

STATES OF JERSEY



CONTINUATION OF ANNUAL JERSEY OPINIONS AND LIFESTYLE SURVEY

Lodged au Greffe on 17th June 2025
by Deputy L.M.C. Doublet of St. Saviour
Earliest date for debate: 8th July 2025

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

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

to request the Council of Ministers to take the necessary steps, including the provision of sufficient funding within the Proposed Budget 2026-2029, if required, to ensure that the Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey can continue on an annual basis.

DEPUTY L.M.C. DOUBLET OF ST. SAVIOUR

REPORT

“Islanders are at the heart of Jersey and their opinions matter”¹

This is the principle behind the existence of the Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (JOLS), and is something that I believe that States Members should all support.

In a [letter](#) from the 18th of September 2024, the Chief Statistician outlined the reasons why the production of JOLS was to be reduced from every year to every two years. In this letter, he cited the reason as *“Statistics Jersey’s share of Cabinet Office budget reductions means reductions to existing outputs are necessary.”*

Following this cut, after 2025 the JOLS will now alternate years with the Children and Young Persons Survey which currently runs every two years.

Further justification to cutting the survey was provided in a scrutiny hearing where the Group Director of Policy [stated](#) that *“The chief statistician has to take a view based on savings that are needed, but also risk and prioritisation of what departments and the wider Island needs, and that was his professional recommendation to Ministers, that on that basis we can trim some of these - we will not do them all together - or in some cases we reduce the frequency in order to make sure that we can still live within that right-sized budget, but also provide the most essential data services.”*

With an aim to reverse this decision and funding cut, the Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel brought an [Amendment](#) to the 2025-2028 Budget to ensure JOLS (and other Statistics Jersey outputs) could continue yearly. The reason given for this amendment was *“The Panel was concerned regarding the loss of key statistical data, as the data produced by Statistics Jersey does not only inform Government decision-making but also provides direction to community services and businesses.”*

In her speech proposing the amendment, Deputy Miles argued that *“statistics are essential for designing and implementing social services and welfare programs. They help us identify vulnerable populations, assess the effectiveness of programs and ensure that scarce resources are reaching those who need them most.”* JOLS being undertaken annually would ensure that those vulnerable populations are identified without delay ensuring that the required help and resources are utilised quickly to deliver the help needed.

The [JOLS page](#) on Gov.je states that *“Over the last 18 years, this survey has given 50,000 Islanders the opportunity to share what life is like for them and play their part in shaping Jersey’s future.”* This is a significant number of people, nearly half the population of the Island, who have been provided the opportunity to voice any potential difficulties they are experiencing. The survey being undertaken annually ensures that trends can be more accurately tracked within these groups to better understand if policies are effectively helping those that are the intended target.

“The survey collects detailed information on a wide range of social issues and provides official social statistics about Jersey.” For example, the housing crisis is one of the biggest issues facing islanders here and now. The 2024 survey highlighted that 32% of the households that were selected to partake in the survey struggled to meet housing costs. This is valuable statistical data needed to inform policy to target the most

¹ <https://stats.je/survey/jersey-opinions-and-lifestyle-survey/>

vulnerable in the Island. If the survey is changed, as planned, to a bi-annual basis vital policy will fall behind the issues currently faced by islanders.

The high cost of living in a more general sense is impacting islanders across every Parish. The Health and Social Security Scrutiny Panel has been following a line of questioning seeking to understand which types of households are struggling financially:

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet: Yes, but given it is not going to be easy to draw on existing data to understand things like the percentage of single parent households that find it difficult to cope financially, that is quite a subjective measure which J.O.L.S. (Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey) measures very well in a very reliable way. Have you advocated for restoring that budget to the Statistics Unit so that that data can be collected?

The Minister for Social Security: I think we had a fairly robust discussion around the specifics. We can only do with the budget what we can do with it. Of course, the conversation will come around again, I am sure, around the next Government Plan as well. I can do what I can do within my remit to ensure that my department is collecting the data that it can

This line of questioning is further detailed in the Appendix.

Apart from a core group of questions, the subjects in JOLS are rotated and often put to islanders every 2 years or in some cases every 3 or 4 years. The move to biennial reporting may mean that key policy information may now be available every 4 years or 6 to 8 years. This will leave Government, Scrutiny and backbench members wanting to form proposals that have a strong evidence-base, with only one data point per political term in some cases.

If we are serious as an Assembly about making reasonable, evidence-based decisions that accurately reflect the needs and views of our islanders across all our Parishes, then we must urgently restore the JOLS survey to run on an annual basis.

Financial and staffing implications

The Corporate Services Scrutiny Panel's amendment called for an increase in funding of £79,000 to cover the cost of the reinstatement of JOLS and of other statistics Jersey's outputs. As this proposition is only seeking to re-instate an annual JOLS it is not anticipated this amount will need to be allocated in any such future budget, however, there will be financial implications of the re-allocation of funds to ensure JOLS continues annually.

Children's Rights Impact Assessment

A Children's Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) has been prepared in relation to this proposition and is available to read on the States Assembly website.

Appendix

[Health and Social Scrutiny Panel Quarterly Hearing. Witness: The Minister for Social Security. Monday, 3rd March 2025. Pages 14-16](#)

Deputy P.M. Bailhache:

I think the Chair has already asked a related question on this, but the panel is concerned about child poverty. The Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle Survey report recently stated that 82 per cent of single parent households find it difficult to cope in 2024. Have you considered the results of this survey, Minister, and what do you intend to do about it?

The Minister for Social Security:

That is why I am quite keen that a single parent household is one of the households that we would look at from the minimum income standards perspective. I am always keen to look again at specific examples so that we can identify what any of the quicker changes that we might be able to make, or 15 process changes are. Obviously, subsequently to that meeting that we had with the Childcare Trust, I have asked them for case studies as well because I think case studies from the organisations that are working with families that may be in this situation are always very helpful. I also have a meeting scheduled with Centrepont this week as well and I will be making the same request to them. Because I think those very real situations is where we can see whether there might be some gaps where we can look to where there are shorter-term changes or even people who may not realise that they are eligible for the benefits that they are eligible for. Again, that is part of that piece of work to ensure that people are applying for what they are eligible for as well, but also the other side is spotting where the gaps are which are leading to people being in distress as well.

Deputy P.M. Bailhache:

I am not sure, you might have dealt with this, Minister, but are you considering updating any of the benefit systems in order to target better the right families and the right children?

The Minister for Social Security:

If we talk about the actual system itself, the system is due for its major upgrade and we should be starting that ... well, we will be starting that this year and starting with income support. One of the conversations that I had in my Ministerial meeting last week was how much richer the data will be. The work that we have been doing in readiness for putting the new system together has highlighted some gaps in data. So, I was pleased to have the conversation with the team on Thursday around how they feel that the changes to our system will give us the data that we need to then make the changes to the income support benefits to ensure that people are getting what they need when they need it. Because we have limited data at the moment and improving that data is really important.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Yes, that was another question that we had. The Children's Commissioner has recently spoken about this, I believe, in the J.E.P. (Jersey Evening Post), one of the concerns being that the cuts to the Statistics Unit means that there is going to be even less data collected going forwards. Is there anything that you feel you could do to address that and make sure that we get some quality data, which is already far less than what, say, the U.K. have around child poverty?

The Minister for Social Security:

From what is within my remit and what I can do, obviously our improvements in systems will vastly improve the data that we are able to get as a department.

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

Is that only for people that are accessing income support already, though?

The Minister for Social Security:

Therein lies the problem as well. We do not know the people that we are not dealing with. That for me is that piece around cross-government work and effective cross-government work. [...]

Deputy L.M.C. Doublet:

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