nonfood consumption structure to estimate the poverty multiplier and the household size of 5 to estimate the minimum food basket needed to escape poverty. The mean proportion of nonfood consumption for Jamaica is similar to households with 3.8 members and is not typical of poor households. This implies the application of a very reasonable non-poor social standard for estimating the poverty multiplier for 1990 to 1996. On the other hand, computation of the minimum standard food basket for the poor is based on the requirements of a family of 5. Since this has been and continues to be the typical size of households in quintiles containing the poor, it implies an estimate which continues to be reasonable and relevant to their needs. Moreover, as is also desirable in light of the incidence of poverty, the estimates continue to be more relevant to rural households than to households in the KMA and Other Towns.



## Consumption

The estimates of household expenditure in the Survey of Living Conditions is one way of monitoring changes in the level of household incomes and the level and structure of competitive survival initiatives as economic and social conditions change. Comparisons over time are generally meaningful after adjusting for inflation. Recall that the SLC is conducted in May-June of each year.

In the 1996 Survey, mean nominal annual per capita consumption expenditure, including the value of goods produced or received as gifts, was \$43,050.00, an increase of 21.2 per cent over the corresponding figure of \$35,522.00 for 1995. However, inflation between April-June 1995 and April-June 1996 caused real consumption to fall by 7.8 per cent from \$7,793.00 in 1995 to \$7,230.00 in 1996. Thus, the steady recovery through 1995 from the marked decline in real consumption to \$6,030.00 in 1991 was halted and partially reversed in 1996.

Current estimates of inflation are based on revised weights (over those from 1984) developed for the CPI in 1988. Based on the SLC data, the CPI generally overestimated the weights for the nonfood consumption items, Housing, Home Furnishings and Furniture, Transportation and Personal Expenses. Since the SLC estimates of the relative quantities have been consistent over time, it seems timely to reconstruct the weights for the CPI. This is now being done using data from the recent Household Expenditure Survey.

The decline in per capita real consumption was evident and differentiated in all three geographical regions. It was stronger in the KMA and Other Towns where it fell by 10.1 per cent and 11.0 per cent, respectively, and milder in the Rural Areas where it fell by only 2.9 per cent. As a consequence, the Rural Areas continued their decade long tendency to gain consumption ground relative to the KMA. Their index of consumption increased from 77 in 1995 to 80 in 1996 while that of the KMA fell from 135 to 129. The emerging stronger relative position of the Rural Areas might be a result of growing mean income effects and improving distributive effects of investment in developing sectors such as entertainment and ecotourism as well as in education, health care and utilities. Further study of this important trend is clearly needed.

The reduction in real income in 1996 involved no significant change in the share of Food and Beverages in either nominal or real per capita consumption. Within the Food and Beverage group the most important adjustment was the decline in the meals away from home in each of the three geographical regions. There was a significant increase in the share of Housing and Household Operational

Expenses in total non-food consumption expenditures, perhaps reflecting substantial increases in the real cost of renting and of utilities such as electricity and water. The share of nominal nonconsumption expenditures in total expenditures increased from 5.2 per cent of expenditures in 1995 to 6.2 per cent in 1996. The significance of this change, however, cannot be evaluated in the absence of real estimates. Non-consumption expenditures accounted for a significantly higher share of household expenditures in the KMA than in other regions and a smaller share for females than for males. The share also tended to increase with the quintile of consumption.

Regionally, real expenditures on Food and Beverages changed very little between 1990 and 1996, but real expenditures on Housing & Household Operational Expenses and Transportation increased substantially, and showed the largest increases among all subcategories of expenditures in all three geographical areas. These expenditures also showed the greatest percentage increase in the Rural Areas.

Home production and gifts continued to account for about 6.0 per cent of total consumption in 1996, showing no significant change from 1995. Rural Areas also continued to be the region with the highest share of this form of expenditure (8.6 per cent) in the consumption budget.

The mean per capita consumption expenditure figures provide one view of the degree of inequity in the society. The mean per capita consumption expenditure for male-headed households was over \$10,000 higher than for female-headed households, representing an increase in the gap during the year from just over \$6,000 in 1995. The population quintile with the highest levels of consumption had a per capita consumption just under 7 times that of the lowest consumption quintile, representing very little change from the situation in 1995. Approximately 12.5 per cent of households were in the core poor group of quintile 1 and 15.1 were in quintile 2, showing no significant change from the corresponding figures for 1995. Similarly, approximately 55.1 per cent of all households continued to consume in the wealthiest two quintiles. Overall, even in the face of the general decline in mean per capita consumption during the year, the general level of inequity in the country maintained its downward trend. The GINI coefficient of consumption equality moved marginally from .3624 in 1995 to .3604 in 1996, this time mostly because of marginal gains in the share of consumption accounted for by households in quintiles 2, 3 and 4 at the expense of the wealthier. In 1995, some of the reduction in inequality was explained by improvement in the relative position of the poorest households; they made no similar gain in 1996.

## Education

Some of the most interesting findings in the 1996 SLC relate to education. This year, to reflect international standards, the age group 17-18 replaced the previously used 17-19 group to represent the upper secondary level and the age group 19-24 replaced the 20-24 group to represent the tertiary level. Also, tertiary level enrolment was decomposed into University and Other Public and Private Tertiary Institutions. The distinction between enrolment and attendance was drawn more sharply. Regarding attendance, the relevant question posed in the education module was "During the last 5 school days how many days did ... [NAME] ... go to school?" Responses to this question are better interpreted as the household's effort to send children to school since factors such as truancy, violence, illness, and road blockages can result in substantial differences between actual attendance and efforts to send children to school. All analyses by school type took account of the two newly created school types: (1) Primary and Junior High; and (2) Junior High (of which there is only one).

The education data for 1996 indicate that some previous gains were consolidated and some improvements were made in the education system. Access to Basic Education continued to be virtually universal. Enrolment of students in the 15-16 age group exceeded 85.0 per cent for the first time in the 1989-1996 period and tertiary level enrolment by students from the Rural Areas more than doubled over the year.

The significance of public guarantees of education was evident in the fact that 97.0 per cent of all students in the country were enrolled in public schools. Of the approximately 3.0 per cent of all students enrolled in private sector schools in 1996, enrolment was greatest among the children of the wealthiest consumption group.

The impact of the upgrading of All Age and New Secondary schools was evident in the shifting pattern of school type enrolment and was greatest on the children of the poorest consumption groups. Enrolment in Comprehensive High, Secondary High and Technical High schools by these children, increased by 25.0 per cent over 1995. Approximately 60.0 per cent of the students of the poorest consumption group were enrolled in All Age, Primary and Junior High (Grades 7-9) and New Secondary schools but this rate was 18.3 per cent less than in 1995 and was the result of the school upgrading component of the ROSE project. Some All Age and New Secondary schools were upgraded to Primary and Junior High schools and Comprehensive High schools, respectively. Efforts by the ROSE programme seem to be yielding the desired results but evaluations must be done and initiatives undertaken to

ensure that the qualitative changes proposed are in fact realized.

The rate of enrolment in Vocational/Agricultural institutions increased across all consumption groups between 1995 and 1996, with the rate of increase of the poorest consumption group being the highest.

Consistent with all previous Surveys of Living Conditions, enrolment of 3-5 year olds in 1996 differed by geographical region. The enrolment rate of children from Other Towns has been declining steadily since 1993 and should be investigated, perhaps urgently. The mean absolute difference of rates of enrolment among the regions is approximately 2.1 and indicates that the rates of enrolment in the three regions, for this age group, are closer to each other than at any time since 1990.

The data this year suggest the existence of school-based feeding programmes driven by initiatives set up outside of the SFP. These came into being in order to fill the gap created by the SFP's inability to provide an efficient service and resulted in a significant increase in participation by students in all regions, consumption quintiles, and school types. In other years, students from the Rural Areas had the highest rate of participation in school-based feeding programmes. The KMA recorded the highest in 1996. It is worth noting the association of this change with the recent tendency for the Rural Areas to record more improvement in consumption expenditures across all households than in the KMA and Other Towns but the change must be carefully studied. Poverty continues to be most severe in Rural Areas and the data for the years 1993 and 1994 reveal a tendency for participation rates to fall when school-based feeding programmes are inadequately supported.

Mean Real Expenditure on Tuition Fees and Contributions was 8.5 per cent less than in 1995 and Mean Real Expenditures on Books, Uniforms, and Other Supplies also fell. The Government's Financial Assistance Programme continued to provide assistance to financially needy students. More students of the poorest consumption groups and the Rural Areas received assistance so targeting appeared to be good.

In spite of these gains, there were significant areas of continuing concern. Enrolment of the early childhood age group (3-5 year olds), at 83.0 per cent, was not sufficiently high relative to desired levels. Differences among students in early childhood education by welfare status were stark, highlighting the urgent need for more work to promote the value of this level of education and for continued support for universal accessibility. Enrolment of students in the 15-

24 age groups also continued to be unacceptably low at 70.0 per cent. As in all previous SLC surveys, poverty and non-enrolment were directly linked, highlighting the need for more social programmes at the upper secondary level and the immediate relevance of the ROSE Project. Low rates of enrolment by the 20-24 years age group indicate possible emergence of an important bottleneck to constrain the country's growth and development efforts.

Households' efforts to send children to school, at 79.0 per cent, were unacceptably low relative to targets. Judged against the background of poor performance in some critical subject areas, especially by males, this is especially worrying. The best efforts at sending children to school were by households with children enrolled in Secondary High schools. Other relatively good rates were achieved by households with students attending New Secondary, Comprehensive High and Technical High schools. Even for these groups, however, household efforts tended to be well below 90.0 per cent for most of the period and should be improved through initiatives at both the level of the household and the level of the state.

Compared with 1995 data, absenteeism declined for both boys and girls. However, in 1995 and 1996 a distinct tendency emerged for the efforts to send girls for the entire 5 day reference period to exceed efforts to send boys to school. Moreover, household efforts to send boys to school declined substantially in both years. Other national attendance data also show girls with better attendance rates than boys.

Survey results also reveal that more than one-half of the Out of School population belonged to the poorest consumption groups and were males. These may be early signs of an emerging problem of poverty and undesirably low social mobility for males which perhaps could now be confronted in a timely manner by the National Poverty Eradication Programme.

The cost of Transportation and Lunch and Snacks increased over the year and the data on Tuition and Fees changed in such a way as to suggest the inclusion of expenditure on contributions. The fraction of such expenses in the total have generally remained relatively low for all groups of students but official policy discourages them.

Perhaps the most significant finding on education for 1996 was about expenditure on Extra Lessons. Real mean expenditure on Extra Lessons exceeded that on Tuition Fees and Contributions, signifying the extent to which households are willing to support the Extra Lessons industry. A private school system providing Extra Lessons

is clearly emerging alongside regular schooling, perhaps partly to buffer some of the deficiencies in the regular education system and partly as a normal expression of entrepreneurship in the country. Such private enterprise is obviously consistent with the spirit of the structural adjustment and economic development programmes and should be carefully evaluated for appropriate social, education and economic policy supports.

## Health

This year, the analysis takes fuller account of the fact that the SLC provides a unique serial view of health conditions from 1989 to 1996. This feature allows planners to monitor changes in health conditions over time, evaluate relevant socioeconomic policies and programmes, and make adjustments in the light of outcomes.

In 1996, the general health indicator of the country, the number of self-reported illness/injury, indicated improvement in the general health status of the country in 1996, continuing a trend evident since 1989. These conclusions are supported by the indicators of the severity of illness, the rate at which those who report illness/injury also report conditions beginning before the four-week reference period of the Survey, the mean number of days of illness/injury and the mean number of days restricted from normal activities.

However, the indicators of severity suggest the need to be cautiously optimistic since the tendency to decline is not uniform on all indicators of severity. Indeed, while the other indicators declined, there was a steady increase in protracted conditions since 1994. This might be pointing to an increase in the prevalence of chronic diseases and the need for new relevant prevention policies. The most significant improvements were in Rural Areas and Other Towns. Nevertheless, the Rural Areas reported the highest percentages of individuals with illness/injury and the highest proportions of these with severe illness/injury. With respect to gender, the patterns were also similar to the national trend, but with the rate of illness/injury for women generally higher than that for men. Comparison of the consumption quintiles reveal that the reduction in reported illness/injury was greater for respondents from the poorest consumption quintile than for respondents from the wealthiest consumption quintile. Among age groups, the elderly above 60 years accounted for most of the improvement in the index over this period. In general, the data indicated that the 'at risk' health groups in the Jamaican population continued to be mostly individuals from the Rural Areas, women, children 0-4 years and individuals 65 years and over.

In 1996, over 50.0 per cent of the ill/injured sought medical care for their reported conditions mostly from private providers. Primary health care services continued to be the highest utilized level of care. Despite the preferred use of private sector care, there was an increased use of public sector providers for both visits and drugs between 1995 and 1996. This can be attributed to the success of the Ministry of Health's (MOH) effort at increasing the efficiency of delivery of better health care services over the period.

In the Rural Areas, up to 66.0 per cent of the health care seekers used private sector care providers. This coincided with reports of shortages of public sector health care services in the Rural Areas during the year, due mainly to shortages of health care personnel. Responding to such imbalances, Government continued to implement programmes that increased the equality of access to health care services by individuals in all geographic locations.

Significant inequality of access to needed health care services persisted between men and women and across consumption quintiles. Individuals 65 years and over, generally a very vulnerable population group because of adverse financial circumstances during retirement and adverse health conditions, faced increased risks from the problems in the operation of the MOH's drug windows due to staff and supply shortages. In response to this problem, the Jamaica Drug Elderly Programme (JADEP) was launched in August, 1996, to improve access to much needed drugs to the elderly at low cost and hence to increase their access to receive treatment for diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, arthritis, glaucoma and asthma.

During the year, there was a significant decline in mean patient expenditure on drugs from the public sector drug windows which might be attributed to the promotion and introduction of the use of the cheaper generic drugs by the Ministry of Health. Health Insurance coverage continued to be low particularly for the poor, the residents of Rural Areas and the elderly. This, coupled with high health care costs to these vulnerable groups, led to the formulation of a draft proposal for a National Health Insurance Plan during the year.

Levels of undernutrition were low by all indicators. When analyzed by the regional classifications of the survey, the geographic pockets of undernutrition reported by health officials in the past were not evident. Differences in the levels of undernutrition by population groups such as age, sex and consumption quintile were also not evident. These suggest that Jamaica is close to achieving its goal of less than 4.0 per cent undernutrition by the year 1998 and the elimination of malnutrition by the year 2000. Nevertheless,

the country should maintain its vigilance as a condition for ensuring that these problems do not reemerge.

#### **Food Stamp Programme**

The analysis of food stamp data for 1996 was extended to include an evaluation of the level of benefits by category of beneficiaries, the level of leakage, the level of education of beneficiaries, and the degree of dependence by category of beneficiaries. As before, the analysis identified the percentage of the target group who received benefits, that is, the coverage of the program. Leakage defines the percentage of beneficiaries who are not in the target group. Also, unlike in previous rounds, the 1996 module was adjusted to collect data on individuals and thereby better reflect official targeting, so the analysis was conducted mainly at the level of the individual.

In 1996, there was no significant increase in the percentage of individuals who received assistance from government in the form of food stamps. In fact, this percentage has generally stabilized at approximately 7.0 per cent since 1991 following efforts by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security, and Sports (MLSSS) to clean the rolls and improve coverage and targeting. The pattern also continued of a higher percentage of eligible children in Rural Areas receiving food stamps. A higher percentage of stamps also continued to go to children in lower quintiles. Since 1990, the proportion of eligible children receiving stamps increased noticeably in all regions and in all quintiles. Coverage of eligible Pregnant/Lactating Women continued to be quite low and changes have been introduced in the registration process to facilitate improved delivery of services to this group of beneficiaries.

In general, the Food Stamp Programme continued to target the poor with reasonable success. The poorest quintiles accounted for 58.0 per cent of beneficiaries in 1996 while the wealthiest quintiles accounted for 22.1 per cent of the beneficiaries, an increase of 4.6 percentage points over the figure for 1995. Some under-registration seems to persist in some categories and it might be desirable to adjust the categories, targets and quotas in the light of the needs of individuals.

Regional targeting continued to be very successful, but in 1996, the percentage of food stamps going to individuals in Rural Areas fell relative to that in 1995 and over the period 1989-1996. Much of the redistribution was to the KMA. Some of this was the result of efforts by the MLSSS to recruit poor individuals from this urban centre.

Food stamps continued to be an important source of income for households in the poorest consumption quintile and

households with low levels of academic education. However, the mean level of dependence on stamps is declining. The proportion of food stamps in the total expenditure of the poorer quintiles declined to just over 1.2 per cent in 1995 but increased in 1996 to over 3.0 per cent.

A significant number of recipients continued to complain about problems with the programme, such as direct cost of travel, waiting time, stigma and other inconveniences to the recipients, especially the elderly and the heads of very poor families. Recipients were very conscious of this erosion and many considered the value of issued stamps to be much too low. This problem has recently been addressed with an increase in the value of stamps for the 1997-1998 budget year. Some of these problems might also be addressed by improving the level of coordination and information sharing among the agencies executing various aspects of social welfare policy.

### Housing

The housing stock and general housing conditions continued to improve in 1996. Apartments and Townhouses accounted for the largest percentage increase in the share of any single housing type. These accounted for 3.3 per cent in 1996 and are used mostly by the wealthy. Their greatest concentration is in the KMA. The share of detached housing continued to decline and to be used mostly by households in the lowest consumption quintile. Perhaps because of perceptions about quality, most houses continued to be built of block and steel. Moreover, as household income increased, so did the consumption of block and steel at the expense of wood.

In 1996, the majority of Jamaicans owned the house in which they lived but the percentage of owner-occupied units continued to decline while the percentage of rented and rent-free units increased. As was indicated in previous SLC Reports, a higher percentage of households in the poorest quintile owned their units than in the upper quintile, while a higher percentage of households in the upper quintiles rented their homes. The proportion of owner-occupied housing was highest in the Rural Areas and the proportion of rented housing was highest in the KMA though the latter has been declining since 1991 even as rental rates have been increasing. The steady decline in rental units is due mainly to conversion of residential properties to commercial uses as landlords seek to earn higher incomes. This is likely to be an effect of both the Rent Restriction Act and growing demand for commercial space by emerging indigenous enterprises. This should be studied more closely before a definitive conclusion is drawn about its cause.

Two important indicators of the condition of the housing stock are the adequacy of water and sanitary services. There was little change in the proportion of households having toilet facilities between 1990 and 1996 and the general advantage of KMA households was maintained. However, since 1990 ownership of flush toilets has been improving among households in the Rural Areas. In some Rural Areas, the use of 'dry toilets' is a viable option when other factors such as the cost of linking to a central sewer system is considered. Within Other Towns, ownership of flush toilets has been declining since 1990 and continued to decline in 1996.

The percentage of dwellings enjoying piped water increased from 61.2 per cent in 1990 to 66.8 per cent in 1996 and there was an overall reduction in the number depending on river/pond and rain water. The indicators revealed that improved availability of piped water was accompanied by substitution of public piped water with private piped water. The Rural Areas were the most disadvantaged in terms of access to water supply but there has been steady increase in the provision of piped water supply in Rural Areas, rising from 33.2 per cent in 1990 to 42.9 per cent in 1996. However, despite this increase, more than one-half of rural dwellings did not enjoy this facility and much remains to be done to improve the rural water supplies in conjunction with improvements in rural housing amenities.

As the national electrification programme continued apace, the use of electric lighting increased in 1996, continuing a trend evident since 1991. There was a corresponding decline in the proportion of households using kerosene. The use of kerosene was highest among rural households; it was the main source of lighting for 31.1 per cent of rural households. Also, the percentage use of kerosene was highest among the poorest households but declined substantially in 1996.

As indicated by rents and expenditures for utilities, the real cost of housing and related services increased in 1996, continuing the general trend since 1990. However, it should be noted that since 1992, real expenditures for electricity have declined. It is also important to note that this was felt most by the poor. In 1990, the poorest quintile paid 50.0 per cent more for electricity than the wealthiest quintile. By 1993, this gap narrowed to 13.8 per cent and by 1996 the mean amount spent by households in the poorest quintile was 69.1 per cent of that spent by the wealthiest.

To ease the problem of comprehending the implications of all data on the trends in housing conditions in the country, a Housing Quality Index (HQI) was constructed using

summary data on housing for the period 1990 to 1996. The indications from this index are that between 1995 and 1996 the HQI improved from 62.4 to 64.8 and there was steady improvement in housing conditions between 1990 and 1996 as the HQI moved from 59.2 to 64.8.

It should nevertheless be noted that some of the more crucial elements in the index, namely exclusive use of flush toilets and indoor taps, are still poor for more than one-half of the households in Jamaica. Continued effort is needed to improve the level and quality of the housing stock and the general conditions of housing in the country.

### Highlights

One highlight of the findings for 1996 is the evidence that Extra Lessons has become a major component of the domestic education and economic system. It generally accounts for a larger share of the household budget than do Tuition Fees and Contributions, and seems to be a significant thrust to indigenous privatisation of education in the country. This developing system is now sufficiently important to command the attention of policy makers. It should be further investigated and carefully interpreted as the basis for designing appropriate initiatives which can complement projects such as ROSE.

Another finding to be highlighted is that even as the health condition problems continued to improve and undernutrition among infants was more or less wiped out, there are emerging signs that chronic but preventable diseases are increasing in the population. The third highlight is the compelling evidence that even as the population ages moderately, young males, especially those in lower income groups, have become a high risk group in the society, facing high prospects of poverty and social immobility in the immediate future. Social policy makers must move urgently to take these findings into account. The fourth significant finding is that the level of inequality remained stable over the period despite adverse movement of the general level of consumption-related well-being and a fifth is that the moves to recompute the weights for the consumer price index are timely in the light of persistent indications from the SLC data that the current weights are no longer appropriate.

Perhaps the most striking finding, however, is the reduction of mean real consumption during the year to a level above that for 1991 but below that for 1989. All social groups were negatively affected. This reversal of the trend for the 1990s seems to have been the result of inflation induced by policy initiatives to suppress demand and protect the balance of payments and exchange rate from emerging consumption demand pressures while creating an environment of low inflationary expectations to favor

investment. Any associated shift of real incomes to favor profits *may* have been unintended. Of course, the documented reduction in real consumption, even among the vulnerable, is not inherently a social problem unless the implied investment is inefficient and the future social (rate of) return inadequate. The prospect of an inefficient process is real and implies the need for review of the relevant policy mix. In the long run, the policy would facilitate increased consumption at an optimal rate through growth of national income only if the nexus of savings, investment and international competitive capacity in the economy is favorable. As the results of the policy initiatives of 1991 to 1995 might have revealed, a favorable nexus may not exist at present and the policy (review) should take account of that possibility.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Reports are also available on the following surveys:

Round 1 (August 1988)	Mimeographed report (unpublished)
Round 2 (July 1989)	Descriptive report
Round 3 (November 1989)	Descriptive report + separate Standard Tables
Round 4 (November 1990)	Descriptive report + separate Standard Tables
Round 5 (November 1991)	Combined descriptive report and Standard Tables
Round 6 (August 1992)	Combined descriptive report and Standard Tables
Round 7 (November 1993)	Combined descriptive report and Standard Tables
Round 8 (November 1994)	Combined descriptive report and Standard Tables
Round 9 (May 1995)	Combined descriptive report and Standard Tables

<sup>2</sup> The areas of focus in other years have been as follows:

Round 3	Health
Round 4	Education
Round 5	Housing
Round 6	Consumption
Round 7	Employment and Time Use
Round 8	(i) Experimental Consumption Modules
	(ii) Social Mobility
Round 9	The Aged

# Demographic Characteristics

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses the demographic variables of the 1996 Survey of Living Conditions (SLC 96) with a view to providing baseline data about the population at large. In so doing, estimates for the country and the three geographic regions namely, Kingston Metropolitan Area, Other Towns, and Rural Areas are discussed, trends highlighted, and policy implications stated where relevant.

The chapter is organized as follows. First, Jamaica's Age Profile is discussed overall in three broad groupings: 0 - 14 years, 15 - 64 years and 65+ years, with very close attention being paid to the latter group, followed by the Age Profiles for the three geographic regions. Second, Household Size is analyzed with reference to the composition and distribution of household members, Sex of Household Head with a breakdown of mean household size and composition by sex of head, and also an age distribution of the household heads. Finally, Household Characteristics by Quintile are analyzed to give a comprehensive picture of the welfare status of households surveyed since 1990. The chapter ends with a conclusion.

The classification of the elderly varies among countries as well as international organizations. In some instances, this population is classified as individuals 60 years and over and in other instances as individuals 65 years and over. In Jamaica, the age group 60 years and over is officially defined as "senior citizens." In this year's SLC, much of the analysis focuses on the subgroup of the elderly individuals 65 years and over but where relevant, estimates for individuals of 60+ years.

## AGE PROFILE

Jamaica has a relatively young population with 35.2 per cent of the people under 15 years of age and 26.3 per cent falling between 15 and 29 years of age. This is shown in the population pyramid in Figure 1.1 and Table 1.1. The working age population of 15 - 64 years comprised 56.7 per cent of all the household members in SLC 96, and the

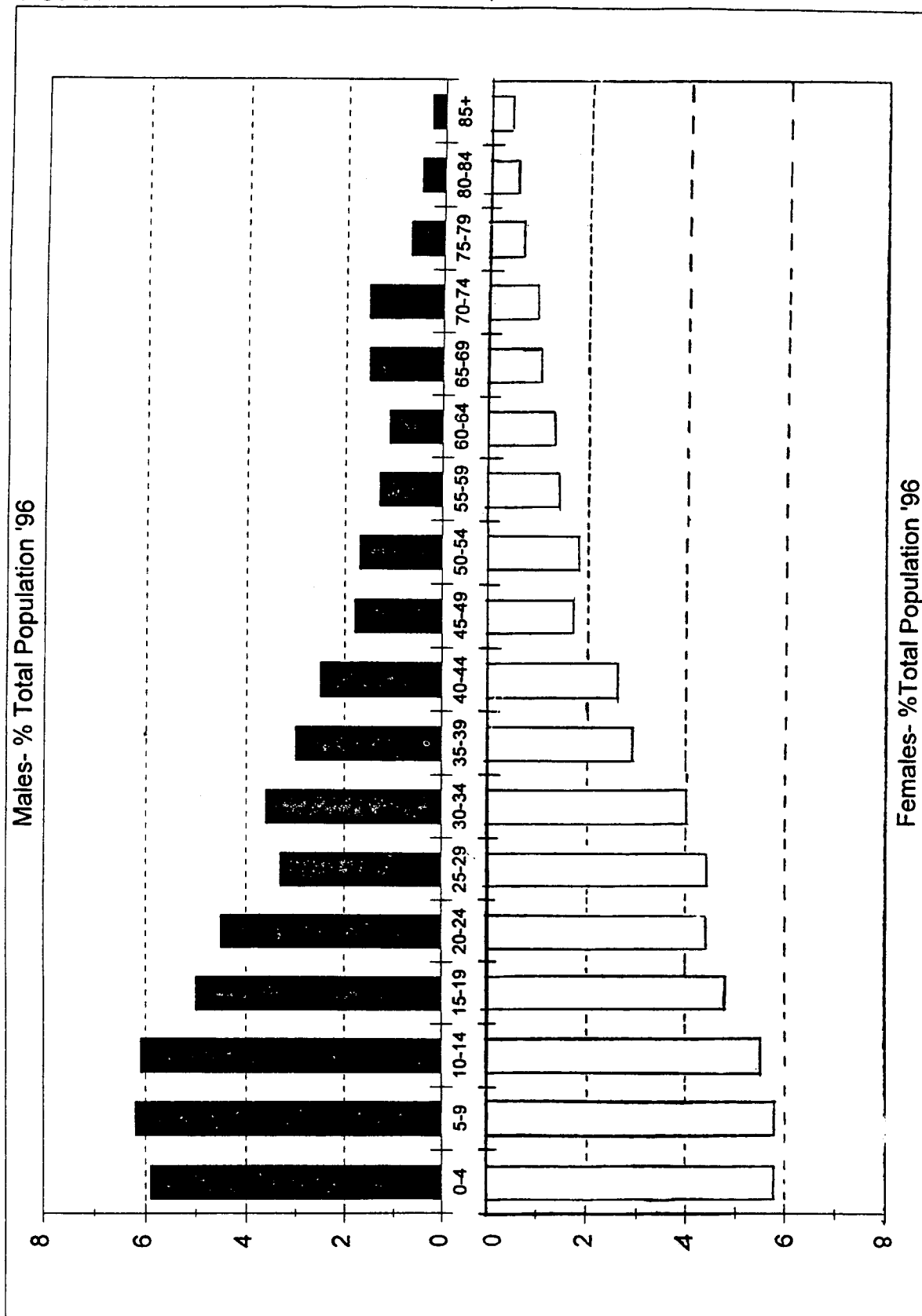
population of 65 years and above were 8.1 per cent.

The characteristic feature of a young or expansive population is a pyramid with a broad base and a narrow tip. The broad base is indicative of a population with a high birth rate, and the narrow tip of a higher mortality rate for the older age groups. In Jamaica's case, there has been some constriction at the base since the early 1970s (Table 1.1), resulting in a slight change in the age profile. The proportion of children aged 0 - 14 years declined from 44.8 per cent in 1975 to 35.2 per cent in 1991, and has remained virtually constant since, with slight fluctuations which are not statistically significant. This change reflects the reduction in the fertility rate experienced since the early 1970s.

Whereas the proportion of children in the population declined, the working age population of 15 - 64 years gradually increased over the same period. The population censuses of 1970, 1982, and 1991 showed 50.2 per cent, 54.7 per cent, and 57.5 per cent, respectively, in this age group.<sup>1</sup> For 1995 and 1996, the SLC showed percentages of 57.0 per cent and 56.7 per cent, respectively. Similarly, the proportion of individuals falling in the elderly population of 65+ years has also been increasing gradually over this period. In 1970, it was 5.4 per cent and in 1996 it was 8.1 per cent (Table 1.1b). The table shows that this age group is the fastest growing group in the population, growing at a rate of approximately 2.0 per cent per annum. The working age population grew at an annual rate of 0.5 per cent whereas the population of children showed a declining rate of 0.8 per cent per year.

<sup>1</sup> The Statistical Institute of Jamaica, *Population Projections Jamaica 1980 - 2015*, page 2; *Demographic Statistics 1995*; *Population Census Jamaica 1970*, Volume II, Part A, Book 1.

FIGURE 1.1  
POPULATION PYRAMID OF JAMAICA, SLC 96





**TABLE 1.1**  
**AGE PROFILE OF POPULATION (PERCENTAGES), 1975-1996**

YEAR	SOURCE	AGE GROUP (YEARS)				
		0-14	15-34	35-54	55+	TOTAL
1975	HES	44.8	28.6	15.2	11.4	100.0
1982	CENSUS	38.4	34.4	15.0	12.3	100.0
1984	HES	38.1	34.0	14.7	13.2	100.0
1990	SLC	34.4	35.6	15.5	14.5	100.0
1991	CENSUS	35.2	36.1	16.1	12.7	100.0
1991	SLC	33.7	35.4	15.8	15.0	100.0
1992	SLC	34.3	34.3	17.3	14.3	100.0
1993	SLC	35.3	34.0	16.8	14.0	100.0
1994	SLC	34.4	34.1	17.9	13.6	100.0
1995	SLC	35.4	34.6	17.4	12.7	100.0
1996	SLC	35.2	33.8	17.9	13.1	100.0

**TABLE 1.1b**  
**AGE PROFILE AND AGE DEPENDENCY RATIOS OF THE POPULATION (PERCENTAGES), 1970-1996**

YEAR	SOURCE	CHILDREN 0 - 14 YEARS	WORKING AGE 15 - 64 YEARS	ELDERLY 65+ YEARS	AGE DEPENDENCY RATIOS	
					CHILD 0 - 14 YEARS	OLD-AGE 65+ YEARS
1970	CENSUS	44.8	49.8	5.4	90.0	10.8
1982	CENSUS	38.4	54.7	6.9	70.2	12.6
1991	CENSUS	35.2	57.5	7.3	61.2	12.7
1995	SLC	35.3	57.0	7.7	61.9	13.5
1996	SLC	35.2	56.7	8.1	62.1	14.3

Table 1.1b also shows the age dependency ratios for the period 1970 to 1996. The age dependency ratio is defined as the ratio of persons in the dependent ages of under 15 and 65 and over years, to those in the economically productive ages of 15 to 64 years in the population.<sup>2</sup>

In 1970, the age dependency ratio for the nation was 101 with 44.8 per cent of the population under 15 years, and 5.4 per cent 65 years and over. This means that for every 100

economically productive persons in the population there existed 101 dependent individuals; expressed another way, each person of working age bore the economic burden of a little over one dependent person. However, by 1996, the age dependency ratio had declined to 76 with 35.2 per cent of the population under 15 years and 8.1 per cent 65 years and over. However, this overall reduction was the result of declining child dependency. The data clearly shows a declining child dependency rate and an increasing old age dependency rate, indicating that the nation is passing through a period of demographic transition of a young population aging at a moderate rate.

<sup>2</sup> Haupt, Arthur and Thomas T. Kane (1980). *Population Handbook*. International Edition, Population Reference Bureau, Inc. Washington, D.C.