



Survey of Businesses' Inflation Expectations

March 2024

**SECTOR ANALYSIS DEPARTMENT
RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC PROGRAMMING DIVISION**

Inflation Expectations Survey



The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) undertakes surveys of businesses on behalf of the Bank of Jamaica to ascertain the expectations of these economic agents about variables which are likely to have an impact on inflation in the near-term. In this regard, the survey captures the perception of Chief Executive Officers, Managing Directors and Financial Controllers about the future movement of prices, current and future business conditions and the expected rate of increase in wages/salaries. These responses assist the Central Bank in charting future policy decisions. The most recent survey was conducted between 1 March 2024 and 29 March 2024 and had 270 respondents. Below are highlights from that survey.

Figure 1: Inflation Expectations

If you expect inflation, what do you expect the rate of inflation to be at December 2024 and over the next 12 months?”

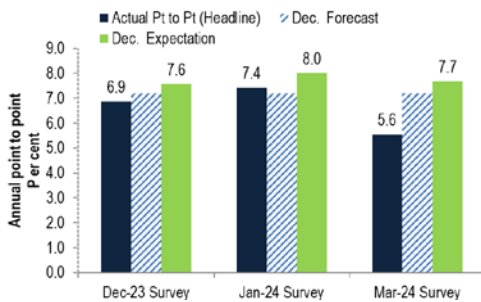
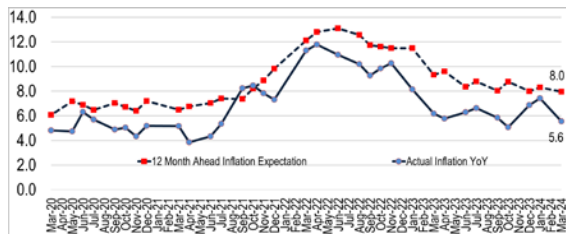


Figure 2: Expected Annual Inflation

What do you expect the rate of inflation to be over the next 12 months?



*Dates refer to survey periods

Inflation Expectations

In the March 2024 survey, respondents’ expectation for point-to-point inflation as at December 2024 was **7.7 per cent**. This expectation was higher than the annual point-to-point inflation of **5.6 per cent** for March 2024 (see **Figure 1**). Respondents’ expectation of inflation 12 months ahead decreased to **8.0 per cent** relative to the previous survey’s estimate of **8.3 per cent** (see **Figure 2**).

Overview

- The March 2024 survey indicated an expected point-to-point inflation of 7.7 per cent for calendar year 2024 (December 2024), which was higher than the March 2024 outturn of 5.6 per cent. The expected inflation 12 months ahead is 8.0 per cent, which is lower relative to the similar measure in the previous survey of 8.3 per cent.
- The perception of inflation control increased (improved) in the March 2024 survey relative to the January 2024 survey.
- Respondents forecasted the exchange rate to depreciate over the three-time horizons at a faster pace compared to the previous survey.
- The majority of respondents believe that the Bank’s policy rate will remain the same over the next three months. The proportion of respondents of this view increased slightly relative to the previous survey.
- Both the Present and Future Business Conditions Indices decreased (worsened) relative to the previous survey.

Inflation Expectations Survey

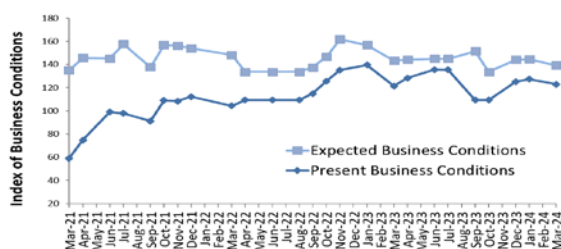
Table 2: Interest Rate Expectations: Policy Rate

In January 2024, the Bank of Jamaica’s overnight rate (policy rate) was 7.0 per cent. What do you think this rate will be for the next 3 months?

SURVEY DATES	OVERALL			FINANCIAL SECTOR		
	Dec-23	Jan-24	Mar-24	Dec-23	Jan-24	Mar-24
Survey responses (percentage of total)						
Significantly Lower	0.3	0.0	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Marginally Lower	11.9	13.0	6.3	4.2	14.8	14.3
Remain the Same	62.2	59.6	62.2	75.0	63.0	61.9
Marginally Higher	12.9	16.8	19.3	16.7	18.5	23.8
Significantly Higher	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Don't Know	12.2	10.2	11.5	0.0	0.0	0.0

Figure 5: Present and Future Business Conditions

1. In general, do you think business conditions are better or worse than they were a year ago in Jamaica?
2. Do you think that in a year from now business conditions will get better or get worse than they are at present?



*Balanced score method: (better-worse) +100
 *Dates refer to survey periods

Interest Rate Expectations: Policy Rate

In the March 2024 survey, the majority of respondents expected that the Bank’s policy rate would remain the same over the next three months. This proportion increased slightly relative to the previous survey.

With regard to the financial sector, the majority (**61.9 per cent**) of respondents expected that the Bank’s policy rate would remain the same (see **Table 2**). Notably however, responses from the financial sector revealed that **23.8 per cent** of respondents expected the rate to be marginally higher. This reflected an increase compared to the previous survey.

Perception of Present and Future Business Conditions

In the March 2024 survey, the Present Business Conditions Index decreased (worsened) to **123.0** relative to **127.4** recorded in the previous survey. The Future Business Conditions Index also decreased (worsened) to **139.3** from **144.6** in the previous survey (see **Figure 5**).

The decline in the Present Business Conditions Index mainly reflected a decrease in the percentage of respondents who said that conditions are “better”. Likewise, the Future Business Conditions Index also reflected a decrease in the number of respondents of the view that conditions will be “better”.

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Table 3: Operating Expenses

Which input do you think will have the highest price increase in the next 12 months?

SURVEY DATES			
	Dec-23	Jan-24	Mar-24
Stock Replacement	32.7	33.3	38.1
Utilities	32.7	34.4	36.3
Fuel & Transport	12.9	10.5	13.3
Raw Materials	13.3	11.9	8.1
Wages & Salary	7.5	7.7	3.0
Not Stated	1.0	2.1	1.1
Other	0.0	0.0	0.0

Expected Increase in Operating Expenses

Respondents indicated that they expected the largest increase in production costs over the next twelve months to emanate from stock replacement, utilities as well as fuel and transport in that order. Despite recent public discussions of a tightening labour market, wages & salary expense is still anticipated to have the lowest increase over the next 12 months. (see **Table 3**).