



PERFORMANCE
AUDIT INTO:

RELIABILITY OF STATISTICS

An assessment of the statistical
system

MARCH
2026



General Audit Chamber

Algemene Rekenkamer





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FOREWORD

Reliable national statistics are essential for evidence-based policymaking, public accountability, and informed national dialogue. Strong statistical systems help governments, institutions, businesses, and citizens better understand social, economic, and demographic developments, while also supporting more effective planning and decision-making.

The General Audit Chamber presents this audit report as a review of the institutional, operational, and governance environment in which the Department of Statistics (STAT) carries out its work. The purpose of this audit is to assess whether the conditions surrounding and influencing STAT's operations sufficiently support the production of reliable official statistics in Sint Maarten.

This report focuses exclusively on the environment in which official statistics are produced, including matters such as staffing, data access, methodological documentation, stakeholder cooperation, and organizational support. It is important to note that this audit does not constitute a direct testing of STAT's published statistical outputs themselves, but rather an assessment of the systems, resources, and coordination mechanisms that support their production.

The 2024–2025 Governing Program acknowledges the important role of STAT in public planning and data-driven governance. It calls for continued reporting on economic, social, and demographic indicators through steady data collection, improved information-sharing practices, and updated methods and integrated systems for reporting on unemployment, GDP, poverty, and other core indicators.

This report is intended to contribute to that objective by identifying opportunities to strengthen the statistical system in which STAT operates. In doing so, it recognizes both the importance of official statistics to Sint Maarten and the institutional conditions required to sustain and improve them over time.

CONTENT

Foreword	
Summary	1
Recommendations	2
1 Our Audit	3
1.1 Basis & Scope of the Audit.....	3
1.2 Audit Objective & Research Design	3
1.3 Reading Guide	3
2 Legal Overview	4
2.1 Statistics National Ordinance	4
2.2 National Decree on STAT.....	4
2.3 National Decree Social Economic Statistics	4
2.4 Function Book.....	5
2.5 International Standards	5
2.6 Conclusion	6
3 Our Findings	7
3.1 Budget	7
3.2 Data Access & Coverage.....	8
3.3 Methodological Documentation & Consistency.....	9
3.3.1 Limited staff.....	9
3.3.2 Gap analysis on the written methodologies	9
3.3.3 The importance of STAT's website	9
3.4 Quality Controls	10
3.5 Stakeholder Cooperation	10
4 SWOT Analysis Summary	11
4.1 Strengths & Opportunities	11
4.2 Weaknesses & Threats	11
5 Epilogue	12

SUMMARY

This audit investigated the effectiveness of the environment in which the Department of Statistics (STAT) operates towards producing reliable national statistics.

Our findings show that STAT's working environment in 2025 creates several challenges that affect its ability to produce reliable national statistics. The department is understaffed, experiences frequent staff turnover, and struggles to consistently access technical skills needed in areas such as statistics, econometrics, and data science. These issues make it difficult for STAT to carry out its annual workplan, update its methods, and keep its publications and technical notes consistently available to the public.

Government has repeated the importance of 'good data' and data driven policy, but limited cooperation occurs with other government departments and STAT. Although STAT has been building relationships with its stakeholders, it still faces obstacles in obtaining administrative data from government departments, businesses, and citizens, even though the Statistics National Ordinance gives STAT full authority to request the data it needs. These gaps affect STAT's ability to publish statistics on time and in a consistent and accurate manner, and they also make it harder to retain staff.

To strengthen STAT's work, cooperation with data suppliers needs to become more structured and predictable. This can be achieved by developing formal data-sharing agreements, using standard templates for data submissions, and introducing written procedures that remain in place even when staff change. A government-wide instruction confirming the obligation to provide data to STAT would help create clarity. In addition, appointing a fixed contact person in each ministry and holding regular cross-agency meetings would support steady information flow and reduce delays.

Without real action, STAT will continue to experience challenges in carrying out their statistical function.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of our audit, we make five recommendations listed below. These recommendations are intended to strengthen the statistical system in which STAT operates in, and relies on, and should be read in the context of the department's continued delivery of core statistical outputs despite significant capacity and data-access constraints.

1. Develop and implement written operating procedure

STAT should document the steps for all core tasks and projects. Clear procedures reduce the impact of staff turnover and helps new staff settle in quickly. It would also create a stable base for improving methods and outputs.

2. Set up agreements that improve cooperation with main data suppliers

STAT needs steady access to administrative data from government departments, CBCS, PJIA, the Harbor, SHTA, and others. Formal agreements would explain what data must be shared, how often, and in what format; in addition to reminding data providers of their legal obligation to comply. Standard templates and clear timelines would make data exchange faster and reduce avoidable delays.

3. Revise the Function Book and strengthen staff skills

The Function Book should require technical skills such as applied mathematics, statistics, geo-information, and social sciences. Current staff should receive structured training where needed. This supports more reliable methods and stronger outputs.

4. Create a new and realistic staffing approach

Given the limited local labor market, STAT and the Ministry of TEATT should explore options such as remote staff, more attractive technical roles, and shifting some specialized work to external experts while STAT coordinates the process. A new approach is needed, as the current situation cannot keep pace with STAT's workload.

5. Strengthen cooperation across the wider government

Government has stated that improving national statistics is a priority. A government-wide instruction confirming the obligation to provide data to STAT would bring clarity and consistency. Each ministry should appoint a fixed contact person to manage data-sharing with STAT. Regular cross-agency meetings would support a steady flow of information, help resolve delays, and build a more coordinated national statistical system.

1.1 Basis & Scope of the Audit

This performance audit was conducted under Article 30 of the [National Ordinance General Audit Chamber](#). We examined how government allocates resources to the Department of Statistics (STAT) and whether STAT's working environment allows it to produce reliable national statistics. This includes a review of relevant laws, regulations, staffing, funding, cooperation with stakeholders, and the methods used to carry out statistical work.

This investigation focuses on STAT and the statistical system it depends on. While, for example, the Central Bank (CBCS) also produces national statistics, it is not the subject of this audit, but it is considered an important partner in the wider system. We did not test STAT's published figures; instead, we assessed the human, financial, and operational conditions in which STAT operates.

1.2 Audit Objective & Research Design

This audit provides a qualitative review of whether STAT has the resources and conditions needed to produce reliable statistics. We based our work on the shared principles of the [UN Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#) and [CARICOM's Statistics Code of Practice](#), which include relevance, consistency, accuracy, transparency, and completeness. We also used STAT's Function Book to assess whether current staffing levels match the department's stated needs.

We answer the following audit questions in this report:

1. Does the Department of Statistics (STAT) possess, or have access to, adequate resources to produce reliable official statistics?
 - a. To what extent does STAT receive the human, financial, and operational resources needed to obtain sufficient staffing levels and access to technical expertise to carry out its annual workplan?
 - b. How do STAT's methodologies facilitate the production of reliable statistics in line with international best practices?
 - i. Are resources allocated to facilitate clear documentation, continuous updating, and public access of employed methodologies?
 - ii. Does STAT have verification and review procedures on data collection, processing, and publication?
 - c. Does STAT have access to the data it needs for its data collection activities (inter-governmental, and external)?
 - i. How does STAT engage with stakeholders regarding the development of their operations and final statistical products?

1.3 Reading Guide

This report discusses, respectively:

Chapter 2: Legal Overview

Chapter 3: Our Findings

Chapter 4: Strengths & Risks

2.1 Statistics National Ordinance

The [Statistics National Ordinance](#)¹ outlines the legal framework for the collection, processing, and dissemination of statistical information. The law gives the Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication (TEATT) and by extension, the STAT department the authority to collect any information needed for statistical work. It requires all individuals and organizations to provide the requested information fully and truthfully, and it outlines possible legal action if they do not comply.

Although the obligation exists, STAT has limited capacity to enforce it. When households, businesses, or government departments do not respond, STAT has few tools to address non-compliance. This obviously increases the risk of incomplete data and weaker statistical outputs, and it reduces STAT's ability to verify information. The law also requires STAT staff to keep all information confidential and prohibits publishing data that can identify any person. In practice, all staff members sign a confidentiality agreement.

2.2 National Decree on STAT

The [National Decree on organization and tasks of the Service of Statistics](#) states that the Department of Statistics should consist of five sections, yet only three are listed:

1. Section of General Affairs and Management Support,
2. Section of Statistics, and
3. Section of Statistical Support.

Each section should be led by a section head, and via ministerial regulation the tasks, structure, and maximum number of positions per section can be defined. The National Decree also establishes a Department Head, a Deputy Head, and a maximum of 41 staff positions. The Department Head is responsible for preparing the annual work program, which outlines the studies, services, and publication methods to be carried out each year. The department is mandated to conduct statistical research for government institutions, scientific organizations, and private entities, and to publish the resulting statistics.

The decree further describes the appointment and dismissal procedures for the Department Head, Deputy Head, and staff. It grants the Head authority to make personnel decisions and hire third parties. Although the decree states that the statistical entity consists of five sections, in practice only the Section of Statistics is currently active.

2.3 National Decree Social Economic Statistics

The Statistics National Ordinance states that further rules must be laid down by a national decree containing general measures (LBHAM), after consultation with the Social Economic Council (SER). The [National Decree on Social and Economic Statistics](#) is based on Article 4, and Article 6 of the Statistics National Ordinance. This National Decree specifies which information STAT may collect, that questionnaires are used for this purpose, and that persons are obliged to provide the requested information.

The legislator intended important substantive choices about the statistical system to be regulated at the LBHAM level, with SER involvement. Although an LBHAM exists, it provides limited guidance and leaves substantive decisions to the ministerial level. As a result, decisions that affect how STAT performs its tasks can be taken without SER consultation. From an audit perspective, this does not necessarily mean that the law is being violated, but it does mean that the regulatory framework does not fully reflect the role that the legislator intended for the LBHAM.

Because clear and binding rules are largely absent at the LBHAM level, the current framework creates structural legal and governance weaknesses. The current regulatory structure does not help the statistical system STAT operates in. Without defined methodologies, survey parameters, publication- and completeness criteria, STAT operates with inherent structural, legal, and governance vulnerabilities, which increase the risk of challenges to the department's operational environment.

¹ AB 2013, GT no.450

2.4 Function Book

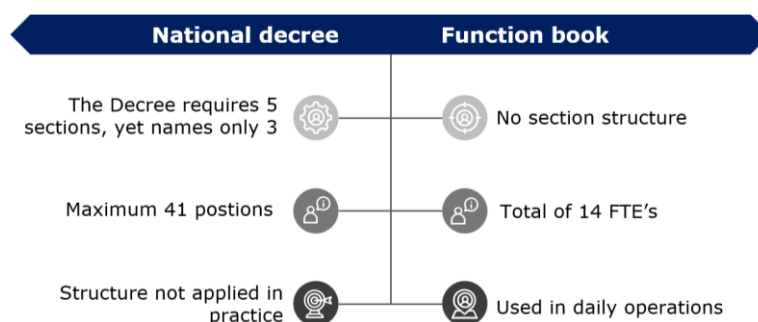
Following a Peer Review in 2022² by Statistics Netherlands, the Department of Statistics updated its Function Book with new positions and salary scales, outlining a total of 14 FTEs. In practice, staffing has remained far below this level. STAT employed 7 staff members up to September 2024, 6 up to December 2024, and 5 up to May 2025. Since May, the department has operated with 4 staff members, one of whom has been on long-term medical leave and another who resigned during the audit. This means over 70% of positions have been unfilled. At the time of this audit, STAT mentioned it is in the process of hiring four new staff members, which would bring the total to 8.³

The 2022 Peer Review concluded that a staff of 10 was “just sufficient” for STAT to carry out its work program. For most of 2025, staffing did not exceed 5 individuals. This indicates that STAT has not had the capacity to meet its work program, or invest in needed improvements, such as new methodologies or expanded data relationships. The Peer Review highlights that human resources must be expanded to complete “special projects, new statistics, major developments, and innovative data collection methods”.⁴ Understaffing increases the risk of heavy workloads, errors, and reduced ability to review the relevance and quality of statistical products.

Although the Function Book was updated in 2024, it does not specify required educational background or qualifications in areas such as statistics, applied mathematics, or quantitative social sciences. It lists university, HBO, or MBO levels. We identified this as a challenge. Producing reliable statistics requires steady access to technical expertise, yet attracting and retaining qualified staff proves to be difficult. There is also no structured training program in place to develop these skills internally.

Given the technical nature of STAT’s work (such as quantitative analysis, designing statistical methods, and drawing on fields like economics, demography, and social sciences) the gaps are significant. We note that these roles require staff trained in areas such as statistics, econometrics, geo-information, and data science. Without sufficient internal capacity, government risks depending too heavily on external consultants, which affects continuity and organizational independence. Figure 1 depicts the main differences between the National Decree and the Function Book.

Figure 1: Main differences between the National Decree and the Function Book



2.5 International Standards

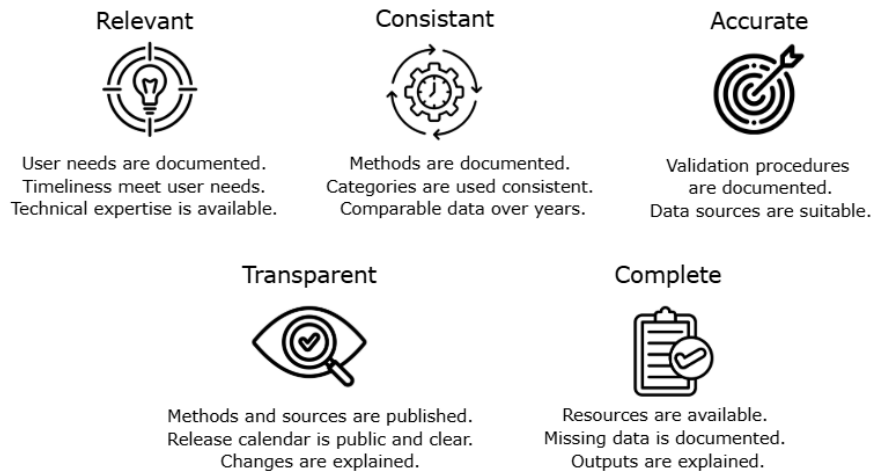
The [United Nation’s Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#) outline a set of internationally recognized best practice principles, overlapping with several of the principles set out by [CARICOM’s Statistics Code of Practice](#). Both sets note the importance of relevant, consistent, accurate, transparent, and complete methods and operations by those who produce official statistics. All of these criteria are important components relating to both how measured variables are defined as well as methods of data collection, analysis and dissemination. Figure 2 outlines the criteria used to assess quality.

² Carina Fransen, Henk van de Velden, Kees Zeelenberg, *Peer Review Report on Compliance with the CARICOM Statistics Code of Practice and Further Improvement and Development of the National Statistics System St. Maarten*, June 2022.

³ Interview Acting Department Head STAT, 6 August 2025.

⁴ *Peer Review Report on Compliance with the CARICOM Statistics Code of Practice and Further Improvement and Development of the National Statistics System St. Maarten*, June 2022, p.15.

Figure 2: International criteria used to assess the quality of statistics



2.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the obstacles STAT faces in devoting time and human resources towards continuous development of methodologies, maintaining continuity amid high staff turnover rates, a lack of access to and supply of necessary technical capacity, and ongoing updating of public access to data and statistical outputs. We observe that understaffing and the difficulty in obtaining and retaining new staff with relevant and complementary technical expertise is a root issue that affects all criteria, which hinders the environment from producing reliable statistics.

3 OUR FINDINGS

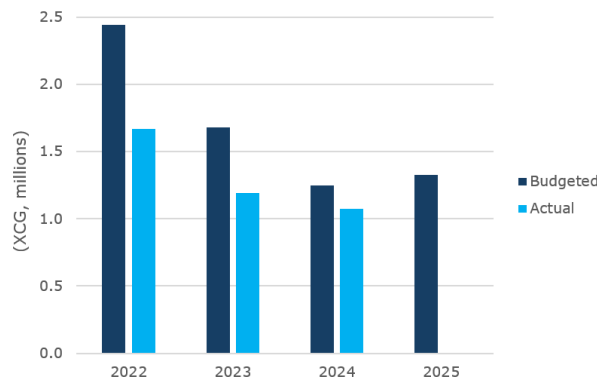
There are no one-size-fits-all standards when it comes to ‘good quality’ statistics. Rather, (statistical) ‘quality’ is a multidimensional concept that includes elements of consistency, accuracy, comparability, completeness, and relevance.⁵ These elements affect each other and sometimes require trade-offs. Producing quality statistics is technical work and requires solid knowledge of statistics, math, social sciences, and how data connects to real life.

Actors such as the [UN](#), [IMF](#), [World Bank and the Netherlands](#), all reference STAT as their primary provider of official national data, which underscores its central role in informing macroeconomic projects.⁶

3.1 Budget

From 2022 to 2024 the total amount budgeted for STAT decreased and was set at XCG 1.3 million for 2025. On average, STAT spent 75% of their planned budget. This indicates that there are sufficient financial resources available for the department but alludes to room for improvement in use of financial resources. Figure 3 below illustrates the total values budgeted and actual sums spent for STAT.

Figure 3: STAT budget and actual spending (2022-2024)



Our review of budget items such as General Research, Specific Research, and External Hire Expenses showed both under- and overspending. This means allocated funds are not always fully used and are sometimes exceeded. These funding streams are important for STAT’s operations: General Research supports annual statistical work (GDP, CPI, National Accounts), Specific Research supports periodic surveys (Census, Labour Force Survey, Household Surveys), and External Hire Expenses cover technical expertise when staff positions are vacant. Figures 4-6 illustrate these budget items.

Figure 4: Budget for STAT Research (General)

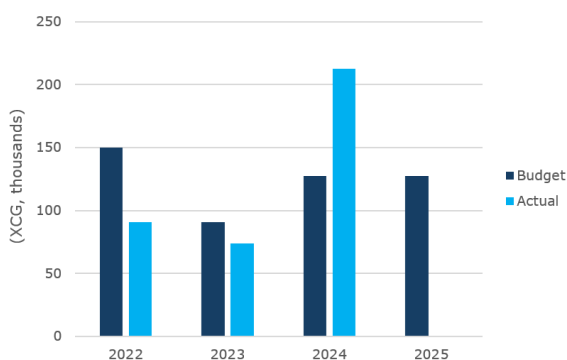
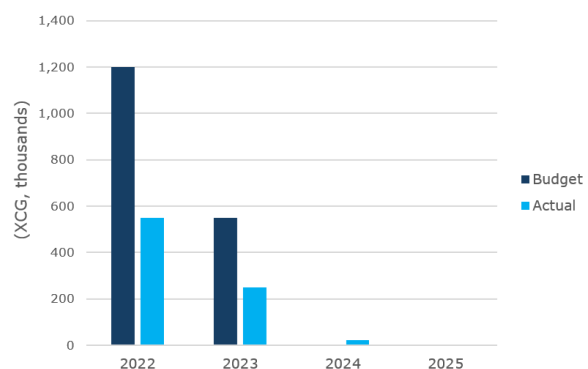


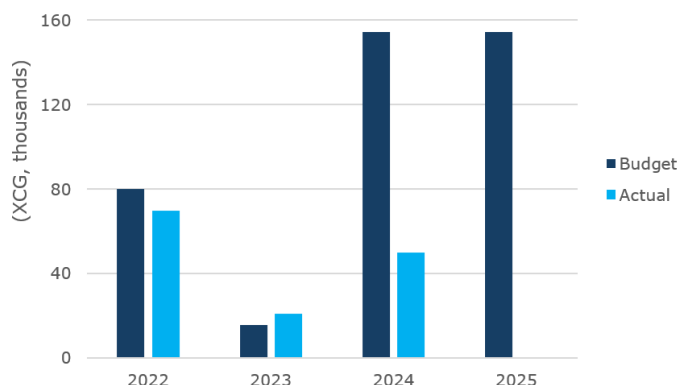
Figure 5: Budget for STAT Research (Specific)



⁵ Gáll-Pelcz, Ildikó, et al. *Special Report: European Statistics (Potential to Further Improve Quality)*, European Court of Auditors, 2022.

⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Handbook on Management and Organization of National Statistical Systems (4th ed.)*, 2022.

Figure 6: Budget for External Hire



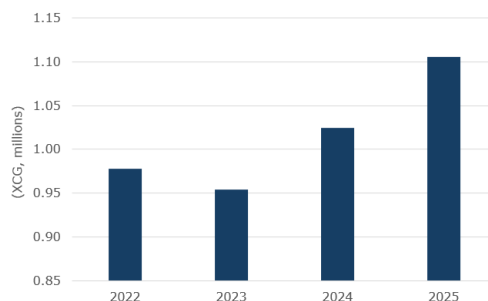
STAT’s budget posts for General & Specific Research and external hires do not show a cohesive financial approach or efficient use of budgetary planning.

Such unpredictability in access and planning of financial resources does not aid in providing a stable climate for the department to consistently produce reliable statistics. This illustrates the department’s dependency on the Ministry of Finance’s financial planning and eventual access to funds.

A lack of consistency in financial resource planning does not align with government’s emphasis on the importance of good data and statistics. Irregular projects such as the census in 2022 do explain large jumps in budgeted values under STAT Research (Specific), but do not justify the drop to zero in 2024 and 2025. If STAT is expected to “sustain and develop the reporting of essential economic, social, and demographic indicators” and introduce integrated data systems, governmental financial planning and access should back that.

Secondly, at the time of the audit, no Department Head is appointed. The current Acting Department Head is made responsible for hiring new staff, however, does not have authority over final budgeting decisions for personnel costs. This indicates a disconnect between a(n) (Acting) Department Head who is tasked with hiring (a role that affects spending) but has no control over the budget for such spending. This shows limited control and a gap between staffing, budgeting, departmental needs, and departmental independence. In the environment where operational budgets see cuts, personnel costs are maintained even after staff members leave. Figure 7 depicts the budgeted totals for personnel costs.

Figure 7: Budgeted totals for Personnel Costs (2022-2025)



STAT has demonstrated their resourcefulness in accommodating unexpected budget cuts, and state that they are engaged with the A2 project from The Netherlands (Country Package) which includes the revision and updating of the Statistical Ordinance, and providing technical support through digital platforms and systems.

3.2 Data Access & Coverage

STAT has experienced obstacles in achieving completeness regarding (survey) data collection, both with citizen households, businesses, and other governmental departments. Although STAT has the authority to obtain requested data, they do not possess the manpower to exercise this authority, resulting in a lack of access.

Other factors also contribute to incomplete and inconsistent data access, such as survey fatigue and perceived unfairness from respondents. Addressing disinterest or frustration in responding to surveys or addressing perceived unfairness from survey participants requires time-, labour-, and expertise-intensive strategies (such as amending sampling strategies, making participation easier, increasing transparency of data use, and design follow-up strategies). To mitigate these issues resource-intensive solutions are needed, such as reconfigured data collection strategies and follow-up plans. However, identifying what

the specific issues hindering complete and consistent data collection, the time, labour and expertise need to be available. STAT currently does not possess these factors.

Incomplete data can lead to skewed results and incorrect conclusions. This shows the need to strengthen access to alternative data sources and make better use of the information they provide.

The 2024-2028 Governing program states that a project manager will be appointed to support implementations that address the challenges faced by STAT regarding cooperation and delays in activities, in response to the 2022 Peer Review by Statistics Netherlands. This Project Manager position has been appointed in December 2025.⁷

3.3 Methodological Documentation & Consistency

The [United Nation's Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics](#) and [CARICOM's Statistics Code of Practice](#), both mention that efforts to maintain relevant, consistent and transparent methods are important when producing official statistics. This includes both the practical and analytical methods used to obtain and analyze data, and making these methods publicly available in a timely manner (to maximize relevance of outputs published).

3.3.1 Limited staff

STAT has several methodologies outlined in handbooks for core projects, like for GDP, National Accounts, Tourism Exit Survey, Labor Force Survey, Household Budget Survey, and the Economic Census Survey. However, the department lacks a formal daily operations manual and, amid high staff turnover rates, has a high dependency on one remaining staff member to make sure the annual workplan is planned and completed.

The legislation governing STAT does not state its obligations as to what statistical outputs the department is required to produce. STAT plans an annual workplan that outlines the activities they will undertake the following year. This annual work plan is not made publicly available. The department does not plan multi-year workplans. This kind of planning environment provides little opportunity for accountability; it makes for an unclear environment for taxpayers to transparently see how public funds are used to execute statistical activities.

3.3.2 Gap analysis on the written methodologies

Although written methodologies for the abovementioned projects do exist, they lack the detail needed to instruct new staff in implementing these methods in the future. Existing methodologies do not provide step-by-step instructions to replicate methodologies for future staff. Given the difficulties in finding and retaining qualified staff, the importance of written procedures only becomes greater, as a high staff turnover rate creates obstacles for continuity and consistency; worsening the environment to consistently generate comparable and relevant statistics, and limiting the degree of written procedures that can be publicly shared for transparency. Clear daily processes should be put in place to support the Department's capacity for consistency and comparability of outputs. At the time of publishing this report, STAT states that they are in the process of documenting formal (daily) operations manuals per statistical project.

3.3.3 The importance of STAT's website

At the time of writing, the updating of STAT's website had been temporarily paused and its continuation is dependent on the start of an external researcher, who will start in the second quarter of 2026. In STAT's human resources environment, limited staff has also affected the IT expertise needed to publish and maintain online access of statistical outputs. Without access to these human resources the department's capacity to maintain relevance (through timely publication and public access to outputs) and transparency is stifled. The method of statistics' dissemination currently relies on time and labor-intensive press releases, which creates obstacles in effective information sharing, which public access on their website can avoid.

The framework of STAT's website does present a solid foundation for public access of statistical data, however many variables' data have not been updated since 2024. The last Factors Statistical Magazine available is from 2014, and Statistical Yearbook is from 2017. Delays in public accessibility of data poses

⁷ Response from the STAT Department d.d. January 9th, 2026.

the risk of depleting the relevance of statistics when they are published. STAT should simplify the steps required to produce and publish data, so that users can rely on consistent and accessible information. An example of such an undertaking can be found from [Statistics Netherlands](#), where they link agreed-upon definitions, classifications, collection-, processing-, and analysis methods in one page. STAT can also benefit from such a structure, simplifying all methods in one place reduces difficulty when certain aspects need to be updated, as well as simplifying for the user, who can find all methods in one place.

3.4 Quality Controls

At the time of the audit, we note that STAT has limited capacity to perform quality checks, internal audits, or verification of data collected by others. Apart from written procedures for specific projects, there are no documented processes for data verification or quality assurance. Some methodologies mention survey design choice to accommodate anticipated quality issues, others mention issues such as survey non-response, but they do not describe how these issues are addressed. Data collected by third parties is not verified for accuracy, and STAT has limited ability to use alternative sources for cross-checking.

For surveys, quality checks depend on available staff to conduct spot checks. The Acting Department Head oversees and performs these checks in addition to her regular duties, creating a heavy workload. STAT needs clear, written quality-control procedures and more staff to ensure verification and quality checks become a standard part of all projects. Without consistently built-in quality controls, the risk of using incorrect data increases. This can lead to misleading results and weakens transparency, consistency, and comparability over time. Using unverified data also reduces understanding of what is being measured. Core statistics such as the CPI are largely calculated and processed by Statistics Netherlands. This reliance limits STAT's ability to oversee methods, ensure accuracy, or explain how results were produced.

3.5 Stakeholder Cooperation

In the past months STAT has undertaken a closer relationship with Princess Juliana Airport (PJIA) and the Immigration Department for the purpose of data sharing.⁸ STAT also engages CARTAC⁹ (the IMF's Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre) to assist with technical and operational issues. While operating with a staffing and expertise shortage, the cultivating of data sharing networks illustrates STAT's willingness to expand meaningful relations with stakeholders. However, STAT does not (yet) have explicit MoUs with its main suppliers of (administrative) data or consistent channels with government-funded administrations or registries.

STAT and the Central Bank are currently the only entities authorized to obtain data deemed necessary for representative national statistics. Calculating GDP through total expenditure, for example, requires complete access to data on domestic consumption, investment, government spending, and net exports. Local businesses, organizations, and associations do not have rights to such access, but many do devote resources to data collection on their own respective activities. This provides an opportunity for STAT to use existing data stores to inform more accurate national statistics.

Creating agreements for continuous data sharing with such organizations would contribute to databases that enhance representativeness of statistical outputs, increase capacity for data verification, simplify periodic publication, and improve accuracy of national statistics. Lack of such agreements risks opposite effects to the potential benefits mentioned.

Agreements with data suppliers also presents the opportunity for back-end cooperation – a built-in feedback channel with stakeholders - which can help inform what statistics are relevant and needed from stakeholders. This can include both the public and private sectors. As STAT increases its staff levels, the department should prioritize developing a stakeholder feedback channel or formal consultation process with such stakeholders. Introducing formal agreements for data-sharing and feedback opportunities provides space to bridge the disconnect between STAT (the producer) and stakeholders (data suppliers, and statistics users). STAT can benefit from improved access to data and improved statistics, while data suppliers, users, and the island as a whole can benefit from more relevant national statistics and improved transparency.

⁸ Government of St. Maarten, [Growth in Both Airport Passenger Arrivals and Cruise Arrivals in Q2 2025](#), Sept. 2025.

⁹ Pearl FM, [The Department of Statistics \(STAT\) reports that Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#), August 2025.

This chapter summarizes the elements discussed in this report into a SWOT analysis covering STAT’s strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats.

4.1 Strengths & Opportunities

An important strength for STAT is that the department already operates under a clear legal ordinance that grants them the authority to collect data they deem necessary to produce reliable statistics. An added strength is the annual Personnel budget allocated towards the department of above XCG 1 million per year. These structured financial resources allow to evaluate the possibilities of hybrid staffing solutions, which could be a source of stability. Meaning; combining the use of remote permanent staff, using shared regional specialists, introducing academic partnerships for graduate trainees, or developing arrangements with international technical assistance programs. Although the department has seen many changes in its staff over the past 12 months, the department showed resourcefulness in adhering to their annual plan.

The department has maintained working contacts with data suppliers and users. During the audit we found attempts from STAT to improve its cooperation with PJIA and the Department of Immigration. We also note the ongoing positive working relationship with the Central Bank, which helps with more consistent data access and to the production of reliable statistical outputs. We believe that the mentality at the department is a strength. A tangible example is STAT’s willingness and motivation for improved relationships with suppliers (and users) of data.

During the audit, STAT indicated a willingness to further improve cooperation, which, in turn, creates opportunities to develop more systematic data-sharing arrangements and also to introduce feedback mechanisms to keep statistical outputs relevant.

4.2 Weaknesses & Threats

We have observed several internal and external factors that negatively impact the statistical system in which STAT operates in and which can become threats to the department in its capacity to guarantee relevant, consistent, accurate, transparent, and complete statistical outputs. The main weaknesses we have identified include understaffing and challenges in consistent access to necessary technical expertise, inconsistent access to operational resources, an absence of systematic quality controls, and a need for more effective cooperation with stakeholders for both data collection and feedback.

These weaknesses can lead to further bottlenecks such as challenges in operational continuity and accurate replication of statistical processes, since an environment of understaffing does not help with maintaining methodological documentation (both internally and sharing methodologies publicly). Such challenges affect the capacity to produce reliable statistics.

If these weaknesses remain unaddressed, they present a further risk to the reliability of statistics. If errors in statistical processing and procedures are missed, from insufficient access to technical expertise, or sudden mid-year budget decreases, there is an enhanced risk that statistical outputs are unreliable. Policy decisions based on such outputs will be misinformed and could prove to be inaccurate for the actual situation on St. Maarten. Figure 8 presents the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and risks at the STAT department, graphically.

Figure 8: SWOT-analysis of STAT



Without a well-functioning Department of Statistics, government’s ability to engage in evidence-based policymaking is diminished.

In accordance with our audit protocol, the General Audit Chamber provided the Secretary-General of and relevant department head within the Ministry of TEATT the opportunity to respond to our preliminary findings. A response was received on January 9th, 2026, and the feedback contributed to additional insight into ongoing efforts.

On February 12th, the Minister was presented with the draft report. On February 27th, representatives of the General Audit Chamber met with the Honorable Minister to discuss the findings and the recommendations. The Minister acknowledged the importance of this audit and accepted the recommendations. The Audit Chamber mentioned that as part of our Progress Meter, we will conduct a review in the future to assess the level of implementation of the recommendations made and progress realized. With this in mind, the Audit Chamber provided the Minister with additional time to draft her official response to the audit report. By March 18th no official response had been received and the report was finalized.

By way of exception, the board decided to implement changes brought forward during post-finalization dissemination, as additional feedback was received from the ministry of TEATT with the request to implement the additions in the report. Based on this feedback received March 20th, 2026, targeted revisions were made to improve clarity and to reduce the risk of misinterpretation of the report.

The General Audit Chamber remains committed to contributing to good governance and transparent public policy, including in the vital domain of statistics. We trust this report will support constructive dialogue and informed decision-making.



General Audit Chamber

Algemene Rekenkamer