

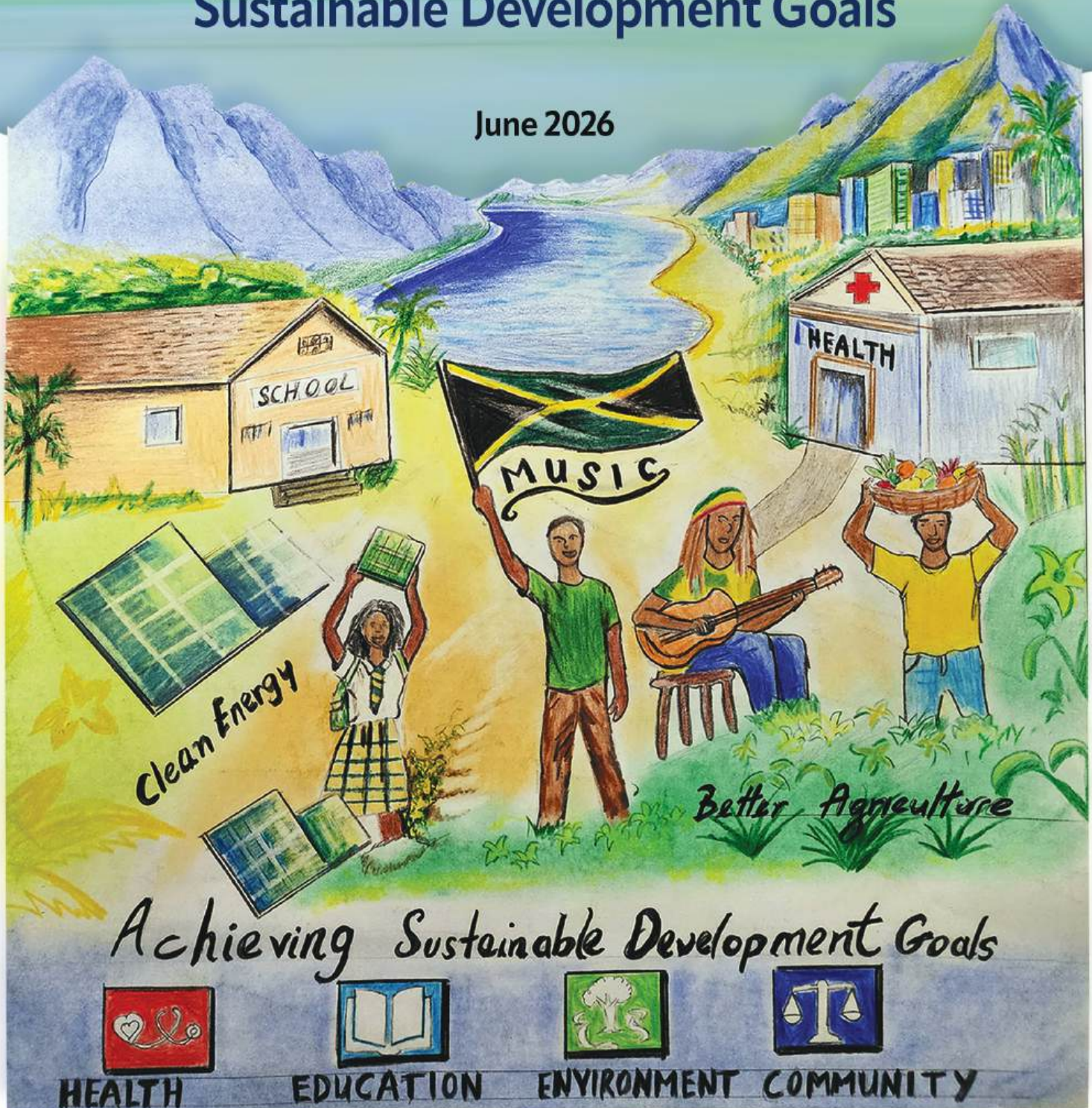


Government of Jamaica



Voluntary National Review Report on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

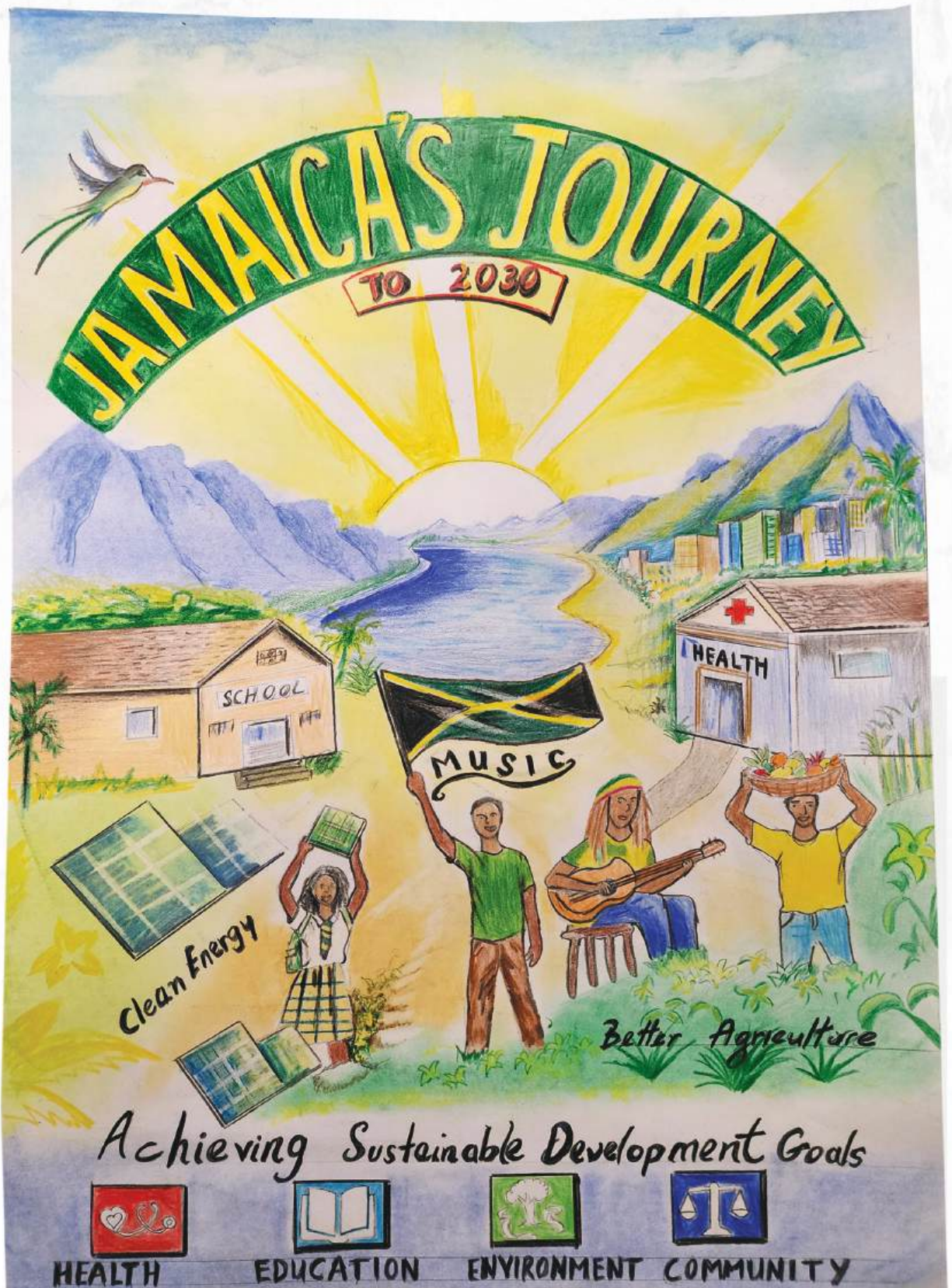
June 2026





Voluntary National Review Report
on the **2030 Agenda** and the
Sustainable Development Goals

June 2026



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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
ABAS	Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS
ADO	Automatic Diesel Oil
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIC	Agro Investment Corporation
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ALEX	Agri-linkages Exchange
ALUP	Agricultural Land Utilization Policy
API	Agricultural Productivity Index
APIS	Advance Passenger Information System
APSE	Alternative Pathways to Secondary Education
ARV	Antiretroviral
ARVs	Antiretrovirals
ATEAM	Agriculture Trade Enforcement Advisory Mechanism
A-TIP	Anti-Trafficking in Persons
BBNJ	Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond Jurisdiction
BBP	Bamboo Bioproducts Project
BCRCC	Beaches and Coastal Resources Conservation Committees
CAP	Career Advancement Programme
CAPRI	Caribbean Policy Research Institute
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CARPHA	Caribbean Public Health Agency
CARTAC	Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre
CCD	Climate Change Division
CCPA	Cockpit Country Protected Area
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CDC	Community Development Committees
CDRM	Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CENRPF	Caribbean Community Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Framework
CEPF	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
CHW	Community Health Worker
CICAD	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CLAP	Latin American Centre for Perinatology
CLEAR II	Country Level Engagement and Assistance to Reduce Child Labour
CLMIS	Contraceptive Logistic Management Information System
COPE	Community Outreach through Partnership for Empowerment

COPOLAD	Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drugs Policies
CPD	Continuing/Continuous Professional Development
CPFSA	Child Protection and Family Services Agency
CRA s	Credit Rating Agencies
CRP	Community Renewal Programme
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSMs	Carbon Stock Assessments Manual
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSEC	Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate
CXC	Caribbean Examination Council
DARP	Development Applications Review Process
DBJ	Development Bank of Jamaica
DPI	Digital Public Infrastructure
DRM	Domestic Resource Mobilisation
DRS	Deposit Refund Scheme
DSSI	Debt Service Suspension Initiative
EBFM	Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management
ECC	Early Childhood Commission
ECHO	Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes
ECIs	Early Childhood Institutions
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECSA	Emergency and Critical Care System Action Plan
EDM	Emergency and Disaster Management
EDMSS	Emergency, Disaster Management and Special Services
EEHCSD	Enabling Environment in Health and Client Service Division
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
EFJ	Environmental Foundation of Jamaica
EHMIS	Environmental Health Management Information System
EHR	Electronic Health Records
EHU	Environmental Health Unit
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EMS	Environmental Management Systems
EMT	Emergency Medical Team
ENC	Essential Newborn Care
ENAP	Every Newborn Action Plan
EU	European Union
EV	Electric Vehicles
EVADP	Essex Valley Agriculture Development Project

EWS	Early Warning Systems
FACE	Fund to Alleviate COVID-19 Economics
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FFDI	Financing for Development Initiative
FBO	Faith-Based Organization
FY	Financial Year
GAC	Gender Advisory Council
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GCCSAP	Gender and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GCM	Global Compact for Migration
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEF SGP	Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GIS	Geographic Information System
GJAM	Green Jobs Assessment Model
GJDC	Global Jamaica Diaspora Council
GKMA	Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area
GMO	Genetically Modified Organisms
GNAT	Grade Nine Achievement Test
GOILP	Grade One Individual Learning Profile
GOJ	Government of Jamaica
GOJEP	Government of Jamaica Electronic Procurement
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GSAT	Grade Six Achievement Test
GSS	Global Services Sector
HDI	Human Development Index
HEOC	Health Emergency Operations Centre
HFO	Heavy Fuel Oil
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HMSR	Hospital Monthly Statistical Report
HSSP	Health System Strengthening Programme
HTA	Health Technology Assessment
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IAS	Invasive Alien Species
ICS	Incident Command System

ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDPs	International Development Partners
IHR	International Health Regulations
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IPP	Independent Power Producers
IRP	Integrated Resource Plan
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUU	Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
JADEP	Jamaica Drug for the Elderly Programme
JAMDEM	Jamaica Diaspora Engagement Model
JAMIS	Jamaica Agricultural Marketing Information System
JAMPRO	Jamaica Promotions Corporation
JAS	Jamaica Agricultural Society
JAGTF	Joint Anti-Gang Task Force
JBDC	Jamaica Business Development Corporation
JCF	Jamaica Constabulary Force
JET	Jamaica Environment Trust
JFLL	Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning
JHLS	Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey
JH-DINA	Jamaica Household Damage and Impact Assessment
JISD	Jamaica Invasive Species Database
JMP	Joint Monitoring Programme
JNVCS	Jamaica National Crime Victimization Survey
JPC	Jamaica Productivity Centre
JPS	Jamaica Public Service
JSIF	Jamaica Social Investment Fund
JSLC	Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions
KMC	Kangaroo Mother Care
KPO	Knowledge Process Outsourcing
KSAMC	Kingston and St Andrew Municipal Corporation
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
LAMP	Land Administration Management Programme
LAPOP	Latin American Public Opinion Project
LFMC	Local Forest Management Committee
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate

LFS	Labour Force Survey
LIAT	Logistic Indicators Assessment Tool
LNG	Liquified Natural Gas
LSF	Liquidity and Sustainability Facility
LSDP	Local Sustainable Development Plans
LTS	Long-Term Emission Reduction and Climate Resilience Strategy
LU	Labour Underutilisation
LUCA	Land Use/Cover Change Assessment
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MDB	Multilateral Development Banks
MCGES	Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport
MEGJC	Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation
MEGID	Ministry of Economic Growth and Infrastructure Development
MGCI	Mountain Green Cover Index
MHAP	Mental Health Action Plan
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
MIIC	Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce
MLGCD	Ministry of Local Government and Community Development
MLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MOAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
MOEYI	Ministry of Education, Youth and Information
MOHW	Ministry of Health and Wellness
MOT	Ministry of Tourism
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
MRPA	Mason River Protected Area
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
MTCT	Mother-to-Child Transmission
MTF	Medium Term Framework
MVI	Multidimensional Vulnerability Index
MW	Megawatt
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NBI	National Broadband Initiative
NBSAP	National Strategy and Action Plan for Biological Diversity
NCDA	National Council on Drug Abuse
NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
NCEL	National College for Educational Leadership
NCTFJ	National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training

NEPA	National Environment and Planning Agency
NFA	National Fisheries Authority
NFIS	National Financial Inclusion Strategy
NFPB	National Family Planning Board
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NHF	National Health Fund
NHI	National Health Insurance
NIDS	National Identification System
NIS	National Insurance Scheme
NOC	National 2030 Agenda Oversight Committee
NPA s	National Protected Areas
NPGE	National Policy for Gender Equality
NRCA	Natural Resources Conservation Authority
NRP	National Reporting Platform
NSC	National Standards Curriculum
NSO	National Statistics Office
NSWMA	National Solid Waste Management Authority
NWC	National Water Commission
OAS	Organisation of American States
OAS/CICAD	Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission
OBS	Open Budget Survey
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ODPEM	Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management
OECD	Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PAHO	Pan American Health Organization
PATH	Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education
PCI	Productive Capacities Index
PDC	Parish Development Committee
PEP	Primary Exit Profile
PHEMS	Pre-Hospital Emergency Medical Services
PIMS	Public Investment Management System
PLHIV	People Living with HIV
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PROMAC	Programme for Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality
PSOJ	Private Sector Organization of Jamaica
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Programme
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RADA	Rural Agricultural Development Authority
RHAs	Regional Health Authorities

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
STATIN	Statistical Institute of Jamaica
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TAJ	Tax Administration Jamaica
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCAC	United Nations Convention against Corruption
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forest
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WRA	Water Resources Authority
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZOSOs	Zones of Special Operations



At this critical juncture in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Jamaica presents its third Voluntary National Review (VNR), reflecting on progress made, challenges encountered and the actions required to accelerate progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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This review is being undertaken against the backdrop of an increasingly complex global landscape, defined by overlapping crises, including climate change, economic uncertainty and the cumulative effects of recent global crises. For Jamaica, these global pressures have been compounded by recent shocks, most notably the passage of Hurricane Melissa in October 2025, which caused widespread disruption and underscored the vulnerability of development gains to external events.

Since our last VNR in 2022, Jamaica has continued to advance implementation of the SDGs through Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, supported by successive Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Frameworks. These instruments have ensured sustained alignment

OPENING STATEMENT

between national priorities and the 2030 Agenda, while strengthening systems for monitoring, evaluation and accountability.

This VNR provides an opportunity not only to assess progress, but to interrogate the pace and direction of that progress. National analyses undertaken since 2022 have identified priority areas where acceleration is required, alongside key sectors that can achieve multiplier effects across the development landscape. These insights have informed a more targeted and issue-driven approach to this review, allowing for deeper examination of the structural and emerging challenges shaping Jamaica's development trajectory.

While notable gains have been recorded across the social, economic and environmental dimensions, recent shocks have reinforced the need to move beyond a focus on stability towards a more deliberate and sustained emphasis on resilience. Jamaica's development strategy is therefore increasingly anchored in strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing data-driven decision-making and building systems that are shock-responsive, inclusive and sustainable.

In this context, Jamaica remains firmly committed to the principles of the 2030 Agenda. Through strengthened partnerships, both nationally and internationally and a continued focus on inclusive development, the country is advancing a path to restore and strengthen development gains, while accelerating progress towards a resilient and sustainable future that leaves no one behind.

The Most Honourable
Andrew Holness, ON, PC, MP
 Prime Minister of Jamaica

THE JAMAICA I SEE

What a prosperous Jamaica I see,
That continues to blossom in this year of 2033
Our healthcare system has become world-class,
With well-equipped facilities and highly trained staff,
Treatment is very affordable for those living with lifestyle disease,
And we have even extended the nations' life expectancy!
What a sustainable Jamaica I see,
We have built such a prosperous economy,
We have overcome challenges like high levels of youth unemployment
And low levels of investment in research and development
What a beautiful Jamaica I see,
A nation rising strong and free
Reclaiming every shining shore,
Where waves sing louder than before!
Solar panels shine like banners
While mangroves guard our golden shore,
We have mastered taking care of our natural environment
and will guard her forevermore,
What a prosperous, sustainable and beautiful Jamaica I see
Jamaica has become the place of choice to live, work,
raise families and do business indeed.'

HALEY CLARKE, York Castle High School
Winner of the SDG Creative Expressions Competition



HIGHLIGHTS

VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2026

Building Resilience for a Better Recovery

OVERVIEW

The 3rd VNR reflects the country's development progress with data up to 2025 and thematic discussions on issues that advance the goals. While strong development gains were experienced in the review period, progress up to 2030 is expected to be undercut by the impact of Hurricane Melissa in 2025.

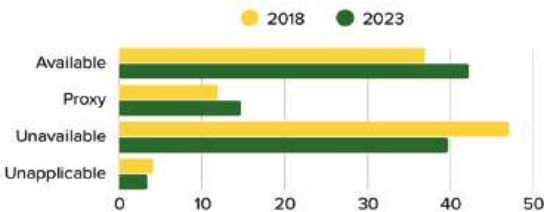
HURRICANE MELISSA

US\$12.3 BILLION Loss and Damage

45 Confirmed fatalities

261 527 Number of persons whose homes were damaged or destroyed.

Availability of SDG Indicators



The 3rd VNR was enhanced with improved data reporting following efforts by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica in a 2023 assessment of reporting capacity.

SOCIAL

7.8% 2024

Lowest recorded poverty prevalence

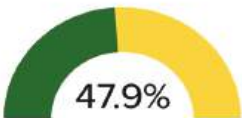
3.3% Q3 2025

Lowest recorded unemployment rate



Elimination of mother-child transmission of HIV

ENVIRONMENTAL

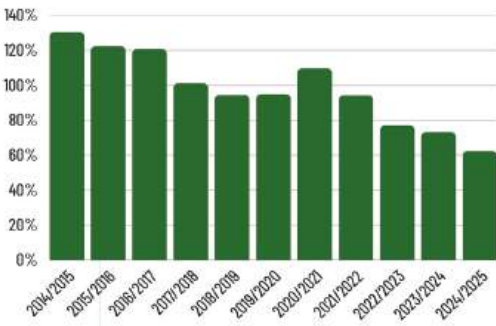


Forest Coverage



15% of Exclusive Economic Zone protected, on track to 30% by 2030

Public Debt % of GDP



INTRODUCTION

The pursuit of sustainable development in a small island developing state (SIDS) requires balancing fiscal prudence, investments for growth, resilience and social inclusion. Ongoing monitoring of progress through the Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan, the mechanism for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation, enables a structured approach to evaluating development outcomes, informing policy prioritisation, and ensuring that the needs of the poor and vulnerable are addressed. This strong alignment, over 98.0 per cent, between the SDGs and Vision 2030 Jamaica reinforces the coherence of Jamaica's national development framework. It demonstrates the country's commitment to SDG implementation through the alignment of policies and programmes to achieving the SDG targets.

The implementation of the SDGs over the past 10 years has benefitted from progressive, strong institutional and governance systems characterised by an overarching national development planning framework and associated results-based accountability and financing systems. Stakeholder participation has been a key feature of SDG implementation in Jamaica through a *“whole-of-society”* approach facilitated by established multi-stakeholder mechanisms and direct engagement that contribute to prioritisation and facilitates action across sectors of society. Strengthening data architecture and monitoring and evaluation frameworks demonstrates the country's commitment to evidence-based policy and implementation. This promotes continuity and resilience through agile frameworks that respond to emerging challenges whilst promoting innovation and strengthening systems.

Jamaica's third Voluntary National Review (VNR) is prepared in a context of emerging global issues such as geopolitical conflicts and crises with significant economic and social consequence. Global progress towards the SDGs is increasingly at risk with 17.0 per cent of SDG targets on track to achievement, 18.0 per cent show moderate progress, 30.0 per cent show marginal progress, 18.0 per cent stagnating and 18.0 per cent have regressed below the baseline year of 2015 (United Nations Stats, 2024). Regionally, Latin America and the Caribbean faces measurably better progress, with 23.0 per cent of targets already met or likely to be achieved, 41.0 per cent in the right direction but at too slow a pace to meet the target by 2030 and 36.0 per cent regressing from the target (United Nations, 2025). For Jamaica, 26.0 per cent of the targets are on track to be achieved, limited progress is observed on 35.6 per cent of the targets and 38.4 per cent is worsening.

The region's progress is compounded by the low productive capacity hindering economic growth, high inequality and low social mobility, diminished institutional capacity and governance (Economic

Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ECLAC, 2025). These factors influence the ability of states to respond to crises while implementing programmes that can support development. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has identified transformative sectors—energy, the bioeconomy, sustainable tourism and digital transformation— as critical drivers for accelerating development (ECLAC, 2023). Advancing these transformations require strong governance, institutional capacity, developed political economy and strong social dialogue to raise the profile of development issues and enable accountability, ownership and effective implementation.

Resilience building is crucial for small island developing states like Jamaica. On October 28, 2025, Jamaica experienced the passage of Hurricane Melissa, a Category 5 storm that caused widespread devastation, mainly, in the western region of the island, and far-reaching impact on the country and society as a whole. This single event generated loss and damage of J\$1 953 billion – equivalent to 56.7 per cent of 2024 GDP – representing one of the most catastrophic disasters in Jamaica’s history. Forty-five lives were lost, underscoring the human cost of climate-related disasters. The country was already recovering from Category 4 Hurricane Beryl, which made landfall in July 2024 and generated J\$56.7 billion in damage. These consecutive events highlight Jamaica’s climate vulnerability and the fragility of development gains in small island developing states.

2

The passage of the Hurricane Melissa during the preparation of the VNR presented a unique challenge incredibly representing Jamaica’s development progress in the context of a major disaster, reflecting the realities faced by policymakers and planners. Jamaica’s commitment to evidence-based development, along with its strong culture of partnership and stakeholder engagement, enabled the country to effectively mobilise recovery efforts while producing a review that is responsive to current realities.

In this regard, the VNR is issue driven, allowing for clear ventilation of development challenges, utilising relevant data to reflect on the global realities and the compounding effects of structural challenges. These, together with identified accelerators for SDG achievement at the national level, support a thematic assessment of progress and priorities for the post-2030 development agenda. The thematic areas selected for this VNR therefore provide both retrospective assessment of progress and a forward-looking perspective on issues relevant to the Jamaican development landscape, highlighting lessons learned and where possible emerging good practices, through 17 thematic reports:

- **GOAL 1:** Modernising Social Protection
- **GOAL 2:** Sustainable Agricultural Production
- **GOAL 3:** Epidemiological Profile and Transition
- **GOAL 4:** Educational Transformation
- **GOAL 5:** Gender in Development
- **GOAL 6:** Water Resource Management
- **GOAL 7:** Energy Transition

- **GOAL 8:** The Future of Work
- **GOAL 9:** Productive Capacity and AI
- **GOAL 10:** Migration and Development
- **GOAL 11:** Spatial Planning
- **GOAL 12:** Circular Economies
- **GOAL 13:** Climate Change Nexus
- **GOAL 14:** Blue Economy
- **GOAL 15:** Biodiversity Management
- **GOAL 16:** Strong Institutions
- **GOAL 17:** Multilateralism

Recognising the complexity of the SDG framework, these thematic reports demonstrate the interlinkages among the SDG goals and how coherence in policy and supportive institutional systems can lead to measurable results. Additionally, the inclusion of a special report: *“Harnessing the Opportunities and Addressing the Challenges of Population Ageing in Jamaica”* contextualises sustainable development in an era of ageing populations, noting its implications for leaving no one behind.

The VNR further analyses SDG acceleration identifying context and policy relevant measures to close the performance gaps. The midterm evaluation of the SDG that commenced in 2023, utilised gap, forecasting and scenario analyses and identified SDGs 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 15 and 16 as priority based on observed stagnation and pace of achievement up to 2030. A correlation analysis revealed SDGs 3, 4, 9 and 11 as accelerators due to their strong positive relationship with the priority goals. The *Accelerating SDG Convergence for Jamaica: Policy Insights from the Prioritising Sustainable Development Transformation Study* was conducted following the midterm evaluation to deepen assessment on SDG Acceleration, examining impact timeliness of identified SDG accelerators and evidence – based policy responses as well as practical and context relevant financing options for implementation. The inclusion of regional analysis, contributed by the ECLAC Caribbean subregional Office, of the development themes acknowledges the regional context of Jamaica’s development and underscores cooperation as vital to achieving the SDGs.

This thematic presentation is complemented by a comprehensive statistical annex prepared by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), presenting a detailed report on each target and indicator for which data are available. This statistical annex was developed through consistent monitoring of the SDG indicators by the National Statistical Office (NSO), and the improvement of data architecture and capacity to enable improved data production and reporting. Together, both documents aim to provide a comprehensive reflection on progress and presentation of key imperatives to drive sustainable development progress forward.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS OF THE REVIEW

Jamaica's third Voluntary National Review process adhered to the Secretary General's Common Reporting Guidelines and the VNR Handbook (2026) published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). It was also conducted with sensitivity to the planned SDG Summit in 2027, evaluating 10 years of implementation and imperatives to drive sustainable development beyond 2030. It promotes continuity and builds on the previous VNR reports improving the analytical depth of each VNR presented. The first VNR (2018) outlined the programmes and actions being implemented to achieve the goals including International Development Partner (IDP) financing aligned to the SDGs, and a statistical annex reporting on progress for each indicator for which data were available. The second VNR (2022) reflected continuity in development planning and highlighted the gains made since adoption of the 2030 Agenda in education, economic management, poverty reduction, and environmental resilience, while exploring the challenges from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, along with other systemic issues—climate change vulnerability, high debt, low export diversification, fossil fuel dependency and low human capital development.

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FIGURE 1: Progression of Jamaica's Voluntary National Reviews

This third VNR is research focused, producing 17 thematic reports that explore the issues identified around which the substantive areas of the targets largely coalesce. These thematic reports were prepared using secondary data from published studies and data sets, as well as incorporating stakeholder input gathered through focus group discussions. Of note, the midterm evaluation of Jamaica's performance on the SDGs commissioned by the Government of Jamaica and the follow-up study conducted on impact timeliness and costing by the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office have contributed significantly to enhancing the analytical approach applied in this report.

The statistical annex is produced by the National Statistics Office, representing official statistics published by the country for reporting on development indicators.

In keeping with the inclusive and participatory nature of the review process, stakeholder engagement was central to ensuring voice and representation of all sectors of society. In this regard, focused consultations were conducted with:

Youth: through consultation with the youth thematic working group of Vision 2030 Jamaica and, youth representatives across all regions mobilised through the National Youth Council of Jamaica in focus group discussions to assess the extent to which youth participation and issues are represented in the sustainable development and how the thematic areas identified take account of youth perspectives and issues in implementation. A national schools competition was executed in partnership with the Planning Institute of Jamaica, the Ministry of Education, Youth, Skills and Information and eLearning Jamaica to enable participation of children and youth from grades 4 to 6 of primary schools and grades 7 to 13 of secondary schools in a competition to design poster or produce a creative writing piece that showed their vision for Jamaica beyond 2030. The winning art pieces were used to create the cover of this publication and other entries represented in other sections. Literary pieces are also included in the thematic sections.

Private Sector: through engagement of representative bodies of the private sector interests who participated in consultations on private sector engagement with the SDGs, validation of key aspects of the VNR report, and providing input to global priorities beyond 2030. A special report to this VNR was completed through Mona School of Business and Management, University of the West Indies, to respond to the following questions as part of the government's commitment to continued inclusive development progress:

- What is the current situation of private sector engagement with national development and the implementation of the SDGs?
- How has the Government of Jamaica created an enabling environment for private sector contribution to national development? What are the gaps and challenges?
- What are the key policy priorities to which the private sector can contribute to accelerate SDG implementation in Jamaica?
- What are the existing mechanisms for private sector engagement in national development? What are the bottlenecks and challenges?

Persons with Disabilities: through a consultation centred on inclusion, persons with disabilities contributed to issues in national development, highlighting priorities for better representation in local and global development paradigms. The consultation with persons with disabilities was executed in partnership with the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities to ensure appropriate representation.

Civil Society: through focused consultations with civil society organisations mobilised through partnership with the Council for Voluntary Social Services and the Community Renewal Programme. This ensured a balance of community and parish-based organisations as well as non-government organisations who are actively participating in development at the local level. This consultation captured the work of civil society in SDG implementation and enabled input in defining priorities for a global framework beyond 2030.

Local Authorities: recognising the importance of translating national development at the local level, this consultation sought to take stock of SDG localisation and engage local authorities in evaluating 10 years of SDG implementation at the local level as well as priorities for a global framework 2030.

Government Stakeholders: through rounds of engagements that supported data and information gathering to prepare the VNR report and statistical annex, review and validation of both documents, participation in consultation to provide perspectives on 10 years of SDG implementation and a global framework beyond 2030. These consultations were conducted at the technical level through the Office of the Permanent Secretary.

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The process of the review is guided by the institutional framework established by Cabinet decision with responsibility to provide oversight and direction to the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. The Planning Institute of Jamaica, the Statistical Institute of Jamaica and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, who together form the National SDG Core Group, provide policy direction to the process in keeping with their respective mandates and terms of reference governing the Core Group. The National SDG Core Group prepared a concept note detailing the approach to the review process which was presented to the National 2030 Agenda Oversight Committee for consideration and approval. Subsequently, a cabinet note was submitted on the country's preparation to conduct a third VNR. Cabinet decision was formally communicated to all government ministries notifying of the commencement of the review process. Stakeholder participation was mobilised as described above to reflect the whole-of-society approach to SDG implementation. The complete validated VNR was submitted for Cabinet approval prior to submission to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Whilst this approach sought to comprehensively represent the country's progress on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, key challenges remain in incorporating progress on the various instruments within the agenda. In this regard, Jamaica continues to advocate for a streamlined system with common

indicators to enable adequate coverage in reporting. Whilst the institutional mechanism through the Data and Monitoring subcommittee of the National 2030 Agenda Oversight Committee sought to respond by commencing a process of mainstreaming data collection for reporting, it is imperative that this issue be addressed at the global level.

POLICY AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Ownership

Jamaica's commitment to sustainable development is reflected in the strengthening of its institutions, systems and methods of engagement to support national development and the implementation of the SDGs. Following the presentation of the 2022 VNR, measures to enhance data capacity and infrastructure have supported the country's pursuit of results – and evidence-based national development. The ongoing strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems for Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan, and the midterm evaluation of SDG implementation in Jamaica builds on earlier assessments, including strategic review of Vision 2030 Jamaica, and the Audit of Jamaica's Readiness to implement the SDGs conducted by the Auditor General in 2018. The strengthening of the results-based management and results-based budgeting frameworks support efficiency in implementation and use of development financing.

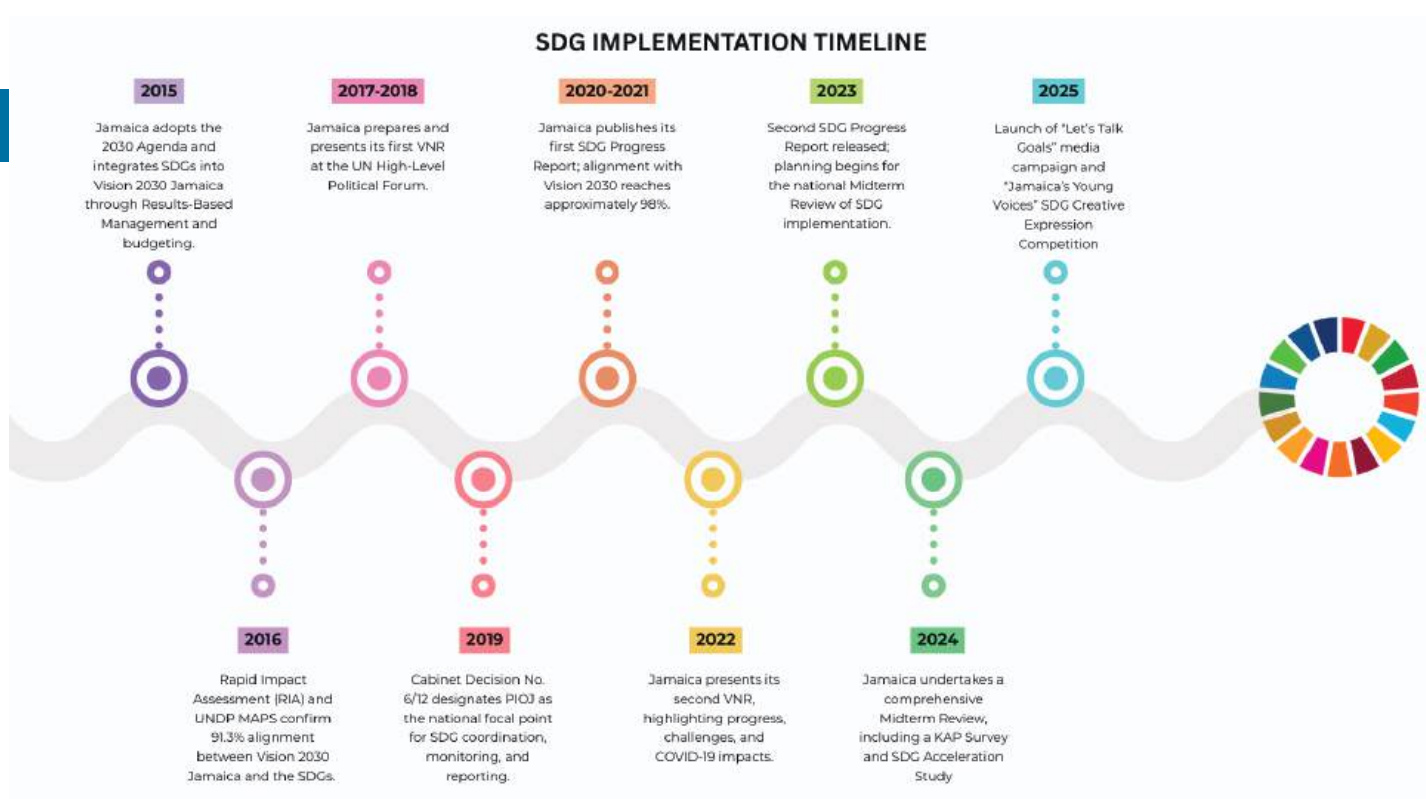


FIGURE 2 SDG Implementation Timeline 2015 - Present

Policy Alignment and Coherence

Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan remains the primary mechanism through which the SDGs are implemented in Jamaica. Vision 2030 Jamaica remains aligned with the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development, demonstrating comprehensive integration at both the goal and target levels. The national framework links each of the four national goals and their corresponding outcomes to relevant SDGs through an extensive integration exercise, ensuring that national strategies under Vision 2030 Jamaica serve as localised vehicles for advancing the global SDG agenda at the national and local levels. The alignment also facilitates integrated monitoring and reporting mechanisms, particularly for tracking national progress against the SDG indicators.



FIGURE 3 Vision 2030 Jamaica and SDGs Alignment

Under the Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF 2021–2024), key advances were made in areas such as human capital development, macroeconomic stability, environmental management, and institutional strengthening. These efforts contributed to measurable improvements in education outcomes, digital transformation in public administration, and enhanced climate resilience at the community level. As Jamaica implements the MTF 2024–2027, there is a deliberate emphasis on addressing structural challenges that impact the enabling environment for development and accelerating progress in lagging areas—particularly reducing inequality, improving disaster preparedness, and advancing the green and blue economy. The Government’s strategic focus for this MTF cycle is anchored in the priority areas outlined, namely: People-Centred Development; Health and Wellness; Human Capital Development and Social Protection; Transformational Culture and Social Capital Development; Effective National Security, Justice and Governance; Economic Stability, Competitiveness and Sustainable and Inclusive Growth; Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change Resilience; and Balanced and Sustainable Rural and Urban Development.¹

The current MTF cycle is designed to consolidate gains while deepening policy coherence with emerging international frameworks such as the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS), which Jamaica adopted in 2024. The country views the ABAS as a critical mechanism to address systemic vulnerabilities faced by SIDS, including limited access to concessional financing, climate-induced disasters, and external economic shocks. Jamaica supports the agenda's call for enhanced international cooperation, equitable access to climate finance, and reform of the global financial architecture to ensure that SIDS can build resilience and achieve sustainable growth.

Jamaica has participated in the processes for defining the monitoring and evaluation framework for the ABAS as well as the process to define the implementation framework.

Financing For Development

The GOJ has taken deliberate steps over time to strengthen its institutional architecture by aligning budgetary priorities with development results, and leveraging a broader range of financing sources for sustainable development. In particular, the adoption of the medium-term results-based budgeting framework has enabled stronger linkages between budgetary allocations and programming aligned with the policy priorities represented in the National Strategy Framework of Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan and the MTF. This approach strengthens the nexus between strategic planning and fiscal policy, reduces fragmentation, and enhances transparency, accountability and the financing of SDG implementation.²

Jamaica, through the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, has actively engaged development partners to secure SDG-aligned concessional financing, thereby expanding its financing envelope beyond domestic revenues and traditional debt instruments. However, Jamaica's designation as an upper-middle income country continues to constrain access to concessional resources, underscoring the significance of diversifying financing sources. Jamaica has advanced the use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and diaspora investment channels as complementary financing streams. For example, Jamaica's PPP framework—managed by the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) and the Ministry of Finance's PPP Unit—facilitates private sector participation in infrastructure development and service delivery. Similarly, the National Diaspora Policy promotes diaspora engagement as a means of mobilizing external financing and expertise for national development.³

Jamaica has also strengthened its disaster risk financing and management architecture as part of a broader strategy to enhance fiscal resilience. Through the development of the National Natural Disaster Risk Financing Policy (2021-2026) and the Jamaica Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy and Strategy (2020-2040), the government has moved to buttress its response and strengthened its disaster risk management framework. These policies and strategies are meant to become a guiding force behind the building of the country's fiscal and financial resilience and will aid the government in

¹ Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) 2024–2027

² Ministry of Finance and the Public Service Financial year 2025/2026 Budget Call and Medium-Term Results-Based Budgeting Guidelines

³ National Diaspora Policy

minimising the fiscal impact of natural disasters on the national budget, the economy and the society through financing instruments that the Government can readily access to respond to natural disasters.⁴ One such instrument is the catastrophe bond, an innovative instrument that provides financial protection against losses from named storms during the Atlantic hurricane season, first issued for 2021-2023 and 2024-2027. Hurricane Melissa met the agreed disaster-risk thresholds and triggered a full payout to Jamaica under its disaster risk financing arrangements. The timely disbursement of funds provided fiscal space to support emergency response and recovery efforts, reducing pressure on the national budget. This experience underscores the value of pre-arranged disaster financing instruments as part of a broader strategy to strengthen fiscal resilience and manage climate-related shocks.

Building on these national efforts, Jamaica's approach is aligned with regional priorities, particularly those articulated under the ABAS, which emphasises resilient economies, risk-informed planning, and sustainable financing pathways across small island developing states. The ABAS also promotes integrated national financing systems, climate-responsive public financial management, and strengthened disaster and climate resilience, areas that Jamaica has begun to advance through its national policies and risk financing strategies. This alignment enhances policy coherence and positions Jamaica to better leverage international partnerships, and financing mechanisms tailored to SIDS. Overall, institutional strengthening remains a critical pathway for SDG acceleration, particularly in building evidence-based frameworks that can attract, coordinate, and effectively utilise diverse financing sources.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Data Systems

Monitoring progress on the SDGs has been strengthened through ongoing improvements in national data systems, reporting mechanisms, and performance monitoring frameworks. These efforts are geared towards filling existing data gaps and enhancing the availability of new data to allow further disaggregation which provides a more detailed representation of progress towards the goals. Despite advances made, data availability and quality challenges remain. A 2016 assessment of Jamaica's SDG indicator framework found 223 unique applicable indicators, but only 66 were being produced locally, with data available for 69 more, and 88 indicators lacked any data sources. Since then, steps have been taken to strengthen the National Statistical System (NSS), expand data production, and improve the SDG dashboard to monitor progress.

STATIN continues to modernise the national statistical framework with the aim to streamline data production, improving coordination for reporting to support evidence-based decision making within the policy space. STATIN along with the PIOJ, continues to maintain their role in coordinating, monitoring, reporting and the accountability framework for the SDGs. In 2023, the national focal point convened the Data Monitoring Sub-Committee, chaired by STATIN, with a mandate to support the NSO in its functions of improving data collection and reporting for the SDGs and strengthening the NSS. This included enabling the production of high-quality, timely data to inform evidence-based decision-making, as well as facilitating the preparation of national reports on the SDGs.⁵ During the same year, a comprehensive assessment of the SDG indicators was undertaken alongside indicators from other

⁴ Green Paper the National Natural Disaster Risk Financing Policy, 2021 - 2026

⁵ Terms of Reference Data and Monitoring Subcommittee

global frameworks to which Jamaica is a party, inter alia, the New Urban Agenda, the SAMOA Pathway, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. The goal was to streamline data collection and reporting processes, ensuring that Jamaica could efficiently meet its reporting obligations while maintaining the availability of quality, timely data.

In 2023, similar to its 2018 initiative, the Statistical Institute of Jamaica conducted an assessment through thematic working groups to evaluate Jamaica's capacity to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals. The assessment identified 251 indicators from the Global Framework, of which 234 were unique and 13 were repeated across multiple targets. Of the 234 unique indicators, 56.8 per cent were available—43.6 per cent as defined by the standard global metadata and 13.2 per cent through proxies. However, 39.7 per cent of the indicators remained unavailable, and 3.4 per cent were considered either inapplicable or not produced at the national level.

TABLE 1 outlines the availability of the 251 SDG indicators in Jamaica, categorised under the 17 Goals. Overall, 57.0 per cent of the indicators are currently available in some form.

This includes:

- 42.2 per cent of the indicators that are available as defined by the standard global metadata.
- 14.7 per cent that are available via proxy data, meaning alternative sources or closely related indicators are used where direct data is not accessible.

GOALS	NUMBER OF INDICATORS					PERCENTAGE				
	GLOBAL	PROXY	AVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE	TOTAL	GLOBAL	PROXY	AVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE	
1	7	4	11	2	13	53.8	30.8	84.6	15.4	
2	5	1	6	9	15	33.3	6.7	40.0	60.0	
3	17	4	21	7	28	60.7	14.3	75.0	25.0	
4	10	1	11	1	12	83.3	8.3	91.7	8.3	
5	5	1	6	8	14	35.7	7.1	42.9	57.1	
6	7	0	7	4	11	63.6	0.0	63.6	36.4	
7	1	3	4	2	6	16.7	50.0	66.7	33.3	
8	9	2	11	6	17	52.9	11.8	64.7	35.3	
9	5	1	6	6	12	41.7	8.3	50.0	50.0	
10	2	2	4	10	14	14.3	14.3	28.6	71.4	
11	3	6	9	7	16	18.8	37.5	56.3	43.8	
12	1	3	4	9	13	7.7	23.1	30.8	69.2	
13	3	1	4	4	8	37.5	12.5	50.0	50.0	
14	1	3	4	6	10	10.0	30.0	40.0	60.0	
15	5	2	7	7	14	35.7	14.3	50.0	50.0	
16	8	3	11	13	24	33.3	12.5	45.8	54.2	
17	17	0	17	7	24	70.8	0.0	70.8	29.2	
TOTAL	106	37	143	108	251	42.2	14.7	57.0	43.0	

TABLE 1 Availability of SDG Indicators in Jamaica by Goals

TABLE 2 provides an overview of the availability and relevance of the SDG indicators in Jamaica. As illustrated below, out of the 251 indicators, 13 are repeated under two or three different targets (17 instances) resulting in 234 unique indicators.

	GLOBAL	PROXY	AVAILABLE	UNAVAILABLE	TOTAL
Total Indicators by Availability	106	37	143	108	251
Repeated Indicators	4	6	10	7	17
Total indicators excluding repeated indicators	102	31	133	101	234
Indicators not applicable to Jamaica	-	-	-	8	226
Percentage of 234 Unique Indicators	43.6	13.2		39.7	3.4

TABLE 2 Summary of Indicator Availability and Applicability for Jamaica

Jamaica, like many other SIDS and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), continues to face major challenges in generating sufficient, reliable, and timely data across the SDG indicator framework. The extent of missing SDG data limits the country's ability to accurately assess progress, which in turn constrains evidence-based policymaking. The scale and complexity of SDG indicators place significant demands on national statistical systems, particularly in small island developing states with limited technical and human resources. Each SDG contains multiple targets, and each target is measured through several indicators—resulting in hundreds of metrics for which data must be produced. For many indicators, data must also be collected and disaggregated at the subnational levels, including by sex, age group, disability status, geography (such as parish), and socioeconomic characteristics. Collectively, these requirements create an exceptionally high demand for data production, coordination, and analysis. This workload is especially challenging given that STATIN was not previously responsible for producing many of these indicators. As a result, substantial investments in capacity, coordination, and system strengthening are required to expand data production to meet international reporting standards and support effective national planning.

Since its inception in 1934, gross domestic product (GDP), has served as a fundamental measure of economic growth, providing a snapshot of a nation's production with a single number. It has been a universally recognised tool that allows for comparisons across countries. While acknowledging the importance of this tool, there has been a growing demand for measures that go beyond GDP; ones that take into account inclusive and sustainable growth, particularly expressed in the SDGs.⁶ In 2024, the PIOJ introduced the Inclusive Growth Index Framework (IGIF), a unique tool designed to bridge the gap between economics and development. It aims to significantly enhance Jamaica's ability to

⁶ The Planning Institute of Jamaica's Review of Economic Performance, October–December 2023 Media Brief February 21, 2024

achieve the goals outlined in Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan—ensuring improved economic and social outcomes for all citizens. The IGIF has seven key pillars: Health, Human Capital, Environmental Quality, Wealth, Equality & Equity, Safety & Security, and Poverty Reduction. These pillars, comprising various outcome indicators, are consolidated into a composite Inclusive Growth Index. It employs econometric and other statistical tools to assess relationships across indicators within and across these pillars. This approach provided empirical insights into the strength or impact of indicators; and the trade-offs in achieving the desired economic growth.

Additionally, Jamaica has advanced the development of a National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). The national MPI for Jamaica is intended to serve as a foundation for further examination and discourse in the development of policies and programmes; and inform research aimed at reducing multidimensional poverty, promoting the welfare of persons in need, and ensuring that no one is left behind. It is used to complement the current consumption-based monetary measure and facilitate the monitoring and identification of different areas of deprivation faced by the poor. The concept of poverty behind the MPI is that poverty is the result of the sum of different deprivations that affect an individual or household simultaneously. The MPI measures deprivations across four equally weighted dimensions: Education, Health, Living Standards, and Employment. Its methodology draws on the international Alkire-Foster approach but is adapted to Jamaica's national context.

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The national MPI was launched in January 2026 informed by a wide range of consultations, expert advice and empirical research. Focus group discussions and consultation sessions were held with vulnerable groups across the island at the community level, and with service providers and experts in related disciplines. At the conclusion of the process, the MPI consists of the four dimensions mentioned above, and 15 indicators. The Index (MPI) shows that the incidence of multidimensional poverty reduced by 2.9 percentage points from 11.6 per cent in 2018 to 8.7 per cent in 2019. Over the two-year period, there was a statistically significant reduction in the percentage of poor people who were deprived in seven of the 15 indicators of poverty.

Subsequent versions of the report are expected to be produced utilising more recent data. The MPI will allow policymakers to identify the depth and distribution of poverty across demographic groups and parishes, enabling more precise targeting of interventions. Importantly, the index relies on disaggregated data—by rural–urban location, sex, disability status, household size and the presence of children in the household making it a powerful tool for identifying populations at risk of being left behind and for strengthening policy coherence.

Institutional Coordination

Mechanisms to ensure policy coherence are embedded through the National 2030 Agenda Oversight Committee (NOC) and the Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), which bring together stakeholders to integrate SDG priorities into sectoral policies and support monitoring and evaluation for Vision

2030 Jamaica - National Development Plan and the SDGs. These mechanisms promote horizontal and vertical coordination to avoid duplication and ensure that Vision 2030 Jamaica implementation is mutually reinforcing with commitments under the 2030 Agenda. Cross-cutting issues, including gender equality, climate resilience, youth empowerment, and equity, are systematically mainstreamed into national planning.

The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), as the national focal point for the SDGs, continues to lead coordination and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Through the National 2030 Agenda Oversight Committee (NOC), the SDG Core Group, and the network of Vision 2030 Jamaica Thematic Working Groups (TWGs), the PIOJ facilitates collaboration across government MDAs, as well as with civil society, academia, and the private sector. These mechanisms ensure alignment between the SDGs and the national development framework, Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, while supporting integrated planning and monitoring across key policy areas. Within this framework:

- **the NOC** provides high-level strategic oversight and serves as a central multi-stakeholder advisory body. It brings together representatives from key sectors of society to support strategic dialogue, promote partnerships, and strengthen accountability, ensuring that implementation of the SDGs reflects national and local level priorities. The NOC's work is supported by two subcommittees—the Data and Monitoring Subcommittee and the Communication Subcommittee. The Data and Monitoring Subcommittee is responsible for strengthening the national statistical framework by promoting the production of timely, high-quality data that enables evidence-based decision making. It also plays a key role in coordinating and facilitating the preparation of SDG-related reports. The Communications Subcommittee supports the implementation of the national communication programme for the SDGs, to increase public awareness and engagement. It is responsible for executing the strategies outlined in the Communication and Advocacy Roadmap and contributes to monitoring and evaluating communication and advocacy efforts.
- **the National SDG Core Group**, comprising the PIOJ, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (MFAFT), and the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), functions as the primary technical coordination body. It aligns national planning processes with international commitments, oversees SDG reporting and review cycles, and guides the development and use of the national SDG statistical framework to support evidence-based decision-making.
- **the TWGs** provide sector-level coordination and technical support. Drawing on expertise from government, civil society, academia, the private sector, and development partners, the TWGs contribute to monitoring, evaluation, and policy coherence across the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development. Their work remains central to translating national goals of Vision 2030 Jamaica into actionable sector strategies and long-term development outcomes.

Institutional capacity has been significantly strengthened since the 2022 VNR through targeted reforms, enhanced coordination, and sustained capacity-building efforts. Notably, the GOJ with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), developed the Data 4 Development Online Monitoring Platform, which serves as a central digital system for tracking progress on Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs. This platform was designed to improve how the country collects, manages, and reports data on national development. Coordination mechanisms have also been reinforced, including the reactivation of inactive TWGs and the convening of the Data and Monitoring Subcommittee of the NOC. The Data and Monitoring Subcommittee contributes to ongoing assessments of Jamaica's capacity to produce data for the SDG indicator framework, including supporting STATIN in revising and refining national indicators. It also strengthens and advocates for improvements in the national statistical system to support monitoring of the post-2015 development agenda, while providing technical guidance to the NOC on monitoring and evaluation, identifying gaps, and recommending corrective actions. In addition, the subcommittee helps review and finalise national reports such as the Progress Report and the VNR, prepares policy papers that advise the government on SDG implementation and monitoring, supports institutional capacity building for effective tracking of progress, and assists with the production of periodic reports related to instruments and agreements under the 2030 Agenda.

Localisation of the SDGs

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Jamaica defines the localisation of the SDGs as the process of translating national development priorities into tangible actions at the local level through participatory planning, engagement and implementation mechanisms. This reflects the whole-of-society approach underpinning the implementation of Vision 2030 Jamaica - National Development Plan and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This approach promotes coherence between policy frameworks and local-level programming, strengthens stakeholder ownership, and enhances the sustainability of development outcomes. Importantly, it ensures that development results are not only achieved at the national level but are meaningfully reflected in improved well-being and lived experiences of citizens across communities.

SDG localisation has been a strategic priority for Jamaica since the adoption of the SDGs. In 2017, Jamaica, in partnership with the UNDP, implemented a dedicated localisation programme aimed at strengthening national capacity, deepening stakeholder participation, and reinforcing institutional frameworks. This initiative promoted improved alignment of local level planning with Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs along with more effective implementation, monitoring, and reporting on the 2030 Agenda. Key results of the localisation programme have included strengthened institutional arrangements for SDG monitoring and oversight, expanded stakeholder engagement and public awareness and enhanced technical capacity within MDAs through training in data quality, standards, and reporting for the SDG indicator framework.

Following the 2022 VNR, Jamaica continued to advance the localisation of the SDGs and has made notable progress. Key actions have included sensitisation and capacity-building sessions

with stakeholders at the local level—including community development practitioners, church representatives, members of Community Development Committees (CDCs), community-based organisations (CBOs), entrepreneurs and civil society groups—to deepen understanding of Vision 2030 Jamaica, the SDGs and their linkages to national and local priorities. Technical guidance has also been provided to support the integration of Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs into local plans, programmes, and budgets through promoting alignment with the national and global goals and targets, and the medium-term policy driven strategies that guide programming presented in the MTF.

The Data 4 Development Online Monitoring Platform includes a Local Development Dashboard, which presents parish-level disaggregated data for the national outcome indicators. Users can interact with the data through customizable visualisation options and can download or share datasets for further analysis. It is complementary to the Vision 2030 Jamaica Monitoring Dashboard which features the national outcome indicators and the alignment of the SDGs with the indicators.

Youth engagement has been strengthened as part of the localisation process through the work of the Vision 2030 Jamaica Youth TWG and strategic initiatives. The Youth TWG is chaired by a representative of the Youth and Adolescent Division in the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information (MoESYI). The focus of the TWG has included the integration of the SDGs and their relevance to youth-led development action, as well as capacity building. These engagements provide a platform for young Jamaicans and key stakeholders in youth development to support the implementation of the National Youth Policy, contribute perspectives on national development priorities and Jamaica's role in promoting shared global prosperity, and contribute to strengthened partnerships and collaboration in advancing youth development.

These localisation efforts collectively contribute to strengthening awareness, participation and accountability at the parish and community levels. By promoting stakeholder engagement and participation, data accessibility, creative expression, and strategic communications, Jamaica continues to deepen the integration of the SDGs within national and local development processes.

Public Engagement and Communication

Communication and engagement of stakeholders supports SDG localisation and is guided by evidence as reflected in the Communications Roadmap prepared in 2018. From this roadmap, Jamaica executed a Knowledge, Attitude and Perception (KAP) survey in 2024 as part of the midterm evaluation of the SDGs. This KAP assessed the knowledge, attitude and perception of the Jamaican population towards the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. It revealed limited public awareness of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, with only 20.3 per cent of respondents having heard of the 2030 Agenda and 22.5 per cent familiar with the term *"Sustainable Development Goals."* Awareness was lowest among younger people, women, and those with less education, with urban centres like Kingston and St. Andrew showing higher levels than rural areas. Knowledge gaps were significant, as just 15.0 per cent could identify the

number of SDGs, and only 7.7 per cent knew of related promotional activities, highlighting weaknesses in outreach and communication. Despite this, attitudes towards sustainable development themes remain positive, with respondents recognising its importance to Jamaica's development, especially in areas such as poverty reduction and environmental protection. Importantly, 90.0 per cent agreed that both younger and older generations should contribute to achieving the goals, underscoring shared responsibility. To strengthen national ownership and accelerate progress, the national focal point aims to enhance public awareness campaigns, expand SDG education in schools and communities, and increase the visibility of initiatives that link Vision 2030 Jamaica with the SDGs.

Public engagement is a critical driver of ownership of national development processes and supports advocacy and action by all stakeholders. Public engagement is supported through the execution of a communication programme. Through this programme, direct engagement of stakeholders is facilitated through provision of information through conversations, literature and multimedia at events hosted by international development partners, government agencies and academia. The launch of the *"Let's talk Goals"* series in 2024 expanded public engagement on the SDGs through an article series published in the two major newspapers and a vlog series which was also broadcast on local television and YouTube. This series was developed by the Communications Subcommittee of the National 2030 Agenda Oversight Committee.

⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3K_7eTmiuY&list=PL77abdcxKCQ5ufiljbAu84r0AMPqxagGH&index=2

COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROGRAMME INTERVENTION

Targeted outreach mechanisms have been strengthened to ensure that vulnerable groups are actively engaged in SDG implementation and national reporting. The Community Renewal Programme (CRP), led by the PIOJ, remains a key platform for engaging communities experiencing chronic poverty, insecurity, and limited access to services. The CRP, continues to advance national development by targeting Jamaica's most vulnerable and volatile communities. Since its inception in 2011, the CRP has served as a strategic and coordinated initiative aimed at fostering social inclusion, economic resilience, and sustainable development. Grounded in the principles of Vision 2030 Jamaica, the CRP supports holistic community transformation through six integrated pillars: Governance, Social Transformation, Safety and Justice, Physical Transformation, Socio-economic Development, and Children and Youth Development. CRP components are completely aligned to Vision 2030 Jamaica: it's 4 Goals and Outcomes; similarly, the CRP aligns with and contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. In line with its mandate, the CRP focuses on empowering citizens by building capacity, improving access to opportunities, and promoting inclusive growth across targeted communities. As such, the CRP's Theory of Change is premised on critical understanding of how community development work leads to changes in people's lives and transform communities as a whole. The Theory of Change elaborated by the CRP is one which provides a holistic framework that aims to strengthen legitimate and participatory governance, promote the development of children and youth, increase safety and justice, improve socio-economic development, enhance social transformation and enable physical transformation using an evidence-driven platform. This platform therefore enables, facilitates, and build capacity for these communities to address their own needs as well as serve to promote strategic partnerships and the coordination and enhancement of the delivery of services under the six interlocking components to vulnerable and volatile communities. Complementing this is the Integrated Development Approach, which coordinates social services, economic empowerment programmes, and capacity-building initiatives at the community level. These mechanisms ensure that outreach is not only geographically targeted but also responsive to gender, disability, age, and socioeconomic vulnerabilities—aligning the voices of marginalised groups with national SDG review processes.

Challenges, Gaps, and Opportunities

Jamaica faces significant barriers to fully harnessing the enabling environment required for the successful implementation of the SDGs. The country's fiscal space remains constrained, limiting the ability to scale up transformative investments in infrastructure, climate resilience, social protection and data systems. Limited fiscal space and the need for innovative financing mechanisms remain among the major challenges to fast-tracking progress and acceleration. Jamaica's weak institutional capacity, insufficient resource and fragmented coordination remain key gaps. These capacity limitations are compounded by exogenous shocks—such as natural disasters, external economic volatility and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic—making sustained progress more difficult.

The COVID-19 pandemic particularly exposed and accentuated long-standing vulnerabilities in Jamaica's development architecture, forcing a reset of priorities and providing lessons for long-term resilience. The 2018-2021 MTF period overlapped with the onset of COVID-19, a period described as “where crisis and recovery were juxtaposed”, requiring greater levels of resilience across all development spheres.⁸ The pandemic disrupted service delivery, deepened inequalities, and eroded development gains – underscoring the need for adaptive planning, stronger social safety nets and diversified financing.

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Despite these challenges, several opportunities emerge for Jamaica to strengthen the enabling environment for SDG implementation to 2030 and beyond. As Jamaica approaches the remaining years of implementation and begins the discussion on a post-2030 agenda, there is an opportunity to deepen the whole of society approach to implementation through public-private-community partnerships, through localisation of targets of the post 2030 agenda and integrating resilience into investments. This approach also requires an even more robust statistical system and monitoring platforms to build a more responsive and future ready enabling environment. Learning from the experience to date will be critical to informing the post-2030 development framework. While Jamaica has achieved strong alignment between Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan and the SDGs, gaps remain—particularly within the “Planet” and “Partnership” pillars—highlighting the need for greater emphasis on ecological sustainability, multilevel cooperation, and inclusive frameworks in the post-2030 agenda.

⁸ Performance Report Summary of Vision 2030 Jamaica for 2009–2021

SYSTEMIC ISSUES AND TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS

Overview

Jamaica's development history has been characterised by significant reforms which have served to improve the wellbeing of the people while balancing economic and environmental imperatives. Gains have been made in the provision of social services, strengthening of governance frameworks, improvement of the business environment for economic development and protection of the natural environment through conservation. These advances are juxtaposed against the inherent vulnerabilities of a geographic location prone to natural hazards, fiscal constraints occasioned by balancing debt repayments and a high exposure to global shocks.

Cognisant of the domestic challenges and the exogenous factors hindering development, long-term planning requires agility and foresight to manage efforts that integrate risk reduction. Implementation of development plans with embedded risk reduction frameworks were tested with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which began in 2020. The country's health, education and social protection systems required shock responsive measures that address an emergent crisis, while maintaining consideration of the long-term development targets. Jamaica withstood the test through inbuilt resilience measures primarily the existence of a strong social protection architecture, partnerships, agility in health service delivery, and rapid responses to reach students through distance learning.

Five years on, the island faced a catastrophic hurricane, which devastated the western region of the country, with far reaching social, environmental and economic impact. The country benefitted from overwhelming support from neighbours in the region, the diaspora and the international community. Of note was the internal mobilisation of volunteer organisations and private citizens who were not affected by the storm, providing basic services and supplies to residents, demonstrating the critical role of culture and social capital in the development paradigm. Investment in the development of frameworks and systems to foster resilience has played a major role in the country's ability to respond to the impact of shocks.

With this context, Jamaica recognises the inherent and emerging challenges to be navigated in a new era of development. The multilateral environment has become more dynamic, spurred by an unpredictable geopolitical climate. This increases risk for Jamaica as a significant net importer of goods. Domestic population changes and the impact of migration and external migration policies will further change the social and cultural landscape. In this regard, the country continues to pursue evidence-based responses, guided by data and intelligence that support the design of policies that remain relevant to current realities whilst providing for future anticipated issues that shape the course of national development.

Public Management

The Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan therefore remains a critical tool to guide the country's development amid global and local challenges. The MTF 2024–2027 notes that accelerated growth and development requires prioritization of systems, mechanisms and institutional building to support results-based implementation.⁹ The MTF further identifies critical gaps in public management which are impediments to sustainable and inclusive development including:

- gaps in the policy, regulatory and institutional and governance frameworks;
- insufficient integration and harmonisation leading to policy and operational incoherence and;
- the need for a strengthened Integrated Results-Based Management Policy framework to guide institutionalisation and resource allocation to support linkages between policy, planning and budgeting.

These issues in public management challenge policy coherence and efficiencies in delivering on development objectives. In this regard, Jamaica continues to improve its development planning, monitoring and evaluation systems as well as pursue reforms and modernization within the public sector. These efforts include the capacity building of staff, digitalisation and institutional strengthening and transformation. The development of a results-based budgeting system supports effective use of development financing, whilst the strengthening of data systems and the overarching monitoring and evaluation framework for national development planning are vital tools to strengthen targeting, decision making and the pursuit of evidence informed policy.

Population

Shifting population dynamics and gaps in human capital development are acknowledged as critical factors that are shaping the country's development path. The implementation of policies to address population dynamics including ageing and reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend are currently being implemented. Whilst challenges persist in educational attainment and health, the implementation of transformation programmes including expanding access to vocational training represent responsive measures. Enabling measures to improve human capital formation and outcomes, include, but are not limited to:

- expanding access to civil documents;
- access to land and land tenure;
- access to capital and credit and financial services;
- bolstering early childhood education and tertiary level enrolment;

⁹ https://www.vision2030.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/07/MTF-2024-2027_Main-Draft-Web_2.pdf pg 6

- addressing the high prevalence of non-communicable diseases;
- enhancing knowledge creation, diffusion, absorption and impact.

Climate Change Vulnerability

Jamaica also faces vulnerability to natural hazards, particularly hydrometeorological events due to its geographic position. Increases in the frequency and intensity of these events present a unique challenge of balancing resilience building, growth and recovery. Hurricane Melissa demonstrated the immense impact that is possible from these events. Though the hurricane directly affected the western region of the island, the loss, damage and associated costs exceeded 50.0 per cent of 2024 GDP. It has also compounded existing systemic issues in agriculture and education caused by physical damage to farms and infrastructure and disrupted school attendance.

Climate change mitigation is therefore a central pillar in planning and investment. The Public Investment Management System (PIMS) established to streamline the preparation, appraisal, approval and management of all government projects, has engendered confidence from partners, as irrespective of the source of funding and the type of procurement or implementation method used, the PIMS adds accountability to the system. This was further strengthened through the inclusion of mandatory climate risk screening for all projects within the PIMS. This enables public investment projects to undergo a complex assessment of climate risks as they progress through the PIMS and provide recommendations for integrating climate adaptation measures into economic and financial appraisals of projects.¹⁰ The implementation of climate adaptation measures as well as strengthening the disaster risk financing policy framework are also expected to bolster climate resilience and disaster recovery measures.

Jamaica's revision and submission of its nationally determined contributions (NDC) signals the country's commitment to addressing climate change through a robust policy and partnership framework. Jamaica's NDC 3.0 targets emissions reductions of 16.3 per cent by 2030 and 16.9 per cent by 2035 in an unconditional scenario excluding forestry. Unconditional emissions reductions including forestry are aimed at 26.3 per cent by 2030 and 27.1 per cent by 2035. Conditioned upon international support, the emissions reduction targets 19.6 per cent in 2030 and 28.3 per cent in 2035 excluding forestry. Conditional emissions including forestry are targeted at 30.6 per cent by 2030 and 41.7 per cent by 2035. Robust implementation and access to climate finance, technology transfer and capacity building are required to support climate change measures.¹¹

¹⁰ <https://www.mof.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/GOJ-Climate-Risk-Assessment-Methodology-20241010.pdf>

¹¹ <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2025-09/Jamaica%20ICTU%20Final%20Report%20Sep19.pdf>

Energy

The dependence on fossil fuels, accounting for over 80.0 per cent of energy consumption, exposes the island to global oil shocks. Geopolitical events have led to increases in prices and impacted, availability of food, disproportionately affecting the poor and children. This underscores the importance of investments to achieve Jamaica's renewable energy targets and facilitate the just energy transition. Jamaica's National Energy Policy 2009–2030 presents an adaptive and strategic framework targeting: energy security and diversity, development of renewables, modernizing infrastructure, energy conservation and efficiency, development of the governance and regulatory frameworks, enabling energy management in the public sector and promoting eco-efficiency in industries.¹² Jamaica has targeted 50.0 per cent of renewables in the energy mix by 2030.

As Jamaica seeks to advance its development through strategic and targeted investments and to protect its development gains through embedding resilience into its investments, the country has also sought to improve institutional capacity thereby bolstering investor confidence and promoting modernisation to achieve efficiencies.

¹² https://www.mset.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/National-Energy-Policy_0.pdf

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Harnessing the Opportunities and Addressing the Challenges of Population Ageing in Jamaica.

Introduction

Jamaica recognises the wide-ranging implications of demographic shifts on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the context of an ageing population.¹³ The demographic landscape is undergoing notable transformations that are being shaped by declining fertility rates, increasing life expectancy and sustained emigration rates, which have contributed to population ageing. With a slow growth rate, Jamaica's population composition continues to be defined by a relatively large working-age population, a growing elderly population, and a declining child population. Consequently, the median age has been steadily increasing indicating overall improved life expectancy. Changing family structures are also influencing patterns of household composition, social and economic systems and social protection support.

The direct intersection between demographic processes and sustainable development must not be overlooked, as these shifts are inevitable. Population ageing is not unique to Jamaica; several countries in the region, such as Barbados and St. Kitts and Nevis, as well as many globally, are experiencing similar trends as they reach the final stage of demographic transition, characterised by low birth rates, low death rates, and slow population growth. Regionally, Barbados has one of the largest proportions of older persons (65+ years) in the Caribbean due to a steep decline in fertility and rising life expectancy. This has increased significantly from approximately 6.8 per cent in 1960 to over 16.0 per cent for the 2024-2025 estimates. Barbados has implemented a National Policy on Ageing (2023-2028) and instituted the Ministry of People Empowerment and Elder Affairs. They have also been lobbying for a Caribbean Commission on Population and Development which Jamaica has been in support of.

It is therefore essential to continuously integrate population dynamics into the Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, along with other national, sub-national, regional, and international frameworks. These demographic changes carry significant implications for national planning, particularly in key sectors such as healthcare, education, labour force participation, sustained economic growth, and social protection systems.

Demographic Landscape

Movements in the demographic processes – fertility, mortality and migration – have fuelled changes in the size, age-sex structure and composition of Jamaica's population. As of 2022, Jamaica's estimated population stood at approximately 2 774 538, from an estimated 2 697 983 in 2011 and 2 607 632 in 2001; reflecting slow population growth over the past two decades.¹⁴ The intercensal (2011-2022) growth rate

¹³ A population is considered to be "ageing" when more than 7.0 percent of its people are aged 65 years or older. World Health Organization. Regional Action Plan on Healthy Ageing in the Western Pacific 2020.

was recorded at 0.24 per cent. The share of children (0–14 years), working-age (15–64 years) and the elderly (65+ years) accounts for about 22.2 per cent, 68.3 per cent and 9.5 per cent of the population, respectively.¹⁵ The changing age composition has increased the median age to 31.1 years in 2024,¹⁶ compared with 17.0 years in 1970 and 27.0 years in 2011.¹⁷

Preliminary data from the Registrar General's Department (RGD) recorded 25 900 live births and 20 600 deaths in 2024. The total fertility rate (TFR)¹⁸ has shown a noticeable decline to 1.9 births per woman in 2021, compared with 4.5 births per woman over the period 1973–1975.¹⁹ A TFR of 1.9 is below replacement level (2.1 births per woman), which is the lowest fertility rate ever recorded in Jamaica. Jamaica also continues to experience negative net external movements, with many professional and skilled workers migrating predominantly to the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. These processes, coupled with declining birth rates and low mortality rates, will inevitably lead to Jamaica's population declining in absolute terms.

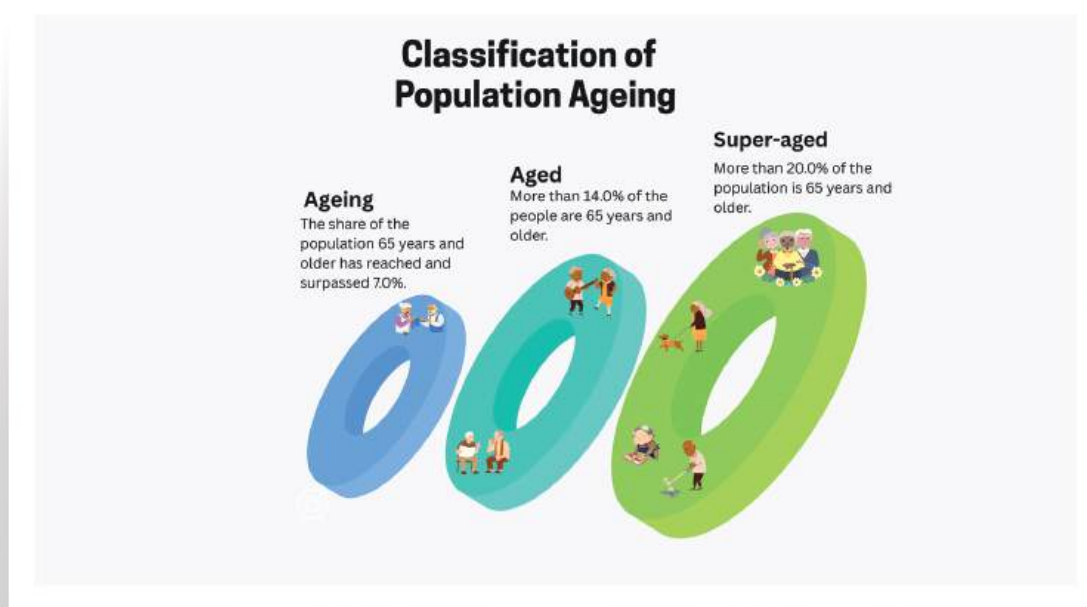


FIGURE 4 Classification of Population Ageing

Population ageing is the process in which the proportions of adults and elderly increase in a population, while the proportions of children and adolescents decrease.²⁰ This has become a national, regional and global trend as countries progress through the latter stages of the classical demographic transition mode.²¹ In Jamaica, an estimated 9.5 per cent of the population is 65 years and older, placing it in the category of an ageing population.²² The dependent elderly population is projected to increase to 11.2

¹⁴ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Population Census Jamaica 2022.

¹⁵ Planning Institute of Jamaica. Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2024.

¹⁶ Planning Institute of Jamaica. Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2023.

¹⁷ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Population and Housing Census 2011 Jamaica General Report Volume I

¹⁸ Total fertility rate represents the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her childbearing years and bear children in accordance with age-specific fertility rates of the specified year.

¹⁹ National Family Planning Board and Statistical Institute of Jamaica. (2023). 2021 Reproductive Health Survey (RHS) Report. Kingston, Jamaica.

²⁰ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: World Population Ageing 2023

²¹ In general, demographic transition refers to a change from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates resulting from industrialization or modernization. The demographic transition theory originally posits three stages. The model has since developed to include four to five stages. See Jacob S. Siegel and David A. Swanson, *The Methods and Materials of Demography* (Elsevier, 2004).

²² Planning Institute of Jamaica. Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2024.

²³ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Population Projections Jamaica 2000–2050. (Kingston: STATIN 2008).

per cent in 2030 and 16.0 per cent in 2050²³ almost double the share recorded in the 2011 census year (8.1 per cent). The child population is projected to stabilise at approximately 23.0 per cent in 2030 and decline to 20.0 per cent in 2050, while the working age population is projected to decrease to 66.0 per cent in 2030 and 64.0 per cent in 2050. Notably, the dependent elderly population is the only segment of the population that is projected to grow.

Fertility

Low fertility rates have contributed to population ageing as fewer children are being born to balance the number of older adults, causing the younger age groups to shrink over time. As each new generation becomes smaller than the previous one, the population's average age rises, thereby increasing the share of elderly people and accelerating the ageing process. This reduction in fertility rates is due largely to greater access to education among women, improved reproductive health services, and higher labour force participation. The 2025 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) State of the World Population Report indicated that one of the main barriers to starting a family was economic uncertainties.

Mortality

Given that Jamaica's population is ageing, mortality and health burdens are shifting in ways that bring new pressures and demand new policy and programmatic responses. While people are living longer, many are still dying "too young" from preventable/treatable non-communicable conditions. For Jamaica, the biggest lag is in reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCDs), both because of their rising share, and because many deaths are avoidable with early detection and intervention. This means lost years of healthy life and economic costs. The government estimates the cost of NCDs (2015-2030) to be US\$18.45 billion.²⁴ Crime, socio-economic, and gender disparities have also contributed to uneven mortality outcomes and lower health expectancy.

Life Expectancy

People are living longer and relatively healthier lives, but population ageing can have both positive and negative implications for achieving sustainable development. It is important to be cognisant that ageing is a lifelong process and does not only consider the older years. Life expectancy at birth for Jamaica has shown an estimated increase to 74.7 years in 2015, up from 74.2 years in 2011 and 73.3 years in 2001.²⁵ Disaggregation by sex showed that female life expectancy was 77.5 years compared with 71.9 years for males in 2015. The United Nations Development Programme reported that in 2023 the Human Development Index (HDI) was 0.72, with Jamaica ranking 117 in the high HDI category.²⁶ Increasing longevity necessitates inclusive and improved social protection services, better health and well-being, improved quality of life and income security in the older years.

²⁴ Primary Healthcare Reform for Jamaica (2021-2030). Ministry of Health and Wellness.

²⁵ Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Demographic Statistics 2019. (Kingston: STATIN 2020); Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Demographic Statistics 2013. (Kingston: STATIN 2014); Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Life Tables of Jamaica 1879-2004. (Kingston: STATIN 2006).

²⁶ Human Development Report 2025. A matter of choice: People and possibilities in the age of AI. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Migration

Jamaica has long been a net migrant-sending country, where annual emigration usually surpasses immigration flows. This sustained emigration continues to be defined by the outflow of younger generations. When large numbers of young people migrate abroad, the proportion of older adults left behind increases, accelerating the ageing of the population and raising the dependency ratio. Addressing the push factors of emigration can help alleviate the imbalance in migrations flows, particularly among the working-age population. A World Bank study on High-Skilled Migration has indicated that Jamaica and other countries in the Caribbean could explore strategies to convert brain drain into brain gain through the Global Skills Partnership (GSP) model.²⁷

Population ageing is inevitable; it is therefore essential for the government and key stakeholders to champion the design of policies that harness the opportunities and address the challenges as Jamaica works towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The SDGs affect the elderly population directly, and policy measures to address population ageing are therefore vital for achieving several of the goals.

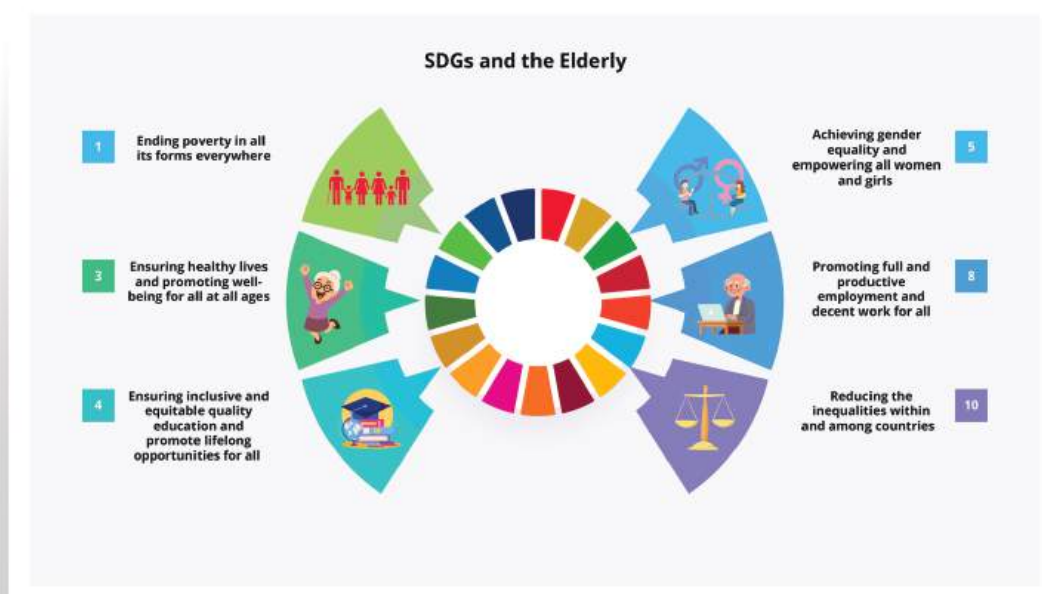


FIGURE 5 SDGs and the Elderly

Implications of Jamaica's Population Structure

The economic, social and environmental implications associated with population ageing are unavoidable but can be managed through a whole-of-society approach. The shrinking child population signals a long-term decline in future labour force entrants, which poses sustainability concerns. While the immediate effect may cause reduced demand on the education system allowing for improved quality through better resource allocation per student, the broader implication is a gradually ageing society

²⁷ Di Giorgio, Laura, Lopez, Claudia, Jaupart, Pascal, Fuca, Antonio, Talo, Teresa, and Lara Salinas, Ana Maria, 2024. Exploiting the Brain Gain Potential for Better Human Capital Outcomes in Jamaica, KNOMAD Paper.

with fewer young workers to support the economy and social protection systems. A reduced youth population may also result in diminished cultural dynamism and innovation, which are often driven by younger generations.

According to the National Transfer Accounts (NTA) theory, the elderly population (65 years and older) has a higher rate of consumption than labour income, as labour income peaks among the working-age population (15-64 years) and declines thereafter. A larger share of elderly persons results in an increased elderly dependency ratio as more elderly persons depend on the working-age population – placing a greater economic and social burden on working-age persons. Notwithstanding, there are elderly persons who still want to contribute to the labour market, however, the ability to work and earn labour income deteriorates with age, making it important to promote healthy ageing as a life-course approach beginning at early ages.²⁸

Simultaneously, the presence of a large working-age population presents a critical opportunity for Jamaica to harness its demographic dividend—a period during which the number of dependents (children and the elderly) is relatively low compared to the size of the working-age population. If this segment of the population is adequately educated, healthy, and productively employed, it can significantly accelerate economic growth, enhance national savings, and reduce poverty. However, realising this dividend is not automatic. Jamaica must overcome structural issues relating to employment and skills mismatches in the labour market. Without targeted investments in job creation, education reform, expanded social security coverage and labour market efficiency, the working-age population may become an economic burden rather than an engine of growth. In this regard, efforts to transform the education system and prepare for the future of work as discussed in chapters on Goals 4 and 8 of this report are vital to realising the demographic dividend, support productive aging and realise the targets of sustainable development.

There has been a rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) among the elderly population (60+ years) with 49.1 per cent reporting hypertension, 22.0 per cent diabetes, and 18.8 per cent arthritis.²⁹ In 2023, the top three NCDs were hypertension, asthma, and diabetes. Consequently, existing health-care facilities and quality of service delivery cannot fully meet the health needs of the increasing elderly population. One of the most pressing and long-term concerns lies in the growing elderly population which has the potential to strain Jamaica's public finances through heightened demand for pensions, healthcare and long-term social care services. The prevalence of NCDs among the elderly is also likely to place additional pressure on the health system, requiring investment in geriatric care, home-based services and elder-friendly infrastructure. Furthermore, without sufficient social security pensions, retirement savings or family support, many older persons may fall into poverty, increasing the burden on government safety nets and threatening intergenerational equity.

²⁸ Healthy ageing is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the “the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age”.

²⁹ It enables older persons to remain a resource to their families, communities and economies.

²⁹ Planning Institute of Jamaica and Statistical Institute of Jamaica. Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023.

According to the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions, JSLC (2021), “social security coverage continued to be less than optimal within the relevant population groupings, which exposes families and individuals to greater income risks brought about by retirement, old age and illness or disability”. Poverty may be prevalent among the elderly due to the inability to work due to poor health. The JSLC 2023 reported that the prevalence of poverty among the dependent elderly (65+ years) was 7.1 per cent while the national prevalence was 8.2 per cent.

Women have a lower labour force participation rate and lower salaries compared to men. The Jamaica Labour Force Survey as of October 2025 reported that female labour force participation was 62.4 per cent relative to that of males at 73.4 per cent. Higher life expectancies among women indicate that they may outlive their spouses and may have a greater risk of age-related disabilities and income insecurity and also require long-term care. Additionally, women may have to contend with shorter careers and play an integral role in the purple economy³⁰ and domestic work which is often informal with low salaries and inadequate pensions.

As a small island developing state, Jamaica is prone to climate-related environmental threats such as hurricanes and droughts. This is evident with the widespread destruction faced in western Jamaica due to the passage of historic Category 5 Hurricane Melissa in October 2025, which resulted in the loss of lives, injury and displacement. The elderly population is more vulnerable to these threats, which may be exacerbated by NCDs, age-related disabilities, food insecurity and income insecurity. Thus, improving the lives of the elderly population is a proactive step in ensuring that they are not left behind.

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As the elderly population and urbanisation increases, environmental design has to adapt to meet their needs, and persons with disabilities. Healthcare facilities, urban and social spaces, as well as transportation for the elderly, must integrate accessibility in design to cater to an ageing population. Disability tends to rise with population ageing; hence an inclusive approach is needed for environmental design and planning to include persons with disabilities. The housing sector has to consider the growing ageing population and create more age-friendly housing solutions. There are challenges with accessible and safe housing for this group who may require no-step entries, ramps, grab bars, wider doorways, bathrooms designed to accommodate mobility aids, and non-slip flooring. Many elderly persons are still able to live independently, and their safety, accessibility and comfort are important in maintaining their independence as long as possible. There has been an increase in high-rise housing developments in Jamaica, markedly in Kingston and St. Andrew and other urban centres, which limit mobility for the elderly population, particularly those with disabilities.

Harnessing the Opportunities of Population Ageing through Policies

The world’s population aged 65 years and older is projected to double to 1.6 billion in 2050 from 761 million in 2021. There are also projected increases in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region, inclusive of Jamaica. A number of international and regional agreements are integrated into

³⁰ The purple economy represents a new vision of economics that recognizes the importance of care work and the empowerment and autonomy of women to the functioning of the economies and wellbeing of societies New Economics for Sustainable Development Policy Brief: Purple Economy (Care Economy+). United Nations Economist Network 2023.

Jamaica's national and sectoral policies, programmes and projects demonstrating our commitment to common policy measures on the promotion of healthy ageing, expansion of lifelong learning and the encouragement of retirement savings. Countries such as Canada which is considered to be "super-aged" (more than 20.0 per cent or more than 1 in 5 persons in the population is 65 years and over)³¹ have adopted policies to promote health and wellbeing in ageing, adapting health and care systems to better address the needs of older adults, improving lived and living experiences and quality of care in the later years, ageing in the right place and age-friendly communities. The policy options to address the implications of population ageing require a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach.

International Policy Response

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development promotes leaving no one behind on the path to meeting the SDGs, emphasising inclusion of vulnerable groups such as the elderly population. Healthy ageing is key to achieving the SDGs. In addition to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Jamaica is guided by several international frameworks towards addressing the implications of population ageing. This includes the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA)³² which was adopted in 2002 and acknowledges the integral role of elderly person in the sustainable development agenda. The Plan of Action focuses on three areas:

1. Elderly persons and development
2. Advancing health and well-being into old age
3. Ensuring enabling and supportive environments

Other guiding frameworks include:

- United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing: Plan of Action 2021-2030
- The Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health (World Health Organization-WHO adopted by the Sixty-Ninth World Health Assembly in May 2016)

Regional Policy Response

The majority of Governments that consider population ageing to be a major policy concern in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) was estimated at 60.0 per cent.³³ An estimated 88.6 million people in the LAC are 60 years and over, representing 13.4 per cent of the total population, and is projected to reach 16.5 per cent in 2030. The changes in the population age structure have resulted in the elderly dependency ratio for the Caribbean increasing to 14.0 in 2020 and is projected to increase to 20.0 by 2030 and 28.0 by 2045.

In response, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development for Latin America and the Caribbean was adopted in 2013 and represents the region's commitment to continue the full implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994).

³¹ Well National Innovation Hub. Visions for Change Policy Challenge 2023-2024. Supporting aging in the right place in Canada with age-friendly community initiatives.

³² The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) is a landmark agreement in which Governments committed to "building a society for all ages".

In 2023, Jamaica produced its second National Progress Report detailing its progress and achievements on the Montevideo Consensus, covering eight of ten thematic areas (A-G and J).

Jamaica has advanced key legislation and policy frameworks including the Disabilities Act (2014), the National Policy for Gender Equality, and the International Migration and Development Policy to strengthen rights, equality, and data-driven governance. Significant progress has also been made in health and education outcomes, strengthened adolescent health initiatives, increased literacy rates, and expanded youth development programmes aligned with regional priorities. Additionally, governance and data systems have improved through stronger institutional frameworks, better international governance scores and development, and enhanced capacity for evidence-based policymaking supported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and other multilateral and bilateral partners. Jamaica is committed to these agreements evidenced through national and sectoral policy integration, along with programmes and projects that focus on sustainable population development.

National Policy Response

Due to changes in the demographic landscape (population size, structure, composition and distribution), the 1995 Population Policy was revised in 2022 to the National Population and Sustainable Development Policy (NPSDP). The overall goal of the NPSDP is to ensure that population processes are optimised to achieve a balanced population size, structure and distribution in urban and rural areas to improve the well-being of the Jamaican population in all dimensions of a sustainable, equitable and just society. There are 12 policy goals that support the overall goal and are guided by the relevant objectives. The older population (60 years and over) is addressed in Goal 8: By 2030, provisions are in place to enable the older population (60 years and over) to lead fulfilling, functional and productive lives. The NPSDP is also supported by a monitoring and evaluation framework to operationalise the policy. Government ministries, departments, agencies (MDAs), academia, private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other partners require continuous and strengthened collaboration to implement the Programme of Action and achieve the goals of the NPSDP.

National Population and Sustainable Development Policy (NPSDP) Goals



	Goal 1: By 2030, Jamaica's population size, growth, age-sex structure and spatial distribution support sustainable development in all dimensions (social, economic and environmental)		Goal 7: By 2030, equal and equitable access to opportunities, resources and rewards for males and females is achieved in all spheres of society
	Goal 2: By 2030, replacement level fertility of 2.1 is achieved and maintained		Goal 8: By 2030, provisions are in place to enable the older population (60 years and over) to lead fulfilling, functional and productive lives
	Goal 3: By 2030, full integration and expansion of quality sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care services are reflected in primary health		Goal 9: By 2030, all children (0-17), adolescents (10-19) and youth (15-24) shall be empowered to fulfil their fullest potential in all areas of life
	Goal 4: By 2030, life expectancy at birth of at least 75 years for males and 80 years for females is achieved and the survival gap between males and females is reduced		Goal 10: By 2030, demographic data systems and other institutional capacities and interoperable information, communication and technology (ICT) and civil registration and vital statistics systems are strengthened, to facilitate the provision of relevant, accurate, timely and comprehensive demographic data
	Goal 5: By 2030, international migration (immigration and emigration) is managed and mobilised to support Jamaica's national development		Goal 11: By 2030, the demographic dividend is effectively harnessed to facilitate sustainable development
	Goal 6: By 2030, internal population movement and distribution are inter-linked with developmental policies and strategies for ensuring a balanced rural-urban development		Goal 12: By 2030, the National Population and Sustainable Development Policy and Programme of Action are effectively implemented in all areas of national development



FIGURE 6 National Population and Sustainable Development Policy Goals

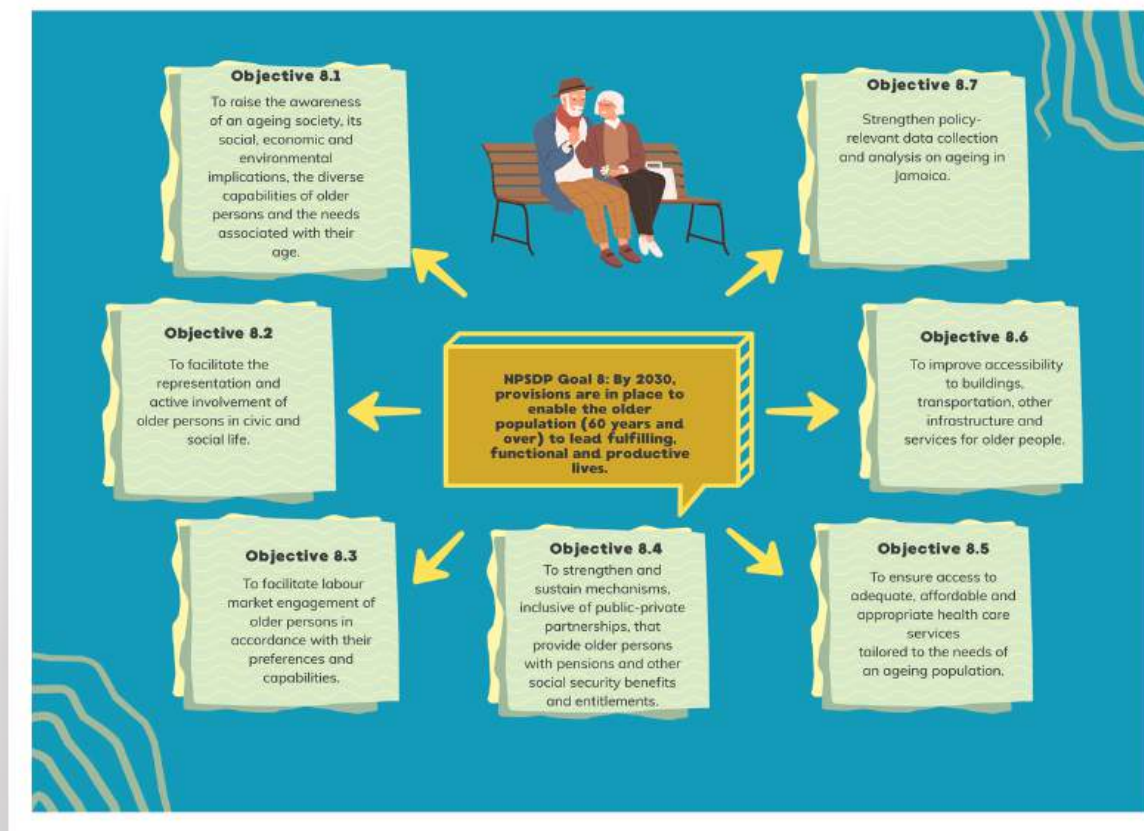


FIGURE 7 National Population and Sustainable Development Policy Objectives

Goal 8 of the NPSDP focuses on the elderly population (60 years and over) and notes that: by 2030, provisions are in place to enable the older population to lead fulfilling, functional and productive lives. So far, Jamaica has managed to:

- Increase the pensionable age of females to age 65 years, consistent with the age for males.
- Launch the Social Pension Programme in 2021 which provides a monetary benefit to Jamaicans 75 years and older who are not currently receiving a pension (overseas or local), retirement, old-age or disability benefit or income and are not living in a government institutionalised care facility. The 2024 Economic and Social Survey Jamaica (ESSJ) reported that the total number of active beneficiaries was 13 763 in 2024.
- Maintain the National Health Fund, Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH), Jamaica Drug for the Elderly Programme (JADEP), National Insurance Scheme (NIS), Social Housing Benefits, cash transfers and other programmes to continue to meet the health, transportation, housing, and other needs of senior citizens.

Similarly, to the NPSDP, other policy frameworks address the intersection of demography and national development, these include but are not limited to:

- [Vision 2030 Jamaica Population Sector Plan](#) - This provides the framework for implementation at the sectoral level and also represent the basis on which the Medium-Term Socio-Economic

Policy Frameworks (MTF) are developed. The vision for this plan is *“A population which meets the sustainable development needs of the country”*

- **National Policy for Senior Citizens (Revised 2021)** – Demonstrates the government’s commitment to the inclusion of senior citizens in nation-building, recognising the tremendous capacity and resources within the age cohort, and aligning programmes and initiatives to respond to the opportunities and challenges posed by population ageing.
- **Jamaica Social Protection Strategy (2014)** - Developed in response to the country’s commitment to ensure the security of all its residents and citizens. In doing this it targets the attainment of agreed basic minimum standards of living and addresses the various threats to such attainment by confronting root causes, proximate causes and symptoms.
- **Vision for Health 2030 – Ten Year Strategic Plan 2019 – 2030** - Signals Jamaica’s intentions and communicates the vision for the health and health care delivery system for the population. For the next 10 years, the challenge is to find the most effective mix of prevention and treatment measures that make the best use of our resources in improving health and extending life.
- **National Policy on International Migration and Development 2017** - Responds to key global developments which have revealed, over time, the need to address the broad and evolving range of challenges and opportunities associated with migration. The policy seeks to ensure that international migration is adequately measured, monitored and influenced to serve the development needs of Jamaica as outlined in the Vision 2030 Jamaica–National Development Plan.
- **National Diaspora Policy (2022)** - Provides the institutional framework for engagement with the Jamaican Diaspora. It addresses issues and concerns of the diaspora while assisting them to live in harmony and to prosper in the countries where they and their descendants reside and it seeks to optimise the diaspora’s contribution to Jamaica’s sustainable development.

Way Forward

While below replacement fertility level and population decline may be possible to reverse in some instances, the process of population ageing is irreversible as countries progress through the demographic transition. It is pertinent that the Government of Jamaica and all stakeholders work together to ensure that the needs of the declining child population, relatively large working-age population and growing elderly population are addressed and the elderly population is not left behind as we strive to achieve the SDGs. Thus, a collective effort is needed to maximise the benefits of population ageing.

Targeted measures are described below:

Declining Child Population

- Incentives to create an enabling environment to increase fertility rates and social policies for women to remain in the labour market while having children, and for childcare and support.
- Shift public policy away from expansionary education strategies towards quality improvement, curriculum modernisation, and lifelong learning to prepare citizens for a rapidly evolving technologically driven job market.
- Increase investment per child in early childhood development, nutrition, and foundational literacy to ensure every child reaches full cognitive and developmental potential.
- Support children with disabilities by promoting inclusion, access to education, health services, and social protection.
- Improve youth health through mental health support, sexual and reproductive health services, and violence prevention, ensuring healthier future workers.

Relatively Large Working-Age

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- Align skills with labour market needs to include digital training, entrepreneurship support, and partnerships with employers for internships and apprenticeships.
- Increase labour-force participation, especially among women and older workers, through flexible work arrangements, childcare, remote work policies, and anti-discrimination measures.
- Formalise informal work with micro-pension schemes and incentives for small business registration.
- Leverage migration by fostering circular migration, short-term labour migration programmes, diaspora investment, bilateral/global networks for brain gain partnerships and streamlined reintegration for returnees to bring skills and capital home.

Growing Elderly Population

The elderly population requires an enabling and supportive environment to continue to make economic and social contributions for inclusive economic growth. This requires comprehensive social protection systems, universal access to education, and healthcare. Education remains key at the older ages, given labour market reforms and the use of evolving technologies such as artificial intelligence. With opportunities for continuous learning and skills development, more of the elderly population can be absorbed into the labour force. Generally, there are more women in the elderly population, and this

would increase the female labour force participation rate. Ageism³⁵ may also influence elderly persons to engage in informal and precarious employment. Measures to address this phenomenon should be integrated into public dialogue.

Policy and programme initiatives should be implemented and strengthened in the following areas:

- Adequate and sustainable pension coverage so the elderly can age with dignity and income security while continuing their contribution to society.
- Career planning and succession management with knowledge transfer and mentorship programmes for the elderly with skills and expertise in specialised fields.
- Promoting a life course approach for healthy ageing and poverty prevention, which will reduce care dependency at older ages.
- Develop the purple economy through formalising unpaid care work, which is often provided by women, and investing in long-term care for the elderly.
- Expansion of recreational activities for the elderly by government, private sector and non-governmental organisations.
- Develop the “*silver economy*” through greater investments in healthcare services, assistive technologies, age-friendly housing, wellness tourism, community care enterprises, and financial products for seniors.

Inclusion of the elderly population is imperative to achieving the NPSDP vision of “A stable population that contributes to the sustainable development of the country” and our National Vision (Vision 2030 Jamaica-National Development Plan) of making “*Jamaica the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business*”. Through the National Policy for Senior Citizens, we aspire to ensure that ‘Senior Citizens live and participate actively in a society that guarantees their rights, promotes their responsibilities, recognises their capabilities and contributions, and facilitates their enjoyment of a life of fulfilment, health and security’.



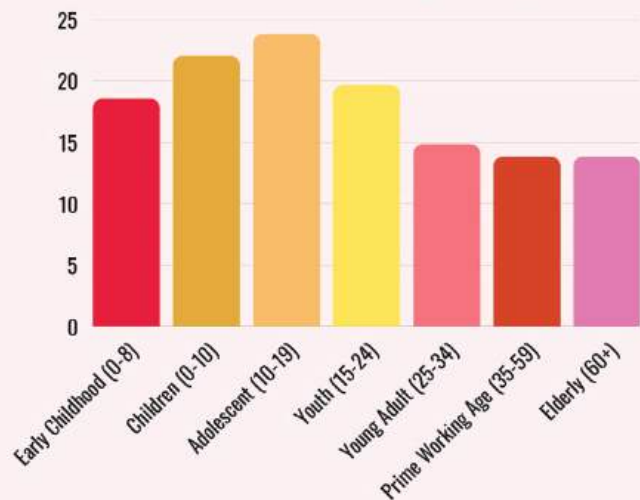
Goal 1

End poverty in all its forms everywhere

National Poverty Prevalence

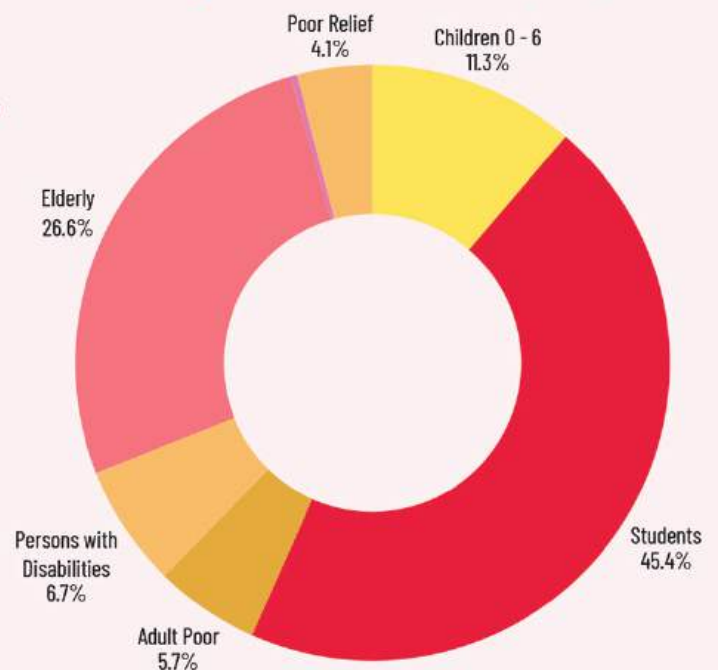


Poverty Prevalence by Age Group (2023)



45.1% 2023
SHARE OF THE LABOUR
FORCE CONTRIBUTING TO
NATIONAL INSURANCE

Categories of PATH Beneficiaries (2024)



MODERNIZING SOCIAL PROTECTION

Context

Jamaica's longstanding commitment to the realisation of social equity is institutionally anchored in its social protection system. Social protection serves as a core instrument and a fundamental pillar of national development. The modernisation of the social protection framework in Jamaica, serves as a strategic imperative that contributes directly to the eradication of poverty and the extension of social security. The development and implementation of a robust social protection system is a necessary strategy towards sustained poverty reduction and universal lifecycle coverage for all Jamaicans through initiatives such as the facilitation of human capital development, ensuring income security and enhancing resilience to shocks. This effort is guided by the Jamaica Social Protection Strategy and the National Policy on Poverty (2017) which are aligned to the strategic goals, objectives and priorities of the Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan.

The inherent vulnerabilities of Jamaica as a small island developing state are embedded in its concerns and lived experiences of existential climate and weather events, such as category four Hurricane Beryl (July 2024), and more recently category five Hurricane Melissa (October 2025). These vulnerabilities are coupled with issues of food security and economic growth. Notwithstanding, the government's prioritisation of the modernisation of Jamaica's social protection system is representative of a deliberate paradigm shift from fragmented safety nets towards a system that is efficient, effective, accountable and accessible to Jamaicans throughout their lifecycle. The system had historically consisted of discrete and often standalone assistance programmes, each operating with separate registries, eligibility rules and delivery mechanisms which led to inefficiencies, gaps in coverage of the most vulnerable and challenges in ensuring shock responsiveness.

The Jamaica Social Protection Strategy was the outcome of a move by Government to develop a comprehensive social protection system that would build on the foundation of a defining conceptual framework. The aim was to create strategies that embraced every aspect of social protection, including safety nets, social security, food security and poverty reduction. By addressing the core causes, proximate causes, and symptoms of threats such as unemployment, health crises, weak social security coverage and climate related disasters, among others, it aims to achieve agreed-upon basic minimum standards for a good quality of life. A main objective of the strategy is to ensure that social protection is integrated and coordinated. This transformation is operationalised through pillars such as strengthened governance and coordination, enhanced adaptive social protection and shock-responsiveness, lifelong coverage and data-driven governance. This agenda is aligned with Jamaica's

national objectives and international commitments that provide a benchmark for system design, such as the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Social Protection Floors Recommendation (2012) and the United Nations (UN) principle of "Leaving No One Behind". The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation acts as a cornerstone instrument which has influenced Jamaica's approach to the guarantee of basic income security through programmes such as Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) and the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and essential access to basic social services such as healthcare through the National Health Fund (NHF). The principles of the recommendation are embodied through a nationally defined social protection floor for all citizens, with a priority on the poor, vulnerable and workers. Additionally, the UN principle of 'Leaving No One Behind' is embedded in Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) of Vision 2030 Jamaica, as it mandates the intentional inclusion of vulnerable groups within the population. It informs programmes by calling for a system that ensures that specific groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, pregnant and lactating women and children are reached and supported. The agenda is also central to the attainment of the National Outcome 3 "An Effective Social Protection System" under Vision 2030 Jamaica, which is recognised as a prerequisite for the empowerment of citizens and the achievement of equitable development. It also serves as an accelerator for the United Nations 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) with contributions to goal 1.3 (social protection systems for all), 3.8 (universal health coverage), 8.5 (full employment and decent work with equal pay) and 10.4 (decent work and reduced inequalities), among others.

This chapter delineates the transformation of Jamaica's strategic pathway towards reforming its social protection system to one that is integrated, adaptive and life-cycle oriented.

Thematic Discussion

With the goal of modernisation, Jamaica has continued on the journey to a social protection system that is guided by a structured policy environment while being implemented through a network of key public and private institutions, supported by local and international partners. The Jamaica Social Protection Strategy (SPS, 2014) serves as the blueprint for a national social protection system that is cohesive and transformative. The SPS is underpinned by core theoretical constructs that are utilised to guide its modernising approach: lifestyle perspective with support from childhood to old age; a rights-based framework that affirms that social protection is an entitlement to ensure dignity; and a transformative approach to empower citizens and tackle the root causes of poverty rather than just its symptoms.

The implementation of the SPS is guided by a multi-sectoral institutional framework that encompasses ministries, departments, agencies and key non-government partners, formalised through the National Social Protection Committee (NSPC), to maximise impact. The NSPC is convened to provide policy and planning oversight for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the SPS, with the Planning Institute of Jamaica, PIOJ, serving as its chair and secretariat. Within this framework, the PIOJ has supported the philosophical and policy shifts underpinning the SPS and its implementation framework.

Among key implementing partners, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) implements several social protection programmes including those that fall under key departments and agencies such as the National Council for Senior Citizens, the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities and the National Insurance Scheme. Other implementing bodies include the Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA) an agency of the Ministry of Education, Youth, Skills and Information, the National Health Fund (NHF) an agency of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Board of Supervision (Ministry of Local Government and Community Development) and other relevant ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs). The efforts of the NSPC are synergised with the National Poverty Reduction Programme (NPRP), which also consists of a wide cadre of stakeholders across different areas such as health, education, social protection, culture, environment and economy. The Programme is guided by the National Policy on Poverty (2017) which provides a focused and overarching framework for addressing poverty, inclusive of principles, vision, goals, objectives, strategies, institutional and monitoring and evaluation frameworks.³⁷ This institutional architecture (SPS, NSPC, NPRP) forms the foundation for achieving key Vision 2030 Jamaica and SDG targets. Specifically, it promotes progress towards SDG 1.3 by building the “nationally appropriate social protection systems”, and advances Target 1.4 by creating access to resources through integrated programmes such as PATH and livelihood initiatives.

Best Practices

Over the past 20 years, there have been significant achievements in the development of frameworks (both policy and legislative), and programmes for social protection. This has involved the modernisation of systems using technology and a broader awareness and call to action in making the linkage between social protection and economics.³⁸ Multiple drivers have shaped this modernisation agenda, including safety net reforms, population ageing, climate vulnerability, digital transformation, and the need for shock-responsive systems. Jamaica has recognised the importance of deliberate policy alignment across these drivers. Some key frameworks guiding this alignment include:

- The Vision 2030 Jamaica (National Outcome Three: Effective Social Protection System, and National Outcome One: A Healthy and Stable Population)
- The National Population and Sustainable Development Policy and Programme of Action
- The National Policy on International Migration and Development
- The National Policy on Senior Citizens
- The National Policy on Poverty
- The Disabilities Act
- National Identification and Registration Act

³⁷ PIOJ, National Policy on Poverty and National Poverty Reduction Programme, (2017)

³⁸ PIOJ, Social Protection Strategy- 10th Anniversary Edition (2024)

- The Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development for Latin America and the Caribbean
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with special emphasis on issues such as social protection, awareness on population ageing and below replacement level fertility

Lifecycle Approach and Poverty Reduction

Effective social protection systems employ a life-cycle approach, recognising that the risks to income security are imminent throughout life, and include illness, disability, unemployment, ageing and retirement, requiring wide population coverage to buffer individuals against the impact of these risks. A lifecycle approach directly supports poverty reduction by targeting interventions at specific stages where vulnerability is most acute such as early childhood and old age. The focus of social protection accepts that lack of social protection coverage is a direct contributor to social instability and increased poverty. Poverty reduction programming in Jamaica has focused on these stages of life when vulnerability is high. Interventions such as the PATH (targeting children and their caregivers) and Social Pension Programme (targeting persons 75 years and older without contributory pensions) are concentrated on these care needs at both ends of the life cycle. The national poverty prevalence rate decreased to 7.8 per cent in 2024 relative to 16.7 per cent in 2021, reflecting the lowest rate recorded since 1989. The period of this reduction also saw the implementation and expansion of social programmes focused on the most vulnerable.

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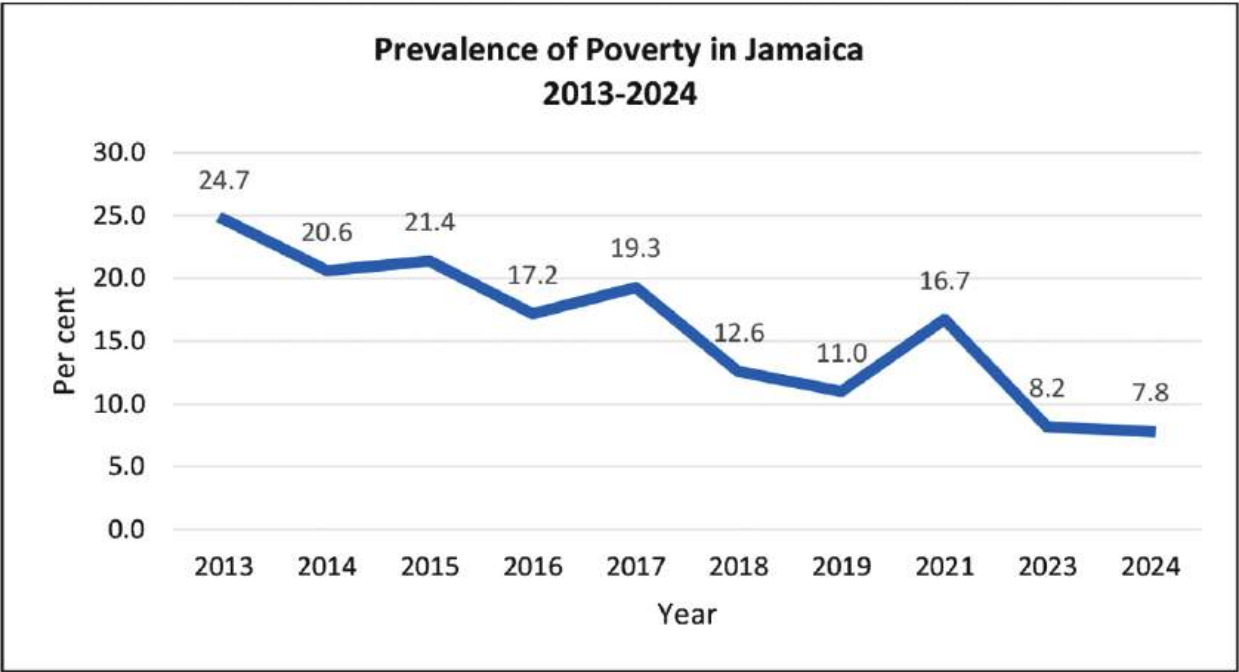


FIGURE 8 Prevalence of Poverty in Jamaica

Notes: - No survey fielded in 2020 and 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Population and Housing Census, respectively.
- Source: Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC), various years.

Adaptive and Shock-Responsive Social Protection

The SPS recognises that resilience is constantly being threatened by natural and man-made hazards and climate risks. The strategy emphasises the need for adaptive social protection systems that are shock-responsive, inclusive and rapidly scalable. Adaptive measures within Jamaica's SPS include early warning systems linked to disaster risk financing, diversified payment modalities (cash, cheque, automated teller machine, ATM, mobile), digital damage assessment tools, management information systems, benefit level calculation models, and scalable cash transfer mechanisms. These measures are not limited to natural disaster response but form part of ongoing social protection development.

The ability to respond effectively in the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl in 2024 served as a pivotal assessment of these adaptive structures. The government launched the Beryl Cash Assistance Programme with over 14 000 households receiving cash transfers via remittance centres. Funds were primarily used for housing repairs, food and essential expenses with 97.0 per cent of beneficiaries indicating satisfaction.³⁹ Interventions prioritized female-headed households, families living below the poverty line, children, youth, elderly and families with persons with disabilities. Additionally, the government mobilized rapid financing from the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility (CCRIF SPC), which also provided additional funding for social assistance programmes.⁴⁰

Following Hurricane Melissa, the MLSS utilised the Jamaica Household Disaster Impact and Needs Assessment (JHDINA) digital tool with geotagging capabilities, reducing subjectivity. Data revealed that over 70 000 damage assessments were conducted and over 1 million persons affected by the hurricane.

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Modernisation of the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH)

PATH delivers conditional cash transfers to the most vulnerable households with the goal of breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty. Approximately \$8.3 billion was expended to provide income support cash transfers to PATH families, and \$510.0 million to support PATH beneficiaries at the post-secondary/tertiary levels of education as at December 2024.⁴¹ As at February 2024, PATH had 311 187 beneficiaries, with children accounting for 59.2 per cent of paid beneficiaries and the elderly comprising 25.6 per cent for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023/24.⁴²

³⁹ World Food Programme. 2025. Hurricane Beryl, Jamaica: Beryl Cash Assistance Programme Report (August 2025). Rome.

⁴⁰ CCRIF SPC, "CCRIF To Make Record US\$70.8 Million (\$11.4 Billion) Payout to Jamaica Following the Devastation Caused by Hurricane Melissa", accessed January 12, 2025. https://www.ccrif.org/news/ccrif-make-record-us708-million-j114-billion-payout-jamaica-following-devastation-caused?language_content_entity=en

⁴¹ PIOJ, Economic and Social Survey (ESS) (2024)

⁴² Ministry of Labour and Social Security, Annual report 2023-2024

Modernisation of PATH includes:

- Progression from manual processes to digital payments
- Use of a proxy means test (Beneficiary Identification System) to introduce objectivity, transparency and improved targeting of beneficiaries
- Widened the options for receipt of payments to cheques collected directly from community Post Offices, via ATM card and electronic transfers through specific remittance agencies.

Income Security for the Elderly

The National Insurance Scheme provides contributory-based benefits for retirement, death or invalidity, meeting ILO social security standards. As at December 2024, the NIS facilitated payments amounting to \$1.3 billion to 139 798 registered beneficiaries, retirement/old age pensioners constituted the largest group of beneficiaries with 106 190.⁴³ As at March 31, 2024, the number of persons contributing to the NIS totalled 664 036. The MLSS now verifies life certificates and make payments electronically, thereby increasing efficiency and accessibility to seniors.⁴⁴

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Additionally, the Social Pension Programme introduced in 2021, provides monetary benefits to Jamaican citizens 75 years and older who are not living in a government facility, or in receipt of a pension or any other benefit. The programme provided \$794.3 million to 13 651 seniors. The MLSS also revised its documentary requirements to include the use of the Elector Registration Identification card, school records, marriage certificate, birth certificate of applicant's child, to increase access to social assistance for vulnerable seniors.⁴⁵

Integration of the Jamaica Drug for the Elderly Programme (JADEP) into the National Health Fund (NHF)

The NHF provides health financing for 24 covered chronic illnesses, advancing SDG Target 3.8 on Universal Health Coverage and directly addresses the high burden of non-communicable diseases in Jamaica. The merging of JADEP and the NHF consolidated pharmaceutical subsidies under one NHF card, reducing fragmentation and supporting the lifecycle approach.

- For the FY 2024/25 approximately 2.8 million prescriptions were filled at government pharmacies, meeting the medication needs of over 700 000 Jamaicans.
- The NHF Card programme had over 350 755 active beneficiaries, with just over 4.8 million claims processed and over \$9.1 billion paid in subsidies.⁴⁶

⁴³ PIOJ, ESSJ (2024)

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ PIOJ, ESSJ (2024)

⁴⁶ National Health Fund, accessed January 12, 2026. <https://www.nhf.org.jm>

Advancement of the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

The Disabilities Act (2014) and the subsequent establishment of the Disabilities Rights Tribunal (2023) exemplifies the government's commitment to inclusivity. The 'I Am Able - My JCPD' app, allows persons with disabilities to access Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) services with multiple accessibility features. Additionally, the My JCPB Management Information System Platform is designed to meet international accessibility standards, centralises registration, verification and grant applications for persons with disabilities.

The Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) has 17 130 persons with disabilities on its registry.⁴⁷ The JCPD has developed and reviewed codes of practice on education and training, and employment in collaboration with key stakeholders. Additionally, through the JCPD Grants Programme, financial support was provided to persons with disabilities. Key initiatives included the New Limb New Life Programme, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness and local rehabilitation partners, as well as economic empowerment and assistive aid grants. Under these initiatives, a total of J\$7.5 million was disbursed to 196 beneficiaries (121 males and 75 females) islandwide.⁴⁸

The Social Protection for Increased Resilience and Opportunity (SPIRO) Project

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The SPIRO Project being executed by the MLSS supports institutional and data management systems for enhancing technology in service delivery. It is also developing the infrastructure for a proposed unemployment insurance scheme for workers, and capacity building of critical stakeholder entities, presenting a modernised and integrated approach to social protection and development.⁴⁹

National Poverty Reduction, Leaving No One Behind National Toolkit

This operational framework is utilised to identify and reach marginalised populations. Launched by the PIOJ in March 2024, the three-part toolkit (assessment and analysis; strategic planning and implementation; monitoring and evaluation) builds stakeholder capacity to identify exclusion risks, strengthen service delivery, and close programme gaps.⁵⁰ The toolkit is intended for multiple stakeholders, including National Poverty Reduction Programme partners, policy practitioners, government decision-makers, social protection practitioners, and social development practitioners. Its monitoring and evaluation section is specifically designed to track inclusion outcomes within poverty programmes, allowing users to identify those left or at risk of being left behind due to policy and programme design, and to develop strategies to close identified gaps.

⁴⁷ Jamaica Information Service. (2025). Approximately 17,130 Persons Registered with Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities <https://jis.gov.jm/approximately-17130-persons-registered-with-jamaica-council-for-persons-with-disabilities/>

⁴⁸ Jamaica Gleaner. (2025, August 7). Reduction in discrimination complaints to JCPD. https://past.jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20250807/reduction-discrimination-complaints-jcpd#disqus_thread

⁴⁹ PIOJ, ESSJ (2024).

⁵⁰ Jamaica Information Service. (2024). PIOJ launches national poverty reduction toolkit. PIOJ Launches National Poverty Reduction Toolkit – Jamaica Information Service

Public Sector Modernisation Programme

The Public Sector Modernisation Programme, led by the Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, provides a government-wide framework for transforming service delivery through improved efficiency and digitalisation. This agenda prioritises accelerated digitisation, results-driven processes, accountability, and citizen experience, directly affecting the sustainability and cohesion of social protection reforms. Tangible examples of public sector modernisation include work permit system digitalisation, a childcare management system, the eGov data centre upgrade, expansion of digital services platforms. These efforts directly support social protection by enabling faster beneficiary verification, reducing administrative duplication, and facilitating digital payments to vulnerable populations.

Lessons Learnt

As Jamaica continues to develop and implement long-term plans that consider the entire population with priorities identified for its vulnerable groups, it is evident that increased levels of social security coverage among the labour force and improved implementation of safety nets are required to yield desired results. However, administrative, institutional, and governance silos within a system that ideally thrives on integration and collaboration still permeate, resulting in inefficiencies, duplication, and wastage of resources. Integration cannot be achieved through policy statements alone; it requires formal coordination mechanisms, shared budgets, and mandated inter-governmental reporting.

Process design must prioritise client-centric flexibility and accommodate standardisation across programmes. Jamaica has begun to address these issues through the development of the Beneficiary Identification System (BIS) for the PATH Programme. The MLSS has also revised documentary requirements for the Social Pension Programme to include alternative identification documents, increasing access for vulnerable seniors without formal identification. These represent some initial adjustments; however, this process is ongoing as MDAs work to standardise processes, expand digital integration and reduce administrative barriers across the social protection system.

Accessibility to social protection programmes and initiatives remains uneven across groups and geographies. For persons with disabilities, barriers include inadequate communication by service providers, high unemployment, and inaccessible physical infrastructure. In the case of rural and vulnerable populations, including the unbanked, geographic disparities in financial service availability hinders digital payment adoption. The lesson here is that standardised programme design alone is not sufficient to address these complex issues. There is a need for targeted outreach and alternative programme delivery mechanisms. Some targeted measures that have been undertaken thus far include the My JCPD Management Information System platform and the *"I Am Able"* app. Jamaica has also implemented community registration fairs, expanded identification document options and have introduced and maintained multiple payment modalities to address these barriers.

Demographic shifts currently impacting Jamaica's population necessitate careful consideration of the financial stability of income security funds. As at 2024, the elderly population (65 years and over), was estimated at 256 500, representing 9.5 per cent of the population.⁵¹ This demographic shift, resulting in a rising dependency ratio, creates an imperative for the modernisation of the scheme's financial foundation, to ensure long-term sustainability. Therefore, contributory pension models must be periodically adjusted to ensure alignment with demographic realities. Contribution rates, retirement age, and benefit formulas are among the areas that would require attention in NIS reform to ensure long term sustainability.

Additionally, the role of technology in reforming processes, systems and institutions, the management of data and the adoption of multi-channel communication is critical in the modernisation of the social protection system that will enhance resilience to shocks. Technology is an enabler, not a solution in itself; it must be accompanied by process reform and capacity building.

In examining the aftermath of Hurricane Melissa, while the social protection systems showed a great level of preparation, they revealed that size, value, timing of resources have to be mapped to meet the level of impact. The key lesson is that shock-responsiveness requires pre-agreed protocols that link impact thresholds to resource mobilization. For example, Jamaica has integrated the Jamaica Household Damage, Impact and Needs Assessment (JHDINA) digital assessment tool with geotagging capabilities and established pre-approved financing mechanisms through the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility Segregated Portfolio Company (CCRIF SPC) to enable rapid disbursement following disaster events and this proved to be impactful post Hurricane Melissa.

Resource Requirements

In order to advance the trajectory and expansion of the social protection system, several critical resources have been identified:

Financial Resources

- Sustained allocation of domestic fiscal resources for social protection programmes and initiatives, including recurrent expenditure for policy and programme elements of the social protection floor.
- Concessional financing and grants from international development partners for specific time-bound initiatives (e.g., Social Protection for Increased Resilience and Opportunity, SPIRO project, digital transformation)

⁵¹ PIOJ, ESSJ (2024)

Human Resources

- Recruitment, retention, and improved compensation structures for social protection personnel across MDAs, including caseworkers, social workers, assessors, and administrative staff.
- Strengthened capacity of the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) to fully execute its mandate under the Disabilities Act.

Technological Resources

- Investment in interoperable social protection information systems.
- Accessible digital infrastructure equipped with pertinent options for assistive computer software and services to ensure inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Digital literacy programmes targeting beneficiaries to enable effective use of digital service delivery platforms.

Institutional Resources

- Continued development and scaling up of the National Identification System (NIDS).
- Data collection systems capable of generating disaggregated data, including for persons with disabilities, to inform evidence-based policy.
- Partnership frameworks with private sector organisations to co-finance or co-deliver specific social protection interventions.

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The overarching consensus is that for an integrated, modernised effective social protection system to thrive there must be critical partnerships in place. This includes the government as the primary actor but with supporting roles from individuals, communities, NGOs, the private sector and international development partners. Partner contributions may include capacity development, resource mobilisation, technical expertise, and maintenance of gains. Partnerships with entities possessing specific expertise can lessen the strain on the Government's budget while maximising available benefits.

Beyond 2030

While there has been significant progress, the design of multi-stakeholder interactions continues to be affected by systemic bureaucracy which can hinder the real possibilities for achievement, collaboration and development. Jamaica has shown stellar commitment in the face of economic constraints and slow moving and sudden environmental shocks in recent years, and its willingness to continue to advance the work of having an effective and modern social protection system. It is this commitment and leadership that will continue to drive policies and programmes that are responsive to the changing needs of the population and more specifically its vulnerable groups.

Looking beyond 2030, several gaps in Jamaica's social protection system must be addressed. These gaps derive from global commitments under the 2030 Agenda, the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation (No. 202), and the Montevideo Consensus, as well as national dialogue and research.

A large percentage of the working population operates within the informal economy, leaving these members of the workforce without access to contributory social security. Work needs to be done on the expansion of coverage to informal workers through portable benefits and simplified contribution mechanisms. Additionally, gaps remain in coverage for the working poor, youth, and elderly without contributory pensions, indicating that there needs to be progress towards universal coverage across all lifecycle stages. Current benefit levels may not adequately replace income or cover living costs, indicating a need to increase benefit adequacy and introduce progressive benefit structures.

Jamaica also lacks an integrated long-term care system for the elderly and persons with disabilities. The development of a national care policy and infrastructure for home-based, community-based, and institutional care is therefore required. While the Disabilities Act (2014) and the Disabilities Rights Tribunal are in place, implementation and accessibility gaps still persist. The full operationalisation of accessibility standards and service integration across all social protection programmes remains a priority. Additionally, partial digitisation has created inefficiencies, as full interoperability of social protection information systems is incomplete. A fully integrated, interoperable digital social protection ecosystem is therefore needed.

Critical to the way forward as well is the development and integration of policies and programmes that are in alignment with the National Population and Sustainable Development Policy (NPSDP). This alignment is necessary due to demographic trends such as population ageing, rising dependency ratios, and below-replacement fertility, which directly affect the demand for and sustainability of social protection systems. Coherent and adaptable plans that benefit all age groups, therefore require continued acknowledgement of the persistent gaps and challenges affecting social protection and the development of suitable responses to mitigate same and the continued emphasis on long-term care, quality of life, and treatment of illnesses and diseases.

Additionally, the recent launch of Jamaica's national Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) expands the tools available for measuring poverty by looking beyond household expenditure, to include deprivations that individuals experience in education, health, living standards and employment, thereby strengthening the evidence basis for providing the data to support a modernised and responsive social protection system.

The execution of the six-year SPIRO project through its three programmatic components: (1) Enhanced Resilience through Unemployment Insurance; (2) Increased Opportunity through Integrated Employment Services and; (3) Strengthened Systems and Capacity to Support Resilience Building;⁵² is charting a path that is not only responsive but innovative and will meet the needs of the population in

⁵² MLSS, SPIRO Project Operations Manual (2024)

a way that is meaningful and sustainable. The SPIRO project by design is expected to revolutionise the social protection system in tangible ways that the effects will be seen and felt at all stages, but more significantly at the service delivery level by its beneficiaries. The current progress and forward-thinking scope and provision will facilitate the continued improvement of services, systems and staff resulting in a modernised social protection system. Jamaica continues to build capacities, strengthen systems and prioritise financing to support the process of modernisation, ensuring no one is left behind.

Looking beyond 2030, multi-sectoral stakeholder collaborations will remain critical to advancing Jamaica's social protection agenda, in alignment with SDG Goal 17. The NSPC and the National Poverty Reduction Programme Committee (NPRPC) integrated frameworks over the years have bolstered the advocacy, decision-making, collaboration and execution of policies and programmes focused on social protection. These structures will continue to deepen the discussion and work on adequacy and effective social protection, engaging entities with global knowledge and expertise to advance the lifecycle approach already embedded in the National SPS. The Government of Jamaica will continue to require support from international development partners (IDPs) to address gaps not readily financeable through domestic resources. These include specific areas where external financing and technical assistance remain critical such as; shock-responsive social protection, unemployment insurance scheme development, integrated social protection information system, development of comprehensive care systems, early warning systems for social protection, among others. Therefore, continued IDP engagement will be essential to sustain progress beyond 2030.

Regional Analysis

The social protection system in LAC encompasses contributory social security, non-contributory benefits, employment law, public health services and health insurance systems, programmes supporting education and nutrition, and other social services.

Contributory social protection in the region varies in its design from country to country but typically includes contributory pension schemes such as old-age, disability, and survivor's pensions, maternity and sick leave. In some countries, health insurance is also included. These benefits are funded by employee and employer contributions but only cover formal sector workers. LAC countries are seeking to include additional branches of social protection, such as unemployment insurance, and to expand social security coverage through policies to incentivise labour market formalisation.

Countries in the LAC region have also sought to expand the coverage of non-contributory social protection (also referred to as public assistance). These benefits are mostly funded from general taxation and serve as a safety net for those not covered by contributory systems. They can include non-contributory pensions, cash or in-kind transfers (e.g. food vouchers or school uniforms), health care or housing assistance. However, the development of the non-contributory pillar has been more piecemeal, both in terms of the benefits available and eligibility requirements. These deficiencies mean that nearly one in four households across the LAC region (23.5 per cent) still lack access to any form of social protection, either contributory or non-contributory (ECLAC, 2024). Moreover, non-contributory benefits are often too low to lift families out of poverty, resulting in entrenched inequality.

Countries from the LAC region have pioneered conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes where receipt of benefits is conditioned upon household's participation in education, training or health programmes. Advocates of CCT programmes, such as Brazil's Bolsa Família or Colombia's Familias en Acción, argue that conditionalities foster the development of human capital through which households can lift themselves out of poverty.

Health services are a key aspect of social protection. LAC countries generally operate mixed healthcare systems incorporating some combination of public health services, contributory public health insurance, and private services. While most public health systems provide universal or near-universal access for basic care, they often suffer from underfunding and long waiting times, resulting in high levels of out-of-pocket expenditure for private services. In the Caribbean, there has been greater emphasis on public health services but, in an effort to increase funding for health, more Caribbean countries are introducing public health insurance schemes.

The rapid ageing of Caribbean populations will place pressure on both contributory and non-contributory systems, including health and social care, because a large proportion of benefit payments

and healthcare services are directed towards older persons. To maintain benefits and services at an acceptable level, many countries are having to increase social security contributions and/or retirement ages. In addition, population ageing adds to the burden on unpaid carers, which falls disproportionately on women, and there is a widespread recognition of the need to provide greater support for carers to address these imbalances and promote women's economic autonomy.

With increasing intra-Caribbean labour migration, it is important to consider the portability of social protection entitlements across countries. The CARICOM Social Security Agreement should ensure that people can move between participating countries without losing entitlements that they have accumulated. Basic and emergency public health care is also generally available across the Community, although with the quality, accessibility, and scope of protection varying significantly across countries, delays or other difficulties can often arise when migrants try to access these services.

Social protection systems also need to adapt to climate-related shocks which pose severe threats to livelihoods, food security, and public health across the region. Regional governments are seeking to make social protection more shock-responsive through the development early warning systems, scalable benefits, disaster-responsive financing and improved coordination with disaster risk management agencies.

In Jamaica, the social protection system is built around core programmes like the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education, (PATH) which is a conditional cash transfer programme for children and low-income households, and the public health service along with the National Health Fund that subsidises medication. A number of new programmes have been added in recent years. The Social Pension, a non-contributory pension for those aged 70 years and over, was launched in 2021. The Tourism Workers Pension Scheme, a defined contribution pension scheme, was launched in 2022. The Solidarity Programme, launched in 2025, incorporates a one-off conditional cash transfer and is intended to integrate 50 000 Jamaicans not currently covered by social protection into the system. Unemployment insurance is also being introduced. These measures reflect our commitment to closing the social protection coverage gaps and to improving the level of coverage provided by different programmes as resources allow.



Local groups, schools, and the private sector all worked together, making it clear that progress was truly for everyone... Living here, I see how social programs and economic opportunities have helped families escape poverty... In Jamaica where no one is left behind, not even the ones who used to be overlooked.

► **DENNAE HARRIS,**
Immaculate Conception High School

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Social protection was the most universally raised theme across the consultation — each group identified structural gaps in Jamaica's social protection architecture as a barrier to SDG progress. The degree of convergence is particularly striking given the diversity of groups consulted.

The Private Sector group called for mandatory NIS compliance and universal coverage reform. The Youth group identified gaps in the PATH programme, noting that young people who age out of the programme face abrupt transitions with no preparation. The Local Authorities group described inadequate social protection as the binding constraint on community-level poverty reduction. The Community Representatives group highlighted the exclusion of elderly persons, trafficking survivors, and informal workers from PATH's coverage, as well as adverse consequences of new interventions such as digital payments that create access to barriers particularly for the elderly. The NGO group made structural reform of PATH — and the entire social protection system — its principal advocacy priority. The Persons with Disabilities group identified specific PATH inequities: the lower benefit rate in the disability segment relative to the education segment, means-testing criteria that appear to penalise disability households, and the absence of transition planning as children age out at eighteen.

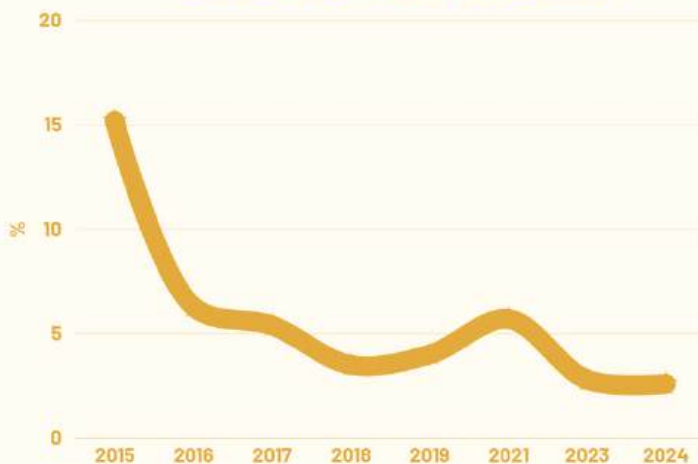
The most consistent demand is for a modernised, data-driven social protection system that is responsive to individual circumstances rather than rigid categorical criteria.



Goal 2

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

National Food Poverty Prevalence



+ Policy, Projects and Programmes

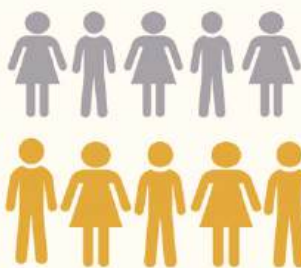


1. Production Initiative Programme
2. Youth in Agriculture Policy
3. Farm Road Infrastructure Programme
4. Irrigation Expansion Programme

+ Strategy



New **FACE** of Food:
Food Security
Agriculture Development
Climate-Smart Technologies
Export Expansion



51.1%

5 IN 10 PERSONS HAVE ENOUGH FOOD TO EAT DAILY

2024

\$636 711

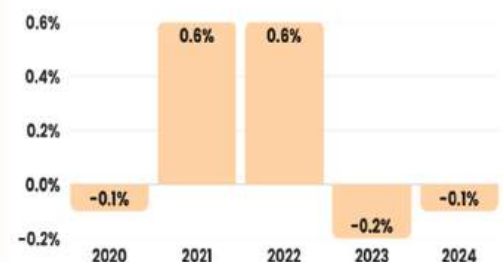
J\$ REAL VALUE ADDED PER AGRICULTURAL WORKER



SHARE OF REAL GDP

7.5% 2024

CONTRIBUTION TO GDP GROWTH



SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Context

The indicators and targets of Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 2 allow for the design of interventions and the monitoring of outcomes that can contribute to ending hunger, improving nutrition, achieving food security and promoting sustainable agriculture. These targets support quality of life improvements at all stages based on affordability and nutrition, and economic development through targeted support to small-scale food producers. Underpinning the consistent availability of affordable, healthy and nutritious food is an agricultural supply chain that can withstand environmental shocks. Sustainable agriculture is therefore promoted as an *“economically feasible approach that maintains the viability of soil, water and air while promoting social equity and community wellbeing”*.⁵³

Small open economies like Jamaica face the challenge of high food imports (18.9 per cent of total imports) for the broad nutritional needs of its citizens.⁵⁴ This dependence increases risk to food security, in conjunction with the island’s climate vulnerability where increasingly unpredictable weather events threaten the productivity of the domestic agricultural sector. Over the last decade, the sector has seen losses in excess of US\$360 million from the effects of droughts, heavy rainfall and storms. Employing sustainable agricultural methods is therefore necessary for economic stability, but also the wellbeing of citizens through access to healthy and affordable food options.

The availability of healthy and affordable food is increasingly a concern owing to the annual increases in prices with little reprieve for consumers. Since 2020, the consumer price index for food has increased 68.0 per cent, driven largely by increases in the category vegetables, tubers, plantains, cooking bananas and pulses (106.7 per cent).⁵⁶ Food prices have experienced increases in part from supply constraints following weather events, and the variable cost of inputs due to external shocks. These and other factors largely affect the ability of individuals to meet their daily dietary needs from early childhood to elderly.

Sector policies and action plans to advance agricultural development, nutrition and food security are consistently developed and updated to address the changing needs of the sector, while fixing structural challenges. The National Food and Nutrition Security Policy and Action Plan (2013) sets out the food and nutritional goals that are to be met so that the country’s agriculture and food systems can deliver adequate and nutritionally appropriate quantities of food, especially to low-income and vulnerable

⁵³ World Bank Group. 1995. Agriculture Technology Notes. Issue No. 13 December 1995.

⁵⁴ Statistical Institute of Jamaica International Merchandise Trade. Imports by End Use.

⁵⁵ Data calculated from 2017 to 2025 reported damage and losses in the Economic and Social Survey Jamaica.

⁵⁶ Data calculated from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica All Jamaica All Jamaica Monthly Consumer Price Index.

groups. In an effort to modernise the approach to the sector, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries began the implementation of a new strategic planning framework, focused on achieving 15 outcomes underpinned by six strategic priorities, as follows:

- Corporate Governance and Strengthened Institutional Capacity
- Food and Nutrition Security
- Market-Driven Agriculture and Fisheries
- Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture, Fisheries and Minerals Sectors
- Inclusive and Viable Agro-industries and Agribusiness
- Dynamic and Diversified Minerals Industry and Geoscience Sector

Included in the government's tool-kit is the new F.A.C.E.⁵⁷ of Food, which places emphasis on increased production of crops with a competitive advantage, formalising the sector through improved data and marketing support, adapting to climate change and boosting exports for revenue generation. This modern approach to sector development incorporates the principle of sustainable agriculture, leveraging regional and international partnerships.

Thematic Discussion

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Food (in) Security

Sustainable agricultural production, is one of the critical vehicles through which the targets to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition can be achieved. Therefore, the pursuit of programmes to facilitate the achievement of these targets is of paramount importance. Globally, food security continues to be a threat to achievement of the 2030 Agenda, with 53 of the 65 countries surveyed in 2024, over 296 million people – 22.6 per cent of the population surveyed – facing high levels of acute food insecurity.⁵⁸

More recent data from the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) 2023 indicate that 51.1 per cent of households had enough food to eat on a daily basis, while 33.3 per cent indicated the household had enough food sometimes and the remaining 15.6 per cent indicated that they did not have enough food to eat daily.⁵⁹ This is against the overall decline in absolute (food) poverty which has been declining in tandem with the prevalence of poverty, from 6.8 per cent in 2015 to 2.7 per cent in 2023.⁶⁰

The availability of affordable healthy food has implications for the wellbeing of the population, measured in non-communicable disease (NCD) prevalence and mortality under SDG 3. There has been a marked increase in the incidence of hypertension from 20.8 per cent in 2000-2001 to 33.8 per cent in the 2016-2017 survey among Jamaicans 15 years and older. Similarly, the prevalence of diabetes

⁵⁷ Food security, Agribusiness development, Climate-smart technologies, and Export expansion

⁵⁸ Global Report on Food Crises 2025 www.fsinplatform.org/grfc2025

⁵⁹ Planning Institute of Jamaica and Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2024. Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions.

⁶⁰ *ibid*

has increased to one in eight people (11.9 per cent) in 2017. Both NCDs exhibit a gender disparity, with a higher prevalence in females than in males. Exacerbating the NCD burden is the high level of overweight or obesity, with one in two Jamaicans (53.8 per cent) classified as such.⁶¹

Improving these outcomes has been the focus of the Government of Jamaica, through policy coherence in health, agriculture and poverty reduction.

Climate Vulnerability and Production

Jamaica's location in the Atlantic hurricane belt makes it highly exposed to hydrometeorological events and vulnerable to natural hazards including intense hurricanes, extreme rainfall, droughts, sea level rise and earthquakes. The country is considered climate sensitive as the impact of these events can be considered deleterious to the economy, livelihoods, and the environment. Over the past decade the sector has faced droughts, excess rainfall and storms, with damage and loss exceeding US\$360 million. The bulk of losses have come in the last three years from the impact of Hurricanes Beryl and Melissa which led to damage, loss and additional costs of approximately US\$315 million.⁶²

Hurricane Melissa made landfall in the island's primary agricultural parishes, delivering an immediate and severe blow to the sector. Assessment of the damage, loss and additional costs to the sector indicate \$36.1 billion across 48 016 hectares of farmland, affecting over 66 000 farmers, with losses from livestock and crops comprising 1.4 million animals and 38 000 hectares of crops. Crop losses were equivalent to 76.0 per cent of the hectares of crop reaped in 2024.

Outcomes like these deliver severe economic challenges for the country as a small-island developing state (SIDS). Agricultural landscapes can be very dynamic, as evidenced by Jamaica's transition from historical reliance on narrow/specific agricultural crops to a more diversified sector encompassing high-value crops, animal husbandry; aquaculture; and value-added products. Most of this form the underpinnings of the Agriculture Production Index (API) produced by the Planning Institute of Jamaica, PIOJ.

AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION INDEX 2015 - 2024							
BASE YEAR = 2015							
SUB-INDUSTRIES							
	TRADITIONAL EXPORT CROP	OTHER AGRICULTURE CROP	ANIMAL FARMING	FISHING	FORESTRY	POST HARVEST ACTIVITIES	TOTAL
2015	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
2016	99.6	115.9	112.9	116.3	100.0	148.0	113.2
2017	103.7	109.2	112.9	140.0	100.0	123.1	111.2
2018	101.2	117.3	115.9	115.1	100.0	80.0	113.0
2019	95.1	119.4	116.3	118.6	100.0	110.8	114.1
2020	87.8	120.9	110.2	106.1	100.6	98.7	111.5
2021	94.0	131.4	112.4	93.9	100.6	129.0	118.7
2022	104.7	143.9	122.6	96.6	100.6	117.9	129.2
2023	104.7	132.1	122.5	120.2	100.6	131.6	124.5
2024	91.4	130.8	124.5	108.0	100.6	78.0	119.6
% CHANGES 2024/2023	-12.7	-1.0	1.7	-10.1	0.0	-40.7	-4.0

TABLE 3 Agriculture Production Index 2015 - 2024

⁶¹ Ministry of Health and Wellness, Jamaica, and the Caribbean Institute for Health Research, The University of the West Indies. The Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey 2016-17 (JHLS III). Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers, 2024.

⁶² Data adapted from Post Disaster Needs Assessment Hurricane Beryl and damage and Loss Assessment of Hurricane Melissa

The Other Agriculture Crops category or sub-index captures mostly domestic crop production, including Legumes, Vegetables, Condiments, Fruits, Cereals, Plantains, Potatoes, Yams and Other tubers. Production is distributed across all parishes, with higher hectares reaped concentrated in the breadbasket parish of St Elizabeth. The growth in this category has supported the growth in the API as other areas in the industry have had varying levels of performance, with the exception of animal farming.

The positive effects of government policy to bring more land under production, improve data for producers, advance technology and the rollout of Agro parks, among other developments, have led to gains in crop production from 571 444 tonnes in 2015 to 767 168 in 2024. This cumulative growth was offset by weather events that either slowed or reversed some year- over-year gains.

Jamaica has made measurable progress in strengthening the resilience and sustainability of its agricultural and fisheries production systems, even in the face of repeated climate-related shocks. Recovery was underpinned by rapid post-disaster interventions including targeted replanting, land preparation and input support, particularly for short-cycle vegetables. As a result, domestic supply recovered quickly, contributing to post-disaster price reductions ranging from 14.0 per cent to 77.0 per cent easing pressure on household food access. The resilience building efforts support the push for sustainable agricultural production as more land is brought under production—from 42 644 hectares in 2015 to 50 564 in 2024⁶³ — and water used for irrigation (1.2 million m³ daily)⁶⁴ creating the need for methods which lessen the environmental impact of the sector while meeting the demands of the population.

Policy Framework

In addition to the established frameworks, a suite of policies is being developed to provide a holistic approach to agriculture that addresses the sector's developmental challenges. The development of the Ten-Year National Agricultural Development Plan, in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO is therefore a critical step for Jamaica. The Plan, along with a Food Reserve Strategy, is slated to be completed in fiscal year 2026/27, providing a strategic blueprint to support the revitalisation of Jamaica's agriculture sector. This Plan seeks to incorporate other critical policies, such as the National Seed Policy and those related to disaster preparedness, health, and nutrition.

In addition, a key policy on the national development agenda is the Youth in Agriculture Policy, which focuses on developing a

YOUTH STAKEHOLDERS:

Strongly advocated for the expansion of school gardens, particularly in urban and peri-urban schools in Portmore and Kingston, as a multi-purpose intervention that can supplement school feeding programmes, improve access to fresh produce, and reconnect young people with food production. Backyard gardening was also highlighted as a community-level food security strategy.

⁶³ Ministry of Agriculture Crop Area Reaped 2015-2024

⁶⁴ Water Resources Authority. 2024. A National Water Resources Master Plan for Jamaica

framework to increase youth participation in the agriculture and fisheries industry while strengthening their contribution to the development of agribusiness. Similarly, the National Organic Agriculture Policy, aims to develop a framework that supports organic farming in Jamaica for the purpose of increasing market access and promoting environmentally sustainable practices. Among the policy priorities of government, the provision of a strategic framework for the sustainable development of the livestock sector and guide to the creation of the National Livestock Board. Legislative priorities are also the focus of government, and many associated with the agriculture industry are at varying levels of completion.

Challenges

Jamaica's agricultural sector faces several structural challenges. These include labour shortages, low productivity, poor infrastructure, limited market access, and changing weather patterns coupled with vulnerability to climate shocks. Broadly, these challenges fall into four categories:

- **Climate-Related** – Extreme weather events, such as droughts and hurricanes, including the loss of productive lands due to rising sea levels.
- **Economic and Financial** – Affordable financing, inadequate insurance coverage, low profitability due to unstable income, and the maintenance of the long-term land productivity, all of which limit agricultural output.
- **Operational and Structural** – Labour constraints, inadequate or poorly maintained infrastructure, limited extension services, and pest and disease management/control services.
- **Social and Institutional** – Insecurity in land tenure and knowledge gaps, including issues of equitable access for women, youth and small-scale farmers.

These challenges all have implications for the development agenda of ending hunger. There exists a nexus between agriculture production and hunger, as a large percentage of low-income workers rely on farming for their livelihoods. While food production has increased generally, populations can remain undernourished, as there exists the issue of access, distribution, and poverty rather than supply alone. Sustainable agricultural productivity, climate-smart practices, and reduced food waste are critical to feeding the population.

As captured in Target 2.3, doubling the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers—specifically women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, and pastoralists requires social equity. The real value added per agricultural worker has grown from \$511 216 in 2015 to \$636 713 in 2024. Improving livelihoods through secure access to resources, knowledge, financial services, and markets, security of land tenure measured by productivity per labour unit and income levels require a levelling of the playfield for the goal of sustainable agricultural production to be achieved.

Programmes and Investments

The Production Incentive Programme (PIP), with a mandate to enhance agricultural productivity, promote rural development and sustainably expand agricultural production, represents a key government instrument. In 2024, \$1.2 billion was allocated for capacity building within the industry, augmenting critical agricultural support services, and providing technical, marketing and material inputs to farmers and fishers in the production of strategically selected crops, livestock and fisheries. Also, given the country's climate-related vulnerabilities the Agriculture Disaster Recovery Programme was established following the extreme weather events of 2024, which targeted impacted parishes and focused on crop, livestock, and fisheries production, as well as infrastructure rehabilitation. For 2022–2025, Jamaica has expended approximately \$5.0 billion under the PIP.

Land ownership support continues through collaboration between the Ministry and the National Land Agency (NLA) under the Systematic Land Registration Programme (SLRP), assisting farmers in possession of land for more than 12 years to attain titles – which is geared towards facilitating agricultural investment and security. Support is also given to farmers who engage in the regularisation process, by assisting them in overcoming financial barriers, as the Ministry often covers the cost of initial surveying and legal fees, with repayment to be done later. Concomitantly, titles are being issued to farmers — a more recent case in point is the more than 200 titles issued to farmers in South St. Elizabeth at the ground-breaking ceremony of the Pedro Plains Irrigation Expansion Project. This is in preparation for their transformation and empowerment to become agribusiness operators, thereby unlocking the full economic potential of the land.

As it relates to infrastructure, there are ongoing projects such as the Farm Road Infrastructure Programme focused on strengthening of the national farm road network within targeted production zones, to facilitate the movement of agricultural products, thereby improving the consistency of food supply to local markets. The Expansion of Irrigation Infrastructure saw the continuation of work on two major irrigation projects—Essex Valley Agricultural Development Project (EVADP) and Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project (SPADP), while ground was broken for the Pedro Plains irrigation project.

Investments in climate-smart infrastructure, particularly irrigation, have significantly strengthened production stability and reduced dependence on rainfall. In 2025, approximately 8 624 hectares of agricultural land were consistently irrigated, exceeding the revised national target of 8 302 hectares. Following Hurricane Melissa, the National Irrigation Commission restored water services to 98.0 per cent of customers within five weeks and delivered 135.5 million gallons of water free of cost to affected farms, enabling the rapid re-establishment of short-cycle crops critical to domestic food supply. These interventions reflect tangible progress towards SDG targets 2.4 and 13.1, reinforcing adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards.

Other programmes aimed at shoring up the industry as it seeks to achieve developmental goals include the Fisheries Development Programme and the Dairy Development Programme. The Fisheries Development Programme explores profitable and sustainable alternative fisheries production, including offshore pelagic fishing, oyster production, eco-tourism in fish sanctuaries, ornamental fisheries, alternative fish feed production, freshwater prawn production and sea moss production. To support industry growth, the Dairy Development Programme continues to pursue its Feed Security Strategy, the National Fodder Programme, the Animal Genetics Programme, and the Equipment Loan Programme, among others. These are being implemented by the Jamaica Dairy Development Board, an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, mandated to regulate and develop Jamaica's dairy sector. Consequently, the programmes pursued and implemented by the Board are in line with its vision "An internationally competitive dairy industry which is economically and environmentally sustainable; and contributes to the self-sufficiency and enhances the nation's food security" and points to sustainability in dairy production, an important aspect of the agriculture industry.

Partnerships

Partnerships have also been forged with development partners (regional and international) to address the financial gaps in the industry. Among those onboard are the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the European Union (EU), and the French Development Agency. It is also worthy of note that private investments and public/private partnerships are playing an essential role in the industry. These organisations have been instrumental in the provision of support (technical and financial) to projects targeting agriculture, some of which directly affects production. Two such projects are the Essex Valley Agricultural Development Project (EVADP) and the Southern Plains Agricultural Development Project (SPADP) irrigation project.

Government, has also been playing its role in addressing the problem of limited financing, and has sought to engage partnerships with local agencies such as the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ), to which the government has provided funds to finance micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The DBJ is also in discussion with the Agro-Invest Corporation (AIC) to facilitate direct lending to farmers and agri-entrepreneurs. There has also been the launch of a Loan Ready Training Programme through memoranda of understanding (MoU's) with DBJ, Rural Agriculture Development Agency (RADA) and the Jamaica Agricultural Society (JAS). Financing and training are critical to sustainability in agriculture production, as there are constant improvements in systems and methodologies, which can serve to enhance agricultural outcomes.

In the area of insurance, steps have and are being taken to de-risk the industry. The implementation of a parametric insurance programme provides wind, rain and drought coverage to farmers and fishers. Several farmers benefitted from payouts in 2024. This undertaking was facilitated by a partnership between the government and GraceKennedy Insurance (GKI), and enabled farmers and fishers to recover quickly from the extreme weather events in 2024. Also, in recognition of the challenges

faced by aging or retired agricultural farmers and an attempt to improve their welfare and security, an Agricultural Workers' Pension will be launched. The Ministry's intention is to advocate for start-up funding of \$1.0 billion. This intervention will have positive spin-offs for Goal 8—which "aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all". The engagement of more individuals in agricultural production will redound to the benefit of both individuals as well as the country.

Best Practices

The acceleration of the SDGs, through leveraging best practices from other jurisdictions is of paramount importance. Jamaica has pursued a number of initiatives that reflect best practice in sustainable agricultural production. The Agro-Park concept – designed to use rational and equitable forms of development that support sustainable agricultural production, in line with international best practice – is a prominent example.

The acceleration of SDG 2 depends heavily on identifying and addressing binding constraints. These have been identified as:

- Inequity in access to land, capital and credit which disproportionately affects small farmers, women and youth
- Inadequacies in agricultural infrastructure and agricultural support services
- Inadequate human capacity development
- Unhealthy food habits and insufficient nutritional awareness
- Lack of regulations for food labelling

Beyond 2030

Focus must be placed on developing infrastructural capacity that responds to disasters, with pre-planning as a critical element. The need for locally sourced seeds is acute, and research in this area should be accelerated. The National Seed Policy & Action Plan (2018–2028) is fundamental in charting the way forward. As articulated in the Policy, "seed is the basic input to crop production which has the greatest potential for increasing on farm productivity and food security".

This foundation can position the country to improve domestic resilience and weather domestic and foreign shocks. While open trade is promoted and encouraged, programming production and available food storage should prevent the adverse shocks to the domestic market from exogenous trade, energy and other shocks, reducing dependency on imports. Domestic capacity in seed production, fertilizer alternatives and locally manufactured agricultural equipment needs to be advanced urgently.

Steps have already been taken to address these constraints through policies, associated projects and programmes and their implementation. Among these are the government's Youth in Agriculture Policy; access to land initiative; and irrigation projects, such as EVADP and SPADP, among other initiatives. Therefore, it is apparent that fast-tracking, intensifying, and targeting focused implementation could be key to achieving meaningful outcomes in the agriculture industry.

Taken together, these outcomes demonstrate Jamaica's continued progress towards SDG 2 (Zero Hunger). Improved food availability, faster post-disaster recovery and moderated price volatility advance ending hunger, while expanded irrigation, structured production systems and climate responsive interventions reflect progress towards and improving food systems. The intersection with sustainable agricultural production with health, poverty reduction, environmental resilience and economic growth is a crucial opportunity for Jamaica to meet its development aims.

Regional Analysis

Agricultural development in the Caribbean is guided by CARICOM policy frameworks, particularly the *Community Agricultural Policy (CAP)*, which emphasizes increased productivity, competitiveness, and sustainable resource management. These policy directions align with our national development strategies, which seek to modernize agriculture through innovation, climate-smart practices, and improved value chain integration. Moreover, the CAP underscores the importance of strengthening agribusiness, improving market access, and enhancing institutional coordination, all of which are central to Jamaica's agricultural transformation agenda.

Food and nutrition security remains a cardinal non-trade concern (NTC) for Jamaica, especially given the subregion, and as a corollary, the country's high dependence on food imports and vulnerability to global price volatility. In this respect, the *CARICOM Regional Food and Nutrition Security Action Plan* highlights that external shocks, climate change, and declining competitiveness of traditional exports have increased the vulnerability of Caribbean agricultural systems. For Jamaica, these challenges are reflected in our policy objective of balancing domestic food production with import substitution strategies, while ensuring affordability and access to nutritious food. Accordingly, we have made significant efforts to promote local production of staples, diversify crops, and strengthen agro-processing industries to reduce reliance on imports and enhance resilience.

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Climate change poses one of the most significant risks to our domestic agricultural sector. Increasing temperatures, erratic rainfall patterns, droughts, hurricanes, and flooding events directly affect crop yields, livestock productivity, and rural infrastructure. Therefore, the Caribbean places emphasis on the urgency of integrating adaptation and mitigation strategies into national development planning, particularly for vulnerable sectors such as agriculture. It is within this context that we have sought to advance climate-smart agriculture initiatives, including improved irrigation systems, drought-resistant crop varieties, soil conservation practices, and the adoption of early warning systems. These efforts aim to reduce climate risks while maintaining productivity and supporting farmer livelihoods.

Disaster risk management is also a critical component of agricultural sustainability in Jamaica. The Caribbean is highly exposed to natural hazards, and agriculture is often the most affected sector during extreme events. *The Regional Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Strategy* highlights the importance of integrating disaster risk reduction into key sectors, including agriculture, to minimize economic and social losses. Guided by the strategy, we have been strengthening our disaster preparedness and response mechanisms, including the development of risk assessment tools, insurance mechanisms, and recovery programs for farmers. These interventions are essential to ensure rapid recovery and continuity of production following climate shocks and other natural hazards.

Furthermore, fisheries and aquaculture play an important role in the domestic agricultural sector, contributing to food security, employment, and export earnings. More pointedly, the *Caribbean*

Community Common Fisheries Policy highlights the importance of sustainable utilization and conservation of marine resources, recognizing their role in economic development and food security. We have therefore been working towards strengthening fisheries management, reducing overfishing, and promoting sustainable aquaculture practices. Jamaica views these measures as central to safeguarding the long-term viability of marine resources and their contribution to national development.

Access to finance, however, remains a major constraint for farmers and agribusinesses. Limited access to credit, high interest rates, and inadequate insurance coverage continue to hinder investment in modern technologies and infrastructure. Regional policy frameworks emphasize the importance of financing and resource mobilization to support sustainable development and resilience building. As such, innovative financial instruments, including climate finance, blended finance, and parametric insurance, are being explored to meaningfully address these challenges. Strengthening financial inclusion and developing tailored financial products for agriculture are critical to enabling sector growth and transformation and therefore necessitate greater attention from our International Development Partners (IDPs).

Jamaica recognizes gender and youth inclusion as important dimensions of agricultural development. Women and young people play a significant role in the sector but often face barriers to access land, finance, and technology. National policy frameworks therefore highlight the importance of inclusive development and capacity building to ensure equitable participation in agriculture. We therefore have been implementing programs to support youth engagement in agriculture, promote entrepreneurship, and enhance skills development. These initiatives are essential to address challenges related to the aging farming population and ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Despite our efforts and attendant progress, several challenges to sustainable agriculture persist. As a small island developing state, we are increasingly at the sharp end of the impact of climate change, which continues to pose significant risks. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events threatens agricultural productivity and livelihoods. Structural issues such as land tenure, infrastructure deficits, and limited access to markets and finance are equally persistent. Additionally, global economic conditions, including commodity price volatility and supply chain disruptions, continue to negatively impact the sector.

Looking forward, it is imperative that our domestic agricultural sector speedily evolves to meet the demands of sustainable development. We will therefore continue to pursue a holistic approach that integrates climate resilience, technological innovation, financial inclusion, and value chain development. Furthermore, there will be heightened policy (and resources) focus on strengthening institutional capacity, enhancing regional cooperation, and leveraging international partnerships to achieve these objectives.



It is also a beauty to behold rural communities thriving through sustainable agriculture, with farming technologies providing food security and exporting organic produce globally. The beaches, such as Seven Mile Beach, which were once neglected, polluted areas are now unspoiled, pristine locations, protected by rigorous conservation efforts that have restored the coral reefs to their vibrant, former glory. The crisp air and crystal-clear water, reflect the commitment of a people who realize that protecting their environment is securing their future.

The heart of this 2035 Jamaica is its people.

► **GREG MCDUFFUS,**
Seaforth High School

CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVES

Agriculture emerged as a critical convergence point, raised with urgency across five of the six groups (Persons with Disabilities was the exception, though food security for disability households was touched on through the social protection discussion). The Private Sector group focused on mechanisation, input cost reduction, and the need for agri-competitiveness benchmarked against regional peers such as Guyana and other Caribbean territories. Youth participants expressed enthusiasm for technology-enabled farming — drone technology, precision agriculture, and agro-tracking for export certification — while noting that agriculture's negative image among young Jamaicans must be actively addressed. Local Authorities raised the potential of agro-parks and parish-level food production, but noted that logistics, market access, and consistent government support are lacking. Community Representatives connected food security to sovereignty, emphasising the cultural and community dimensions of food production and noting that Jamaica's dependence on food imports represents a structural vulnerability. The NGO group raised women's roles in agricultural livelihoods and the intersection of migration and agricultural labour availability.

The consistent message is that Jamaica has the land, the climate, and the cultural connection to agriculture to achieve a significantly higher degree of food self-sufficiency — but structural barriers (cost of inputs, land tenure, market access, labour availability, skills gaps) prevent this potential from being realised. Several groups independently referenced the need for government leadership in removing import duty barriers on agricultural machinery and investing in targeted technical training.



Goal 3

Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages



Maternal mortality
150 per 100 000
live births (2024)



Neonatal mortality
15.2 per 1 000
live births (2024)

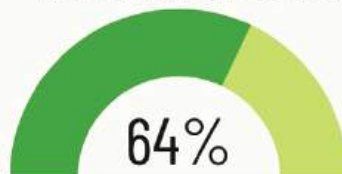


Under 5 mortality
21 per 1 000
live births (2022)

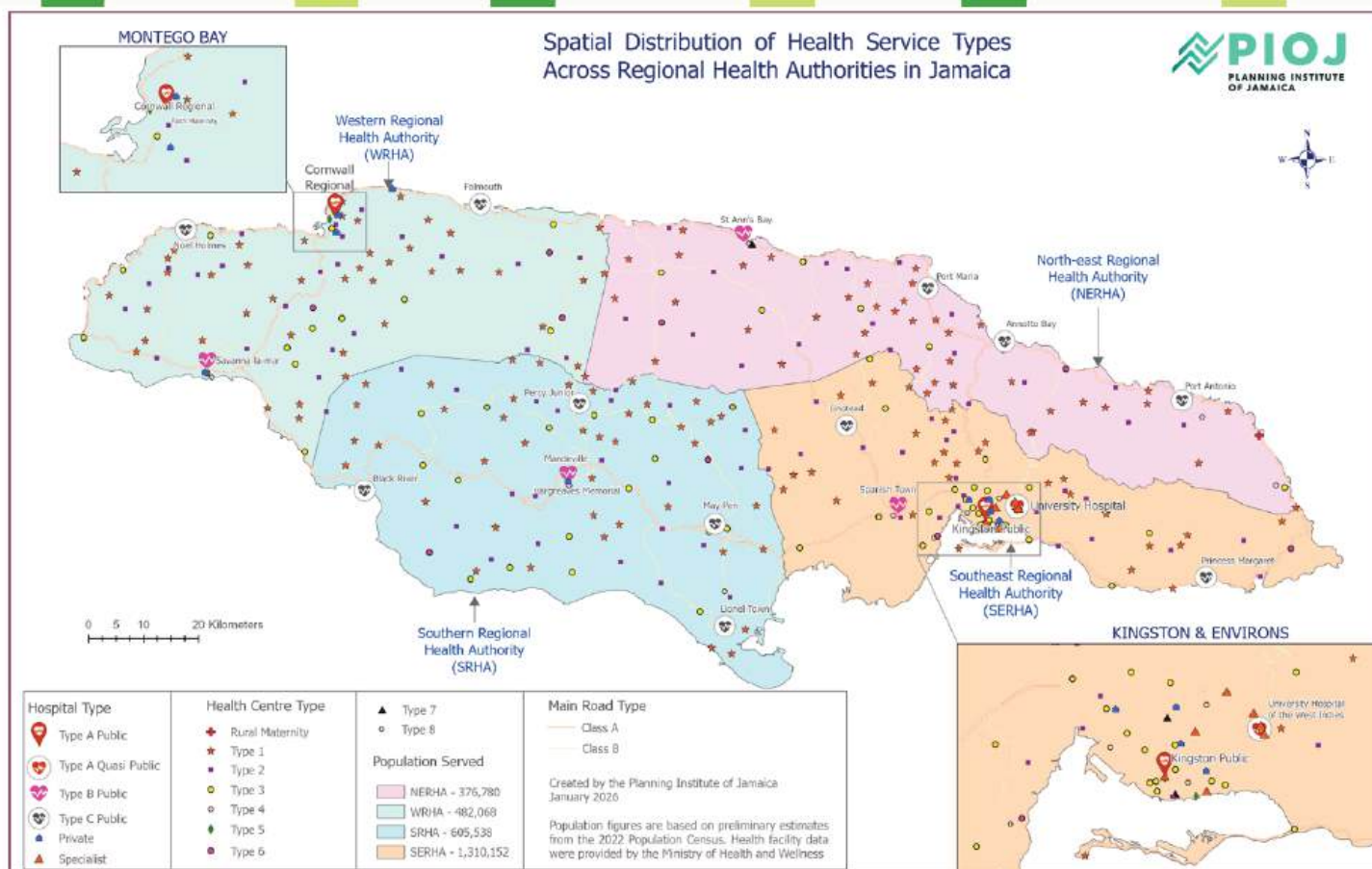
% of Persons Living
with HIV AWARE OF STATUS



% of Persons Living
with HIV
AWARE OF STATUS AND ON ARV



% of Persons Living
with HIV
ON ARV AND VIRALLY SUPPRESSED



JAMAICA'S EPIDEMIOLOGICAL PROFILE AND TRANSITION

Changes in the Disease Profile and Measures to Prevent Emerging Outbreaks

Context

Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 3 seeks to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for people at all ages, encompassing the reduction of maternal mortality, control and prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), promotion of mental health, achievement of universal health coverage (UHC), and access to essential medicines and vaccines. In Jamaica, SDG 3 is central to Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, which positions health as a foundation for sustainable development and human capital advancement.

The country's health agenda, as articulated in Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan and the Vision for Health 2030 – Ten-Year Strategic Plan 2019–2030, emphasises health as a critical accelerator of sustainable development. The Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) continues to pursue integrated strategies that combine NCD prevention, communicable disease control, and outbreak preparedness. Recent progress includes strengthened surveillance systems, the expansion of digital health platforms, improved access to primary healthcare, and ongoing public awareness campaigns. However, new and re-emerging health threats – including Dengue, Zika, Chikungunya, and COVID-19 – have underscored the need for sustained vigilance, resilient infrastructure, and robust intersectoral coordination.

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Jamaica's Disease Profile

Jamaica like many middle-income countries, is undergoing an advance stage of the epidemiological transition, characterised by a shift from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases as the dominant causes of morbidity and mortality. Historically, infectious diseases were the primary drivers of death; however, improvements in vaccination, sanitation and medical care have significantly reduced their burden, with chronic conditions now accounting for most of the health loss and mortality. Current evidence shows that NCDs such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases and cancers are the leading contributors to disability and premature death, collectively accounting for approximately 42.0 per cent of total healthy life lost, with the broader NCD category contributing up to three-quarters of the total burden. This transition reflects both demographic changes – including population ageing – and epidemiological shifts linked to lifestyle and environmental factors.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVE:

Mental health emerged as a significant cross-cutting concern. Participants called for institutionalised mental health support in schools, workplaces and communities, noting that existing provision remains largely voluntary and inadequate. Weak mental health systems were linked to broader patterns of trauma and stigma in Jamaican society.

The epidemiological profile is now dominated by NCDs, driven largely by modifiable behavioural and metabolic risk factors. Nationally, NCDs accounted for approximately 77.8 per cent of all deaths in 2019, up from 72.8 per cent in 2000. The age-adjusted mortality rate from NCDs was 454.8 per 100 000 population – substantially higher than that from communicable diseases, at 57.6 per 100 000.⁶⁵ The leading causes of mortality and morbidity are hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers, linked to risk factors such as unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and tobacco use.

Communicable diseases such as polio, malaria and measles, once major threats to the population, have been successfully controlled through vaccination and other public health interventions. Between 2000 and 2019, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) mortality declined by 46.8 per cent, demonstrating the effectiveness of expanded treatment and prevention strategies. Sustained immunisation coverage has been maintained, with measles vaccination coverage reaching 91.0 per cent in 2022. Despite the dominance of NCDs, Jamaica faces a double burden of disease, with persistent communicable diseases coexisting alongside chronic conditions. Tuberculosis and HIV continue to require attention, with an HIV incidence rate of 28.1 per 100 000 population in 2022 and tuberculosis incidence at approximately 3 cases per 100 000 population.

A triple burden is evident when injuries and violence are considered. External causes accounted for 12.4 per cent of deaths in 2019, with high rates of homicide and road traffic injuries. Injury-related deaths reached 2 557 in 2022, with these trends disproportionately affecting younger populations and contributing significantly to premature mortality. Mental health conditions, self-harm and violence collectively account for approximately 10.0 per cent of total healthy life lost,⁶⁶ indicating an additional layer of complexity within Jamaica's epidemiological landscape.

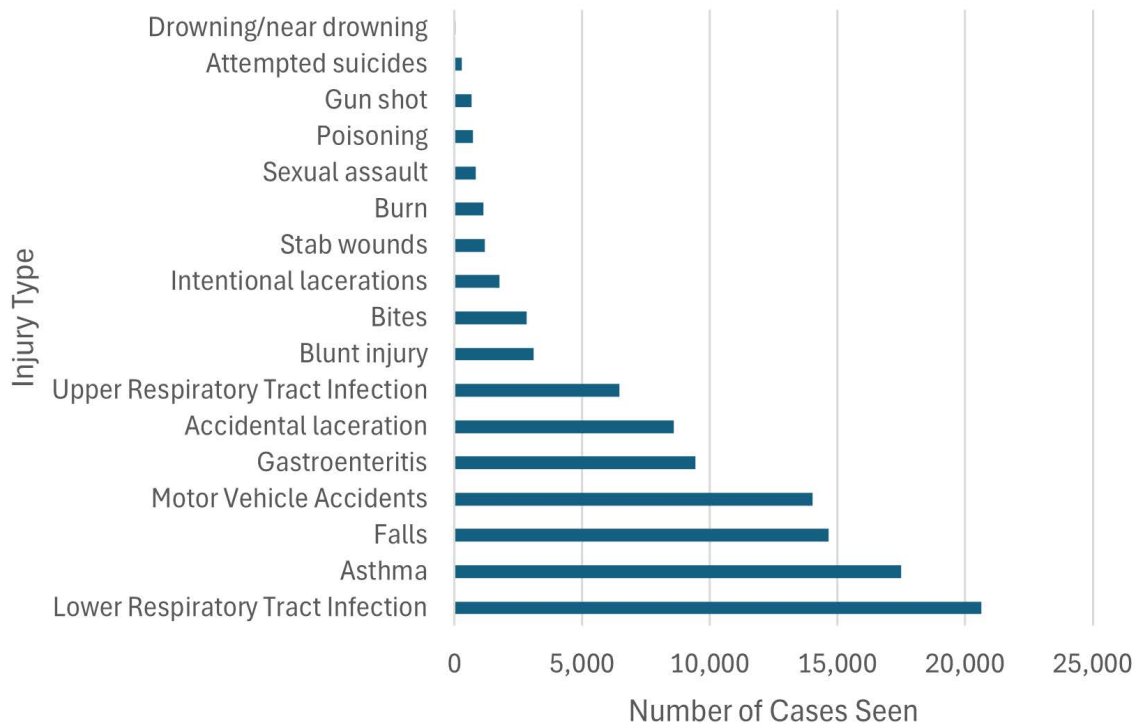


FIGURE 9 Number of Cases Seen for Injuries at Public Hospitals (2024)

Maternal and child health indicators have improved, though the system remains vulnerable to systemic shocks. Infant mortality declined from 21.1 to 16.7 deaths per 1 000 live births between 2006 and 2020. Skilled birth attendance exceeds 99.8 per cent, yet the mortality ratio – estimated at 98.9 deaths per 100 000 live births – remains above the SDG target of less than 70.0 per 100 000 live births. Jamaica therefore faces the dual challenge of sustaining gains in communicable disease control while strengthening NCD prevention and management, and building resilience against emerging health threats.

Overall mortality rates have declined modestly, from 6.4 to 5.8 deaths per 1 000 population between 2000 and 2019. However, the rate of potentially avoidable premature mortality remains high at 284.5 deaths per 100 000 population, exceeding regional averages. The persistence of preventable and treatable causes of death highlights gaps in early detection, access to care and health system performance.

Thematic Discussion

Governance and Institutional Framework

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Governance, coordination, and partnerships are central to Jamaica's management of its ever-evolving disease landscape. The Ministry of Health and Wellness, supported by four regional health authorities — Western Regional Health Authority, Southern Regional Health Authority, South East Regional Health Authority, and North East Regional Health Authority—leads the implementation of national health strategies and service delivery. The Ministry of Health and Wellness is the primary agency mandated for health policy planning and implementation, as well as providing oversight to the four regional health authorities that provide health care service delivery through the 24 public hospitals and 320 health centres to the estimated 2.7 million Jamaicans. The National Surveillance Unit and Epidemiology Division oversee monitoring, early detection, and investigation of communicable disease outbreaks. Key public health institutions such as the National Public Health Laboratory and the National Influenza Centre enhance diagnostic capacity and enable the timely identification of emerging pathogens.

Jamaica's partnership framework extends across multiple levels. The National Health Fund (NHF) supports access to essential medicines for chronic conditions, while the Health System Strengthening Programme (HSSP) has improved infrastructure, workforce training, and information systems. Collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) provides technical support for surveillance, laboratory strengthening, and outbreak response. The country's achievement of PAHO certification for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis exemplifies the success of coordinated governance and evidence-based policy.

⁶⁵ Ministry of Health and Wellness Jamaica, Epidemiological Status and Transition in Jamaica, pg 2

⁶⁶ The term "*Healthy Life Lost*" refers to the years of life lost due to preventable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancers. Jamaicans dying younger: Health Ministry to tackle lost life years with prevention campaign – Ministry of Health & Wellness, Jamaica

The revised Population Policy (2023) also serves as a framework that integrates maternal health, family planning, and demographic planning as critical guiding indicators that emphasise health as a cornerstone of human development and sustainable growth. The country remains cognisant of the importance of partnerships with international, regional, and domestic organisations, which provide technical support and contribute to research and training in public health, as there is continued progress to accelerate progress towards realising the targets of SDG 3.

Multi-sectoral partnerships have also been critical for prevention. The National School Nutrition Policy developed jointly with the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information (MOESYI), addresses dietary risks in children and childhood obesity, while collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development enhances vector control and waste management. These mechanisms demonstrate Jamaica's shift towards an integrated approach—combining health promotion, disease prevention, and resilience building within and beyond the health sector. Strong governance underpins Jamaica's health achievements, as demonstrated by the PAHO-WHO certification for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

Internal and External Factors Influencing Health Outcomes

A mix of internal and external dynamics shapes Jamaica's progress towards SDG 3. While the health sector has faced persistent challenges, the past decade has also brought important gains that provide a foundation for continuous advancement.

Internally, resource limitations, infrastructure gaps, and uneven access to specialised care continue to pressure the capacity of the country's health sector. There have also been shortages of critical healthcare workers, including midwives, public health nurses, and other allied health professionals, which have affected both service delivery and response to outbreaks. In rural parishes, health facilities are significantly impacted and challenged by issues of inequity, resulting in delayed response times during public health emergencies. All these factors have been exacerbated by migration, as healthcare professionals have been exiting the sector over the past few decades in search of better opportunities in developed countries.

Notwithstanding these pressures, Jamaica has pursued a range of targeted interventions to stabilise and strengthen health system capacity. These include the creation of 2 000 permanent jobs in the public health sector, the establishment of a \$2.5 billion scholarship fund, and pilot programmes offering housing and financial incentives to attract professionals to underserved areas. Bilateral training agreements have also been concluded with partner countries to address specialist shortages.⁶⁷

The country has made notable strides in strengthening the health care workforce and the delivery of services. There has been improved access to services in all health regions, as there have been investments in primary healthcare, expansion of community health centres, and improvements in maternal and child health services. The country has also made gains in mitigating vulnerabilities with

⁶⁷ See Extended Health Report in Annex

the strengthening of emergency preparedness protocols, advancement in immunization coverage, and the expansion of screening programmes for NCDs.

Behavioural and lifestyle risk factors also contribute to the disease profile. Dietary patterns illustrate particular concern: approximately one-quarter of Jamaicans consume the recommended daily intake of fruits, while approximately 38.0 per cent meet vegetable intake recommendations. Among children and adolescents, high consumption of fast food and low intake of fruits and vegetables establish early-life risk trajectories that persist into adulthood. Among Jamaican students aged 13-15 years, the prevalence of overweight increased from 21.7 per cent in 2010 to 25.6

per cent in 2017, while obesity rose from 6.0 per cent to 10.1 per cent over the same period – a near doubling within seven years, suggesting that more than one in four adolescents are now overweight.

Metabolic risk factors further compound the burden. Overweight and obesity prevalence reached 61.1 per cent in 2022. Hypertension affected 21.8 per cent of adults in 2015, and diabetes prevalence increased from 8.1 per cent in 2000 to 11.9 per cent in 2017. Additionally, 32.6 per cent of the population reported insufficient physical activity, while tobacco use remains present among 8.6 per cent of adults.

Poverty and geographic isolation are socioeconomic inequities that serve as inhibitors and often times limit access to early diagnosis and treatment for the population. Weakened data collection and health information systems, affect effective real-time monitoring of disease trends. Despite all this, the country has made efforts to digitise health records, improve surveillance capacity, and expand the DHIS2 platform in an effort to create a modernised health information infrastructure.

Externally, Jamaica's health trajectory has been affected by both global and domestic pressures. The COVID-19 pandemic represented a major inflection point. Between 2020 and 2022, Jamaica experienced a significant escalation in cases and mortality across four major outbreak surges. In 2020, a total of 12 827 cases were recorded (4 540 per million population), rising sharply to 81 093 cases in 2021 (28 704 per million). COVID-19-related deaths rose from 302 in 2020 (107 per million) to 2 171 in 2021 (768 per million), reflecting the intensified severity of the pandemic during this period. In the regional context, Jamaica ranked 34th in COVID-19 mortality in the Americas in 2020 and 33rd in 2021, with a combined mortality rate of 873 deaths per million over the two years. Excess mortality estimates from the World Health Organization showed negative excess mortality in 2020 (-900 deaths; -30 per 100 000 population), followed by a sharp reversal in 2021, with 4 493 excess deaths (151 per 100 000 population), underscoring the broader population impact of the pandemic. During this period, the

YOUTH STAKEHOLDERS:

Expressed a strong desire to serve as health ambassadors and peer educators, provided they are equipped with accurate information. Behaviour-change campaigns were recommended using platforms and formats that resonate with youth, including short videos, social media, and visual content. Participants framed health as an area requiring a comprehensive approach that treats young Jamaicans not merely as a risk group, but as active partners in reshaping Jamaica's health landscape.

health sector was characterised by disrupted service delivery, delayed preventive and elective care, and a spike in maternal mortality.

Climate change and natural disasters further amplify health risks, with the increasing incidence of dengue disease. The country also faced economic constraints, such as reduced fiscal space and the shift in aid flows from international development partners (IDPs), which impeded the country's capacity to adequately sustain health investments. Nevertheless, the country has remained steadfast and resilient by prioritising essential services during crises, and has improved disaster preparedness, the capacity of the public laboratories, and climate-resilient health initiatives. In addition, there are international frameworks such as the SDGs, the PAHO/WHO mandates, and the Caribbean Community, CARICOM Port-of-Spain Declaration, which continue to guide national priorities. However, these internal and external factors collectively underscore the need for systemic strengthening and resilience building within Jamaica's health sector.

Progress and Achievements

Maternal health interventions — including early antenatal care programmes and the establishment of a maternal death surveillance system — have strengthened service quality and oversight, contributing to skilled birth attendance reaching approximately 99.0 per cent. Uptake of first-trimester antenatal care increased from 39.0 per cent in 2018 to 47.0 per cent in 2024, demonstrating the effectiveness of targeted outreach programmes. These achievements reflect the impact of strengthened local health services, community engagement and coordinated national strategies.

The country has achieved PAHO certification for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission (MTCT) of HIV and syphilis — a landmark in preventive care. Access to primary healthcare has been expanded through digital health platforms, enabling more efficient service delivery and improved patient monitoring. Immunisation programmes have been expanded, maintaining high coverage rates across key childhood vaccines and protecting vulnerable populations from preventable diseases. Efforts to reduce adolescent pregnancies have yielded positive results through targeted reproductive health education and youth-focused interventions. Advancements under the Health System Strengthening Programme (HSSP) have led to enhanced infrastructure, increased workforce capacity and improved service integration, collectively contributing to a more resilient and responsive health system.

Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

Several important lessons have emerged from Jamaica's navigation of its epidemiological transition. Integrated health system approaches have yielded stronger results. Embedding NCD screening within primary care has improved early detection and management while lowering the pressure on hospitals. Public awareness campaigns such as 'Know Your Numbers', have been instrumental in promoting the screening and early detection of NCD risk factors.

Early engagement in maternal care has proven effective. The improvement in first-trimester antenatal care uptake demonstrates that targeted community outreach and strengthened health centre capacity translate directly into better maternal and neonatal outcomes. The upgrading of health centres and implementation of standardised maternal care guidelines have strengthened service quality and adherence to best practices across the health system.

The epidemiological evidence further underscores three overarching lessons: first, that prevention strategies must target shared risk factors across NCDs and communicable diseases simultaneously; second, that strengthened primary healthcare and screening systems are the most efficient mechanism for early detection and management; and third, that multisectoral policies addressing food systems, urban design and environmental risks are essential to any sustainable health response.

Despite these successes, challenges persist in the areas of maternal mortality, high rates of obesity and overweight, late diagnosis of NCDs, an inadequately staffed health workforce, limited resources and outdated infrastructure, and weak surveillance data systems. These challenges underscore the need for more comprehensive, evidence-based approaches to health system strengthening.

Localisation

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The mainstreaming of health initiatives at the local level has been pivotal in advancing Jamaica's progress towards SDG 3 targets. In 2020, the Government employed approximately 1 300 new community health aides to strengthen the country's public health system,⁶⁸ and by 2025, 41 community health aides had gained certification to provide footcare to diabetic patients.⁶⁹ With support from international development partners, Jamaica has also invested in upgrading local health centres and developing postpartum home visit guidance tools, ensuring that essential maternal and child health services are accessible and responsive to community needs. Community outreach initiatives for antenatal care have further strengthened local engagement, resulting in a notable increase in the uptake of first-trimester antenatal care.

YOUTH STAKEHOLDERS:

Participants identified a critical gap in education in these areas; linking the absence of age-appropriate, frank instruction on sexual health to rising sexually transmitted infections STI rates among youth. Social taboos around discussions of sex and contraception in schools and homes were cited as contributing factors. Stakeholders called for targeted educational approaches to be embedded systematically in schools and community spaces, rather than relying on ad hoc initiatives.

In 2017, the Ministry of Health and Wellness launched the Adopt-a-Clinic Programme to strengthen Jamaica's primary healthcare system. Under the initiative, local and international donors are invited to partner with the government by adopting clinics and providing essential resources to improve patient

⁶⁸ Gov't hiring 1,300 new community health aids - Jamaica Observer

⁶⁹ 41 Community Health Aides Now Certified to Provide Foot Care to Diabetic Patients – Ministry of Health & Wellness, Jamaica

care. To date, donations channelled through the programme have contributed vital infrastructure and equipment valued at \$220 million, including air conditioning units, autoclave sterilisers, blood pressure monitors, examination lamps, refrigerators, microwaves, and television sets – all of which serve to enhance the patient experience and support health education during medical evaluations.⁷⁰

Resource Requirements

Managing Jamaica's epidemiological transition – particularly in maternal and child health and in the prevention and treatment of NCDs – requires a comprehensive investment framework. Investments in workforce development—training of epidemiologists, data analysts, and public health nurses—are equally critical. Though efforts are underway to enhance health sector infrastructure through the Health Systems Strengthening Programme (HSSP), Jamaica will continue to prioritise the modernisation of health care facilities. The COVID-19 pandemic and the passage of Hurricane Melissa in October 2025 have highlighted the need for an integrated surveillance and response system with upgraded information and communication infrastructure that facilitates coordination across all sectors.

Under SDG 17, partnerships are emphasised as a strategic mechanism to maximise resources and accelerate progress. International partnerships with WHO, PAHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Global Fund, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and bilateral partners will remain relevant to provide technical assistance, funding support, and policy guidance in areas of outbreak management, climate-health adaptation, human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome, HIV/AIDS, and NCD prevention and treatment. The expansion of the public-private partnerships approach will broaden service delivery, while engagement with civil society organisations, faith-based groups, non-governmental organisations, and communities is critical to addressing the social determinants of health and enabling an environment conducive to improved health outcomes.

Beyond 2030

Looking beyond 2030, the health trajectory of the population will depend on how effectively the country is able to achieve and sustain gains, while adapting to emerging threats. If the high-risk factors pertaining to NCDs are not aggressively addressed, the high prevalence of such diseases will continue, threatening both individual health and the wider health system.

To achieve this, Jamaica must consolidate investments in public health infrastructure, surveillance technology, health workforce, and laboratory capacity. Investments must focus not only on expanding access to health services but also on improving the quality of care. There must be scaling up of services in maternal, neonatal, and child health in order to reduce delays in accessing services and ensuring that emergency obstetric care is available to all women, regardless of their location on the island.

⁷⁰ Adopt-a-Clinic programme generates over \$220m in support | News | Jamaica Gleaner

Preventive measures for NCDs must also be scaled up, with emphasis placed on healthy diets, physical activity, and the control of tobacco and alcohol use.

Addressing the epidemiological transition holistically requires: integrated prevention strategies targeting the shared risk factors underpinning both NCDs and communicable diseases; strengthened primary healthcare and screening systems; and multisectoral policies addressing food systems, urban design and environmental risks. These priorities are consistent with Jamaica's obligations under the SDGs and its Vision for Health 2030.

Strengthening the health system requires a larger and better-distributed health workforce, enhanced surveillance and data systems, and expanded universal health coverage with attention to equity across geographic and economic spheres. The vision beyond 2030 must be one of a health system that not only treats illness but anticipates and prevents it.

Regional Analysis

Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are experiencing epidemiological transition in which non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have replaced infectious diseases as the most prevalent diseases, causing 80.0 per cent of all deaths in the region (Flores et al., 2025). This epidemiological transition is due to several factors that contribute to a demographic transition towards an ageing population and the associated increase in population susceptibility to NCDs. Although improvements in health have resulted in increased life expectancies, it has also led to an increase in the proportion of people living with NCDs. The emigration of the younger population from the region has reshaped the demographic composition of LAC towards an aged population. In addition, economic growth of LAC has improved the general standards of living of many households, leading to lifestyle changes, including increased consumption of dense foods, sugar-sweetened beverages, tobacco and alcohol, as well as the adoption of a more sedentary life. These lifestyle changes have increased the prevalence of obesity—a risk factor for NCDs.

In 2019, the four most common causes of deaths in the Americas were NCDs, namely cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes (Luciani, et al., 2022). These diseases not only cause excess premature deaths, but they also account for between 60.0 and 90.0 per cent of the burden of diseases in countries of the region, with NCDs representing more than 80.0 per cent of disability-adjusted life years in Barbados, Chile, and Uruguay, and more than 70.0 per cent in 15 other LAC countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and Suriname. Not co-incidentally, Barbados, Chile and Uruguay also have the highest proportion of population aged 70 years and above (Flores et al., 2025).

A rising trend of childhood obesity adds another dimension to the epidemiological transition. In LAC, 7.0 per cent of children were reported to be overweight. However, estimates of the prevalence of overweight and obesity among Caribbean children aged 5–19 years was much higher, ranging from 23.4 per cent in Saint Lucia to 35.8 per cent in The Bahamas (Abdulkadri et al., 2021). If left unaddressed, overweight and obesity could further contribute to productivity decline in the Caribbean (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ECLAC, 2020), realizing that countries with high obesity levels and NCD rates have been noted to experience slower economic growth as a result of a combination of reduced availability of skilled human capital, increased absenteeism due to illness, and lower productivity levels (Abdulkadri et al., 2026). An earlier study estimated the economic burden of diabetes and hypertension to be equivalent to 1.36 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of The Bahamas, 5.34 per cent of GDP of Barbados, 5.87 per cent of GDP of Jamaica, and 8.0 per cent of GDP of Trinidad and Tobago, with the indirect costs of premature deaths, temporary and permanent disabilities, and absenteeism up to 73.0 per cent and 47.0 per cent of the economic burden of diabetes and hypertension, respectively, in Trinidad and Tobago (Abdulkadri, et al. 2009). In another study focusing on older persons in Jamaica, the indirect cost associated with the provision of care constituted the largest share (35.0 per cent) of all costs (Mitchell-Fearon, et al. 2017).

The significance of a healthy population for its sustainable development has prompted the Caribbean to take a proactive approach of dealing with NCDs, resulting in the 2007 Declaration of Port of Spain (POS) by the CARICOM Heads of Government to tackle the problem of NCDs. At the national level, many countries have established NCD Commissions with the mandate to promote the prevention and control of these diseases. Some Caribbean countries have also taken deliberate steps to address childhood obesity. In Jamaica, a nationwide ban on sugary drinks has been imposed in schools. In addition, National School Nutrition Standards that define the types of foods and beverages restricted in the Jamaican school environment have been introduced. Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica have implemented taxes on fast food and sugar-sweetened beverages while Guyana and Saint Lucia have introduced subsidies on local fruits and vegetables. Across the Caribbean, mandatory physical education has been implemented while nutritional guidelines have been streamlined in most schools. Within the broader population, the “Caribbean Moves” initiative, which promotes physical activity to reduce NCD risk factors, has been implemented in Barbados, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Trinidad and Tobago.

In leveraging policy fiscal policy to promote healthy lifestyle in Jamaica, as from 1 April 2026, non-alcoholic beverages containing added sugar or other caloric sweeteners will carry a Special Consumption Tax (SCT) of J\$0.02 per millilitre. Furthermore, following WHO-recommended best practices, the SCT rate on cigarettes and alcoholic beverages will increase by 17.6 per cent and 13.8 per cent, respectively, starting in May 2026. These tax measures, in addition to inducing a healthier lifestyle, are expected to generate J\$10.1 billion in new revenues from sugar-sweetened beverages and J\$300 million in additional revenues from tobacco and alcohol in the first year. These tax revenues will provide the government with financial resources that could be earmarked for health promotion and disease prevention, partially offsetting the economic burden caused by NCDs.



*How could he charge this woman for the right to health?
Especially when she had lost everything in the hurricane.
He thought of others, like Sandy, who were denied
proper healthcare.*

*'This medication should be available and accessible to everyone.
Not just a select few. Think of the lives we could save!'*

*Through partnerships and innovation, programmes like Lifeline
expanded access to care, bringing treatment to remote communities
and ensuring that more Jamaicans could receive the healthcare
they needed.*

► **SALEEZA ALLY,**
Campion College



Goal 4

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all

2022

63.2%

PRE-PRIMARY STUDENTS
MEETING MINIMUM
STANDARDS

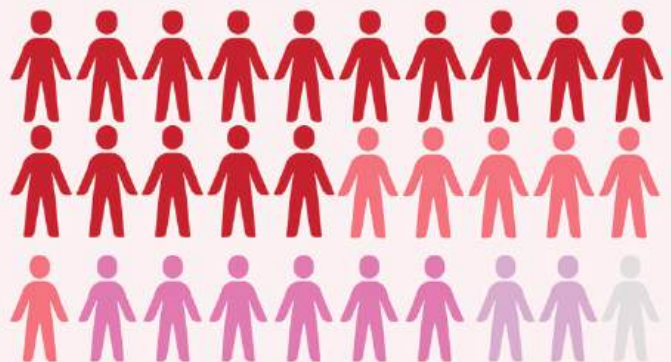


2024

80%

SHARE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL
TEACHERS WITH A TERTIARY
DEGREE

Labour Force Education Levels (2024)

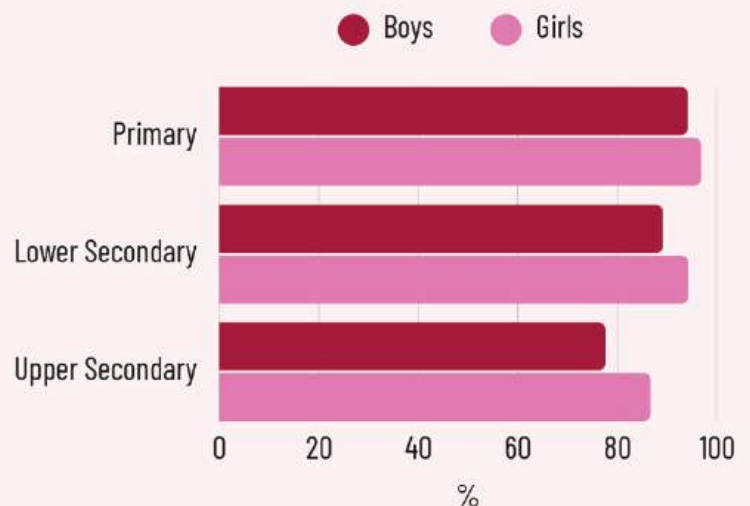


Upper Secondary Lower Secondary Tertiary
Post Secondary-Non Tertiary Primary and lower

Government Expenditure on Education by Financial Year



Attendance Rates by Level (2022)



EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

Context

The transformation of the education sector has been a priority of the Government of Jamaica, and has been driven by demographic, social and environmental shifts and systemic challenges that necessitate more responsive architecture and systems that facilitate targeted human development outcomes. Transformation of the education system has been guided by an evidence-based approach which includes in-depth systemwide assessments and expert recommendations to strengthen systems and delivery. The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission was appointed to assess, and make recommendations to strengthen education delivery, and published the Reform of Education in Jamaica, 2021. The Commission assessed the recommendations of the 2004 Task Force on Education identifying implementation gaps that impacted the planned outcomes relating to student performance, improvement of the teaching profession and classroom procedure. Implementation successes were identified in the areas of institutional capacity building, but noting gaps in translating these upstream changes into student performance. Building on these recommendations, the Commission identified institutional reform of the ministry, teaching and curriculum reform, foundational early childhood development and strengthening of the tertiary sector as key drivers of reform.

A primary indicator of success in educational transformation is improved student readiness, performance and responsiveness to labour market demands. Human capacity is identified by the Accelerating SDG Convergence for Jamaica: Policy Insights from the Prioritising Sustainable Development Transformation study as “Jamaica’s most pervasive bottleneck in productive capacity” and that “investment in human capital and institutional strengthening must advance together. Expanding education and skills without the institutional capacity to effectively absorb, align, and utilise talent can, under certain conditions, slow convergence, as gains are diluted by labour market mismatches, skills migration, weak coordination, and limited policy implementation”. Educational transformation, whilst a strategic priority, must therefore be contextualized to optimise outcomes for beneficiaries and society.

Jamaica has consistently seen high rates of enrolment at the pre-primary (96.2 per cent) and primary levels (100.0 per cent), however, enrolment declines as students progress through the education system. Enrolment rates were recorded for the 12 to 14 age group at 97.2 per cent, 15-16 age group at 95.0 per cent, and the 17-18 age group at 62.8 per cent, and 17.3 per cent of 19 to 24-year-olds were enrolled in tertiary education.⁷¹

⁷¹ Planning Institute of Jamaica and Statistical Institute of Jamaica. 2024. Jamaica Survey of Living Condition.

Gaps in student readiness, are evidenced in approximately one-third (10 018 out of 27 179) pre-primary students not meeting the minimum standard of foundational literacy and numeracy.⁷² Similarly, about 62.0 per cent of children aged 7–14 years demonstrated foundational reading skills, while 50.0 per cent demonstrated foundational numeracy skills. Disaggregation of the data highlights significant disparities by household socio-economic background; 82.0 per cent of children in Quintile 5 households demonstrated foundational reading skills compared with 47.0 per cent of children in the poorest households. For numeracy, 66.0 per cent of Quintile 5 households demonstrated foundational skills compared with 33.0 per cent of the poorest households.⁷³

Persistent challenges are observed in performance in foundational subject areas. Pass rates in Mathematics and English Language at the CSEC level are consistently around 60.0 per cent and 40.0 per cent, respectively.⁷⁴ Further analysis of data between 2015 and 2025 shows a trend of underperformance in Mathematics and English Language among students sitting the CSEC exam.

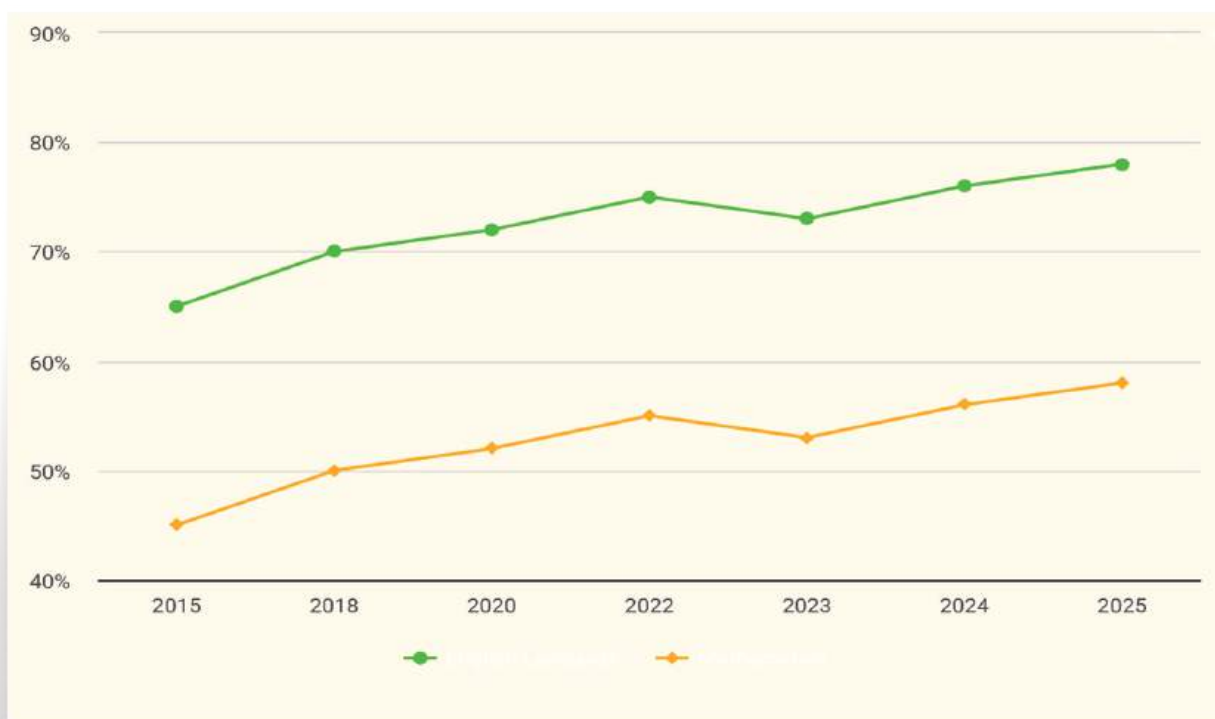


FIGURE 10 CSEC PASS RATES GRADES I-III

In 2025 (cohort of students who started secondary school at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic), 19.2 per cent of students passed at least five subjects compared with 34.1 per cent in 2024. The 2022 Voluntary National Review (VNR) special report on the impact of the pandemic on education, tourism, labour market and social protection, underscores the far-reaching impact of the pandemic, citing learning loss, mental health concerns among students and limited access to conducive spaces

⁷² Jamaica School Readiness Assessment

⁷³ UNICEF. 2024. Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2022.

⁷⁴ Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate. CSEC subjects are examined for certification at the General and Technical Proficiencies. The General and Technical Proficiencies provide students with the foundation for further studies and entry to the workplace.

and tools to facilitate learning. Students with disabilities faced additional challenges as online learning was less conducive to their learning needs.⁷⁵

The majority of students complete secondary school without the minimum certification required (five CSEC subjects, including English Language and Mathematics) to access further education or skilled employment. This affects our ability to attract or service higher value added industries. The Jamaica Education Transformation Commission Report (2021) underscores that although the great majority of Jamaica's children have access to primary and secondary schooling, significant gaps remain in literacy and numeracy at the end of primary school and the acquisition of marketable skills at the end of secondary school. Learning outcomes are impacted by structural and systemic inequities that exist in the quality of learning, infrastructure, and support systems available to students. Inequity in access to quality education also results in disparities in performance across schools by region as urban schools consistently outperform rural schools in Reading, Science and Mathematics.

Thematic Discussion

Human capital development remains a critical priority to support Jamaica's social and economic development outcomes, and ensure the wellbeing of the population. Sustainable Development Goal SDG 4 has been identified as an accelerator of progress due to its strong positive correlations with identified priority goals. Strategic investments in human capital development are therefore anticipated to have positive multiplier effects across the development landscape including future outcomes. The education transformation programme emphasises institutional reform of the ministry, teaching and curriculum reform, foundational early childhood development and strengthening of the tertiary sector as key drivers of reform.

Both Tennant et al and the findings of the Education Transformation Commission emphasise the necessity of addressing the binding constraints to progress in the education sector which are both systemic and operational. Among these constraints are inconsistency in quality of early childhood education, inequity in quality of education received, high out of school rates at the primary and secondary levels, declining number of teachers in primary and secondary level, low tertiary enrolment rates and poor state of education infrastructure. The system further faces data access challenges limiting evidence-based planning.

These challenges have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricanes Beryl and Melissa, which have significantly impacted school infrastructure, the teaching and learning process, and the delivery of quality education. Damage and Loss Assessments conducted post-Hurricane Melissa reported damage to 1 358 public schools across pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary sectors and 56 private institutions. With the suspension of classes and disruptions in face-face teaching and

⁷⁵ <https://www.pioj.gov.jm/product/voluntary-national-review-2022-special-report-impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-education-labour-market-tourism-and-social-protection/>

learning, an estimated 381 349 students in public primary and secondary schools, 27 000 students in private institutions at the same levels, approximately 40 000 students in the tertiary education sector and more than 24 000 children in early childhood development institutions were directly impacted. These impacts, if not strategically targeted and adequately addressed can compound the existing challenges in the sector and lead to worsening of the performance rates of students at all levels with future implications for quality of the labour force and matriculation to tertiary institutions.

COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVES:

Infrastructure and access barriers were highlighted, particularly in rural parishes, where inadequate school buildings, limited vocational facilities, and restricted bus services reduce attendance and constrain the delivery of skills-based training. Community organisations have stepped into this gap — establishing homework centres, breakfast programmes, and training spaces — reflecting both the depth of the need and the innovative capacity of local groups.

Pathways to Educational Transformation for Educational Attainment and Market Relevance

Advance Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Early childhood education is foundational to human development and socio-economic outcomes. Early stimulation, quality mother-child interactions and nutrition support better labour market and socioeconomic outcomes.⁷⁶ Jamaica achieves high levels of pre-primary attendance for 4–5-year-olds and has one of the highest rates of enrolment in the world: 93.4 per cent of 3– 5-year-old children.⁷⁷ The Early Childhood Sector's strengths include an established institutional and regulatory framework through the Early Childhood Commission and the Early Childhood Act and Regulations, and a National Curriculum that prioritises holistic development through play-based learning and socio-emotional development. Of the 2 371 ECIs, 19.0 per cent are government-funded, while 81.0 per cent are privately operated. Compliance is improving – non-compliant (i.e., unregistered/operating without proper registration) ECIs declined from 84 in 2022 to 27 in 2023.

Teacher quality within the early childhood sector remains a challenge, with data for 2021 showing 44.9 per cent of teachers and practitioners employed at the early childhood level having attained vocational certification as the highest level of education, 18.4 per cent of teachers/practitioners having a bachelor's degree and 14.7 per cent having a diploma in Education. This variability in qualification impacts curriculum delivery and early stimulation, which has implications for performance at higher levels of the education system. Gaps in teacher training also affect quality of delivery for children with disabilities and special developmental needs. Greater focus is needed on inclusive therapeutic interventions, affordable care services and access to quality early childhood stimulation. There is also need for greater investment to support the enforcement of standards, compensation, reskilling and upskilling of teachers/practitioners.

⁷⁶ Dillon Alleyne, David C. Jaeger, and Li Shi, *Inequality, Poverty, and Social Welfare in China*, NBER Working Paper No. 29292 (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, September 2021), https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w29292/w29292.pdf

⁷⁷ <https://educate.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/JETC-Report-Abridged-Version.pdf>

⁷⁸ World Bank and UNICEF, 2021. "Public Expenditure Review"

Financing remains a critical challenge; the sector is allocated between 1.3 per cent (\$1.1 billion) and 4.9 per cent (\$7.2 billion) of the budget for education. A 2021 World Bank Public Expenditure Review Report on Jamaica's education system found that early childhood education is underfinanced and experiences significant pressure through high demand and an inadequate number of qualified teachers.⁷⁸

Expand Tertiary and Workforce Education

The draft National Higher Education Policy being developed facilitates the expansion and reform of the higher education framework. Expanding tertiary and workforce education is critical to progress on SDG 4.4 which calls for skills relevant to employment – not only in the Jamaican labour market, but increasingly in the global labour market which is more interconnected. The cross-border movement of people and services has created increasing opportunities for decent work. The Economic and Social Survey Jamaica (ESSJ), 2024 indicates that only 16.0 per cent of Jamaica's labour force (approximately 234 300 individuals) possesses a university degree.

A substantial portion of Jamaicans are not yet accessing higher education, limiting both individual opportunity and national competitiveness. Consequently, the tertiary education sector is undergoing transformation, focusing on creating greater equity by expanding access and reducing barriers to participation in tertiary education. Specific pathways to the extension of tertiary education scope and reach include community college online learning programmes, modular and stackable credentials that allow working adults to build qualifications incrementally, distance learning solutions for regions without local colleges, and tuition-free access to Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service Training Agency Trust (HEART/NSTA Trust) programmes up to Level 4. Additionally, creating multiple entry and exit points to build flexible learning paths, such as certificates, diplomas, stackable credentials, or shorter courses that ladder into degrees are measures to improve tertiary level education outcomes. The current qualification/certification framework provides for upskilling, reskilling, and certification through multiple pathways. Uptake of tertiary level options remains a challenge and the associated barriers must be addressed. Establishing modern governance frameworks for the tertiary sector, including clearer regulations, quality assurance, and performance monitoring are also required to strengthen the sector.

Furthermore, transformation for educational attainment and market relevance has at its core, aligning skills with labour market needs and future of work considerations. With technology redefining labour markets by making some jobs obsolete, while creating new ones, tertiary education programmes must reflect the evolution of the labour market and the required competencies. To this end, there is a need for greater collaboration and connection between institutions and professional bodies, and industry players to inform the

YOUTH STAKEHOLDERS:

Called for systematic labour market intelligence and publicly accessible guidance on in-demand careers to better inform subject choices at the secondary and tertiary levels.

programme offerings and designs within the tertiary sector. This requires coordination between tertiary education and secondary level education to provide career guidance to students, ensuring that students pursue needed and relevant career paths. This has implications for the preparedness and employability of tertiary level graduates.

Jamaica has several vocational streams, (HEART/NSTA Trust for technical and vocational education and training, TVET, community colleges, and the new Sixth-Form Pathways Programme). The government launched the Sixth-Form Pathways Programme, which integrates secondary and vocational certification.⁷⁹ In the 2023/2024 school year, enrolment increased from 14 000 to over 24 000 students.⁸⁰ This indicates that more students are participating in the Pathways programme as an avenue to graduate secondary level with CSEC subjects and vocational credentials (National Vocational Qualification-Jamaica levels 2–3, diplomas, or associate degrees) in technical or professional fields. To accelerate progress, there is a need to address the challenge of geographical inequity; regions without local colleges require transportation or distance-learning solutions to enable improved access.

Educational transformation around TVET also requires skills training institutions to forecast and proactively develop programmes that not only fill gaps in the market but also unlock the innovative skills and creative capacity of all students, as more students are pursuing non-traditional career paths and, therefore, are diverting from purely academic pathways. The future of work demands an agile labour market, significantly altering the types of skills and competencies offered to meet the needs of the working environment. Developments in various sectors, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, STEM, information and communication technology, ICT, transportation, artificial intelligence (AI), creative industries, and renewables, are demanding that TVET education be transformed to be more agile to align with the constantly changing global landscape.

Expand Quality Teachers

The SDG 4.c target aims to substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers in small island developing states. Jamaica has a high cadre of trained teachers, 80.0 per cent of 25 000 public school teachers hold a university degree (bachelor's or higher); 20.0 per cent have diploma-level qualifications (often from teacher training colleges).⁸¹ Disaggregation highlights variability in quality in critical subject areas, with data in 2023 reporting a shortage of 7 000 teachers. This has implications particularly for STEM subjects, with only 25.0 per cent of secondary students passing the mathematics examination in the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) in 2024. Additionally, in rural areas up to 30.0 per cent of schools are understaffed. This has an impact on the ratios and deployment, which affects the quality of interaction and learning outcomes.⁸² The number of teachers available at primary and secondary schools declined between 2015 and 2021 (11.7 per cent at the primary level and 17.8 per cent at the secondary level). The loss of teachers may be attributable to teacher migration to developed countries among other reasons.

⁷⁹ The Human Employment and Resource Training /National Service Training Agency Trust (HEART/NSTA Trust). This agency provides Technical Vocational Education and Training in Jamaica and the Caribbean. Primarily focused on practical, competency-based training which empowers trainees to transition seamlessly into real workplace scenarios.

⁸⁰ <https://jis.gov.jm/increased-student-enrolment-in-sixth-form-pathways-programme/>

⁸¹ Ministry of Education, Skills Youth and Information 2023

⁸² Ministry of Education, Skills Youth and Information 2023

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programmes have been introduced to address skills gaps and incorporate technology into teaching. Particular attention must also be given to pedagogical practice and capacity-building for teaching children and students with special needs and/or disabilities – this is currently a significant gap in CPD provision. CPD effectiveness is limited by inconsistent participation and resource constraints. Ensuring equitable access to professional development is crucial for improving nationwide teaching quality.

Strengthening the teacher workforce requires a multi-pronged approach that combines recruitment, retention, training, and career development. Ensuring equitable distribution, particularly in rural and high-need areas, is critical for reducing disparities in learning outcomes. Investments in professional development must be sustained and, targeted. A highly qualified, motivated, and well-supported teacher workforce is essential for achieving sustainable improvements across all levels of education.

Accelerate Digital Transformation

Jamaica stands at a critical juncture in its development as it operates within an environment shaped by rapid technological advancement that changes how countries interact, do business, design, and deliver education. Since the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Government School Digitalisation Project has issued 198 323 tablets, laptops, interactive panels, projectors and specialised equipment. Since 2020, the government has rolled out broadband services in schools, equipping approximately 750 institutions with Wi-Fi coverage and 720 with internet services, with a commitment of at least J\$1.0 billion annually to fund both projects. The National ICT in Education Policy, approved in 2022, aims to establish an education system in which ICT is integrated into teaching and learning environments. The Policy Guidelines for the Use of AI in Public Schools (2024) further transform learning experiences by catering to individual needs and learning styles.

There have also been partnerships established to advance digital education through the Tablets in Schools Programme, designed to transform teaching and learning by integrating technology across the entire education system. The programme distributed tablets to 38 educational institutions, reaching approximately 24 000 students and 1 200 teachers across six pre-primary schools, 13 primary schools, 5 all-age and junior high schools, 12 high schools, 1 teacher's college, and 1 special education institution. Through this initiative, about 20 000 teachers have been trained in online learning management systems.⁸³

In March 2025, the MOESYI in partnership with the United Nations, launched the Empowering Jamaica's Future: SDG Joint Programme on Digital Transformation for Education project, aimed at modernising the Jamaican education system through digital innovation systems, which is projected to impact over 450 000 students nationwide.⁸⁴ While these initiatives started the process of closing the digital divide and advancing digital literacy, post-pandemic education highlighted gaps in digital readiness and

⁸³ <https://www.unesco.org/en/dtc-financing-toolkit/tablets-schools-programme-tis>

⁸⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/jamaica/press-releases/modernising-jamaicas-education-system>

remote learning capacity. Data from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica reported that there is unequal access to the internet, as only 55.0 per cent of rural students were reported to have reliable broadband versus 85.0 per cent in urban areas. Teacher digital literacy gaps remain an issue, with 40.0 per cent of teachers integrating technology into lessons up to 2023. UNICEF reported that 230 000 (35.0 per cent) of Jamaican children did not have access to computers at home during the pandemic. Although two-thirds of households had internet access, many relied on mobile data through handsets, severely limiting engagement in online learning. Addressing this challenge is critical to the transformation of the education system and the advancement of SDG 4. Improvement in infrastructure is required to support the implementation of the ICT in Education Policy (2022).

Furthermore, the integration of technology in the administration of the sector is also vital to the transformation of the education system. To this end, the government with support from the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO across several initiatives, began work on the development of a comprehensive Education Management Information System (EMIS). The EMIS will provide data to inform national education policy, sector planning, and reform initiatives, support the Ministry and its agencies to make data-driven decisions at national, regional, and school levels as well as track access, participation, and outcomes of students which will lead to early identification and treatment of at-risk students.

Financing Education

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Jamaica's public contribution to education as a share of its gross domestic product, GDP and as a share of its budget is in line with international norms and higher than its regional peers. Since 2015, the Government of Jamaica has allocated between 12.8 per cent (JMD82.3 billion) and 13.6 per cent (JMD148.3 billion) of its national budget to education. However, Jamaica's GDP per capita is significantly lower than comparable high- and middle-income SIDS, meaning that while the share of GDP spent on education is relatively large, the amount available per student compares unfavourably with many other SIDS. There is a need for review of the contribution to the early childhood and tertiary sectors, which are critical to future educational outcomes, labour market productivity and economic growth. Innovative financing mechanisms and partnerships with private sector and other institutional partners can support the improved service delivery from public institutions.

Localisation

Educational transformation has been mainstreamed through the Ministry of Education's Transforming Education for National Development (TREND) programme — a formal, long-term, system-wide, multi-year change process fully aligned with the SDG 4 framework. TREND is built around seven pillars (governance, early childhood, curriculum/teacher training, TVET, technology, tertiary, and finance), which ensure that transformation is systemwide. The Ministry has supported teachers with over 700 localised lesson plans aligned with the National Standards Curriculum and has hosted training and coaching sessions in literacy, numeracy and digital instruction.

The MOESYI and the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ) have formalised an alliance to share talent, provide incentives and innovation. Through this partnership the TREND Ambassador Volunteer Portal was established, allowing for professionals to support schools through mentorship, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) labs, EdTech pilots – broadening TREND’s reach beyond government structures and rooting it in community assets.

Lessons Learnt/Best Practice

Jamaica is currently producing only 63.7 per cent of the SDG 4 data needed to fully monitor targets, indicating gaps in statistical systems that must be closed for resources and learning outcomes to be targeted effectively. The Ministry of Education, in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund, UNICEF, has piloted the Education Management Information System to capture critical data to drive decision-making. The strongest gains were achieved when literacy was addressed early. With that, the MOESYI has introduced a National School Learning and Intervention Plan (2021) at the primary level, which applies targeted remediation to strengthen student learning outcomes. Measures include extended teaching time through summer schools and homework programmes, psychosocial and parental engagement, strict attendance monitoring, digital learning resources, and customised instruction based on assessment data.

The MOESYI highlighted the importance of leadership in educational transformation, starting with training for all school boards with a view to modernising the governance framework for school boards, requiring ongoing training of board members to help them carry out their mandates effectively and efficiently. The Ministry updated school board selection processes and governance arrangements to include clear qualification criteria for board members, fit-and-proper standards, and performance reviews for boards.

Finally, partnership is critical to transforming education sector. The GOJ has partnered with both local and international organisations to boost the digital infrastructure within schools through initiatives such as the UNICEF Global Learning Passport, a digital platform for greater access to quality education for children and youth. This platform allows for online, mobile, and offline access, so learners can access content even with limited connectivity.

Additionally, through a joint venture between E-Learning Jamaica and the Jamaica Teachers Association, four state-of-the-art coding labs were established. These will be important to learners being introduced to programming, robotics, and foundational computer science skills. In partnership with the Digicel Foundation, 21 Smart Labs were established across 13 parishes, benefitting approximately 12 000 children with expanded digital literacy, ICT learning, and exposure to technology in primary schools.

Beyond 2030

For Jamaica's educational transformation process to accelerate, enabling it to achieve measurable transformation by 2030 and beyond, there is need to pursue further structural reform to achieve direct classroom impact, guided by data, inclusivity, and robust implementation systems. The midterm evaluation of the SDGs details policy relevant recommendations to address the binding constraints to educational transformation, and facilitate SDG acceleration through quality education. These recommendations are informed by the Education Transformation Commission and are relevant beyond 2030. The prioritised policy recommendations are detailed in Appendix 2.

Strategic investments and financing decisions will maximise Jamaica's human capital as a critical dimension of productive capacity that directly influences outcomes on multiple sectors.

Regional Analysis

The educational transformation required in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) takes place within the broader structural challenges or “development traps,” such as low capacity for growth, high inequality and weak institutional capacities, which together limit social mobility and economic diversification. Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education plays a central role in enabling a new development model by strengthening human capital, improving productivity and fostering inclusive social mobility.

Expanding access to education is a key component of educational transformation and the LAC region has made strides in this regard. The average completion rate for lower region increased from approximately 69.0 per cent in 2000 to 90.0 per cent, in 2022. During the same period, the average completion rate for upper secondary education increased from 47.0 per cent to 73.0 per cent (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, 2024). These rates compare favourably with the optimal reference rates of 88.0 per cent or higher completion rate for lower secondary education and greater than 71.0 per cent completion rate for upper secondary education set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In this regard, our progress in expanding access to secondary education is well-documented as we are one of five countries in the Caribbean to have met the optimal reference point for the completion rates of lower secondary (97.0 per cent) and upper secondary (82.0 per cent) education in the subregion (Abdulkadri et al., 2026).

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Beyond expanding access, education systems must focus on improving inclusiveness. Persistent disparities in educational outcomes across socio-economic groups reinforce intergenerational inequality, limiting social mobility and productivity gains across the region. There has been progress at the regional level in this regard. The average gap in completion rates for lower secondary education between the first- and fifth-income quintiles in the LAC region decreased from approximately 57 percentage points in 2000 to 18 percentage points in 2022. Similarly, the average gap in completion rates for upper secondary education between the first- and fifth-income quintiles in the LAC region decreased from approximately 63 percentage points in 2000 to 36 percentage points in 2022 (ECLAC, 2024).

For SIDS, the educational transformation is also central to building resilience and long-term prosperity. This is recognised in the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS). The agenda identifies education and skills development as key pillars for strengthening human capital, supporting youth employment and enabling participation in emerging sectors such as the green and blue economies. A recent study by ECLAC shows that the Human Development Index (HDI) is correlated ($R^2 = 0.85$) with learning-adjusted years of schooling for 25 SIDS, including 11 Caribbean countries, (Abdulkadri et al., 2026), which highlights the critical role of functional learning in the human and sustainable development of the Caribbean.

Quality education that results in functional learning and skills acquisition requires investment. The ABAS agenda calls for increased investment in quality education, reskilling and lifelong learning opportunities, particularly for vulnerable groups. UNESCO recommends that countries spend at least four to six per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on education to achieve the different targets of Sustainable Development Goal 4 by 2030 (Abdulkadri et al., 2026). Among CARICOM countries, Jamaica invested the most in education from 2013 to 2023. On average, Jamaica invested 5.6 per cent of annual GDP on education during this 10-year period. This level of public investment in education also means that we met the UNESCO benchmark for education spending over this decade. For Jamaica and other SIDS, investments in education are both a development driver and a resilience strategy. Reform efforts aligning education systems in SIDS like Jamaica with global transformations increasingly emphasise preventing mismatches between educational outcomes and labour market demands, which contribute to the high rate of youth unemployment in many Caribbean countries. Furthermore, youth unemployment is a gendered issue. In 2019, average unemployment among young women globally and in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was 19.0 per cent and 24.0 per cent, respectively, compared to young men, which was 16.0 per cent and 19.0 per cent, respectively. We have advanced in this respect, as the unemployment rate in 2019 for young women in Jamaica was 6.5 per cent and for young men 5.0 per cent (Abdulkadri et al., 2026).

Expanding the skills set of the youth will ameliorate the youth unemployment challenge faced by SIDS. In this regard, the ABAS agenda calls for strengthening digital competencies, technical and vocational education, promoting lifelong learning and improving institutional capacity. Advancing digitalisation and digital competencies in educational systems and the broader economy is key for SIDS to equip young people with the skills required for evolving labour markets, thereby substantially reducing labour market mismatches. Advancing the digitalisation of SIDS also promotes science, technology and innovation, helping economies absorb and leverage artificial intelligence to boost domestic productivity. Therefore, our reform of the education system is promoting the educational transformation in Jamaica that can support the broader structural transformations needed for sustainable growth and social inclusion.



She felt happy knowing she lived in a Jamaica where every school had an organic garden, and every student had a chance to grow their own food.

Working in the garden made Sophia interested in other subjects like Science and Social Studies. She learned that organic farming helped protect the soil and water, and she began exploring how countries grow their own food.

Her father had doubts about the STEAM programme, but those disappeared when Sophia's all-girls team won an innovation award for creating a 'soil alkalizer' to restore damaged soil.

Sophia was proud—she had discovered her talent, and her education was helping her shape a better future.

► **MALAIKA MILLER,**
Duhaney Park Primary School

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Education was discussed by each group, though with meaningfully different emphases. The Private Sector group focused on the mismatch between the outputs of the education system and the skills needed for agricultural productivity, technology, and economic growth — noting brain drain as the mechanism by which Jamaica's human capital investment leaks out of the country. Youth participants raised quality concerns: teacher capacity, access to digital tools, and the relevance of curricula to contemporary work and life. Local Authorities flagged the physical and infrastructural dimension — schools that lack basic facilities, particularly in rural parishes. Community Representatives identified barriers to access — cost, distance, and the practical demands of poverty that pull children out of learning. The NGO group raised the intersection of education and gender, noting the inadequacy of both male-focused and female-focused programming. The Persons with Disabilities group offered the most detailed and urgent critique: a teacher training pipeline that does not include special education at secondary level, an absence of sign language provision, shadow teachers without formal training or adequate compensation, and an inclusive education policy that is implemented without the resources — particularly interpreters — that would make it effective.

The cross-cutting insight from this theme is that Jamaica's education system faces challenges of quality, access, relevance, and inclusion simultaneously. Progress on SDG 4 requires attention to all four dimensions; interventions that address one without the others will be insufficient.



Goal 5

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

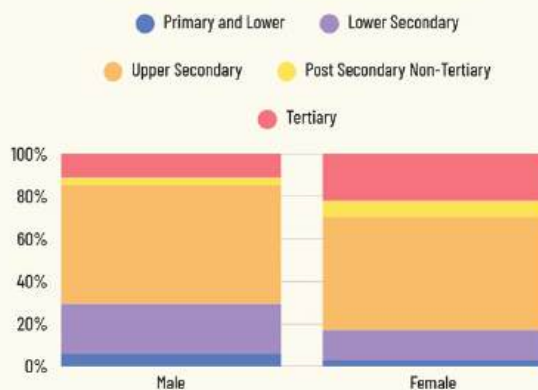


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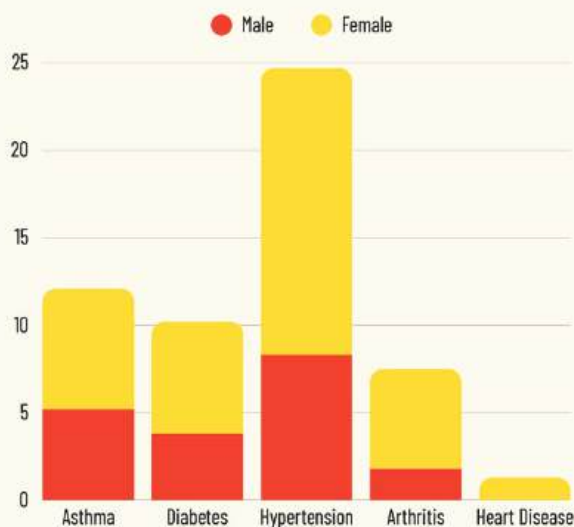
Gender Development Index (2023)

Gender gap 0.005

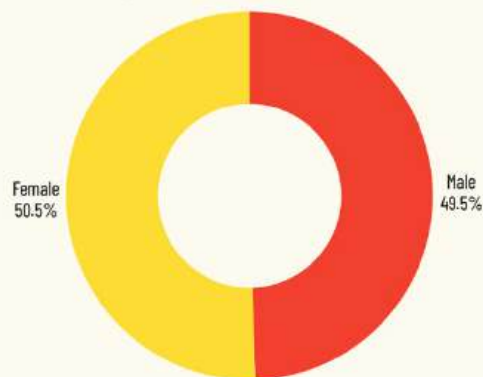
Education Levels of Labour Force (2024)



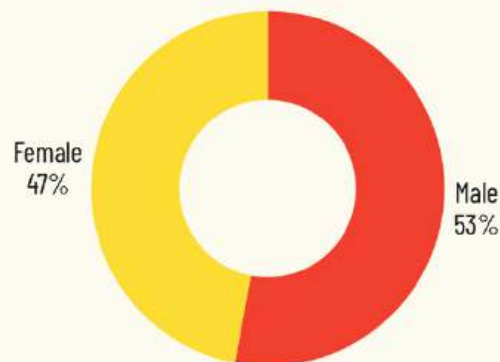
Distribution of Self Reported Chronic Illnesses (2023)



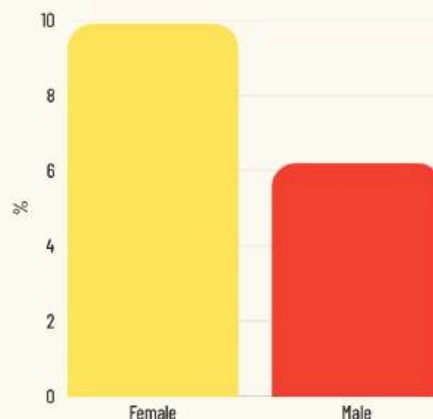
Population Distribution (2022)



Distribution of Household Heads (2023)



Poverty Prevalence by Household Head (2023)



GENDER IN DEVELOPMENT

Context

Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 5 seeks to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, closing the gender gap to ensure equal opportunities for all – leaving no one behind. This imperative is grounded in international agreements including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly as the key international treaty; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and the Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Pará Convention, 1994). While the issue of gender is a cross-cutting theme, this chapter focuses on salient gender-related progress and persistent gaps impacting national development – examining achievements, as well as structural issues affecting women and girls, while highlighting national priorities for men and boys, and the importance of engaging males as partners in achieving gender equality.

Jamaica has advanced the legal and regulatory framework for gender equality through two landmark pieces of legislation—the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, (2023) and the Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, (2021). The Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, (2023), which came into effect on January 22, 2024, provides for the increased protection of victims and survivors of domestic violence, expanding the category of persons who may apply for protection orders and increasing penalties for breach. The Act also widens the range of prosecutable behaviours and misconduct.

The National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE), developed under the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) within the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport (MCGES), provides that overarching national framework for gender mainstreaming across all ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs). The policy is underpinned by Jamaica’s commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the SDGs, and is implemented through a Gender Focal Point Network embedded across the public sector. The BGA serves as the national machinery for gender equality, coordinating implementation, monitoring progress, and providing technical support to MDAs to develop gender-responsive policies, programmes and budgets.

Jamaica continues to advance towards greater levels of gender equality in development. The 2023 Human Development Index (HDI) for Jamaica was 0.720, placing it in the high human development category at 117 of 193 countries. Between 1990 and 2023, Jamaica’s HDI changed from 0.662 to 0.720.

The 2023 HDI value for females in Jamaica is 0.723 in contrast with 0.713 for males, resulting in a Gender Development Index (GDI) value of 1.013, placing Jamaica in Group 1, the highest tier of human development between women and men globally. For the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which measures gender-based inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity, Jamaica ranks 88 of 172 countries in 2023, with a GI score of 0.358.

Progress has been made in advancing gender equality for women and girls across education, health and efforts to stem gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment. Challenges persist however, including income security and labour market participation for women – including those involved in domestic work and those providing unpaid care services. Simultaneously, strategic efforts have been made to advance progress for boys and men in areas where they are lagging, including in education, health and psychosocial well-being.

Jamaica has a population of an estimated 2.7 million people, with females comprising 50.5 per cent and males 49.5 per cent. Analysis of the 2023 Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions data by head of household found that 53.0 per cent of households had a male head, and 47.0 per cent a female head. The prevalence of poverty is typically higher in female-headed households (9.9 per cent) than male-headed households (6.2 per cent), within a national poverty prevalence of 8.2 per cent in 2023.

Thematic Discussion

Gender-Based Violence

Jamaica maintains its commitment to the achievement of gender equality and equity through the efforts of the national machinery for gender equality, the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) in the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport (MCGES). Importantly, efforts to realize this goal should include strengthening of the gender mainstreaming framework through the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies, guidelines and initiatives geared towards the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV).

Furthermore, these developments should be supported by a robust public education campaign focused on addressing negative gender norms targeting relevant stakeholders, the enactment of key gender-based violence legislation for the protection of survivors of GBV and prevention of further victimization, the strategic co-ordination of GBV support services, as well as the prioritization of a multi-stakeholder approach and partnerships.

The mainstreaming of gender in development must recognize and promote examination of gender disparities –whether for women and girls or men and boys at all levels and in all sectors. An integrative approach to strengthen meaningful inclusion and opportunities is central to the achievement of SDG 5.

MCGES continues to seek to strengthen partnership with bilateral partner countries and non-government stakeholders to further mainstream gender equality into all areas of development. This includes provision of accessible materials and access to relevant initiatives for persons with disabilities.

Eliminating gender-based violence (GBV) requires coordinated, multi-level action – from state systems and laws through to organisations, communities and individual behaviour. The National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender-Based Violence in Jamaica (NSAP-GBV) 2017-2027 guides this work across five strategic priority areas: Prevention; Protection; Investigation, Prosecution and Enforcement of Court Orders; Enforcement of Victim's Rights to Compensation, Reparation and Redress; Protocols for Coordination of NSAP and Data Management Systems.

The National Shelter Unit within the BGA continues to support survivors of GBV through two government-owned and operated regional shelters. Following Hurricane Melissa, the BGA implemented Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBViE) post-disaster interventions in partnership with UN Women and the United Nations Population Fund UNFPA, including GBV risk-awareness sessions, distribution of relief supplies to affected communities in St. Elizabeth, Trelawny and Westmoreland.

The Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, 2021 took effect on July 3, 2023. It establishes a framework to address sexual harassment in the workplace, educational institutions, correctional facilities, places of safety, nursing homes, medical facilities and other public and private spaces, ensuring protection and redress against unwanted sexual advances.

To support the implementation of the Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, 2021, the Sexual Harassment Investigation Unit was established within the Bureau of Gender Affairs. This Unit is responsible for handling matters regarding sexual harassment in the workplace, investigating sexual harassment claims, conducting sensitization and awareness-raising sessions regarding the Act, ensuring compliance within organizations and institutions, and providing support to the Sexual Harassment Tribunal. During the period July 2023 to December 2025, a total of 6 544 sensitization sessions were facilitated by the Unit and approximately 147 organizations were supported to draft or review sexual harassment workplace policies in keeping with the legislation. Overall, over 4 325 organizations were reached including government agencies, faith-based organizations, community groups and organizations within the private sector.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVE:

Participants argued that Jamaica's legal and policy frameworks do not yet adequately address digital GBV, and called for; specific legislative provisions to tackle non consensual image sharing and related forms of online abuse. Additionally, they advocated for school and community based education programmes on digital safety, consent, and respect, coupled with clear protocols for victim support and redress.

This is indicative of the need for increased awareness among persons regarding the legal provisions.

The Sexual Harassment Tribunal was established in accordance with the Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, (2021), to hear complaints of sexual harassment and determine appropriate courses of action based on provisions within the Act. The Tribunal commenced reviewing cases in July 2025 and received a total of 22 complaints (filed by 20 females and 2 males) as of December 2025. Most complaints were received from individuals within the private sector (11), followed by the public sector (8), and educational institutions (3). During the period, 14 cases were closed, 7 cases are pending, while 1 case was withdrawn. Together, the Unit and Tribunal create a continuum from workplace support and policy compliance through to formal adjudication, ensuring accessible and graduated redress for complainants.

Health

Jamaica's health profile carries significant gender dimensions that directly intersect with the achievement of SDG 5. According to the Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey III (JHLS III, 2016/17), published in 2024, approximately one-third of Jamaicans (33.8 per cent) had hypertension, one in eight (11.9 per cent) had diabetes, and half (53.8 per cent) were overweight.⁸⁷ Critically, these conditions exhibit marked gender disparities: hypertension and diabetes are more prevalent in females than males, while males are more likely to smoke and misuse alcohol – the latter being key modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular disease, cancer and injury. In 2022, total health expenditure accounted for 8.3 per cent of Jamaica's gross domestic product, (GDP) with government health spending rising from 3.5 per cent to 5.1 per cent of GDP, reflecting the significant fiscal burden of Jamaica's non-communicable diseases, NCD profile.

Jamaica is currently not on track to meet SDG Target 3.4 on premature NCD mortality. The risk of premature death from NCDs is higher in males than females. From a gender perspective, the Potential Years of Life Lost (PYLL) data reveal that hypertensive disease (91.0 per cent increase from 2010-2020), ischaemic heart disease (84.0 per cent), diabetes (64.0 per cent), and prostate cancer (58 per cent) represent the largest and fastest growing contributors to male premature mortality.⁸⁸

Non-communicable diseases continue to pose a significant threat to Jamaica's public health burden, contributing to morbidity and mortality and straining healthcare delivery. According to the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (2023), an estimated 23.6 per cent of the population reported having at least one NCD compared with 26.8 per cent in 2021. Among elderly females, the highest NCD prevalences were hypertension (60.1 per cent), diabetes (27.9 per cent) and arthritis (26.7 per cent). Similarly, among elderly males, hypertension (37.0 per cent), diabetes (15.6 per cent) and arthritis (10.2 per cent) were most prevalent.

Data on suicidal behaviour indicate a concerning trend. Attempted suicides recorded across all four Regional Health Authorities totalled 249 in 2021, rising to 315 in 2023 and remaining elevated at 290

⁸⁷ Jamaica-Health-and-Lifestyle-Survey-2016-17-JHLSIII-Electronic.pdf pg X

⁸⁸ See extended Health Report in Appendix 1

in 2024. Females account for the majority of recorded attempts across most regions, while males — particularly those over 40 — face the highest risk of completed suicide, with the national suicide rate standing at 2.4 per 100 000 at end-2024. From a gender equality perspective, male reluctance to seek mental health support — rooted in cultural norms around masculinity and emotional expression — is a structural barrier that the Male Empowerment Unit, the MCGES, and mental health service providers must continue to address through targeted, stigma-reducing outreach. The Ministry of Health and Wellness is developing a National Mental Health Policy that will lead to amendment of the Mental Health Act (1996) and alignment with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), to which Jamaica is a signatory. The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Technical Working Group is also advancing disaster preparedness protocols, recognising that events such as Hurricane Melissa (2025) generate significant psychosocial support needs that require coordinated cross-sectoral response.

Education

Boys' persistent underperformance within Jamaica's education system represents a critical development challenge with long-term implications for human capital and economic productivity. Despite slightly higher primary enrolment rates for boys (93.0 per cent) compared with girls (91.4 per cent) in 2024/25, boys consistently lag behind girls in learning outcomes from the primary level onward.

Gender disparities are evident from the early grades. At Grade 4, females accounted for a larger share of students achieving mastery in literacy (56.2 per cent) and numeracy (53.4 per cent). These gaps widen in the Primary Exit Profile (PEP) examination, where girls recorded higher proficiency in mathematics (60.8 per cent compared with 49.9 per cent for boys) and language arts (68.5 per cent compared with 54.1 per cent).

Educational disadvantage among boys intensifies at secondary and tertiary levels. Boys accounted for the smaller share of candidates and achieved lower pass rates in both the 2024 Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate, (CSEC), and Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination, (CAPE), examinations. Of the 2 378 graduates with first degrees from the University of the West Indies, Mona in 2024, 1 721 were female and 657 males. Females accounted for 61.0 per cent of enrolment in Human Employment and Resource Training /National Service Training Agency Trust, (HEART/NSTA Trust) programmes.

In contrast, males continue to dominate Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), with a male LFPR of 74.5 per cent compared with 61.9 per cent for females in October 2024. Yet females are overrepresented in unpaid care and domestic work, spending an estimated five hours per day compared with under three hours for males. The data reflect an education-to-work paradox: high male participation in the labour force alongside high levels of educational underachievement among boys and young men.

Men and Boys

Recognising that men and boys are critical partners in achieving gender equality, the government has continued to engage men around issues of gender norms, power relations and gender-based violence. The Male Empowerment Unit of the Ministry of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport examines challenges facing males including mental health, physical health, educational underperformance, and crime and violence. As of December 2024, 5 129 persons were reported as victims of major crimes, of whom 3 542 (69.1 per cent) were male — including a continued trend of significantly higher homicide rates among males. The unit therefore also spearheaded a number of activities geared towards supporting the health and well-being of males. Health and Wellness fairs focusing on men's physical and mental health were held and services offered included free health screenings, health consultations, and wellness workshops. In 2024, International Men's Day was commemorated on November 19, with a focus on the theme "Aspire to Inspire: Healthy Men, Healthy Families". The day's events facilitated dialogue on the social and psychological challenges faced by Jamaican men and the support needed to address these issues.

Other initiatives, such as the Daddy Day Care series were implemented to highlight positive fatherhood. A Career Expo was also held during the year and provided a platform for men to connect with potential employers, gain insights into various industries, and explore job opportunities. Career development workshops covering resume writing, interview preparation, and personal branding to equip men with the skills needed to succeed in the job market formed a major part of the exposition.

While policy discourse on men and boys has often focused on deficits, it is equally important to acknowledge and build on the significant economic contributions men make across key sectors of the Jamaican economy. The construction and infrastructure sector is among the most-male dominated in Jamaica, with men comprising the substantial majority of the skilled and semi-skilled workforce in building, civil works, and infrastructure development – a sector that is central to Jamaica's ongoing development agenda, including post-hurricane reconstruction following Melissa (2025). According to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) Labour Force Survey, construction consistently represents one of the primary industries of employment for working-age males, particularly those in the 20-44 age cohort. The energy sector, including renewable energy installation and maintenance, is similarly male-dominated and is projected to grow significantly as Jamaica transitions toward its 50.0 per cent renewable energy target.

Men also make substantial contributions in agriculture and fisheries – sectors critical to national food security – as well as in transportation, manufacturing, creative industries, and the tourism sector. The male labour force participation rate of 74.5 per cent in October 2024, compared with 61.9 per cent for females, reflect the continued high proportion of men in formal employment. Recognising and reinforcing these positive labour market contributions – while simultaneously addressing the skills

mismatches and educational underperformance that limit male economic mobility – are essential to a balanced gender equality strategy.

Jamaica has taken concrete legislative steps to recognise the role of fathers in family life. The Employment (Amendment) Act provides for paternity leave, entitling male employees to paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child. This provision reflects a broader shift in national policy towards recognising men as active caregivers, not only breadwinners – a framing consistent with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC Tlatelolco Commitment (2025),⁸⁹ which emphasises the importance of enabling men to share care responsibilities as a prerequisite for a gender-balanced care society. Paternity leave, when taken, contributes positively to child development outcomes, maternal wellbeing, and long-term gender equality by normalising male caregiving from the earliest stages of a child's life.

Fathers Incorporated Jamaica (Fathers Inc.) is a non-governmental organisation that works to strengthen responsible fatherhood, family cohesion and male engagement in child rearing across Jamaica. The organisation operates through community-based programmes that provide parenting skills training, mediation, and family counselling, economic empowerment support, and advocacy for legislative reform on issues affecting fathers. Fathers Inc. has been a key civil society partner in advancing the positive fatherhood agenda, working alongside the MCGES and the Male Empowerment Unit to deliver the Daddy Day Care series and other fatherhood engagement initiatives. The organisation's work addresses a critical dimension of gender equality that is often overlooked: that meaningful engagement in caregiving and family life is not only beneficial to women and children, but is essential to breaking cycles of absentee fatherhood, childhood poverty, and gender-based violence. Strengthening the formal partnership between government and organisations like Fathers Inc. – including through sustainable resourcing – is a priority for the way forward.

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Health and Wellness fairs focusing on men's physical and mental health provided free screenings, consultations and wellness workshops. International Men's Day was commemorated in 2024 under the theme "Aspire to Inspire: Healthy Men, Healthy Families", facilitating dialogue on the social and psychological challenges faced by Jamaican men. The Daddy Day Care series highlighted positive fatherhood, and a career expo provided men with connections to employers and career development workshops. Participants benefited from capacity-building and life-skills training.

Localisation

Ongoing efforts are being made to improve gender equality at the community level through training, sensitisation and empowerment sessions.

The government through partnerships with civil society organisations implemented programmes at the community level to address harmful gender norms, ensuring access to justice and support services

⁸⁹ 2500671e_crm16_tlatelolco_commitment-1_0.pdf pg 2 -4

for survivors. Additionally, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (IDEVAW) and the 16 Days of Activism were commemorated, with the MCGES implementing the UNiTE campaign. The “No Excuse for Abuse” public education campaign reached approximately 1 200 persons through 26 communities across the island.

At the community level, 170 GBV training sessions were conducted in 2024, reaching 6 106 participants. The GBV Helpline supported 7 063 persons, and as of December 2025, the BGA has established Parish Coordination Platforms in 13 of 14 parishes. In 2025, 7 453 (109 males) persons received counselling, psychosocial support and referrals from the GBV Helpline Specialists.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVE:

Proposed a broadening of the gender conversation beyond a focus on women’s issues to encompass the distinct but interconnected challenges facing men and boys. Participants noted that classroom environments and teaching approaches frequently disadvantage boys, and that men are significantly over-represented in psychiatric institutions such as Bellevue Hospital. Gender policy was urged to address both the persistent structural barriers facing women and girls and the emerging patterns of under-achievement and marginalisation among boys and young men.

The Bureau of Gender Affairs, in keeping with its mandate to promote, advocate for, and achieve gender equality in the Jamaican society, partners with the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information to mainstream gender throughout the education system through the Gender Ambassadors Programme (GAP). GAP bolsters sensitization and awareness-raising on several gender issues, including, gender equality, gender equity and School-Related Gender-Based Violence (SRGBV).

This equips students with the knowledge and skills to identify harmful behaviours, promote respectful interactions, challenge discriminatory norms, and help create a safer school environment. The GAP targets students from secondary level institutions (grades 10-13), including co-educational and single-sex schools, as well as, tertiary level institutions. Currently, there are twenty-four (24) schools that participate in GAP.

Lessons Learnt/Best Practice

The achievement of gender equality requires gender-responsive, evidence-based interventions that address structural and social factors at all levels. Key lessons include the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach, robust public education on gender norms, and coordinated GBV support services. Critically, mainstreaming gender must recognise and address disparities affecting both women and girls and men and boys – an integrative approach central to the achievement of SDG 5. The MCGES and BGA can benefit from strengthened partnerships with the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities and other stakeholders to mainstream gender equality into all areas of development.

Among the lessons learned are:

- Strengthening educational outcomes for boys and young men across all levels requires targeted interventions that address the interconnected socio-economic barriers they face – including poverty, gang involvement, peer pressure and limited support systems – while maintaining gains made for women and girls.
- Sport and the creative arts remain effective tools for male engagement and positive masculinity. Greater multi-sectoral collaboration between the MCGES, BGA, MOESYI, and other partners should be pursued.
- Further research is required to understand and address the gap between educational attainment and labour market outcomes for women and men.
- Civil society organisations such as Fathers Inc. demonstrate that community-based, male-centred programming can shift gender norms and improve family outcomes. Sustainable government partnership with, and resourcing of such organisations, is essential for scale.
- The two-tier sexual harassment governance structure – Investigation Unit for workplace-level resolution and the Tribunal for formal adjudication – has demonstrated early effectiveness, but continued public awareness of the distinct roles of each institution is needed to ensure complainants access the appropriate pathway.

Resource Requirements

Adequate budgetary and human resources as well as partnerships are required to support gender in development. Important considerations include:

- **Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)** — a globally recognised strategy implemented in countries including Rwanda, Austria, Sweden and Morocco, which creates budgets that reflect and serve the diverse needs of all persons. GRB requires strong linkages to the identification of gaps at the policy, programmatic and community levels, and Jamaica would benefit from a structured pilot programme to formalise its use.
- **Expansion of the Gender Focal Point Network** — increasing numbers and building capacity in gender-related advocacy, data analysis, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting, with strengthened linkages to the private sector, civil society and international development partners.
- **Sex- and age**—disaggregated data across all areas for persons with disabilities, to inform budgets, policies and programmes and guide resource allocation and legislative changes.

- **Dedicated resourcing for the Male Empowerment Unit and sustained funding for male-focused community programmes** – including through Fathers Inc. and similar civil society partners – to scale positive masculinity and responsible fatherhood initiatives islandwide.
- **Expanded mental health services delivery** - including additional community PM+ providers, school counsellors in every secondary school, and a sustained national media campaign targeting males seeking help informed by the national suicide and attempted suicide data reported by the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

Beyond 2030

Sustained progress towards gender equality beyond 2030 requires continuous identification and redress of gender-related deficits for both women and girls, and men and boys. Issues of lower educational achievement for boys and gender-based violence affecting mainly women and girls must remain policy priorities. New and emerging imperatives — including climate change, population ageing, declining fertility rates, technology-facilitated violence against children and women, and artificial intelligence — carry significant gender-related development implications. Gender considerations must be further mainstreamed, monitored and evaluated across all policies and programmes to ensure policy coherence.

Regional Analysis

Gender inequality remains a central concern for sustainable development, as framed by SDG 5, traditionally focusing on the disadvantages faced by women and girls. However, attention is also being given to the specific gender disparities affecting men and boys, particularly in education, skills development and health. These dynamics have important implications for labour markets, human capital formation and economic productivity.

At the global and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) levels, the transformation towards a “care society” and more inclusive development models requires addressing gender inequalities that affect both women and men. Tackling this issue is the central spirit and letter of the Tlatelolco Commitment reached in August 2025 by the member States of ECLAC. The Tlatelolco Commitment establishes a 2025–2035 “Decade of Action” to advance substantive gender equality and transition towards a care society and prioritises the universal right to care and social co-responsibility. This international commitment to achieving a care society emphasises that gender equality must involve structural changes in economic and social systems, including labour markets, social protection, and the distribution of unpaid care work. The inclusion of men and boys in social transformations towards a care society is key to closing gender gaps that have disproportionately affected women and girls. For example, policies that allow men to share care burdens with women, such as adequate paternity leave, are crucial for promoting a gender-balanced care society.

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Resilience building to climate change has gendered effects on care work. For example, policies promoting the physical adaptation of spaces to the adverse consequences of climate change may not include the provision of essential care services, such as child and elder care, which can substantially increase the time spent by women, girls and boys, and persons with disabilities performing care work in the aftermath of disasters (ECLAC, 2025). The burden of care work on boys and girls after climate change-induced disasters can impede their reinsertion into educational systems, thereby degrading the human capital and productivity potential of societies.

Achieving sustainable development requires policies that enable all individuals to fully develop their capabilities and skills to contribute to the overall productivity. Gender disparities in education and employment are particularly important in this regard, as they shape the formation of human capital, productivity potentials and long-term development outcomes. In Latin America and the Caribbean, significant progress has been made in expanding access to education for both girls and boys and closing gender gaps that have disadvantaged women and girls. In the LAC region, parity in years of education was reached in the early 2000s. Since then, the gender gap in upper secondary and tertiary education attendance has been constantly widening to the detriment of men and boys. By 2024, 24.0 per cent of women had completed 13 years or more of education compared to 20.0 per cent of men in the region (ECLAC, n.d.).

The pattern of a widening gender education gap, to the detriment of men and boys, is particularly pronounced in the Caribbean. The Caribbean achieved gender parity in tertiary education enrolment in the 1970s. Since the mid-1990s, a gender gap in tertiary education enrolment has emerged, with women enrolling at higher rates than men do. This gap has been widening ever since. In 2016, roughly 29.0 per cent of women were enrolled in tertiary education institutions in the Caribbean, compared to 16.0 per cent of men (Abdulkadri et al., 2026). The underrepresentation of men in higher education has become a widely recognised issue in the subregion and raises concerns about the future composition of the skilled workforce.

Emerging evidence indicates that boys are increasingly underperforming in schools, with implications for labour market participation and social inclusion. In Small Island Developing States (SIDS), of which a large proportion are in the Caribbean, the average expected years of schooling by 2020 was 11.4 years for boys and 11.7 for girls. This gender gap increases when adjusting for years of schooling by weighting expected years of schooling by harmonised test scores. The average years of schooling adjusted for learning in SIDS in 2020 were 6.9 for boys and 7.5 for girls (Abdulkadri et al., 2026). Lower educational outcomes of boys compared to girls limit the productivity potential of young males, creating social vulnerabilities. Underperforming boys and young men are more likely to experience difficulties in attaining well-remunerated employment, which, together with other adverse socio-economic conditions, increases the incentive for some young males to seek economic rewards through violent and illegal activities, contributing to the well-known crime problem facing the Caribbean.

Gender inequalities persist in labour market outcomes across the Caribbean. Despite their higher educational attainment, young women in the Caribbean often experience labour market participation rates that are more than ten percentage points lower than men's (Abdulkadri et al., 2026). Lower labour market participation by women compared to men suggests that educational advantages for women do not necessarily translate into equal economic opportunities. Structural labour market constraints, occupational segregation, and limited job creation in high-productivity sectors contribute to this mismatch between education and employment outcomes, producing gendered effects.

Health is an area where men in particular face substantial disparities. In 2019, the global average for deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) was 23 of every 100 000 men, compared to a rate of 16 per every 100 000 women. Death rates from NCDs in the Caribbean reflected this gender disparity (Abdulkadri et al., 2026). In the Caribbean, advances in the availability and accessibility of quality healthcare reduced mortality among the working-age population (persons aged 15-60) between 1990 and 2023 by roughly one-third, equally for men and women. However, a gender gap to the detriment of men remains. In 2023, an average of 157 out of 1 000 men in the Caribbean died between the ages of 15 and 60 compared to 86 out of every 1 000 women of the same age range (UN DESA, 2026). Addressing the epidemiological transition will reduce health disparities between women and men that are a burden on the sustainable development of the Caribbean.



Women like Oswald's mom was easily sidelined by men... Now, women and men both earn the same under the 'Equal Pay and Opportunity Act'... everything was solar-powered... that 'expensive' gas was now a thing of the past... carbon emissions dropped significantly.

► **CHENNELLE JACKSON,**
St. Jago High School

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Gender was discussed substantively by four groups, though with different framings. The Private Sector group focused its discussion on gender primarily through workforce participation and labour rights. Youth participants framed gender and development as a cross-cutting priority: addressing violence against women and girls, men's mental health and educational outcomes, digital GBV, and the invisibility of care work are all seen as core conditions for achieving equitable, sustainable development in Jamaica. The NGO group addressed gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and women's economic empowerment as the core of their gender work. The Persons with Disabilities group introduced a nuanced gender-disability intersection: boys are more frequently diagnosed with certain disabilities while girls' autistic behaviours are systematically masked; the burden of care for children with disabilities falls disproportionately on women, with significant consequences for women's economic participation.

The 2030 Agenda's gender framework is built primarily around SDG 5 (Gender Equality), but participants argued that Jamaica's development challenges require programming that is evidence-based and gender-specific for both women and men, without treating them as competing priorities.



Goal 6

Ensure availability and sustainable management of water for and sanitation for all



2023

78%

**HOUSEHOLD ACCESS TO
IMPROVED DRINKING WATER**
DOWN 2.1% FROM 2015



2023

98.5%

**EXCLUSIVE USE OF
WATER CLOSET**
UP 15.7% FROM 2015



2023

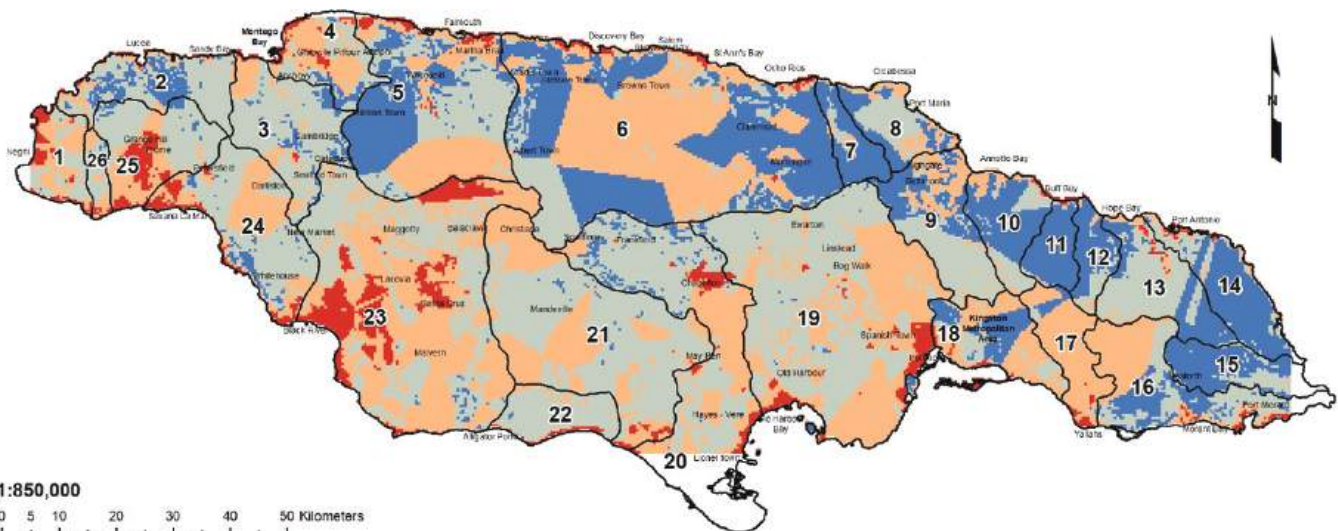
75%

**NON-REVENUE
WATER
WATER LOST FROM LEAKS**



Limestone Aquifer Vulnerability

Draft



1:850,000

0 5 10 20 30 40 50 Kilometers
0 2 4 8 12 16 20 Miles

LEGEND

- 21 Watershed Management Unit
- Low Vulnerability
- Medium Vulnerability
- High Vulnerability
- Very High Vulnerability

DRAFT (2012)
Prepared by the Water Resources Authority

No.	WMU Name	No.	WMU Name
1	South Negri – Orange River	14	Drivers River
2	Lucea River	15	Plantain Garden River
3	Great River	16	Morant River
4	Montego River	17	Yallahs River
5	Martha Brae	18	Hope River
6	Rio Bueno – White River	19	Rio Cobre
7	Rio Nuevo	20	Rio Minho
8	Oracabessa – Pagee River	21	Milk River
9	Wagwater River	22	Gut-Alligator Hole
10	Pencar – Buff Bay River	23	Black River
11	Spanish River	24	Deans Valley River
12	Swift River	25	Cabarita River
13	Rio Grande	26	New Savannah River

NOTES

Aquifer vulnerability refers to the potential for pollution of the aquifer at a given geographical location. Aquifer Vulnerability derived using the DRASTIC rating system based on seven weighted parameters used to calculate vulnerability values. The parameters and weights are:

Depth to Groundwater (5) / Recharge of Aquifer (4) / Aquifer Media (3) / Soil Media (2)
Topography (Slope) of land / (1) Impact of Vadose Zone (5) / Conductivity of Aquifer (3)

DRASTIC makes four major assumptions:

- (1) The contaminant is introduced at the ground surface;
- (2) The contaminant is flushed into the groundwater by precipitation;
- (3) The contaminant has the mobility of water;
- (4) The area evaluated is over 40 hectares/0.4 km² in area

WATER RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Context

Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 6, seeks to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030. This goal encompasses eight targets that address various aspects of water resource management, from ensuring universal access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services to protecting water-related ecosystems and supporting local community participation in water management.

Jamaica's performance on SDG 6 indicators reveals a complex landscape of achievements and persistent challenges. The country has made notable progress in expanding access to basic water services, yet significant gaps remain in achieving safely managed water and sanitation services, particularly in rural areas and among vulnerable populations. Climate change impacts, ageing infrastructure, and institutional capacity constraints continue to pose substantial obstacles to achieving universal access to clean water and sanitation.

Jamaica's water resource management operates within a multi-agency governance framework underpinned by the National Water Sector Policy and Implementation Plan (2019), which establishes the overarching principles for the sustainable management, development, and use of water resources. The Water Resources Authority (WRA) is the principal regulatory body with the statutory mandate to monitor, manage, protect, and allocate the country's water resources under the Water Resources Act. The National Water Commission (NWC), established under the National Water Commission Act, is the largest water service provider, responsible for the production, treatment, and distribution of potable water and the collection and treatment of wastewater across most parishes. The Rural Water Supply Limited (RWSL), operating under the Ministry of Water, Environment and Climate Change, provides engineering solutions and constructs minor water supply systems, catchment tanks, etc., and hands over the operation of these systems to entities, such as the National Water Commission and the municipal corporations. The Ministry of Water, Environment and Climate Change provides national policy oversight for the water sector, while the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) regulates on-site sanitation systems and issues environmental permits. At the local level, municipal corporations hold shared responsibility for solid waste management and oversight of community water systems within their jurisdictions. This distributed governance architecture creates both coordination opportunities and challenges, with inter-agency alignment essential to achieving the country's water and sanitation targets.

Jamaica's water sector presents a tale of two realities: substantial progress in urban areas contrasted with persistent challenges in rural communities. The challenges faced in the provision of access to potable water and adequate sanitation in Jamaica are closely linked to the country's demographic and geographic characteristics. Jamaica's population of approximately 2.7 million is unevenly distributed across 14 parishes, with significant concentration in urban centres, particularly the Kingston Metropolitan Area, and St. Catherine, which is the second most populated parish. The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN), defines an urban area as a densely populated locality with at least 2 000 inhabitants and a population density of 500 or more persons per square kilometre and advanced socio-economic infrastructure.⁹⁰ Based on the 2022 census,⁹¹ population density ranges from highly concentrated urban zones to sparsely populated rural areas. This uneven distribution, combined with the island's varied topography, including steep mountains, limestone karst formations, and coastal plains, creates distinct challenges for water infrastructure development and service delivery.

The issue of access to potable water is more of a rural than urban problem. According to the 2023 Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions, 78.5 per cent of households in the Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area (GKMA) reported Indoor Tap/Pipe as their main source of drinking water, while in the Other Urban Centres (OUC) 59.9 per cent reported Indoor Tap/Pipe as their main source. Comparatively, only 32.5 per cent of households in Rural Areas indicated Indoor Tap/Pipe as their main source of drinking water. Overall, 78.0 per cent of households surveyed reported access to an improved drinking water source (which includes indoor/outdoor tap/pipe, public standpipe, bottled water, and trucked water from NWC), while 21.4 per cent reported access to unimproved drinking water sources including rainwater tanks (13.5 per cent), trucked water from private sources (4.5 per cent), and other sources such as rivers, springs and ponds (3.4 per cent).⁹² This disparity reflects the complex interplay of geographic, economic, and institutional factors that shape access to water across the island. This context also highlights the need for discussions on increased management and distribution of water through urban centres during climate episodes of high temperatures and droughts, as water lock-offs⁹³ disproportionately affect urban areas despite their better infrastructure compared to other urban centres and rural areas.

Jamaica has established ambitious targets aligned with Vision 2030 Jamaica, mandating specific agencies to increase the accessibility of potable water to 100 per cent of the population by 2030.⁹⁴ This initiative includes the NWC, which supplies approximately 190 million gallons of water daily to two million people across the island, and the RWSL that installs catchment tanks and rainwater harvesting facilities to distribute potable water to some non-utility service communities.⁹⁵ This commitment represents both a human rights imperative and a cornerstone of sustainable development, recognising that water security underpins achievements across multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

The NWC serves as Jamaica's premier water service provider, producing more than 90.0 per cent of Jamaica's total potable water supply, with more than 74.0 per cent (as of end of financial year

⁹⁰ Increase in Urban Districts Across the Island – Jamaica Information Service

⁹¹ [Statinja.gov.jm/PopCensus/Census2022/Urban-Rural Enumeration Districts by Parish.aspx](https://statinja.gov.jm/PopCensus/Census2022/Urban-Rural%20Enumeration%20Districts%20by%20Parish.aspx)

⁹² Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023 - HOUSING.pdf pg 5.8

⁹³ Water Lock Off refers to powers granted to the National Water Commission under the National Water Commission Act to implement water restrictive measures for water conservation due to drought or water shortage. National Water Commission.pdf

2023/24) of the population having access to water services, and 29.9 per cent (as of the last financial year 2024/25) having access to wastewater services.⁹⁶ However, the remaining demand, primarily in rural areas, is addressed through a ministry-led initiative involving the NWC, which mainly focuses on utility coverage areas, and the RWSL, which serves non-utility coverage areas in rural areas, along with municipal corporations. This multi-agency arrangement creates both opportunities for localised solutions and challenges in coordination and resource allocation.

Jamaica's 14 parishes exhibit varying levels of water security, influenced by topographic features, population density, and infrastructure development. Groundwater provides approximately 85.0 per cent of the country's available water resources, yet the distribution of both groundwater resources and population creates service delivery challenges. The mountainous interior parishes, including sections of Manchester, Clarendon, and St. Elizabeth, face particular accessibility constraints due to difficult terrain and scattered settlements. Urban centres, particularly in the Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area (GKMA), benefit from concentrated infrastructure investments and economies of scale in service delivery. However, even within urban areas, disparities exist. The urban poor, many of whom live in the country's 269⁹⁷ squatter settlements, face challenges accessing adequate sanitation services. This creates public health risks and impacts living standards, particularly affecting women, children and vulnerable populations. Jamaica's commitment under SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), emphasises adequate housing and basic services for all, with particular attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations. The National Squatter Management Policy (draft), under the purview of the Ministry of Economic Growth and Infrastructure Development (formerly Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation) recognises the critical need to integrate water and sanitation infrastructure improvements into squatter regularisation programmes, demonstrating policy coherence across SDG related interventions.⁹⁸

Thematic Discussion

Water resource management and sanitation infrastructure represent critical pillars of Jamaica's sustainable development agenda, directly impacting public health, economic productivity, and environmental sustainability. Jamaica as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) faces unique challenges in water security that are compounded by its geographical characteristics, climate vulnerability, and developmental constraints.

The relationship between SDG 6 and Jamaica's development trajectory is multifaceted and profound, with strong interlinkages across multiple SDGs. Access to clean water and adequate sanitation services directly influences health outcomes (SDG 3), educational attainment (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), and economic opportunities (SDG 8). For Jamaica, where tourism and agriculture represent significant economic sectors, water quality and availability are essential for maintaining competitive advantages in these industries.

⁹⁴ Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) 2024-2027, pg 516

⁹⁵ Water Distribution in Jamaica – Jamaica Information Service

⁹⁶ NWC Capital Projects. NWC

⁹⁷ National Squatter Management Policy for a Squatter Free Jamaica, Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, pg 50

⁹⁸ National_Squatter_Management_Policy for review.pdf pg 88 and 102

SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being) directly depends on access to clean water and sanitation to prevent waterborne diseases and improve maternal and child health outcomes. Research by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that inadequate water and sanitation services contribute significantly to the incidence of diarrheal diseases, particularly among children under five, affecting productivity and healthcare costs.⁹⁹ Waterborne diseases and poor sanitation conditions affect productivity and healthcare costs, with vulnerable populations in informal settlements facing disproportionate health risks.

SDG 4 (Quality Education) benefits from adequate school sanitation facilities, particularly for girl's retention in secondary education. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) is supported by reducing the burden of water collection on women and girls. In communities where piped water is unavailable or unreliable, the burden of water collection disproportionately affects women and children. The distance travelled and the time consumed to source water can be a hindrance to increased productivity, and can expose women and children to danger.¹⁰⁰

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) depends on reliable water supplies for industrial and agricultural development. Water access disparities have direct implication for Jamaica's economic development trajectory and contribute significantly to persistent underdevelopment in rural areas. Rural communities with unreliable water access face constraints on agricultural productivity. The tourism sector, which contributed US\$4.3 billion to Jamaica's economy in 2024,¹⁰¹ depends critically on reliable water supply and wastewater treatment to maintain international standards and visitor satisfaction.

Global trends in freshwater availability present concerning implications for Jamaica. According to the United Nations World Water Development Report 2024, global freshwater resources are under unprecedented stress, with climate change intensifying the hydrological cycle and creating more extreme weather events. In the case of Jamaica, water stress level has been relatively low; however, between 2015 and 2021, there was a 61.4 per cent increase in the level of water stress. In addition to low water stress¹⁰², Jamaica's freshwater withdrawal as a per cent of available freshwater resources remains relatively low.¹⁰³

Events on a global scale present challenges for Jamaica and the region as global patterns have translated into increased vulnerability to droughts and flooding, both of which compromise water security and sanitation infrastructure. The Caribbean region has experienced increasing variability in precipitation patterns, with Jamaica's Standard Precipitation Index (SPI) value showing that dry conditions, ranging from near-normal dry to exceptionally dry conditions, prevailed for the first half of 2023 as several parishes experienced meteorological drought¹⁰⁴ as documented in the Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 2024.

⁹⁹ Improving access to water, sanitation and hygiene can save 1.4 million lives per year, says new WHO report

¹⁰⁰ FINAL National Water Sector Policy (2019)a - Jan 08 19 pg 3

¹⁰¹ Jamaica Earns US\$4.3 Billion from Tourism – Jamaica Information Service

¹⁰² Water stress refers to the ability, or lack thereof, to meet human and ecological demand for water. Water stress is a more inclusive and broader concept. It considers several physical aspects related to water resources, including water scarcity, but also water quality, environmental flows, and the accessibility of water. Defining Water Scarcity, Water Stress, and Water Risk – Pacific Institute

¹⁰³ PIOJ, Acceleration of SDG Implementation in Jamaica, pg 122-123.

Both internal capacity constraints and external climate pressures have shaped the country's response to these challenges.

Internal Factors

Jamaica faces challenges related to ageing water infrastructure, with significant portions of the distribution network experiencing high levels of non-revenue water due to leakages and unauthorised connections. Jamaica struggles with non-revenue water levels averaging 72.0 per cent nationwide, with physical losses accounting for approximately 60.0 per cent, production/technical loss and commercial losses of roughly 40.0 per cent. Recent progress has been made in the Kingston Metropolitan Area and Portmore, St. Catherine, where non-revenue water has been reduced from 71.0 per cent to under 42.0 per cent and 60.0 per cent to approximately 47.0 per cent respectively through targeted infrastructure improvements under its Non-Revenue Water Reduction Co-Management Programme.

Historical deficiencies in water infrastructure investment have made the targets of SDG-6 challenging, however, Jamaica has significantly increased investments since 2016 to reduce distribution losses, increase storage and increase processing and production capacity. Several critical infrastructure projects are being undertaken by the NWC, which upon completion will improve water supply services across the island and increase the country's resilience to climate change. Key infrastructure improvements target expansion of water treatment capacity in high demand areas, particularly the Kingston Metropolitan Area and major tourism zones along the north coast. These investments aim to enhance service reliability for industrial and tourism sectors, which are critical for economic growth and employment generation.

The NWC's capital programme includes the NWC/MIYA NON-REVENUE WATER (NRW) Reduction Co-Management Programme that has been completed in Kingston and St. Andrew, and is being implemented in Portmore, St. Catherine with the aim to improve the capacity within NWC for sustainable NRW reduction which is budgeted at JMD\$828.8 million and US\$14.32 million respectively. This, as well as the Islandwide NRW Reduction budgeted at JMD\$44 billion are key projects. The implementation of its Islandwide Non-Revenue Water Reduction Programme is expected to improve service delivery to its customers, enhance operational efficiency of the NWC, improve water distribution, and facilitate energy and water savings.

Additionally, the NWC is replacing aged transmission lines and infrastructure across several service areas in the country, which will improve the delivery of water supply. One such programme is the Western Parishes Water Supply and Resilience Improvement Programme, which will be implemented over 10 years at an estimated cost of US\$425 million, and includes major infrastructure and facilities upgrades being done in four phases. On completion, this project is expected to augment potable water production by an additional 35 million gallons per day (MGD), reduce NRW to 30.0 per cent, and enhance operational flexibility through the interconnection of four water treatment plants.

Additionally, works have commenced on the building of the Rio Cobre Water Treatment Plant (Content Water Treatment Plant), valued at US\$92 million and on completion, this will make available an additional 15 million gallons per day to the Kingston Metropolitan Area.

The high cost of energy has significantly affected Jamaica's ability to distribute water to all. Despite this challenge, Jamaica has taken steps to reduce its energy consumption in the water distribution process with updated equipment, increased use of renewable energy systems, and greater use of gravity-fed systems. The country is moving to integrate the use of renewable energy sources, consistent with policy provisions outlined in Jamaica's National Renewable Energy Policy (2009-2030), which targets 20.0 per cent renewable energy in the national energy mix by 2030.¹⁰⁵ The National Water Sector Policy and Implementation Plan (2019) explicitly address climate adaptation as a central organising principle for future investments and includes provisions for service providers in the water sector to adopt energy efficient technologies and techniques to reduce high-energy costs and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

External Factors

Climate change poses significant challenges to Jamaica's water security, with data projecting more intense periods of drought. Policy adaptation measures have responded by promoting rainwater harvesting at the household level as a key strategy. The RWSL has implemented rainwater-harvesting projects at over 30 schools, institutions and communities around the country, demonstrating practical adaptation responses to climate variability.¹⁰⁶ According to the JSLC 2023, approximately 13.5 per cent of households nationally rely on rainwater tanks as their main source of drinking water, with this proportion being highest in Rural Areas.¹⁰⁷

External factors influencing Jamaica's water security include regional climate patterns, global commodity prices affecting infrastructure development costs and international cooperation frameworks that provide technical and financial support. Jamaica benefits from partnerships with multilateral institutions including the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which have provided concessional financing for major water infrastructure projects. Recent examples of this support include the Essex Valley Agriculture Development Project (EVADP), which aims to improve water management for agricultural development. Additionally, the Rural Water Supply Improvement Project funded by the Caribbean Development Bank with \$300 million allocated for the 2025/26 fiscal year to bring reliable potable water infrastructure to non-utility service areas in St. Mary, Trelawny, Clarendon, St. Elizabeth, and St. Thomas, is expected to conclude in March 2029.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ In the Caribbean region, a meteorological drought event occurs when the SPI is negative for at least two consecutive months and reaches a value of -1.30 during the wet season and -0.80 during the dry season.

¹⁰⁵ National Renewable Energy Policy 2009 – 2030 ...Creating a Sustainable Future pg 21

¹⁰⁶ Rural Water Supply Ltd. to expand minor water systems – Ministry of Local Government & Community Development

¹⁰⁷ Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023 - HOUSING.pdf pg 37

¹⁰⁸ Improved Water Supply Coming for Residents in Six Parishes – Jamaica Information Service

Jamaica's commitment to international conventions and agreements significantly influences its approach to achieving SDG 6 targets. As a signatory to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Jamaica has developed Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that explicitly address water resource management and climate adaptation. Jamaica's Updated NDC (2025) includes conditional emission reduction targets in multiple sectors, with water sector actions contributing to both mitigation through energy efficiency and adaptation through enhanced resilience of water supply systems.¹⁰⁹ The NDC 3.0 outlines specific scenarios for the water sector, including investment in an 8.5 MW of Solar Photovoltaic (PV) plant by 2030. The country's participation in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction also shapes its approach to building resilient water and sanitation infrastructure capable of withstanding natural disasters.¹¹⁰

Water Access and Infrastructure

Sanitation Access and Infrastructure

Sanitation remains a critical component of SDG 6, addressing not only access to toilet facilities but also the safe management of wastewater and sewage systems. According to the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) 2023, 98.5 per cent of households in Jamaica have access to an improved sanitation facility (Water Closet), representing significant progress toward universal coverage. However, this aggregate figure masks important geographical disparities that mirror the challenges observed in water access. The GKMA demonstrates the highest level of sanitation access at 97.8 per cent, followed by Other Urban Centres at 87.1 per cent, while Rural Areas lag at 79.6 per cent.

The 7.5 percentage point gap between rural and urban sanitation access reflects persistent infrastructure challenges in rural communities, where factors such as dispersed settlements, difficult terrain, and higher per capita infrastructure cost complicate service delivery. Beyond basic access to toilet facilities, the quality and type of sanitation systems vary considerably across regions. Urban areas predominantly feature flush toilet systems connected to sewage networks or septic tanks, while rural areas rely more heavily on pit latrines and other basic sanitation facilities that may not meet the SDG 6 definition of "safely managed sanitation services".

LOCAL AUTHORITY PERSPECTIVES:

Noted that responsibility for water access and sanitation at the community level is often diffuse and inadequately coordinated across the National Water Commission, municipal corporations, and health authorities. Despite partnership initiatives in some parishes, some communities continue to lack reliable access to safe water and adequate sanitation.

¹⁰⁹ NDC_Report_Oct12.pdf pg 23-24 and pg 52

¹¹⁰ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 pg 22

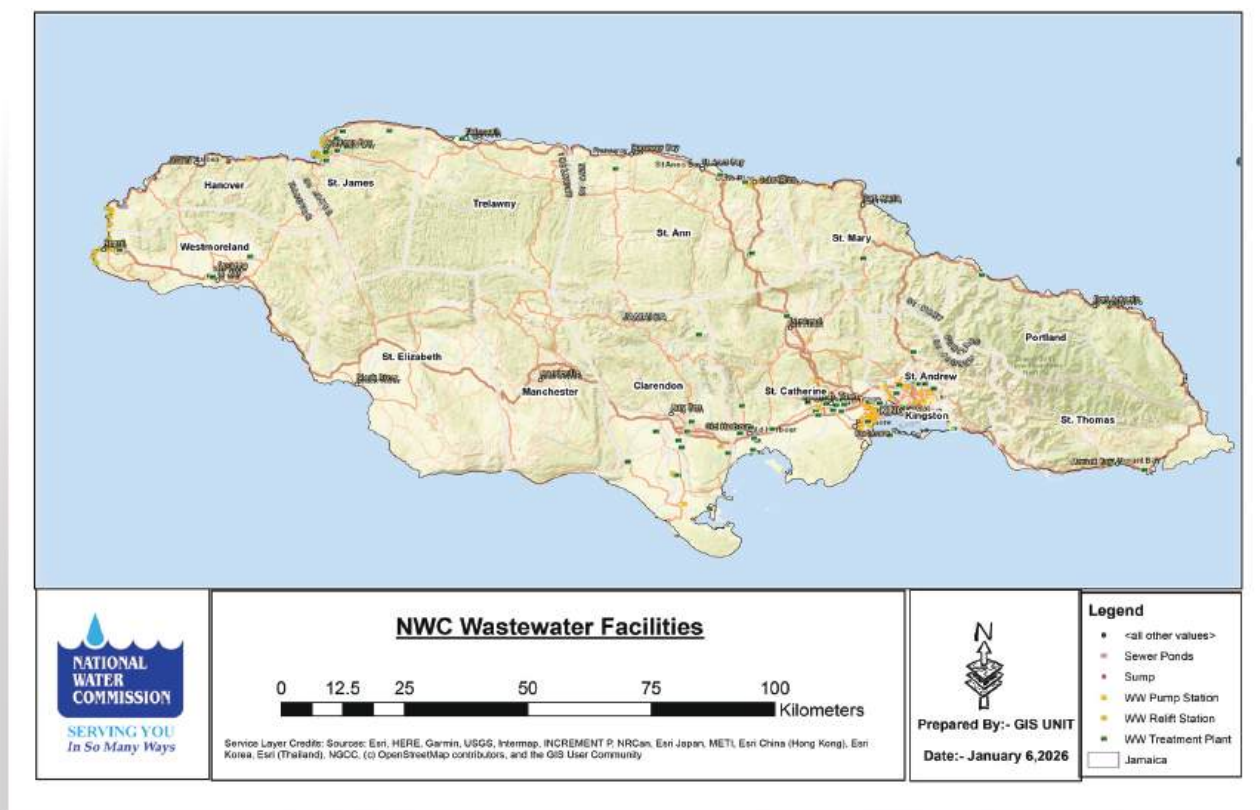


FIGURE 11 NWC Wastewater Facilities

The NWC provides wastewater services in all parishes except for Manchester and St. Elizabeth. These parishes are excluded due to factors including high infrastructure costs, low population density, and the nature of economic sectors and industries that predominate in these areas. The majority of Jamaica's population depends on on-site sanitation solutions, including septic tanks and soak-away pits. The Environmental Conservation and Protection Division of the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA)¹¹¹ regulates these systems. However, in informal settlements, the unplanned nature of these communities means they are typically not regulated or enforced by NEPA but rather the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Additionally, private sector entities such as hotels and industries have their own wastewater facilities. Enforcement challenges and maintenance gaps in both public and private systems create potential public health and environment risks, particularly in densely populated informal settlements and areas with high water tables.

Advancing from basic sanitation access to safely managed sanitation services – where excreta are safely disposed of in situ or transported and treated off-site – represents a significant challenge for Jamaica's path to achieving SDG 6.2. SDG 6.2 seeks to achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations by 2030. This transition requires substantial investments in wastewater treatment infrastructure, septage management systems, and behavioural change programmes to ensure proper maintenance of on-site sanitation facilities.

¹¹¹ Environment Management | National Environment & Planning Agency

Localisation

Sanitation improvements have proven particularly challenging in informal settlements and peri-urban areas where land tenure issues complicate infrastructure development. The Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) has implemented community-driven development projects such as the Integrated Community Development Project 2 (ICDP2), which has resulted in the construction and/or repair of sewer lines. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the project responded by providing personal protective equipment (PPEs) and sanitation supplies to schools, community agriculture and tourism enterprises and community-based organisations. These projects have demonstrated the importance of community ownership and participation in ensuring long-term sustainability of sanitation investments.

Local government authorities have played increasingly important roles in water and sanitation service delivery. Municipal corporations have assumed shared responsibility for solid waste management, and oversight of community water systems within their jurisdictions.

Jamaica's approach to localising SDG 6 implementation has emphasised community participation and decentralised management systems, recognising that water and sanitation challenges often manifest most acutely at the local level. The Rural Water Supply Programme operates through partnerships between central government agencies, and local community organisations, representing a key mechanism for translating national water policy into local action. Between 2021 and 2022, RWSL completed major projects connecting thousands of Jamaicans to piped potable water, including Penn and Lucky Valley in St. Catherine, Brandon Hill and Salt River in Clarendon, Portland Cottage and Rocky Point in Clarendon, Bangor Ridge in Portland, and Coral Gardens, Flower Hill, Torado Heights, and Stonehenge in St. James. The flagship Top Aberdeen Water Supply System in St. Elizabeth, commissioned in February 2022 at a cost of JMD \$111 million, now provides reliable water supply to more than 1 600 residents.¹¹²

Parish-level implementation of water and sanitation improvements has shown significant variation across Jamaica's fourteen parishes. According to the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023, the GKMA demonstrates the highest rates of access to piped water services with 78.5 per cent of households having Indoor Tap/Piped as their main source, compared to 59.9 per cent in Other Urban Centres and only 32.5 per cent in rural areas.¹¹³ This geographical disparity reflects both infrastructure investment patterns and the challenges of serving dispersed rural populations with limited economies of scale.

Access to Improved Water Sources

According to the JSLC 2023, 78.0 per cent of households nationally reported access to an improved drinking water source. However, this aggregated figure masks significant regional variations: 99.6 per cent of GKMA households have access to improved water sources (combining indoor tap/pipe at 78.5 per cent, outdoor tap/pipe at 11.5 per cent, public standpipe, bottled water, and NWC trucked water),¹¹⁴

¹¹² Rural Water Supply Ltd. to expand minor water systems – Ministry of Local Government & Community Development.

¹¹³ Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023 - HOUSING.pdf pg 37

compared to 74.5 per cent in Other Urban Centres and 51.8 per cent in Rural Areas.

The Housing Quality Index (HQI), revealed that in 2023 only 53.6 per cent of households nationally had Indoor Tap/Pipe as their main source of drinking water – a decline of 4.8 percentage points compared with 2021, and one of the lowest readings recorded over the period 2017-2023. This decline has negatively affected overall HQI performance and underscores that progress on infrastructure access has not been uniform.

Disaggregation by consumption quintile reveals further disparities: Households with Indoor Tap/Pipe as their main source ranged from 32.7 per cent in the poorest quintile to 67.0 per cent in Quintile 5. Conversely, reliance on unimproved water sources such as rainwater tanks was highest among poorer households, with 20.0 per cent in Quintile 1 compared to 7.4 per cent on Quintile 5.¹¹⁵

Gender Disparities in Water Access

While overall access rates appear similar between male-headed and female-headed households, the JSLC 2023 reveals significant disparities in the quality and reliability of water services, particularly water lock-offs. During the 30-day period preceding the survey, 51.7 per cent of households with piped water reported experiencing at least one water lock-off, with an average of 8.2 lock-offs during the period. Regionally, the average number of lock-offs was 8.7 in GKMA, 8.6 in OUC, and 7.5 in Rural Areas.

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Water storage patterns also reveal important household dynamics. Among households that stored water in containers for use during lock-offs, 43.7 per cent used plastic tanks, 37.3 per cent used drums, and 12.3 per cent used buckets. Disaggregated by sex of household head, 44.5 per cent of male-headed households used plastic tanks compared to 42.8 per cent of female-headed households. Notably, households in Quintile 1 primarily used drums (53.6 per cent) while Quintile 5 households predominantly used tanks (55.8 per cent), suggesting economic factors may influence water storage capacity – though this interpretation warrants further analysis before drawing firm conclusions.¹¹⁶

In Jamaica, water access challenges are primarily related to infrastructure distribution and location rather than gender-based disparities in water collection typical of other developing countries.

Distance to Water Sources

The National Water Sector Policy (2019) indicates a reasonable distance to travel to a water source as being within 500 metres from the household.¹¹⁷ According to the JSLC 2023, of the 7.6 per cent of households that reported use of a public water source and who travelled to collect drinking water, 61.9 per cent travelled less than 500 metres to the source.

¹¹⁴ Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023 - HOUSING.pdf pg 37

¹¹⁵ Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023 - HOUSING.pdf pg 37

¹¹⁶ Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023 - HOUSING.pdf pg 5.9

¹¹⁷ FINAL National Water Sector Policy (2019)a - Jan 08 19 pg xi

Lessons Learnt/Best Practices

Jamaica's experience in implementing water and sanitation intervention over the past decade has yielded important lessons that inform future approaches to achieving SDG 6 targets. The most significant successes have occurred where interventions combined infrastructure investments with institutional capacity building and community engagement processes.

However, significant challenges have been encountered in scaling successful pilot projects to national implementation levels. While small-scale community interventions often succeed, many face sustainability challenges when scaling up or when external technical support is reduced.

Public-private partnerships have shown mixed results in Jamaica's water and sanitation sector. While private sector involvement has brought technical expertise and financial resources, ensuring affordability and universal coverage has required careful regulatory oversight. The experience with private management of water and waste water systems in some urban areas has demonstrated the importance of maintaining strong regulatory frameworks and community oversight mechanisms to protect consumer interests. It should be noted that private sector operations occur in the same areas as NWC, suggesting there is not a lack of coverage but rather parallel service provision, which does not necessarily change overall access to water.

Resource Requirements

Achieving universal access to safely managed water and sanitation services in Jamaica requires substantial financial resources, technical capacity, and institutional commitment. These resource requirements encompass multiple categories of investment. Infrastructure development represents the largest component of total resources for new construction, rehabilitation, and expansion of water treatment facilities, distribution networks, and sanitation systems. Institutional capacity building accounts for resource needs, supporting human resource development, organizational strengthening, and regulatory framework enhancement. Operational support, including subsidies for vulnerable populations and maintenance of existing infrastructure will require additional resources.

Financing these investments will require leveraging partnerships consistent with SDG 17 targets for global cooperation and resource mobilisation. Jamaica's approach emphasises diversified financing mechanisms that combine domestic resource mobilisation with international development assistance, private sector investment and innovative financial instruments. International development partnerships remain essential for meeting Jamaica's SDG 6 resource requirements. Private sector participation offers important opportunities for resource mobilisation while bringing technical expertise and operational efficiency. However, ensuring universal coverage and affordability requires careful structuring of private sector involvement.

Innovative financing mechanisms, including green bonds, blended finance facilities, and results-based financing, present emerging opportunities for resource mobilisation. Jamaica's recent issuance of blue bonds for ocean conservation demonstrates the potential for environmental finance instruments to support water and sanitation investments that provide both social and environmental benefits.

Leveraging partnerships also requires addressing non-financial resource requirements, including technical expertise, technology transfer, and institutional knowledge sharing. Jamaica's participation in regional and international networks such as the Caribbean Water and Wastewater Association, International Water Association, International Water Resource Association and UN Water provide access to global best practices and technical assistance that complement financial resources.

Greater investment is required for infrastructural development, as these agencies do not make a profit. Support is also needed for monitoring and research in the water sector in areas such as microplastics and water quality. This will assist in ensuring safe access for water usage. While Jamaica receives assistance from international organizations and bilateral partners in terms of project infrastructure and equipment, there is a need for funding for maintenance of equipment and systems. Funding is also needed to increase technical capacity and human resources. This focus should extend broadly across other sectors such as agriculture, tourism and health rather than just the water sector. An integrated cross-sectional approach to water resource capacity is essential for long-term sustainability.

Beyond 2030

Projections for Jamaica's water and sanitation sector indicate that achieving universal access to safely managed services will require accelerated progress and substantial additional investments beyond 2030. Current trends suggest that while basic access may be achieved by 2030, safely managed services for all Jamaicans will likely require continued efforts and significant investments, particularly in rural areas and informal settlements.

Climate change projections for the Caribbean region indicate that Jamaica will face increased water stress in coming decades. Temperature increases of 1.5 degrees and 2.0 degrees and precipitation variability of ± 20.0 per cent by 2050 will require adaptive management approaches that build resilience into water resource planning and infrastructure design. The National Water Sector Policy (2019) identifies climate adaptation as a central organising principle for future investments, emphasising the need for diversified water sources, improved storage capacity, and resilient distribution infrastructure.

Regional Analysis

Jamaica's 2022 Voluntary National Review positions water and water resources management as a primary driver of socio-economic development, integrated natural resources management and environmental sustainability. In the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, water insecurity is intensified by structural "development traps"—low growth and high inequality—which are exacerbated by the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.

By synchronising national, regional and international efforts for sustainable freshwater resources management, we are building a data-driven, systematised approach. This will ensure that our freshwater resources management approach is more resilient to increasing pressures of a changing climate, climate variability and other anthropogenic pressures.

In the regional context, The V Regional Water Dialogues of Latin America and the Caribbean (2025) underscored the urgent need to strengthen investments, governance, and regional cooperation toward water resources management. Furthermore, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC (2024) highlighted a critical infrastructure deficit that includes:

- **Sanitation Coverage:** As of 2022, regional coverage for safely managed sanitation remained below 50 per cent due to historically low sectoral investment.
- **Investment Gap:** Between 2015 and 2019, sectoral investment averaged only 0.16 per cent of regional GDP.
- **Future Needs:** To achieve universal access by 2030, regional investment must increase more than eightfold to approximately 1.38 per cent of regional GDP annually over the next decade.
- **Integration and Sustainability:** Mobilizing this financing is a prerequisite for a sustainable water transition. Treating water as an engine of sustainable development generates the long-term social and environmental benefits necessary to mitigate the triple environmental crisis.

The importance of water resources is underscored by the reality that Caribbean SIDS are among the most water-stressed globally with seven countries—Dominica, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, and St. Kitts and Nevis—facing "extremely high" water stress levels.

Climate change poses an existential threat, as the most frequent disasters in Caribbean SIDS are hydroclimatic, including flooding, watershed degradation, droughts, and freshwater salination. These risks were demonstrated by Hurricane Melissa in October 2025, a Category 5 storm that deprived a large percentage of the regional population of safe drinking water and exposed the fragility of existing provisioning services (Gheuens et al., 2019).

To build resilience, Jamaica and our regional partners are moving beyond sectoral silos toward a coordinated “Nexus” approach. This strategy recognizes that water, energy, and food systems including forestry and soils management are inextricably linked and must be managed through integrated planning to reduce management trade-offs (Daw & Stout, 2019).

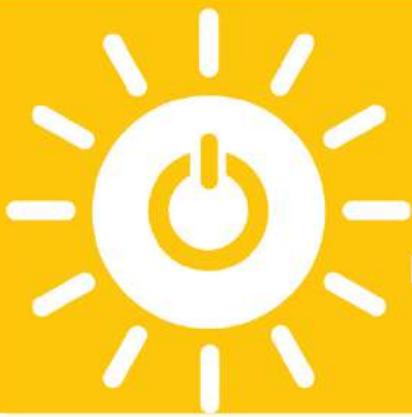
Given its cross-cutting nature, water security is linked to gender equality. We are mainstreaming gender considerations into disaster management to address the disproportionate burden water scarcity places on women and girls, who often serve as primary household water managers (Mycoo, 2017). This rights-based approach ensures that the competing demands of tourism, agriculture, and domestic use are balanced equitably (Townsend et al., 2020).

Our regional strategy treats water as a scarce resource with intrinsic value rather than a mere utility. This is critical for SIDS, where sustainability is threatened by population growth and limited land (Winters et al., 2022).

- **Food Security:** The CARICOM Regional Food Security target (reducing the import bill by 25 per cent by 2030) is directly tied to the sustainable management of agricultural water supplies.
- **Energy Synergy:** The CARICOM Regional Electric Vehicle Strategy promotes low-carbon systems that support the resilient operation of critical water extraction and desalination infrastructure (Gay et al., 2018; Shah et al., 2022).

We are operationalizing the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS 2024–2034), which identifies water security as a foundation for “resilient prosperity” (ABAS 2024). Our actions, therefore, are guided by several multisectoral frameworks, including:

- **Comprehensive Disaster Management:** We align with regional strategies that treat disaster risk reduction and water stability as “inextricably linked”.
- **Watershed Protection:** Our strategy prioritizes the restoration of watersheds and the integration of green and grey infrastructure to protect freshwater lenses from extreme weather events (Parra et al., 2024).
- **Systems-Thinking:** Modern water governance is transitioning from a narrow focus on supply infrastructure to a comprehensive model integrating technological innovation, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship (A. Dubrie et al., 2022).



Goal 7

Ensure access to affordable,
reliable, sustainable and modern
energy for all

RENEWABLE ENERGY
GENERATING CAPACITY 2024

177.8MW

55.07MW (2015)

HOUSEHOLD ACCESS TO
ELECTRICITY (2024)

96.2%



Petroleum Consumption by
Industry (2024)

Road & Rail
Transportation

32.7%

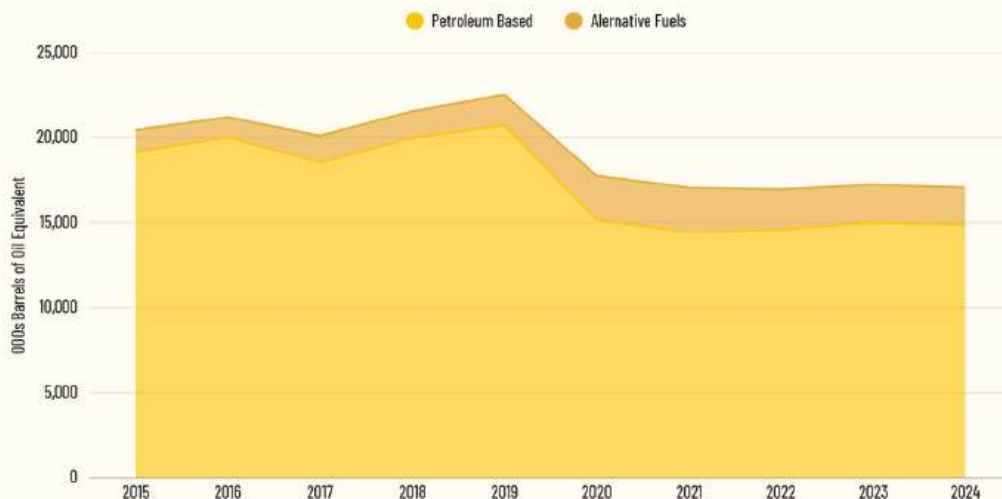
Electricity
Generation

26.9%

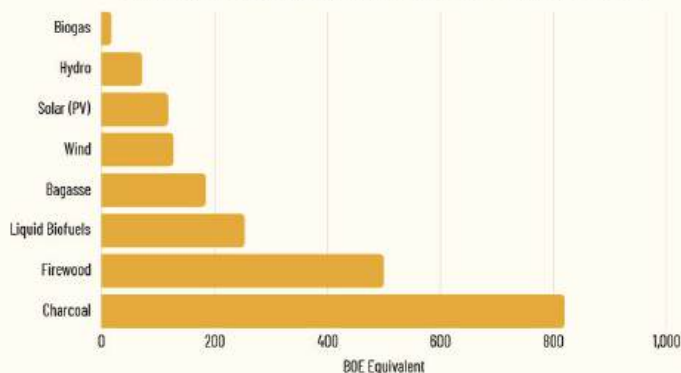
Shipping

19.4%

Domestic Energy Consumption



Primary Energy Supply from Renewable Sources (2024)



THE ENERGY TRANSITION

Context

Globally, the energy transition represents the systemic shift from a fossil-fuel-based energy system to one that is sustainable and relies more on renewable sources like solar, wind, and hydropower, with the goal of addressing climate change and fostering economic growth. This transformative process involves decarbonising energy production and consumption across all sectors, promoting energy efficiency, and integrating innovative technologies to achieve a low- or zero-carbon future that brings clean and affordable energy to all. For small open economies like Jamaica this is a critical enabler of sustainable development, as it links environmental protection, economic resilience, and social equity. Jamaica's National Energy Policy outlines the vision for the sector to become a "modern, efficient, diversified and environmentally sustainable energy sector providing affordable and accessible energy supplies with long-term energy security and supported by informed public behaviour on energy issues and an appropriate policy, regulatory and institutional framework."¹¹⁸

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Jamaica's energy landscape is characterised by heavy reliance on imported oil and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), making it vulnerable to high costs and price volatility. At the end of 2024 energy consumption from petroleum-based fuel (diesels, fuel oil, others) was 87.1 per cent of total consumption, 9.6 per cent from LNG and 3.3 per cent from renewable and other sources. The transportation sector is the largest consumer of petroleum, accounting for 59.9 per cent of barrels used in production. For electricity generation, petroleum like diesel and heavy fuel oil now account for less than 30.0 per cent of consumption, with 60.0 per cent from LNG and 10.4 per cent from renewables - wind, solar and hydro.¹¹⁹

The energy sector is liberalised, with multiple companies providing fuel for transport, cooking and electricity generation. However, the sole distributor of electricity is the Jamaica Public Service (JPS), which generates power from its own plants and also purchases power from private Independent Power Producers (IPPs). The JPS owns and manages the islandwide transmission and distribution network. As of mid-2025, residential electricity rates in Jamaica were among the highest in the region, costing individuals approximately US\$0.29 per kWh, while business rates are around US\$0.24 per kWh.¹²⁰ (Figure 12)

¹¹⁸ Jamaica's Energy Policy 2009-2030

¹¹⁹ Ministry of Energy, Transport and Telecommunications Energy Statistics 2024

¹²⁰ GlobalPetrolPrices.com, Global Petrol Prices, accessed April 28, 2026, <https://www.globalpetrolprices.com>.

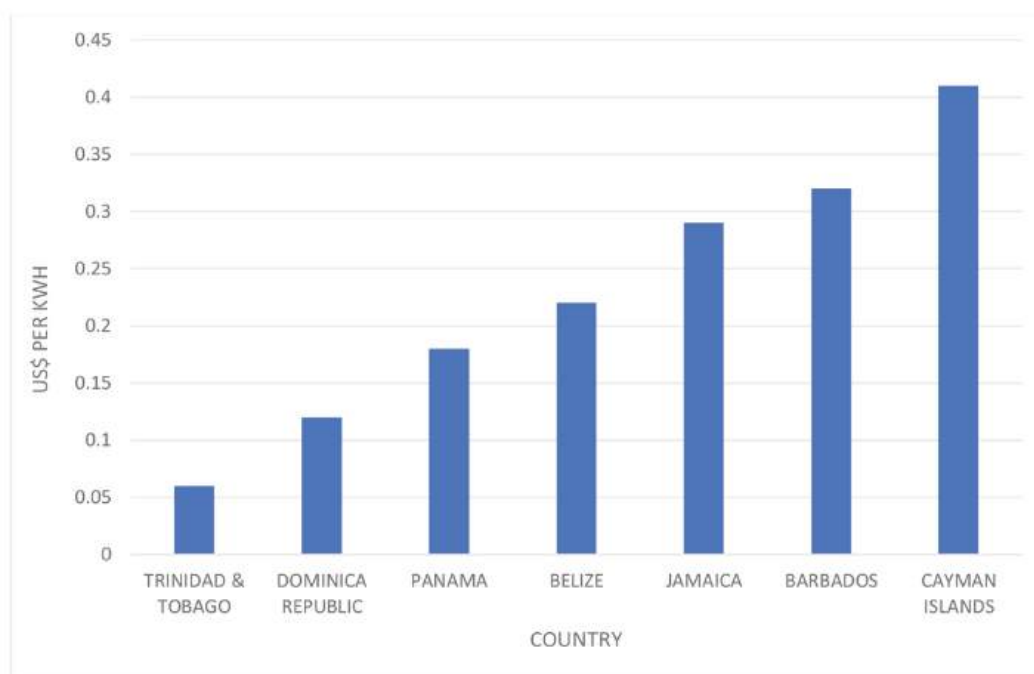


FIGURE 12 Approximate Electricity Rates Of Select Caribbean And Latin American Countries

Government policies have deliberately targeted energy sector transformation, owing to the high dependence on fossil fuels which contribute to the country's emissions, fluctuation in price and limited competitiveness of domestic industries. The policy direction is articulated in the National Energy Policy (NEP), which is aligned with the Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan. Among its key areas of focus related to energy transition are:

- Security of energy supply through diversification of fuels as well as development of renewables
- Modernising the country's energy infrastructure
- Development of renewable energy sources such as solar, hydro and wind.

Through this policy agenda there have been strides in the development of renewables. Increases in generating capacity from renewables have reached 170 per cent, and include:

- **Wind:** Jamaica has two wind farms — Wigton Energy Limited (largest in the Caribbean, 62 MW capacity) and Blue Mountain Renewables (36 MW capacity).
- **Solar:** Private systems, farms and commercial operations contribute to solar energy production, with capacity growing in recent years. Key installations include Paradise Park Solar Farm (Jamaica's largest solar energy plant, 37 MW) and Content Solar (20 MW).

- o **Hydropower:** Small-scale, all owned by JPS
- o **Biomass:** Bagasse from sugarcane is used in cogeneration.

The domestic policy agenda has been enhanced with efforts to reduce emissions, in the revised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the UN Framework on Climate Change. Under the revised policy Jamaica targets emissions reductions of 16.3 per cent by 2030 and 16.9 per cent by 2035 in an unconditional scenario excluding forestry. Unconditional emissions reductions including forestry are aimed at 26.3 per cent by 2030 and 27.1 per cent by 2035. Conditioned upon international support, the emissions reduction targets 19.6 per cent in 2030 and 28.3 per cent in 2035 excluding forestry. Conditional emissions including forestry are targeted at 30.6 per cent by 2030 and 41.7 per cent by 2035.¹²¹

Thematic Discussion

Intricately linked to the NEP and critical to Jamaica's energy transition is the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP-2), approved by Cabinet in 2024, which sets out a 20-year plan for the electricity generation sector. A key feature in the IRP-2 is the renewable portfolio standard of 50.0 per cent of renewable energy in the electricity generation mix by 2030. Under the IRP-2, there is a planned investment of US\$1.3 billion in capital and maintenance costs, targeting a reduction in energy costs as old and inefficient generators are retired.¹²² This should benefit consumers through lower costs, reduced power outages and an improvement in the country's carbon footprint.

The scaled-up approach in the IRP-2 is meant to accelerate the energy transition yielding economic, environmental, and social benefits. Due to the role of energy across all spheres of development, the energy transition is expected to directly support the achievement of targets related to climate change, sustainable production, decent work and poverty reduction.

Within the revised Nationally Determined Contributions, updated data have shown how emissions from energy consumption are the highest share of Jamaica's output, 82.69 per cent.¹²³ Cleaning consumption has the benefits of greening the economy, and reducing these emissions, from 2.2 million tonnes in 2022 to 1.29 million tonnes by 2030. Further benefits to be translated in the economy are the competitiveness of industry and creation and redistribution of jobs. Jamaica has among the highest electricity rates in the Caribbean region, thus lower rates from domestic supplied energy are expected to increase the cost competitiveness of local businesses, while creating new jobs and redistribution of workers. Specific, up-to-date, nationwide data regarding the exact number of persons currently employed solely in Jamaica's renewable energy sector is not explicitly available, as it is often categorized under the broader "Electricity, Gas, and Water Supply" industry, which had a total of 13 300 employed persons in the fourth quarter of 2025.¹²⁴ If Jamaica achieves its goal of sourcing 50.0 per cent of energy from renewables by 2030, it is expected to create between 6 000 and 16 000 jobs.¹²⁵

¹²¹ <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2025-09/Jamaica%20ICTU%20Final%20Report%20Sep19.pdf>

¹²² <https://www.mset.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2022-Jamaica-Integrated-Resource-Plan.pdf>

¹²³ Climate Watch Data

¹²⁴ Statistical Institute of Jamaica

With clearly articulated targets for renewable energy Jamaica has accelerated its deployment to bridge the gap between current renewable energy share and the 50.0 per cent target, with several major projects recently commissioned or in development:

- **Near-term Additions:** Approximately 100 MW of renewables are expected to come on stream during the financial year 2025/26.
- **2026 Projects:** Construction on major climate-resilient infrastructure projects, such as the REDI-II Greenhouse Clusters, is slated to begin in March 2026.
- **Corporate Investment:** Companies like Wigton Energy Limited are currently deploying capital, with roughly \$3.14 billion in cash as of December 2025 intended to partially fund a \$10-billion solar investment over a period of 24 months.

Key Issues Affecting Progress

While Jamaica remains resolute in its commitment to the energy transition, the process is not void of challenges. Notwithstanding efforts at addressing these, there are still existential threats to progress and constant effort geared at speedily addressing them are of utmost imperative. Chief among these are:

- **High investment costs:** The upfront cost of renewable energy infrastructure and technologies is a significant barrier for Jamaica. Limited access to financing and high capital expenditure requirements hinders the development of large-scale renewable projects. The Inter-American Development Bank has identified a US\$11.9 billion financing gap in water, sanitation, telecommunications, and energy infrastructure in Jamaica, hindering the rapid scaling of renewable energy. This gap necessitates massive private sector investment as well as innovative financing, such as the US\$764 million IMF Resilience and Sustainability Facility and new green bond frameworks. According to Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, to move from a 30.0 per cent to a 50.0 per cent renewable energy mandate, Jamaica requires an estimated investment of US\$1.2 billion.
- **Grid Integration:** The existing grid was not built to handle the variable and decentralised nature of renewable energy. Integrating high percentages of renewables, such as solar and wind, requires investments in advanced infrastructure, including smart grid technologies and energy storage systems. In September 2025, a deficit in reliable back-up power was exposed, as widespread blackouts were experienced across Jamaica following a technical failure at a critical Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) facility. The blackout affected approximately 95 000 customers and triggered generation losses.

¹²⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and International Labour Organization (ILO). A Green Economic Growth Model for Jamaica: Scenarios for Fostering GreenGrowth. Kingston: UNDP Multi Country Office in Jamaica, July 7, 2025. <https://www.undp.org/jamaica/publications/a-green-economic-growth-model-for-jamaica-scenarios-for-fostering-green-growth>.

¹²⁶ Brichetti, Juan Pablo, Leonardo Mastroratti, María Eugenia Rivas, Tomás Serebrisky, and Ben Solís 2021. The Infrastructure Gap in Latin America and the Caribbean: Investment Needed Through 2030 to Meet the Sustainable Development Goals. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0003759>

- **Land Constraints:** Jamaica faces limitations in land availability for large-scale solar and wind farms, to support its renewable energy targets.
- **Climate Change Vulnerability:** As a Small Island Developing State, Jamaica is highly susceptible to climate change impacts like rising sea levels, more intense storms, and prolonged droughts, which further strain the economy and infrastructure. This reduces the availability of locations for project sites, and affects the timeline for completion of projects.
- **Workforce Development:** There is a pressing need for reskilling the workforce in technical and vocational education to meet the demands of the renewable energy sector.
- **Lack of domestic supply chain:** The absence of a local supply chain and the inability to procure renewable energy components at a large scale make projects in the Caribbean inherently more expensive.
- **Public awareness and education:** While educational initiatives exist, a lack of wide-spread public awareness and education on energy efficiency and the benefits of renewables hinders behavioural change and broader adoption.

Best Practice

For Jamaica, a just energy transition means not only shifting to renewables but ensuring fairness, inclusion, and resilience. Best practice combines policy alignment, workforce reskilling, social protection, and community participation with renewable expansion and financing strategies. A key priority of the government is ensuring diversification in the energy mix, that allows for household participation in the electricity market, through net billing and reducing the cost of supply to power distributors, which can bring large scale price reductions to all users. Done well, Jamaica can become a model for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) navigating climate and energy challenges.

Financing Arrangements

- **Mobilise international climate finance:** Leverage international partnerships to secure additional funding from mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund and Climate Investment Fund. International support is crucial for easing the fiscal burden of the transition and building local capacity.
- **Implement fiscal incentives:** these support clean energy investments and can be used to promote green public procurement.

- **Promote green financial instruments:** Develop platforms like the Green Bond Plus on the Jamaica Stock Exchange to attract private investment in renewable energy and green industries to help overcome financing gaps.

Governance/Policy

- Create a multi-stakeholder governance structure involving the government, private sector, trade unions, civil society, and vulnerable groups. This ensures that policies are co-created and that the transition benefits all of society.
- Provide subsidies for grid connections to ensure the most vulnerable populations can access electricity, while addressing issues like electricity theft through community education.
- Simplify and streamline the bidding processes for renewable energy investments to accelerate the adoption of clean energy sources and achieve renewable energy targets.
- Integrating climate action into national policy and governance frameworks
- Create clear, actionable roadmaps with specific goals and timelines. Jamaica's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) for electricity generation serves as a model for how to guide the transition towards renewables and grid modernization.

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Decent Work

- Expand green jobs training: Align technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes with the skills needed for a green economy. Focus on emerging green sectors like renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable agriculture.
- Promote green job creation by aligning education and training institutions with the needs of the green economy

Workers' Rights

- Improve workers' rights and provide social protection for those displaced from traditional industries to ensure a balanced and fair transition. Currently, the industrial sector (including electricity/gas) employs roughly 16.0 per cent of the workforce, with fossil fuels powering over 80.0 per cent of electricity generation. Petrojam Limited, which operates Jamaica's only refinery and is a major importer, employs approximately 242 highly skilled persons.

Human Rights

- Prioritise measures that enhance the resilience of the poor and most vulnerable, who are most susceptible to climate change impacts. This includes expanding early warning systems, incorporating risk reduction in land use practices, and restoring natural ecosystems.

Public Awareness

- Educate the general public on the importance of the energy transition. This includes integrating environmental and sustainability principles into the education curriculum.

Resource Requirements

- **Financing Constraints:** Attracting sufficient private investment and securing affordable, large-scale financing is a challenge.
- **Limited Land Space:** Large solar and wind farms require substantial land areas, which can lead to conflicts with other critical economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism.
- **Data and Expertise:** There is lack of reliable and accurate data — for example, granular employment data disaggregated by energy sub-sector, real-time renewable energy output data by source, and household-level energy consumption data — as well as limited local technical capacity and expertise in managing the complex transition.
- **Energy Storage Limitations:** The lack of affordable and efficient energy storage solutions (like large-scale batteries) exacerbates the intermittency of renewable sources (solar and wind), making it difficult to provide consistent, 24/7 power.

Beyond 2030

The path towards a just energy transition in Jamaica is not simply about replacing fossil fuels with renewable sources but providing a balanced mix which protects the economy from shocks, reduce harm to the environment and protect society. Jamaica's vulnerabilities as a Small Island Developing State (SID) demand that energy policy be integrated with climate adaptation, social protection, and economic diversification.

By aligning energy reforms with long term plans and international commitments, accountability remains built into deliverables. The continued success of existing efforts will depend on strong institutions, inclusive participation, and strategic partnerships at both the national and international levels.

Ultimately, a just energy transition offers Jamaica not only cleaner power but also a chance to build a more equitable and prosperous future—one where the benefits of sustainable growth are shared widely across society and where the island stands as a model for other nations navigating the challenges of climate change and energy transformation.

Regional Analysis

As the LAC region moves towards embracing the transition to low-carbon economies it must ensure that the principles of just transition of the workforce are also considered, encouraging the creation of decent work and quality jobs according to the national development priorities of countries (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change UNFCCC, 2015; United Nations Development Programme UNDP 2022). These elements are essential to successfully achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy and to truly leave no one behind. This falls in line with the region's priority to build its energy security, especially considering the region's vulnerability to external shocks. Governments are charged with the responsibility of navigating changing geopolitical dynamics, such as the war in the Middle East and its direct effect on energy security for the region, shifts in tariff regimes impacting global trade, and the impact of disasters, such as Hurricane Melissa that affected Jamaica in October 2025 and caused damage estimated at US\$12.2 billion (Patterson, 2026). Furthermore, the current fluctuations in energy prices are a serious concern for the region, as oil prices account for approximately 60.0 per cent of regional energy inflation (Sanders, 2026). These and other risks faced by Caribbean countries underscore their desire to attain energy security through transition from fossil fuel to renewable energy sources.

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In the case of Jamaica, we are aiming to achieve at least 50.0 per cent of our electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030. As of May 2025, 12.5 per cent of our electricity generation originated from solar and wind resources (Williams, 2025). Other countries like Antigua and Barbuda are committed to being a net-zero country by 2040 with 86.0 per cent of its electricity generation sourced from renewable energy by 2030 (Hoody et al, 2023). Barbados has also made the commitment in its National Energy Policy (BNEP) to achieve 100.0 per cent renewable energy and become a carbon neutral island by 2030 (GoB, 2026).

The Paris Agreement calls on all parties to develop and communicate their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) outlining their climate action ambitions. A few Caribbean SIDS have included just transition principles in their NDCs to varying degrees. These include Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize and Trinidad and Tobago. Just transition, by nature, is cross-cutting, as the world seeks pathways to transition to low-carbon economies, the action undertaken by countries must engage all members of society in inclusive dialogue, fair engagement, creating opportunities for decent work and high-quality jobs.

While Jamaica has not developed a just transition policy, we are taking steps towards achieving that with the recent launch of the Just Transition Project in 2024, named "Jamaica Just Transition: Embedding climate justice in regional policy frameworks". This two-year project seeks to lay the foundation required to incorporate the International Labour Organization, ILO's guidelines for decent work and social justice as it implements climate policies (ILO, 2024).

¹²⁸ PAGE is a United Nations initiative which focuses on the sustainability aspect of global economic policymaking to reformulate finance and investment to reflect a just, circular and green economic transformation.

Other Caribbean countries are similarly making progress. As reported in their Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), Antigua and Barbuda has demonstrated a commitment to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the energy sector through the ramping up of renewable energy initiatives, planning support for a socially inclusive energy transition and just transition of their workforce by 2030. Overall, their national strategy to integrate the just transition is quite comprehensive (GoAB, 2021).

Barbados' NDC outlines the country's plan to imbue just transition principles into development plan, ensuring that its society is inclusive, equitable and built to accommodate its diverse societal needs (GoB, 2025). Having joined the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE)¹²⁸ in 2016 and through the guidance of the ILO, Barbados is set to embark on its just transition to a green and blue economy (GoB, 2025). Further, the recommendations proposed during the 2024 Just Transition Symposium and a Renewable Energy Skills Council will help to steer the country through the process. This is also backed by the newly established Decent Work Country Programme 2025 – 2030, a cross-cutting programme which is geared towards integrating just transition across several sectors (ILO, 2025).

Trinidad and Tobago has also made strides in this area. The 2015 Strategy for Reduction of Carbon emission in Trinidad and Tobago defines sector-specific pathways to reduce the country's greenhouse emissions, especially in the energy sector. The government drafted the "Just Transition Policy for an Equitable Low Carbon Future for Trinidad and Tobago" to guide the process (GoTT, 2025). The draft policy considers the impact workers may experience as the country shift its energy focus. It therefore, provides a systemic approach to sustainability whereby job losses are minimised as the transition to a green economy ensues.

The NDC for Belize mentions its intention to implement just transition, however it has not fully explored the mechanisms through which just transition can be realized (GoBZ, 2025). Nonetheless, an Inter-American Development Bank, IDB funded project has been developed to accommodate the just transition of the energy sector (IDB, 2025).



In this future Jamaica, the hills of St. Thomas are alive with windmills turning gracefully, providing clean energy to every home. Solar panels glisten on rooftops, and our rivers run clear again, protected by strong environmental laws. Hurricanes still come, but our communities are prepared, houses are built with climate-resilient designs, and early warning systems powered by AI keep families safe. Jamaica has become a global leader in climate resilience, teaching other nations how to protect their environment while living in harmony with nature.

► **D'ANDRE BLAIR,**
Seaforth High School



Goal 8

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

Q4 2025

3.3%

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



Q4 2025

67.8%

LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

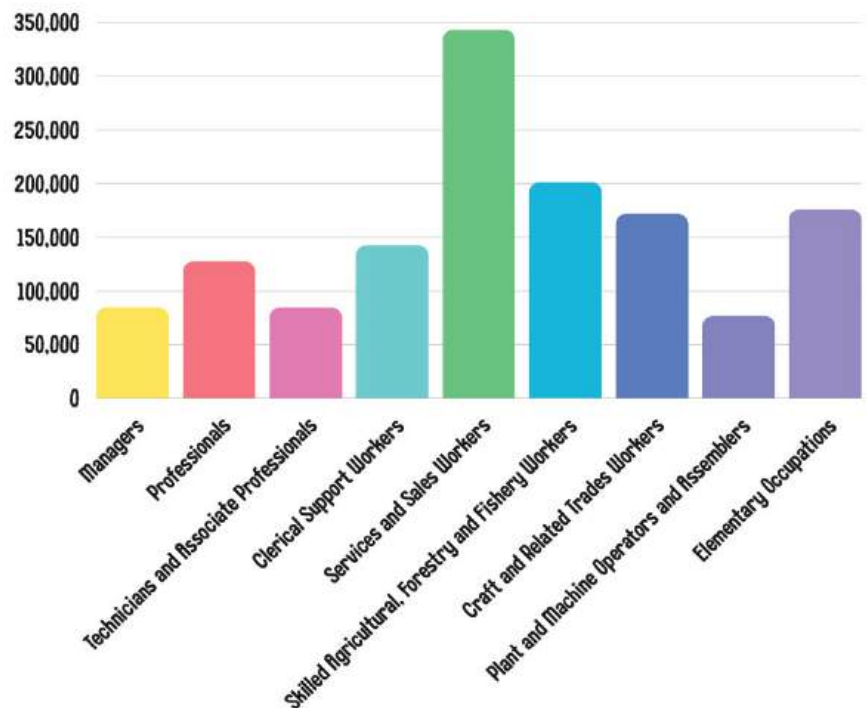


25.5%

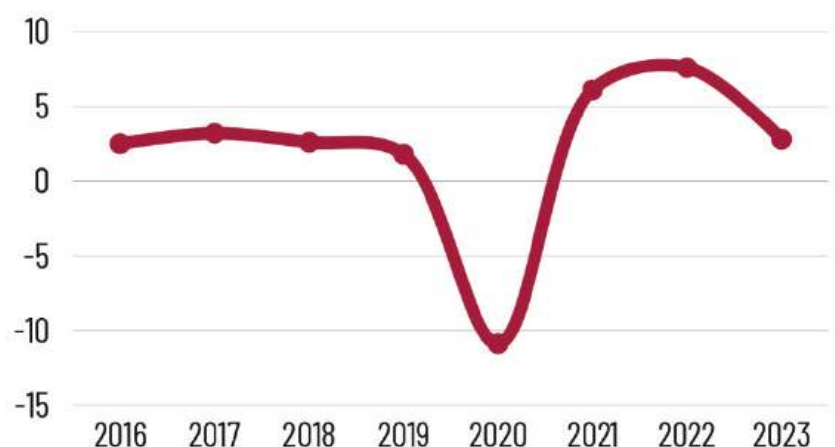
Youth (15-24) not in employment, education or training Q3 2025



Labour Force by Occupation Group (2024)



Annual Growth Rate Real GDP Per Capita



FUTURE OF WORK

Context

The Government of Jamaica remains firmly committed to strengthening economic resilience and advancing sustained, inclusive economic growth and job creation through ongoing macroeconomic reforms and improvements to the business environment. While the last Voluntary National Review (VNR) highlighted the setbacks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Jamaica's economy and labour market have since demonstrated a rebound, reflected in output growth and improvements in key labour market indicators. However, it is anticipated that the recent passage of Category 5 Hurricane Melissa in October 2025 may reverse some of the gains achieved in recent years.

Since reporting in the 2022 VNR, revisions have been made to the Labour Force Survey (LFS). In January 2024, the Statistical Institute of Jamaica modernised the LFS to incorporate standards from the 19th, 20th and 21st International Conferences of Labour Statisticians, thereby increasing the accuracy, consistency and international comparability of labour market estimates and aligning them more closely with the System of National Accounts. This modernisation introduced the strict definition of unemployment, requiring individuals to be both actively seeking and available for work, replacing the earlier definition that did not require active job search. Employment is now defined more narrowly as work performed for pay or profit in cash or kind, and unemployment is assessed within the broader concept of labour underutilisation (LU) to better capture unmet employment needs. Additionally, the lower age boundary for the labour force was raised from 14 years to 15 years. These methodological changes created a complete break in the statistical series, meaning that data produced from the 2024 LFS onward cannot be directly compared with previous years. Consequently, when assessing progress made since 2015, the analysis will focus on pre-2024 trends using the previous LFS methodology, while the analysis of labour-market performance since 2024 will use the new internationally aligned framework, ensuring that comparisons remain meaningful and technically sound.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the unemployment rate in Jamaica has been on a downward trajectory, reflecting the strengthening and recovery of the labour market during the post-pandemic period. In October 2023, the unemployment rate declined by 9.3 percentage points to 4.2 per cent, the lowest rate on record at that time, compared with the corresponding quarter in 2015 (Figure 12). This signals not only recovery but net progress beyond pre-COVID outcomes. Disaggregated by sex, improvements were also observed in both male and female unemployment rates, as the rates declined by 6.2 percentage points and 13.1 percentage points to 3.1 per cent and 5.4 per cent, respectively in October 2023, compared with October 2015.

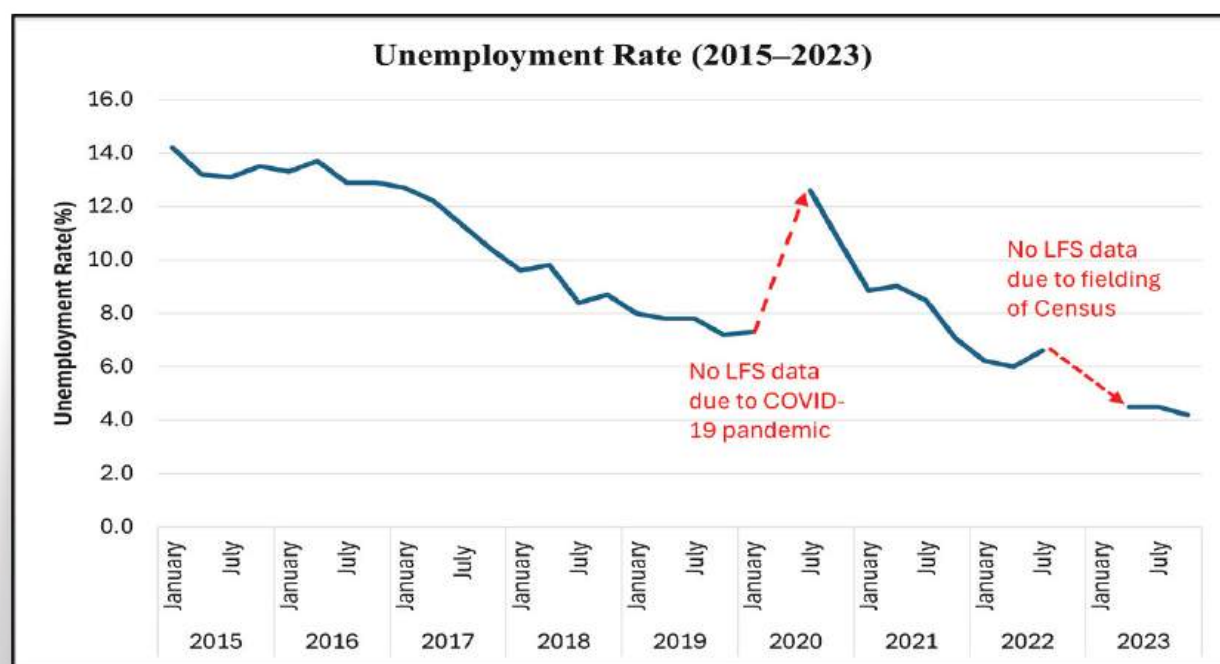


FIGURE 13 Unemployment Rate in Jamaica, 2015 –2023

SOURCE: Statistical Institute of Jamaica

The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) of females increased by 2.9 percentage points to 59.6 per cent in October 2023, compared with October 2015. Despite this, low female participation in the labour market continues to be an issue as the female LFPR was 12.1 percentage points below that of males. Data from October 2023, indicate that 61.9 per cent of the labour force who received no training were male – highlighting the need to further boost female engagement in the market by addressing social and cultural norms such as care responsibilities, which continue to hinder female participation.

Improvements have also been observed from the LFS data regarding youth engagement in the labour market. The youth (15–24 years) unemployment rate decreased by 20.1 percentage points to 12.6 per cent in October 2023 compared with October 2015. Both male and female youth unemployment rates improved over the period; the male youth unemployment rate declined by 14.7 percentage points to 9.9 per cent between 2015 and 2023, while the female youth unemployment rate fell by 28.0 percentage points to 15.9 per cent over the same period. Despite this progress, youth unemployment remains a challenge, as the youth unemployment rate in October 2023 was 8.4 percentage points higher than the overall unemployment rate, highlighting the continued vulnerability of young people in accessing stable and decent work. In October 2024 and 2025, youth unemployment was registered at 11.0 per cent and 10.6 per cent, respectively.

More recent LFS data also point to challenges regarding youth not in employment, education or training (NEET): 25.5 per cent of youth were NEET in Quarter 3 of 2025, an increase of 3.3 percentage points compared with the corresponding quarter of 2024. Female youth continued to be disproportionately

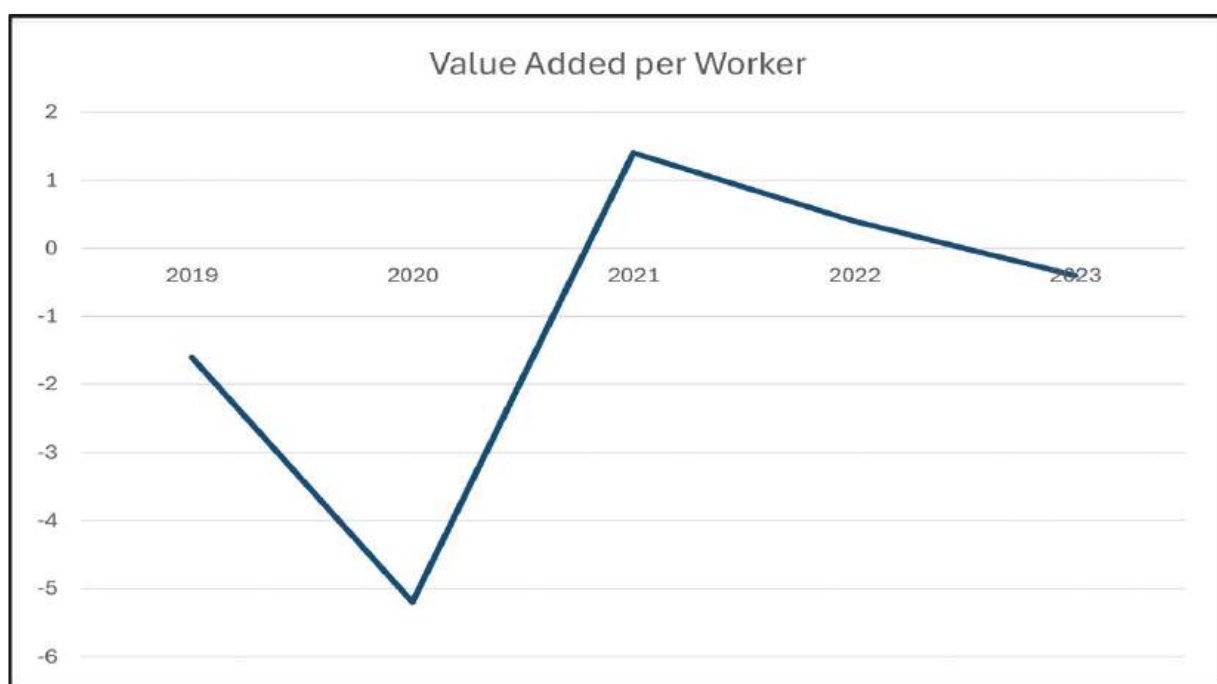
affected, with 27.1 per cent classified as NEET compared with 23.9 per cent of male youth in the same period. High youth NEET rates hinder achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 8, by signalling weak youth integration into the labour force. The gender gap in youth NEET rates also directly affects achievement of gender equality reflecting inequalities in young women's access to economic opportunities, skills development, and labour-market participation.

In response to these challenges, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) has continued to implement targeted interventions aimed at strengthening youth labour market attachment. Through the Special Employment Programme under the Social Intervention Programme (SIP), temporary jobs and work experience have been provided to young people aged 18–35 years, especially those living in vulnerable communities and Zones of Special Operations. Under the SIP, youth were also supported with education and entrepreneurship grants totalling J\$50.8 million to reduce barriers to secondary and tertiary education. In FY 2023/2024, 352 young persons benefited from the programme, with many of the beneficiaries being female youth and persons from vulnerable communities. In addition, the Steps-to-Work (STW) Programme continued to support the youth from Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH), households by providing access to internships, and support for micro-enterprise development with total expenditure of J\$69.4 million self-employment. Furthermore, the STW programme provided skills training and certification through its partnership with the Human Employment and Resource Training /National Service Training Agency Trust (HEART/NSTA Trust.)

While there are improvements in employment outcomes, the expansion of the labour force and the reduction in unemployment rates are important for economic development. The quality of jobs is also central, and thus productivity needs to be examined. Productivity remains a central challenge within the Jamaican economy and the Government of Jamaica (GOJ), through the Jamaica Productivity Centre (JPC), has continued its efforts to build a productivity-conscious culture across both the public and private sectors. These efforts include productivity assessments aimed at strengthening workflow efficiency, resource utilisation, and service-delivery effectiveness. Over the period 2021 to 2023, labour productivity, measured as output per worker, grew on average by 0.5 per cent per year. In 2021 and 2022, labour productivity increased as growth in real value added outpaced the expansion of the employed labour force. However, in 2023, employment growth exceeded the increase in real value added, resulting in a 0.4 per cent decline in labour productivity. This performance reflected contractions in productivity in both the Goods-Producing Industry (down 0.6 per cent) and the Services Industry (down 0.4 per cent). Construction (down 6.9 per cent), Manufacturing (down 4.2 per cent) and Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing (down 4.2 per cent) recorded the greatest reductions in 2023. These trends point to concerns about the types of jobs being created, as growth in lower value-added or lower-skill employment tends to weaken overall productivity gains, an issue highlighted by the World Bank in their Jobs Diagnostic report on Jamaica.¹²⁹

FIGURE 14 Annual Value Added per Worker 2019–2023

¹²⁹ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099062124143540232/pdf/P1768541726a180101b0021fe9bcbf913e6.pdf>



SOURCE: Jamaica Productivity Centre

Informality also remains an issue within the Jamaican labour market despite ongoing government initiatives to reduce informality such as those aimed at increasing participation in the National Insurance Scheme (NIS), strengthening labour inspection and enforcement activities, and expanding access to formal employment services. Although overall employment grew during the post-pandemic recovery, a share of this increase came from informal work. Individuals who previously held formal jobs but were laid off during the pandemic shifted into informal employment as a means of sustaining their livelihoods.¹³⁰ In July 2022, the number of persons employed informally rose by 4.7 per cent to 510 000 compared with July 2021. However, the share of informal workers within non-agricultural employment declined by 0.6 per cent to 47.0 per cent. Men remain disproportionately represented in informal work, accounting for 59.5 per cent of all informal workers in July 2022.

Thematic Discussion

The pursuit of SDG 8 is taking place amid an accelerating transformation of the global labour market. The Future of Work is not a distant concept – it is an unfolding reality, shaped by climate and environmental pressures, rapid technological advancements and demographic shifts.¹³¹ For Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Jamaica, the future of work requires a shift towards jobs that are climate-resilient, digitally enabled and adaptable to an ageing workforce. The future of work is closely connected to national development ambitions such as economic diversification, digital transformation, climate resilience, and improved labour market participation among youth, women, and vulnerable groups. Achieving SDG 8 therefore depends on Jamaica's ability to navigate these transitions and convert them into pathways for inclusive growth.

¹³⁰ <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/df51be56cceb6f502073fd93e6a1590a-0370062022/original/Caribbean-HFPS-Taking-the-Pulse-FINAL.pdf>

¹³¹ https://reports.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Future_of_Jobs_Report_2025.pdf

This transition presents Jamaica with a mix of challenges and opportunities. The transition to new models like a green economy in conjunction with technological advancements is occurring within the context of an ageing population. Between 2001 and 2019, the share of the population under age 15 years fell from 32.2 per cent to 20.9 per cent. Over the same period, the working-age population (15–64 years) rose from 60.0 per cent in 2001 to 69.3 per cent in 2019, while the proportion of people aged 65 years and older increased from 7.6 per cent to 9.6 per cent.¹³² It is estimated that by the end of the 21st century the median age of Jamaica's population (52.5 years) will exceed the global median (41.9 years).¹³³ This, along with the trend of outward migration of skilled workers, will have varying implications for the Jamaican labour market. For Jamaica, demographic change must therefore be viewed not only as a challenge but as a driver of economic transformation that intersects with green transitions and technological innovation, shaping both future labour-market needs and long-term development priorities. To reduce the risks associated with an ageing population, such as labour and skills shortages, it is important to increase productivity growth and the participation of underrepresented groups in the labour force.

Green Economy

The shift towards a green economy is one of the most significant forces reshaping Jamaica's labour market and broader development trajectory. For Jamaica, this transition – driven by climate pressures, international commitments, and national development priorities, will reshape existing jobs, create new sectors of employment, and redefine the skills demanded in the labour market. Climate change is occurring at an unprecedented and accelerated rate, affecting every region of the world, heightening the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, and transforming how industries operate.¹³⁴ For Jamaica, the effects are heightened as the economy is dependent on climate-sensitive natural and coastal resources, in particular tourism and agriculture. In 2024, the contribution to gross domestic product, GDP of the Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing industry was 7.5 per cent and the Accommodations & Food Service Activities industry was 5.9 per cent. In October 2024, these industries accounted for 14.2 per cent and 8.2 per cent of total employment, respectively.

Concrete examples of how Jamaica is greening its key sectors are emerging. In tourism – the island's largest foreign exchange earner – the Jamaica Sustainable Tourism Initiative is driving hotels towards energy-efficient systems, water conservation and waste reduction. In agriculture, Agro Parks managed by the Agro Investment Corporation embed water harvesting practices, sustainable soil management and reduced chemical use. The Jamaica Systemic Risk Assessment Tool (J-SRAT) further supports greening by identifying climate vulnerable communities and informing evidence-based, nature-based solutions – including mangrove restoration, watershed rehabilitation and agroforestry – that simultaneously protect ecosystems and support rural livelihoods. These are not theoretical constructs, but active, on-the-ground interventions reshaping how Jamaica's key economic sectors operate.

¹³² Planning Institute of Jamaica. 2022. "National Population and Sustainable Development Policy and Programme of Action."

¹³³ Oosthuizen, Morné. 2021. "The Economic Impact of Population Change in Jamaica."

¹³⁴ <https://science.nasa.gov/climate-change/extreme-weather/>

¹³⁵ <https://jis.gov.jm/hurricane-beryl-causes-decline-in-economic-activity-for-july-september/>

Jamaica's history shows that climate hazards adversely affect economic growth, employment and productivity, and can reverse development gains. Category 4 Hurricane Beryl in 2024 led to a 2.8 per cent decline in economic activity in the July–September 2024 quarter compared with the similar quarter in 2023, disrupting several industries such as agriculture, forestry and fishing; mining and quarrying; hotels and restaurants; and electricity and water production, resulting in reduced output.¹³⁵ Research also found that Hurricane Gilbert in 1988 had long-term negative effects on Jamaica's labour productivity. It is estimated that by the end of 2021, Jamaica's labour productivity would have been 72.4 per cent higher if Hurricane Gilbert did not occur¹³⁶ – demonstrating how natural disasters can disrupt the economy in ways that persist long after physical reconstruction.

More recently, Category 5 Hurricane Melissa has underscored that the threat of climate hazards is escalating. The hurricane inflicted severe damage on physical infrastructure, destroyed agricultural livelihoods, and led to hotel closures. These disruptions translated into immediate job losses, disproportionately affecting youth and women who work in agriculture, tourism and other sectors in the affected parishes. In this context, climate change acts as a multiplier of inequality, threatening to push vulnerable groups further behind and making the achievement of full and productive employment more difficult. Strengthening climate resilience is a priority of the Jamaican government. Reflecting this, the Ministry of Tourism is collaborating closely with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to develop and disseminate an enhanced Tourism Strategy aimed at bolstering the sector's competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability. The Tourism Strategy for Jamaica 2030 seeks to advance product diversification and comprehensive, destination-specific approaches to improve competitiveness, particularly through human capital development, digital transformation and information technology, while strengthening the sector's resilience to climate change. In parallel, the shift to a green economy represents a strategy for reducing long-term economic risk, strengthening resilience, and safeguarding livelihoods.

This transformation is also driven by international commitments that require countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and modernise their economies. Jamaica is a signatory to the Paris Agreement and is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening climate resilience. Nationally, this commitment is formalised through the Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan (NDP). A key priority action identified in the NDP's Medium-Term Socio-economic Framework is the development and implementation of a Green Economy Investment Strategy. Furthermore, the NDP explicitly outlines National Strategy 12-3 to promote eco-efficiency and the green economy. This strategy focuses on creating an enabling environment to stimulate the promotion and growth of green jobs and industries.

The transition to a green and climate-resilient economy offers concrete pathways for job creation and sectoral transformation. Green jobs are expected to emerge across renewable energy (solar panel installation, wind energy technicians, biomass operators), sustainable construction (green building

¹³⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/397067281_The_workforce_paradox_Do_extreme_natural_disasters_accelerate_or_undermine_labour_productivity

inspectors, energy auditors), environmental services (forest management, watershed stewards, nature-based tourism guides), sustainable agriculture (agroforestry practitioners, organic certification specialists), and waste management and recycling (circular economy technicians, composting coordinators). These are not replacements for existing workers but upgraded and reoriented pathways within sectors that already employ thousands of Jamaicans. With policies and investment, Jamaica's green transition could generate approximately 7 500 new jobs, which is 0.6 per cent higher than if the country continued business-as-usual, and increase GDP by an estimated 1.0 per cent by 2037.¹³⁷ This transition has the potential to increase household income, and can alleviate poverty.

At the same time, the green transition carries inherent challenges, including the risk of worker displacement in mining, quarrying, and other carbon-intensive sectors. A challenge facing Jamaica is that the labour force currently lacks the specialised skills required to participate in emerging green sectors such as renewable energy installation and maintenance, environmental monitoring, climate-smart agriculture, sustainable construction and the circular economy. Women and young people stand to benefit the most from the greening of the economy, as many new jobs are expected to emerge in services, sales, clerical, technical and green-support roles where these groups have strong representation. Female employment accounted for 48.0 per cent of the increase in total employment over the period 2023–2027 under the green growth scenario. This has implications for national development, as it provides a concrete pathway for Jamaica to reduce youth unemployment, and expand labour market participation for women. The opportunities from a green transition support several SDG 8 targets, including SDG 8.2, SDG 8.5 and SDG 8.6. At the same time, the green transition contributes directly to broader SDGs such as SDG 13, SDG 5, SDG 10, and SDG 14 demonstrating the multi-dimensional development benefits that green jobs offer. A challenge facing Jamaica in its transition to a green economy is that the labour force lacks the specialised skills required to participate in emerging green sectors. The Green Jobs Assessment Model (GJAM) study underscored the scale of the skills gap, indicating that to enable green growth, at least 10.0 per cent of the workforce must be trained annually in green technologies and services. Compounding the skills shortage is a constraint in financing to scale green investments.

Digital Transformation

Technological advancements are reshaping the Jamaican labour market and the wider economy with the same urgency as climate change. Digitalization is reshaping labour markets through the increased innovation and adoption of internet-based systems, mobile technologies, and online platforms.¹³⁹ The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digitalisation in Jamaica as businesses, schools and government institutions shifted towards digital modalities to continue their operations. This digital shift also enabled the expansion of new forms of work outside traditional employment structures such as remote and hybrid work arrangements. The increase in remote work opportunities presented increased

¹³⁷ <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/jamaica-charts-greener-path-new-national-green-economic-growth-model>

¹³⁸ Ibid

¹³⁹ https://www.giga-hamburg.de/assets/pure/45024740/WP_335.pdf

opportunities for Jamaicans to access work in other countries. Digitalisation has also driven the growth of the gig and platform economy.

In Jamaica, the gig economy's growing prevalence is best illustrated by the expansion of delivery and transportation companies such as Uber and QuickCart. The acceleration of the gig economy was driven by macroeconomic shocks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in mass layoffs and reduced work hours, prompting many to turn to these platforms for income generation. Subsequently, it has been found that high inflation further incentivized workers to seek alternative routes to supplement their existing income.¹⁴⁰ Jamaica also experienced inflationary pressures stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine War, with the country's annual point-to-point inflation peaking at 11.8 per cent in April 2022.¹⁴¹

The most recent technological wave is being driven by artificial intelligence (AI). While the concept of AI has been around since the 1950s, recent breakthroughs have led to the rapid development of advanced AI systems that can generate human-like text and perform complex tasks. Over the years, AI has been integrated into several industries, and is already transforming different industries globally and is set to expand its influence across many more sectors in the coming years. Initially concentrated in sectors such as finance and retail, AI is now making strides in energy, healthcare, construction and manufacturing, signalling a broad and accelerated shift in how labour markets are organised, and work is performed.

Technological advancements are also generating new opportunities than can accelerate SDG progress. The rise of the gig and platform economy adds another layer of opportunity by creating more flexible work arrangements that can support inclusion across demographic groups. This is particularly beneficial for women, youth, older workers and persons with disabilities who are underrepresented in the labour market. Data from STATIN showed that 60.3 per cent of persons outside of the labour force were women (July 2025). The leading reason for non-participation in the labour market was household responsibilities as reported by 41.4 per cent of women outside the labour force. Digital labour platforms can offer new income streams for women balancing caregiving responsibilities, and can increase their participation in the labour market. It can also increase the participation of youth seeking flexible employment pathways. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to increase participation of older persons in the labour market. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), flexible work arrangements are a key tool for extending working lives, helping older workers manage health concerns and caring responsibilities while remaining in employment.¹⁴² These benefits align with SDG 8.5, SDG 8.6 and SDG 5. However, there are drawbacks such as concerns in relation to job security, legal protection and bargaining power.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/rebeccahenderson/2020/12/10/how-covid-19-has-transformed-the-gig-economy/>

¹⁴¹ BOJ. (2023). Monetary Policy Press Release – December 2023. Retrieved from Bank of Jamaica: <https://boj.org.jm/monetary-policy-press-release-december-2023/>

¹⁴² https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2025/07/oecd-employment-outlook-2025_5345f034/full-report.html

¹⁴³ <https://www.clearvoice.com/resources/gig-economy-future/>

AI also presents opportunities for Jamaica to advance implementation on SDG 8, by raising labour productivity, enabling innovation, and supporting the transition towards higher-value economic activities. Moreover, in an ageing society, AI-enabled technologies can compensate for labour shortages by automating repetitive tasks, supporting remote work, and enabling older persons to remain active in the labour force. These opportunities, if strategically harnessed, position Jamaica to diversify its economy and strengthen long-term competitiveness. On the other hand, sectors heavily reliant on routine, automatable tasks are at increased risk. Jamaica's Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, one of the country's largest employers, engaging more than 60 000 workers, is particularly exposed.¹⁴⁴

Localisation

Jamaica has taken a multifaceted and proactive approach to preparing the country for the future of work, recognising that climate change, digital transformation, and demographic shifts demand coordinated national responses. An important step in strengthening Jamaica's readiness for the future of work was the approval for the development of a gender-responsive National Employment Policy (NEP) in 2022. The government, with support from the International Labour Organization, ILO, commenced the development of a National Employment Policy (NEP) in 2025, aiming to provide a coherent, forward-looking framework for labour market governance, workforce development, and job creation in an age of transitions. The NEP will be designed to address the evolving nature of work by aligning employment policies with the structural transition drivers. Additionally, the country has embarked on strategies to provide empirical evidence to assist with navigating the rapidly evolving labour market.

Jamaica recognises that transitioning to a green and climate-resilient economy requires both labour force adaptation and robust social protection and labour market planning. While green transitions offer opportunities for new industries and high-value job creation, they can also result in displacement of workers in carbon-intensive sectors such as mining and quarrying, or in climate-sensitive industries such as agriculture. Low-skilled and informal workers are particularly vulnerable to being left behind during structural shifts. To address these risks, Jamaica has adopted an evidence-based approach to planning through the GJAM Project, implemented in partnership with the ILO and the United Nations Development Programme. The GJAM analysis provides detailed insights into how green industrial policies affect the labour market, the types of jobs likely to grow or decline under different climate scenarios, and the skills that workers will need to transition into sustainable industries. By strengthening the analytical foundation for climate and labour policy, the government ensures that climate action contributes to economic inclusion, decent work, and long-term resilience rather than exacerbating inequalities. Building on the GJAM project, in 2024, with support from the ILO, the government launched the 'Jamaica Just Transition: Embedding Climate Justice in Regional Policy Framework' project. The project aims to support national policymakers in integrating climate priorities into labour market policies, promote dialogue on inclusive pathways to a green economy, and identify

¹⁴⁴ Loop News. 2024. "More than 60,000 Jamaicans employed in BPO sector, says Hill." Loop Jamaica News. March 17. <https://jamaica.loopnews.com/content/more-60000-jamaicans-employed-bpo-sector-says-hill-0>.

¹⁴⁵ JIS. (2024). Retrieved from Jamaica Information Service: <https://jis.gov.jm/jamaica-selected-as-pilot-for-ilo-just-transition-project/>

social protection measures to safeguard vulnerable workers from the impacts of climate change.¹⁴⁵ Recognising that artificial intelligence is reshaping the labour market and will continue to do so, the government established a National Artificial Intelligence Task Force in 2023 to provide evidence-based research to aid in the development of a National AI Policy.

To ensure that the labour force is prepared for the future of work, efforts are being made to align education and skills development with emerging industry needs. In April 2023, the HEART/NSTA Trust removed fees for all programmes up to Level 4 or the associate degree level, reducing financial barriers to training. The Trust has reoriented its programmes towards future-of-work competencies including renewable energy, sustainable construction and digital technologies. Jamaica's participation in the five-year Skills to Access the Green Economy (SAGE) Programme, funded by Global Affairs Canada, has further strengthened Technical and Vocational Education and Training TVET offerings in climate-related sectors, including an Associate Degree in agro-processing at Moneague College.¹⁴⁶

The HEART/NSTA Trust is also launching a dedicated prompt engineering course to train students, public-sector workers and professionals to use AI tools effectively. The government has also partnered with the Amber Group to establish a national AI Lab. The Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information has taken steps to modernise the education system for a digital and technologically advanced economy through the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Education Policy (2022), strengthening Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics, (STEAM), curricula, improving digital literacy and expanding computer and internet access in schools.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES:

Identified several priority sectors where Jamaica could build competitive employment opportunities if education and policy were better aligned. These include technology and artificial intelligence, sustainable and climate-resilient construction, modern agricultural technology, and regional business and services leveraging the CARICOM market. Participants argued that Jamaica's strategic advantage lies in positioning itself as a regional hub in these emerging areas rather than competing broadly across all sectors.

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A key dimension of the government's future of work strategy has been to transform the Global Services Sector (GSS), which globally and locally is undergoing rapid restructuring due to advances in automation and artificial intelligence. Recognising this, the government, through the GSS Project, supported by the Inter-American Development Bank trained and equipped persons to tap into higher-value sub-segments such as Information Technology Outsourcing (ITO) and Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO). Also, the project was geared towards increasing investment in these sectors so that persons would have job opportunities once trained. The share of high-level sub-segments (ITO and KPO) increased in the sector under this project, moving from 20.0 per cent in 2017 to 43.0 per cent in 2022.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.moa.gov.jm/content/agriculture-minister-welcomes-skills-programme-agro-food-processing>

¹⁴⁷ JAMPRO Outsourcing Survey

Collectively, these actions: expanded access to skills training, updated school curricula, the development of AI readiness strategies, investment in digital infrastructure, targeted TVET programmes in green sectors, and evidence-based planning for labour transitions – strengthen Jamaica’s capacity to harness the opportunities of the future of work.

Resource Requirements

Financial Resources

Expanded access to climate finance, concessional loans and development grants to support renewable energy infrastructure, digital transformation, AI infrastructure, TVET modernisation, expansion of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, (STEM), facilities, and upgrading of training institutions, and large-scale reskilling programmes.

Technical Resources

Research and analytical studies are needed to fully understand the impact that new forms of work are having and will have on the Jamaican labour market and economy. For example, assistance is required to better recognise, record, and measure the extent of the gig economy and its specific effects on the labour market, as reliable data remain a major barrier to effective governance. Support is also needed to deploy new technological tools, AI systems, digital infrastructure, monitoring tools and climate resilient techniques.

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Beyond 2030

Modernise Jamaica’s Labour Legislation

Jamaica’s labour laws were designed for a traditional employment model centred on fixed workplaces, standard working hours and employer–employee relationships; however, the rise of platform work, remote work and hybrid arrangements require an updated legal framework. To ensure that technological transformation generates decent work, the development of regulatory frameworks that protect workers in new forms of employment is needed. This includes updating labour laws to cover platform work and ensuring social protection coverage, among other issues.

Implement Recommendations from National AI Taskforce

The recommendations of the National Artificial Intelligence Taskforce need to be implemented, including teacher training, AI readiness standards, and national guidelines for responsible AI adoption. These interventions mitigate risks of job displacement, particularly in vulnerable sectors, while supporting the emergence of higher-value digital jobs.

Further Bridging of Digital Divide

The benefits of digitalisation, green economy transition, flexible work expansion and AI adoption can only be fully realised if persons have equitable access to digital infrastructure, affordable broadband, devices and digital-skills training. Without closing this gap, especially in rural areas, the country risks exacerbating existing inequities and limiting participation in emerging labour market opportunities.

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY AS A PILLAR FOR THE FUTURE OF WORKS IN JAMAICA

The Creative Economy contributes between 5.1 per cent and 7.6 per cent or \$107 to \$160 billion dollars to Jamaica's GDP annually, outpacing the global average of 3 per cent. Vision 2030 Jamaica projects this contribution to grow to or surpass 8.3 per cent by 2030. Culture, 'the missing SDG' is no longer considered peripheral to economic development but recognised as a major economic driver, particularly in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and developing countries. While overall growth in the sector continues to surpass that of more traditional sectors, UNCTAD has identified digitalisation and AI as critical factors in the transformation and growth of the trade in creative services in particular, which has outpaced that of creative goods. Approximately 93 per cent of UNESCO's reporting member states in 2024 included culture as central to national sustainable development policies, rising from 88 per cent in 2021. The Green Paper: National Policy on Culture, Entertainment and the Creative Economy (October 2025) seeks to formalise the sector, create investment opportunities, provide training, support intellectual property protection, increase data collection and analytics, increase access to frontier technologies and institute resilience mechanisms, such as the Jamaica Entertainers and Creatives Insurance Plan which was established in 2024.

Culture is specifically referenced in SDGs 11.4: *Strengthening of efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage* and 4.7: *Ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including... appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development*. Jamaica's success here is evident in the UNESCO world heritage inscriptions of the Blue and John Crow Mountain range, 2015 and the Archaeological Landscape of 17th Century Port Royal, 2025; Intangible Cultural Heritage inscriptions for the Maroon Heritage of Moore Town, 2008, Reggae Music of Jamaica, 2018, the Revival Pilgrimage to Watt Town, 2024 and the designation of Kingston as a Creative City of Music, 2015.

SIDS lose 2.1 per cent of GDP to natural disasters each year, and the effects of climate change continue to be detrimental to creatives, cultural assets and communities. A National Strategy for Disaster Resilience and Recovery for the Culture Sector has been drafted, and in the wake of Hurricane Melissa, the MCGES partnered with UNESCO in conducting a Post Disaster Needs Assessment and with ECLAC on a Damage and Loss Assessment of heritage and cultural assets.

Regional Analysis

Decent, long-term employment is a key factor in human development. At the global level, the Global Commission on the Future of Work strives to promote work that facilitates security, equality and prosperity (OECD, 2025).

The CARICOM Human Resource Development (HRD) 2030 Strategy: Unlocking Caribbean Human Potential is the region's landmark strategy for preparing the region for the future of work in the digital age. The overarching goal is to develop citizens with skills and competencies to secure good-quality, decent jobs, advance their personal development, and participate as good citizens in their societies. In this vein, the strategy is anchored on four key priorities: access, equity, quality and relevance.

A second key plank of CARICOM's HRD is the region's continued commitment to its decent work agenda (ILO, 2012). This agenda remains focused on providing good-quality jobs in an era of disruption and change. It includes a number of key planks. One is employment creation and enterprise development, which aims to generate sufficient job opportunities, especially for young people, and to grow entrepreneurship to reduce dependence on the state and traditional sectors for employment. Another is a commitment to universal social protection, including access to pensions, healthcare and occupational safety and health standards for informal sector workers. Crucially, the agenda also advances social dialogue through a tripartite arrangements among government, private employers and trade unions to resolve disputes in a cohesive manner and to ensure that wages and benefits are linked to worker productivity. Both the CARICOM HRD and decent work agenda dovetail with Jamaica's new National Employment Policy (NEP), which provides a comprehensive framework for integrating productive and decent employment in a strategy to promote economic growth and sustainable employment for all its people.

Nevertheless, CARICOM realizes that technological disruption, automation and digital technologies will fundamentally reshape the workplace of the future. Indeed, the HRD strategy notes that many jobs currently performed by humans will be eliminated or replaced by machines. Moreover, even though the region has been slow to adopt artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and other cutting-edge technologies, their effects are already being transmitted through global trade and investment. In response, CARICOM is focused on developing a demand-driven, competency-based education and training system to ready its people to adjust to these disruptions. Jamaica is preparing to benefit from these disruptive technologies by updating its legislation, dispute resolution and occupational safety and health (OSH) to increase the number of gig and platform workers. Jamaica is also modernising our digital infrastructure, including broadband access and training to optimize our gains from these technologies.

To address concerns related to the future of work, CARICOM is also upgrading labour qualification, certification and standards. A key plank is the Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ), which

facilitates the movement of people with certified skills across the region (CARICOM, Undated). This provides a framework for skills recognition and gives employers confidence that workers can perform the tasks they claim to perform. In 2026, CARICOM continues to advance its micro-credential sub-framework aimed at digital, green and technical labour-market needs, with a focus on portability, quality assurance, and access for youth, women, persons with disabilities, rural communities, and working adults (CARICOM, 2026). This sub-framework acknowledges the urgent need for the region to prepare its people to address the challenges and opportunities posed by digitalisation, climate vulnerability, and shifting labour markets. The goal is to provide micro-credentials that can rapidly equip citizens with targeted skills in climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, disaster risk management, coastal zone protection, sustainable tourism and other areas. The CVQ and micro-credential framework provide an opportunity for Jamaica's VNR to consider how the country could leverage these vehicles within its national re-skilling, HEART/NSTA, digital upskilling, and other frameworks to advance a seamless regional mobility and skills recognition system (Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) 2009).

Alongside the core human resource and technical issues, CARICOM acknowledges the importance of high quality data for sound, evidence-based policy-making concerning the future of work. In 2025, CARICOM labour ministers again underscored the importance of improved intra-regional labour market and migration data and the need to create a modern LMIS. This will provide a central repository of labour statistics, help track job opportunities and skills shortages, and facilitate the free movement of labour in the region. Jamaica can upgrade its LMIS and to develop and integrate a labour-skills policy and an AI policy that is related to the regional framework (CARICOM, 2016).



*Technology link up country, fast internet
help small business run 'ye' of course.
Entrepreneurs winning, youth start 'dem'
brand from handmade craft to app in hand, that's
how we have youth coding, building, leading the way
'STEM/STEAM' and creativity side by side every day.....
'knowledge on blast, future so bright', 'yeah' we moving fast."*

► **DAYANNA JACKSON,**
Lister Mair/Gilby High School for the Deaf

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

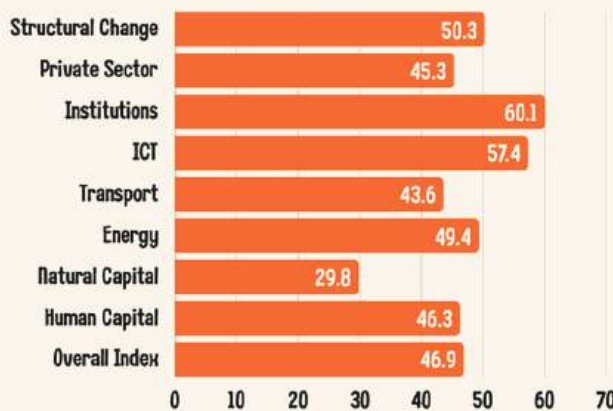
The future of work was widely discussed, with the most substantive exchanges occurring in the Private Sector and Youth sessions. The Private Sector group discussed the flexible working hours policy, the distinction between flexible scheduling and remote work, and the cost implications for small businesses. They emphasised reducing business costs, enforcing local labour content in FDI contracts, and flexible working arrangements. They also raised AI as both an opportunity and a reputational risk — Jamaica's emerging association with cyber fraud threatens its credibility as a digital economy player. Youth participants were the most forward-looking on this theme, engaging substantively with AI's implications for employment, education, and governance, and calling for digital literacy investment and youth-friendly information about the digital economy. Community Representatives raised youth unemployment and the under-utilisation of the creative and cultural economy. The NGO group noted the orange economy as an employment sector for youth that is absent from national development frameworks. Both Community and NGO groups focused on worker rights, living wages, and the exploitation of informal workers. The Persons with Disabilities group made the observation that technology is already functioning as an equaliser for persons with disabilities, and that digital economy pathways represent a realistic employment route for Persons with Disabilities— provided training and placement infrastructure is created.



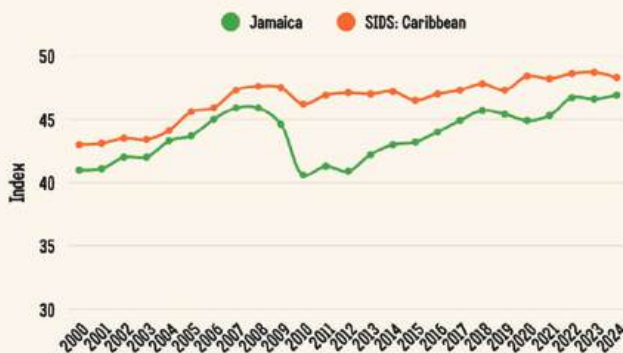
Goal 9

Build resilient infrastructure,
promote inclusive and sustainable
industrialization and foster
innovation

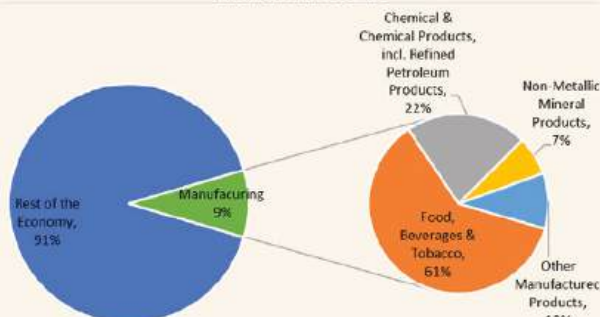
JAMAICA PCI



JAMAICA & CARIBBEAN PCI



MANUFACTURING SECTOR COMPONENTS
VALUE ADDED



AI CROSS-CUTTING POSSIBILITIES



AI POTENTIAL IN INDUSTRY

AGRICULTURE

Precision farming
Predictive analytics for climate resilience
Supply chain optimization



TOURISM

Personalized visitor experiences:
Chatbots and virtual assistants
AI in marketing



LOGISTICS & MANUFACTURING

Route optimization & supply chain management
Predictive maintenance
Robotics & automation



PRODUCTIVE CAPACITIES AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Context

Jamaica is at a pivotal moment in its development journey, where it is seeking to balance economic growth with environmental sustainability and social inclusion. Central to this effort is the strengthening of the country's productive capacities. For Jamaica, strengthening productive capacity is deeply intertwined with advancing Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) {Table 4}.

PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY DIMENSION	LINKED SDGS	POTENTIAL IMPACT ON JAMAICA
INFRASTRUCTURE (roads, ports, digital, energy systems)	 SDGS 9 Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure  SDGS 13 Climate Action	Improved logistics and trade competitiveness; reduced transport costs; climate-resilient infrastructure
HUMAN CAPITAL (education, skills, labour productivity)	 SDGS 4 Quality Education  SDGS 8 Decent Work & Economic Growth	Enhanced workforce productivity; reduced skills gap; creation of higher-value jobs;
INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY (R&D, AI, digitalization)	 SDGS 9 Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure  SDGS 17 Partnerships for the Goals	Strengthened innovation ecosystem; growth of knowledge-based industries; increased global collaboration and competitiveness.
ENERGY & NATURAL RESOURCES	 SDGS 7 Affordable & Clean Energy  SDGS 12 Responsible Consumption & Production  SDGS 13 Climate Action	Reduced energy costs for industry; greater reliance on renewable sources; and lower carbon footprint.
ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPABILITIES (SMEs, financing, private sector linkages)	 SDGS 8 Decent Work & Economic Growth  SDGS 10 Reduced Inequalities	Expansion of SME sector; improved financial inclusion;
INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY (governance, policy frameworks)	 SDGS 16 Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions  SDGS 17 Partnerships for the Goals	More effective policymaking; stronger regulatory frameworks for innovation and AI; improved investor confidence.

TABLE 4 Productive Capacity Dimensions Aligned to the SDGs

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) 2022 Productive Capacities Index (PCI) assesses 194 countries using 42 indicators across eight components. Within the Caribbean, the highest-ranked performers were Curaçao (42nd), Barbados (44th), Bermuda (59th), and Dominica (60th), driven largely by strong governance and institutional frameworks (Table 5). Jamaica was ranked 128th, a weaker performance in the PCI relative to several Caribbean peers reflecting underperformance across several key dimensions, notably human capital, private sector development, and transport systems.¹⁴⁸ Further analysis comparing Jamaica to other developing countries indicate that while performing better than some low-income countries, Jamaica is lagging behind more dynamic middle-income countries. This suggests that while Jamaica possesses foundational productive elements, gaps remain in structural transformation and diversification. Among these gaps are: limited diversification of exports, low levels of technological adoption, constrained Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME) access to finance, inadequate road and digital infrastructure in rural areas, and a persistent skills mismatch between tertiary graduates and labour market needs.

COUNTRIES	GLOBAL PCI RANK (OUT OF 194)	STRENGTHS
 ▶ CURACAO	42	▶ INSTITUTIONS, TRANSPORT
 ▶ BARBADOS	44	▶ INSTITUTIONS, TRANSPORT
 ▶ BERMUDA	59	▶ TRANSPORT, PRIVATE SECTOR
 ▶ DOMINICA	60	▶ ENERGY, TRANSPORT
 ▶ ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES	69	▶ ENERGY, TRANSPORT
 ▶ THE BAHAMAS	93	▶ ENERGY, INSTITUTIONS
 ▶ GRENADA	96	▶ ENERGY, TRANSPORT
 ▶ CUBA	126	▶ ENERGY, HUMAN CAPITAL
 ▶ JAMAICA	128	▶ ENERGY, INSTITUTIONS
 ▶ GUYANA	130	▶ ENERGY, INSTITUTIONS
 ▶ HAITI	179	▶ NATURAL CAPITAL, STRUCTURAL CHANGE

SOURCE: UNCTAD, Productive Capacities Index, 2022

TABLE 5 PCI Ranking Across the Caribbean

Jamaica's productive resources—encompassing human capital, natural assets, and infrastructure—form the foundation of its capacity to achieve sustainable development and long-term economic resilience. With regard to human capital, the country has made significant strides in expanding access to education, with high enrolment rates at the early childhood, primary and secondary level

¹⁴⁸ United Nations, 2023. Productive Capacities Index 2nd Generation: Enhanced Statistical and Methodological Approach with Results

of education.¹⁴⁹ However, challenges remain in aligning educational outcomes with labour market demands. Latest available data show that of the total number of persons unemployed, the largest proportion is for individuals with upper secondary level education. This indicates that the market is demanding persons with post-secondary level education and training, which presents a challenge, as the enrolment rate at this level was at 20.1 per cent in 2021. Additionally, the emigration of skilled professionals, often referred to as “brain drain,” continues to undermine workforce productivity and constrains the pool of talent available for national development.

The Jamaican economy has traditionally relied on its natural assets and while efforts for transformation are underway, local economic prospects remain integrally linked to and dependent on the robustness of the natural environment as well as the quality and resilience of the built environment. It is therefore important to be cognizant of its inherent vulnerabilities—associated with geology and geography—which are exacerbated by climate change; poor cultural practices; concentration of major industries; inadequately planned physical development; and limited enforcement of planning laws. In July 2024, Hurricane Beryl, a Category 4 system, caused an estimated J\$56.7 billion in damage—about 1.9 per cent of 2023 gross domestic product (GDP) —with severe losses that disrupted economic activity, contributing to overall economic contraction during the respective quarter. Even more severe impacts followed the next year with Category 5 Hurricane Melissa in October 2025, which generated overall cost of damage at J\$1 953 billion or US\$12.3 billion, equivalent to approximately 56.7 per cent of 2024 GDP. The hurricane had a devastating effect on residential and productive assets of agriculture, transport, telecommunications, electricity and water supply, and it is estimated that full economic recovery will take approximately three to five years.

Critical to Jamaica’s economic productivity is its public infrastructure, particularly the road network, which connects industrial zones to ports and facilitates the movement of goods and services. However, as cited by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) “years of economic contraction prior to 2013, followed by fiscal adjustment undertaken under two successive IMF-supported programs, have led to underinvestment in capital projects, and the maintenance of infrastructure, including roads, bridges, energy, and water.”¹⁵⁰ This underinvestment and poor maintenance, coupled with climate-related damage have degraded roads and bridges, thus hampering growth. To address this, Jamaica has launched major infrastructure initiatives, including:

- **Southern Coastal Highway Improvement Project (SCHIP):** aimed at upgrading the southern coastal corridor from Kingston to Port Antonio, improving access to St Thomas and Portland.
- **Montego Bay Perimeter Road Project:** aimed at alleviating severe traffic congestion in Montego Bay, one of the country’s key tourism hubs. The bypass, scheduled for completion by mid-2026, will provide an alternative route around the central business district, enhancing connectivity, reducing travel times, and spurring economic development.

¹⁴⁹ According to the JSLC 2021, gross enrolment by age group was as follow: 3-5 years, 93.0 per cent; 6-11 years, 98.7 per cent; 12-14 years, 99.2 per cent; 16-16 years 96.5 per cent and 17-18 years 62.3 per cent.

¹⁵⁰ Bollers, Elton, Zubin Deyal, Victor Gauto, Laura Giles Álvarez, Jeetendra Khadan, Henry Mooney, Lodewijk Smets, Kimberly Waithe, and Allan Wright. 2019. Country Infrastructure Briefs: Caribbean Region. Washington, D.C.: Inter-American Development Bank. <https://doi.org/10.18235/0001627>.

- **Project SPARK:** the \$44 billion (US\$260 million) initiative to rehabilitate 27 000km of road infrastructure. Financed from domestic resources, SPARK is designed to deliver resilient infrastructure which boosts economic growth and provides savings to the government and residents from a deteriorating road network.

Air and sea transport hubs—including Sangster International Airport and the Kingston Freeport Terminal—serve as gateways for trade, tourism, and global integration. Upgrades of these hubs not only facilitate the efficient movement of goods and people but also have supported key sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, and services by reducing logistics costs and improving market access. These projects aim to modernise transportation, boost productivity, facilitate the emergence of new industries, and support sustainable economic growth.

Historically, Jamaica has depended on imported fossil fuels which exposes the economy to volatile global oil prices. Electricity tariffs are among the highest in the region, averaging US\$0.27–US\$0.31/kwh, compared to countries like the Dominican Republic and Trinidad & Tobago for which rates are closer to US\$0.12–US\$0.15/kwh.¹⁵¹ To broaden energy sources, thus reducing the heavy reliance on fossil fuel, Jamaica has with regard to energy infrastructure, committed to generating 50.0 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2030, guided by the updated Integrated Resource Plan (IRP-2) and supported by new net billing regulations¹⁵² and amendments to the Electricity Act.¹⁵³ To achieve this, several large-scale projects are underway, including Wigton Energy and SunTerra Energy are developing nearly 100 MW of solar farms in Clarendon and Trelawny; and JPS is investing US\$300 million in a 133 MW solar plus 171.5 MW battery storage complex to replace aging fossil fuel units.

Beyond human capital, natural assets, and physical infrastructure, a critical element of productive capacity in the modern world is artificial intelligence (AI), as it can be used to foster innovation and optimise resource utilization. In the 2025 Latin American Artificial Intelligence Index (ILIA, 2025), published by Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe, CEPAL, Jamaica ranks 13th out of 19 countries, placing it in the region's mid-tier.¹⁵⁴ This position reflects a mixed landscape: the country has made meaningful progress in institutional readiness, policy development, and foundational digital transformation, supported by emerging governance frameworks and engagement with regional partners, however, its overall performance is constrained by limited digital and data infrastructure, a comparatively small AI research and innovation ecosystem, and low levels of AI adoption across both the private sector and government. Though still early in building the physical and institutional infrastructure needed to fully support AI, Jamaica has nevertheless laid significant groundwork through strong policy initiatives and steady advances in digital governance.

¹⁵¹ Ministry of Energy, Telecommunications and Transport. Jamaica Energy Statistics 2024

¹⁵² Electricity (Net Billing) Regulations, 2022 allow customers who generate renewable energy (e.g. rooftop solar) to sell excess back to the grid.

¹⁵³ In 2023, Cabinet approved amendments to the Electricity Act that allow the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS) to replace ageing fossil-fuel power plants with renewable energy systems by exercising its Right-of-First-Refusal under its existing licence.

¹⁵⁴ The ILIA evaluates countries on multiple dimensions of AI ecosystem maturity, including: Enabling factors (e.g., infrastructure, policy frameworks); Research, development & adoption (e.g., R&D activity, business use of AI); Governance (e.g., strategies, regulation and institutional readiness).

Thematic Discussion

Productive capacity provides the essential foundation for boosting a nation's overall productivity. This is particularly critical for Jamaica, where productivity levels have been on a decline. Between 2014 and 2023, labour productivity contracted at an average annual rate of 0.9 per cent, primarily due to employment growth consistently outpacing output growth. Total factor productivity also registered a decline during this period. In contrast, global trends show labour productivity expanding at an average rate of 1.8 per cent per year, while total factor productivity recorded modest growth of 0.1 per cent annually.

Addressing this productivity challenge requires strengthening Jamaica's production linkages—connections between sectors, firms, and markets—which are critical to enhancing competitiveness and driving sustainable growth. While key sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism operate in parallel, deeper integration is needed to unlock value-added opportunities. Currently, backward linkages remain weak, with many industries relying heavily on imported inputs, whereas forward linkages—such as export channels and logistics—are relatively more developed. Strategic initiatives like the Caymanas Special Economic Zone aim to reinforce these linkages by co-locating industries and improving infrastructure. Within this context, the manufacturing industry plays a pivotal role, positioned at the intersection of agriculture, services, and exports, and offering significant potential to strengthen supply chain integration and foster domestic value creation through:

- **Economic diversification:** reducing the reliance on traditional industries
- **Value added:** transforming raw materials into higher-valued goods
- **Innovation and technology:** investing in advanced machinery and automation can advance productivity and efficiency.

The Manufacturing industry accounts for approximately 8.0–9.0 per cent of Jamaica's GDP and employs approximately 80 000 persons, making it the largest goods Producing industry. In Jamaica, the industry is dominated by food and beverages manufacturing, with other key subcomponents such as chemicals & chemical products inclusive of refined petroleum; and non-metallic minerals e.g. cement and clinker. Despite challenges such as high energy costs, imported raw material dependence, and global competition, the sector remains one of the most promising engines of industrial development.

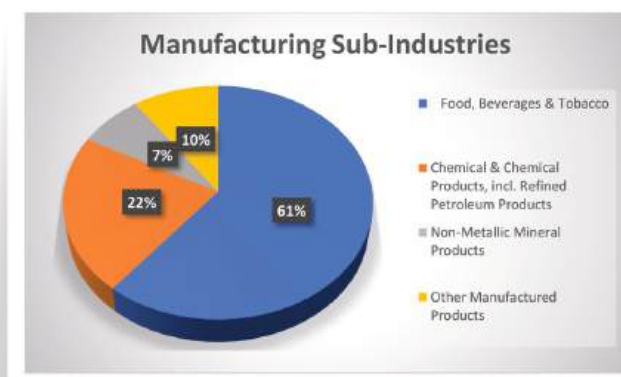


FIGURE 15 Share of Manufacturing Sub Industries

Efforts are ongoing to modernise production processes, improve quality standards, and expand export readiness to position manufacturing as a critical driver of industrial transformation. The Ministry of Industry, Investment and Commerce (MIIC) leads this effort by shaping policies that support industrial development, including the National Quality Policy, which strengthens the national quality infrastructure and supports micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The MSME & Entrepreneurship Policy, under review in 2024, is being updated with a new implementation plan and strategy to further align small business development with national growth priorities. To support competitiveness, manufacturers benefit from the Productive Inputs Relief (PIR) Scheme, offering duty-free access to raw materials and capital goods, while trade facilitation is being modernised through EXPORTJamaica—a digital platform launched in March 2024 to help exporters navigate global markets.

Agencies such as Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) and the Development Bank of Jamaica (DBJ) have played a pivotal role in promoting investment, streamlining business processes, and expanding access to financing. This has created a more enabling environment for startups and MSMEs, which are critical to economic diversification. The combined impact of these measures extends beyond traditional sectors into manufacturing, agro-processing, and emerging industries such as the creative industries, positioning Jamaica to leverage innovation and global market access for sustainable economic development.

Jamaica has an active evolving policy framework for digital development. The country passed a Data Protection Act (2020) and established an Office of the Information Commissioner, strengthening data governance and digital trust—a foundation for more strategic data infrastructure planning. Furthermore, Jamaica is rolling out a National Identification System (NIDS) and investing in wider e-government frameworks to support digital public infrastructure (DPI). Jamaica has also established a National Artificial Intelligence Taskforce, charged with developing a national AI strategy, advising on governance frameworks, and coordinating cross-sector AI adoption. The taskforce's work is expected to accelerate the translation of digital policy commitments into actionable programmes that strengthen Jamaica's AI readiness and productive capacity.

Lessons Learnt/Best Practice

Enhancing productive capacities has emerged as a central priority for developing countries seeking to achieve sustainable growth, reduce dependency and strengthen resilience against external shocks. Experience from across regions demonstrates that building the skills, infrastructure, institutions and innovation systems necessary for competitiveness is both complex and gradual, requiring coherent policies, strategic investment and active public-private collaboration. Lessons learnt over the past decades highlight that while no single pathway guarantees success, countries that integrate human capital development, technology adoption, sectoral linkages and good governance into their growth strategies are better able to unlock value-added opportunities. Among the socio-economic challenges and recommendations gleaned from lessons learnt are:

Productivity

Productivity, defined as the ratio of output to input, is a key driver of economic growth and prosperity. Higher productivity typically leads to increased profits for owners of capital, improved wages for workers, lower prices for consumers, and greater revenue for the government. Closing Jamaica's productivity gap requires decisive and forward-looking strategic actions, particularly in accelerating digital transformation and embedding artificial intelligence (AI) across key sectors. Given Jamaica's current level of limited technology infusion, AI integration should begin with foundational digital infrastructure development. Bridging the digital divide—through continued expansion of broadband access, affordable connectivity, and digital public infrastructure—is a prerequisite for meaningful AI adoption. Without universal digital access, productivity gains will remain uneven and exclusionary.

AI can enhance productive capacity in practical, incremental ways. In agriculture, AI-enabled climate and crop monitoring systems can improve yields and resilience. In tourism, data analytics and AI-powered customer platforms can enhance service delivery and market targeting. In manufacturing and logistics, predictive maintenance systems and supply-chain optimisation tools can reduce downtime and operational costs. In the public sector, AI-driven data systems can improve customs processing, tax administration, and public service efficiency—reducing bureaucratic delays that suppress private sector productivity.

Additionally, strengthening collaboration between universities and industries is vital to foster applied research, innovation, and commercialisation of new technologies. Academic institutions working closely with private firms can integrate AI literacy, data analytics, and digital tools into curricula aligned with evolving labour market demands. Furthermore, enhancing the education system to focus on critical thinking, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, and digital literacy will equip future generations with the skills needed to thrive in a modern, productivity-driven economy, where human capital complements intelligent technologies rather than competes with them.

While there have been planned developments to promote science, technology and innovation (STI) as a fillip to national development, investment in STI remains low at less than 1.0 per cent of GDP. The recent promulgation of an STI policy framework, the thrust in STEM education, and related initiatives call for a renewed effort of integrating STI across sectors to support diversification and resilience.

Further to enhance productivity, the Human Employment and Resource Training /National Service Training Agency Trust (HEART/NSTA Trust)—Jamaica's national human development and training agency—and the broader Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system play a critical role in workforce development. Combined, these should embed

AI-related competencies—such as data analytics, automation systems, and digital operations—into technical training programmes while expanding lifelong learning opportunities.

- **Building Resilience and Reducing Vulnerability**

Jamaica's vulnerability to climate hazards and seismic risks has been underscored by Hurricane Melissa, a Category 5 storm that caused damage and loss equivalent to 56.7 per cent of GDP 2024 and displaced thousands of people. The event highlights the urgent need for integrated climate resilience strategies, including infrastructure adaptation, social protection, and continuity of essential services. Beyond the economic impact, Hurricane Melissa had severe social impacts—such as disrupted education and health systems—and tested disaster financing mechanisms, which covered only a fraction of the total damage and loss. Future priorities include scaling up climate financing, strengthening early-warning systems, and implementing nature-based solutions to reduce vulnerability and enhance national resilience.

- **Economic Diversification**

Economic diversification is critical for developing countries as it reduces dependence on a narrow range of industries and creates a more resilient and sustainable economy. For Jamaica, diversification is essential to long-term resilience and sustainable growth, as broadening the economy beyond traditional sectors like tourism, agriculture and bauxite will reduce vulnerability to market fluctuations, natural disasters, and geopolitical events.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can support this transformation by boosting productivity in existing industries and fostering new technology-driven activities. By improving efficiency, enabling value-added production, and strengthening export performance. For example, AI can be used to modernise agriculture and expand agribusiness through: improving crop forecasting and climate monitoring; optimising irrigation and fertilizer use; predicting pest and disease outbreaks; and providing digital extension services to farmers via AI tools. This supports a shift from raw agricultural exports to agro-processing and branded food products, increasing value-added exports and rural incomes.

Together, diversification and strategic technology adoption provide a pathway towards a more inclusive, and sustainable Jamaican economy. A key takeaway for Jamaica is that diversification and technology adoption should start small, be targeted, and build on existing strengths, combining human capital development, infrastructure, and supportive policies. AI is not just a futuristic tool; it becomes practical when it solves concrete challenges in priority sectors, making structural transformation tangible, measurable, and inclusive.

Beyond 2030

As Jamaica approaches the culmination of its Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, the country is actively shaping a forward-looking strategy to sustain growth, resilience, and inclusivity beyond 2030. The post-2030 development trajectory is expected to build on the foundational pillars of Vision 2030 Jamaica while addressing emerging global challenges and opportunities. To improve its competitive position and achieve higher and more inclusive growth, the PCI highlights the need to develop and implement policies that strengthen human capital, technology adoption and private sector capabilities, therefore the next phase of development will prioritise:

- **Economic Diversification:** Reduce reliance on traditional sectors by developing emerging industries, fostering innovation through R&D and technology adoption, and creating cross-sector linkages to build a resilient, competitive economy.
- **Human Capital and Workforce Transformation:** Establish a culture of continuous reskilling, upskilling, and new-skilling, to meet future-of-work requirements. Strengthen TVET by embedding digital literacy, and sustainability into its core programmes.
- **Climate Resilience and Sustainability:** Foster a strong focus on green energy, environmental protection, and disaster risk reduction.
- **Deepening Digital Transformation:** Leverage advancements in AI, automation, and digital platforms to enable a more competitive and inclusive economy and to accelerate productivity and innovation across key sectors, including manufacturing, tourism, finance, and agriculture.

Regional Analysis

The productive capacity agenda in CARICOM remains anchored in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. The treaty calls for a smart industrial policy that boosts the production of internationally competitive, sustainable goods and services (CARICOM Secretariat, 2001). It further emphasises the need for production integration, public-private partnerships, and support for MSMEs. Production integration is critical to leveraging economies of scale by optimising the competitive advantages of countries across the region. Given the sector's importance, the services chapter calls for increased investment in services, trade in services, and research and development to leverage the sector's gains. With respect to the mainstay tourism sector, the Treaty calls for a more diversified product offering, stronger linkages with other sectors and sustainable practices. Jamaica can use the Revised Treaty as a pivot to further upgrade its traditional sectors and to grow new globally competitive sectors to boost employment and foreign exchange earnings. Indeed, Jamaica has partnered with UNCTAD to use its Productive Capacities Index (PCI) to diagnose gaps and strengthen its productive capacity (UNCTAD, 2026). Plans are also afoot to develop a National Productive Capacity Gap Assessment, which will provide greater details on the bottlenecks that must be addressed to enhance productive capacity.

CARICOM is also focused on boosting productivity and productive capacity in agriculture. The Common Agriculture Policy aims to transform the sector into a market-oriented, internationally competitive, and environmentally sustainable one, with stronger exports, domestic supply, and linkages with tourism. In 2026, CARICOM launched its E-Agriculture Strategy to use digital technology to modernise the sector. This will support the flagship 25 x 2025+5 food security initiative, which aims to significantly reduce the region's food import bill while promoting sustainable food systems. Jamaica takes note of CARICOM's initiatives in agriculture and continues to prioritise investment in modernising and improving its competitiveness as a key plank of its food security and foreign exchange generation strategy. Indeed, our National Food Security Policy focuses on key areas, including increasing domestic production of nutritious foods and expanding climate-smart technologies to increase output by 40 per cent, thereby reducing reliance on imported food.

Although the regional manufacturing sector remains underdeveloped, CARICOM is committed to strengthening its productive capacity. The region's 2020 "Made in CARICOM" Initiative was aimed at expanding the output of manufactured products. This needs to be supported by digital upgrading of local firms, improved certification and standards and data-sharing to improve the competitiveness of small firms. Jamaica's manufacturing vision is centred on transforming the sector from low-value production to high-value, innovation-driven production. This will be facilitated by workforce development, including upgraded technical and vocational skills relevant to the sector and capacity-building programmes.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is recognised as a critical, fast-moving cross-cutting vehicle for improving productive capacity, productivity, quality and the sophistication of regional output in the three sectors. UNESCO's Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap provides a framework for leveraging AI for development in the region. Key pillars, including education & upskilling, which aim to integrate AI education and training across all sectors and ensure that AI adoption aligns with sustainability, are key to productive transformation in CARICOM. Jamaica's National Artificial Intelligence Recommendations propose building AI hubs and startup ecosystems and the adoption of AI across all sectors. We anticipate that this will help to mainstream the use of AI to boost productivity and efficiency throughout the economy. The Recommendations also call for integrating AI coding and digital skills across all levels of the curriculum. This would provide the critical mass needed to develop innovative AI solutions to economic problems.

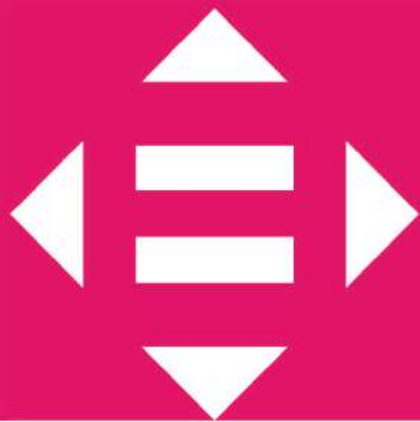
Nevertheless, there are pitfalls that Jamaica is keen to avoid in leveraging AI for productive capacity building. First, Jamaica is aware of the need to align its AI rollout with adequate procurement rules, skills upgrading, data protection, audit and assurance systems, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that AI leads to significant productivity and efficiency gains rather than harmful impacts.

Further, Jamaica is keen to avoid the siloed approach to AI where there a "islands of adoption", without mass spread across the society. This would limit the scale effects of the technology and its potential to transform production, distribution and trading systems. It is well recognized that optimum AI beneficiary gains depend on improving its spread effects by providing adequate complementary capabilities such as digital skills, data readiness, organizational and management modernization. These are vital to ensure that firms across the full spectrum, including MSMEs benefit from the technology.



Economic growth was no longer measured only by profit, but by impact... The success of Jamaica wasn't owned by a few; it belonged to everyone... Governance has become transparent, digital, and participatory... Democracy was no longer something Jamaicans observed, it was something they practiced every day.

► **AMONESIA BROWN,**
Seaforth High School



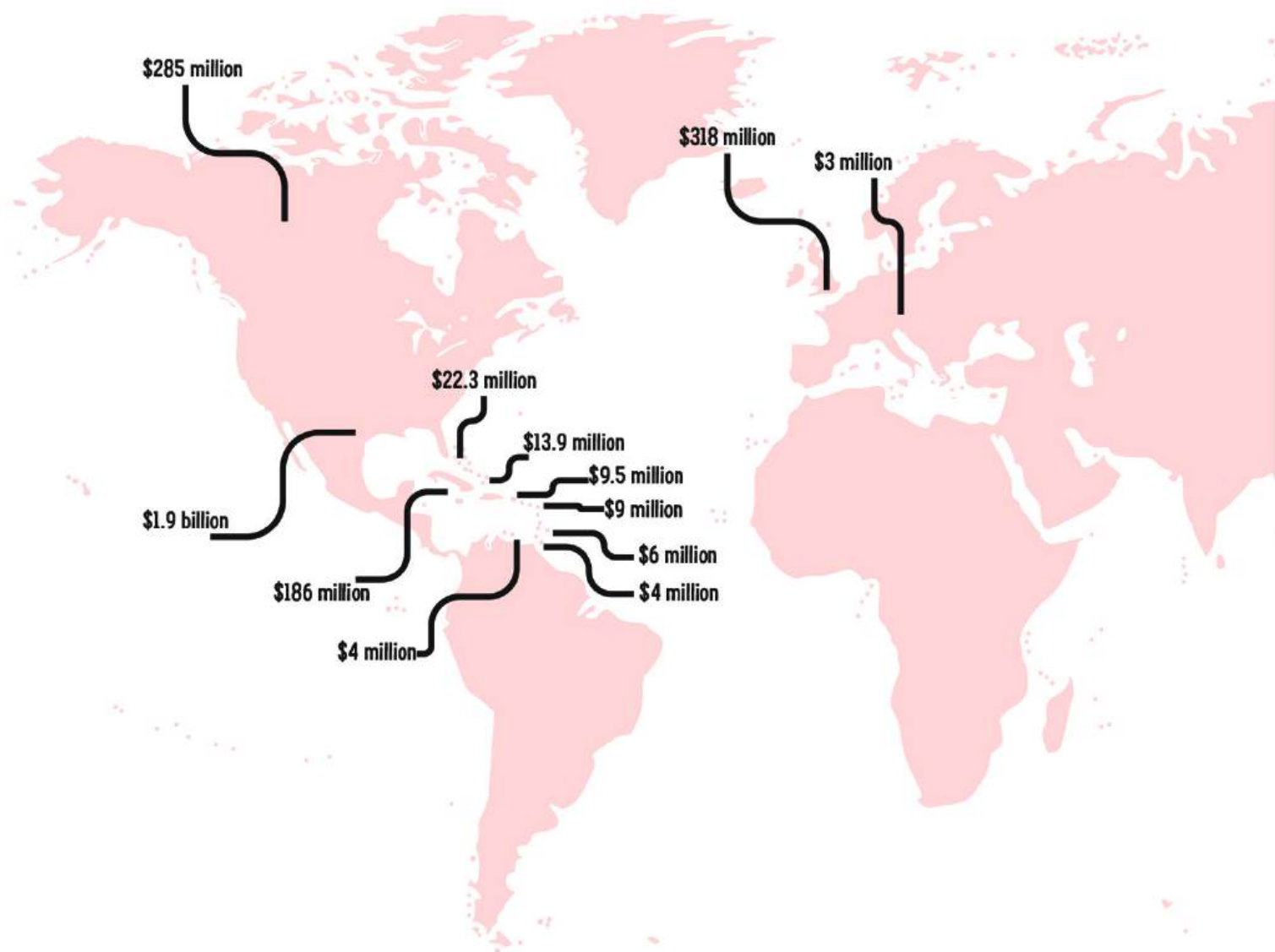
Goal 10

Reduce inequality within and among countries

2024

US\$3.3 billion

REMITTANCES RECEIVED FROM OVER 14 COUNTRIES



MIGRATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Context

Jamaica's development trajectory has been profoundly shaped by migration. As a net migrant-sending country with a diaspora estimated at over three million people, Jamaica has developed sophisticated mechanisms to facilitate migration for development while mitigating its challenges. The country's commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is reflected in its Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, which explicitly integrates migration considerations across its four guiding pillars: Economic Prosperity, Social Equity, Environmental Sustainability, and Good Governance. While multiple factors influence and contribute to reducing inequality under goal 10 of the SDGs, the interconnection between migration and sustainable development is notable.

Migration influences development outcomes through multiple channels: remittance flows that reduce poverty at household levels, diaspora investments that create employment opportunities, skills transfer that enhances human capital, and social remittances that influence cultural norms and development practices. Jamaica's geographical position in the Caribbean makes it both a source and transit country for migration flows. As such, the country has experienced significant emigration of skilled professionals alongside immigration from within the Caribbean region. These complex migration patterns present both opportunities and challenges for reducing inequality and poverty and boosting economic growth that is inclusive and supported by decent work. Voluntary migration is encouraged and facilitated, involuntary migration presents challenges for the state and society to navigate, which is an emerging concern for long term development.

Working with international partners and local stakeholders, the GOJ is building a comprehensive framework that is both responsive, and adaptive to the realities of modern movements of people. The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) serves as the national focal point for migration and development, coordinating implementation across multiple ministries and agencies through the National Working Group on International Migration and Development (NWGIMD). This institutional architecture ensures policy coherence and effective implementation of migration-related initiatives. This VNR comes at a critical juncture as Jamaica prepares for the second Global Compact for Migration (GCM) review. This report provides an evidence-based assessment of progress, challenges, and future priorities that account for the positive and negative impacts of migration on development.

Thematic Discussion

Voluntary Migration

Voluntary migration is the most common form of movement of persons in Jamaica, a net migrant sending country, with over 20 000 persons emigrating annually (See figure 14). An additional 15 000 workers travel annually, employed in short term employment programmes in North America. Economic and social issues are significant push factors for emigration from Jamaica. Overseas Jamaicans continue to provide economic relief and share the island's culture however the departure of skilled individuals contributes to a loss of human capital, and productive workers which can undermine the positive impacts of the present demographic dividend.

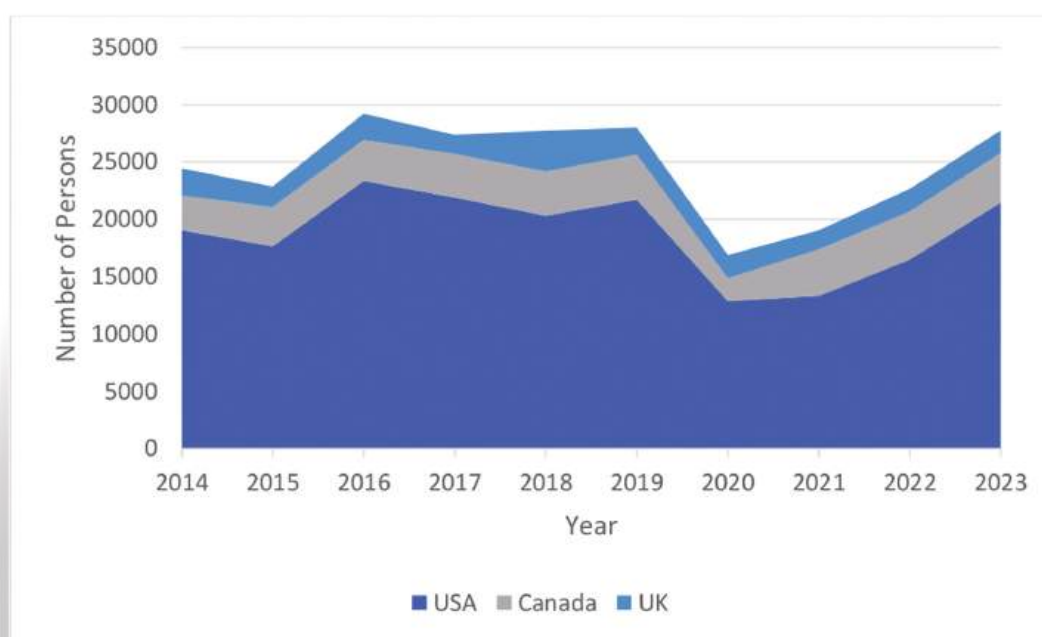


FIGURE 16 Main Destinations of Migrants from Jamaica

SOURCE: Economic and Social Survey Jamaica

Circular Migration

The GOJ has recognised circular migration as a pathway to reducing inequality and supporting economic growth locally, through established programmes across the region. Established facilities like the Jamaican Overseas Employment Programme operated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MLSS) in partnership with governments of main destination countries (USA and Canada primarily) match Jamaican workers with employment opportunities for periods up to six months. On average, upwards of 15 000 Jamaicans have utilised the programme working in the agriculture and hospitality sectors in the United States of America (USA) and Canada. Other avenues for movement have been facilitated through the United Kingdom (UK) Health and Care Worker Visa, a secured streamlined pathway for healthcare professionals, addressing critical shortages in the UK while providing career advancement opportunities for Jamaican nurses and care workers.

Government involvement in circular migratory schemes supports the pursuit of decent work and formalises the industry. The intersection of migration and labour present both possibilities and risks in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The key programmes monitored by the MLSS have predominant male participation with 93.2 per cent of posts secured by males in 2024.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security regulates private recruitment agencies, requiring compliance with ethical recruitment standards, including transparent fee structures, written contracts, and pre-departure orientation. The MLSS provides periodic training to sensitise entities on the standards and operational procedures that govern the overseas recruitment programme established by the government and allow for renewed compliance of some private recruiting agencies, as it has been found over time that operators become non-compliant. Over the period of review, approximately 66 private overseas employment agencies participated in the training, which was facilitated by the Planning Institute of Jamaica in collaboration with the MLSS and the International Organization for Migration. Migrant workers also receive comprehensive pre-departure orientation covering rights, responsibilities, and support mechanisms. Liaison officers in destination countries provide ongoing support and grievance resolution. Further, in order to facilitate effective skills transfer and domestic employability, the Human Employment and Resource Training/National Service Training Agency Trust, HEART/NSTA Trust provides certification for skills acquired abroad, enabling reintegration of returning workers into the Jamaican labour market.

Diaspora

Jamaica's diaspora represents a critical asset for national development, with its contributions spanning economic, social, and cultural dimensions. Estimates on the size of the diaspora suggest over three million persons of Jamaican descent reside in North America and Europe (primarily the UK) with 743 963 residents in the USA, UK and Canada having been born in Jamaica based on the most recent censuses in these countries. (Figure 13),

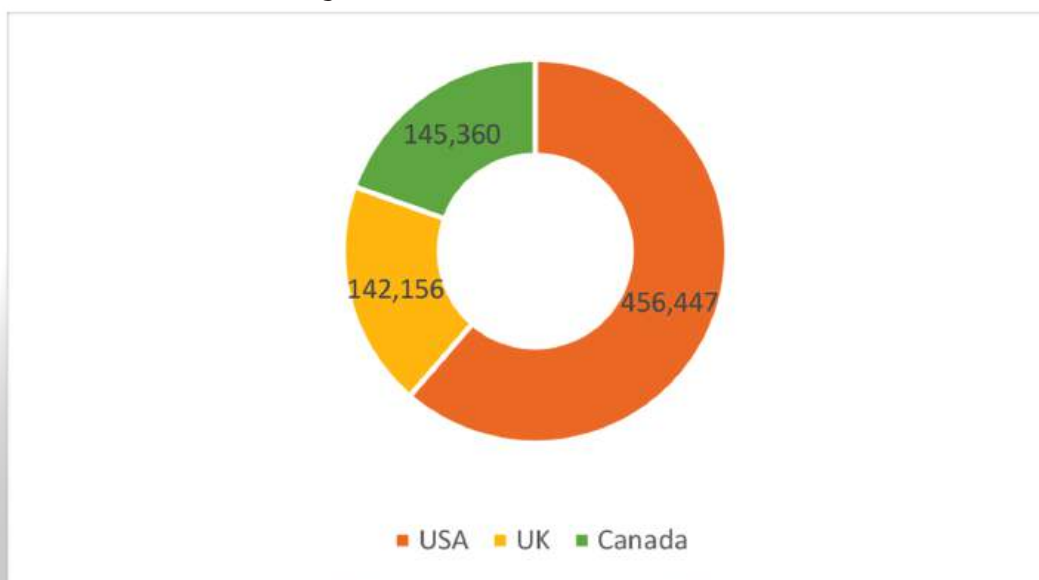


FIGURE 17 Overseas Residents Born in Jamaica as at 2022

SOURCE: United States Census Bureau, Statistics Canada, Office for National Statistics

Over the period of review, the Government bolstered its engagement apparatus with the diaspora community through structured mechanisms. The National Diaspora Policy (2022), establishes structured mechanisms for diaspora engagement, recognising the diaspora as a strategic development partner. The policy is operationalised through the Global Jamaica Diaspora Council (GJDC), sector-based working groups, and digital diaspora platforms. The GJDC established in 2023, comprises 35 elected representatives from major diaspora regions (USA, Canada, UK, and other regions). The Council members serve two-year terms and work with counterpart government officials on sector priorities such as health, education and culture, to foster collaboration between the government and the diaspora community.

In keeping with ongoing engagement, the 9th Biennial Jamaica Diaspora Conference held in June 2022 coincided with the Jamaica Diamond Jubilee, 60th Anniversary of Independence and saw over 300 in-person delegates and over 3 000 joining virtually from 13 countries. Similarly, Jamaica hosted the 10th conference in June 2024, which attracted 1193 delegates from 18 countries, generating commitments in areas including climate resilience, education innovation, and healthcare partnerships. The conference theme, "Unity and Growth for a Sustainable Future," reflected the strategic focus of aligning diaspora contributions with national development priorities.

The diaspora has been recognised as an avenue for partnership that can bridge critical gaps in financing and digitalisation as priority areas. Leveraging the diaspora in this format supports Jamaica's aims aligned with the Global Digital Compact in technical cooperation. The Reverse Innovation Programme facilitates the transfer of technologies and practices from diaspora communities to Jamaica, particularly in renewable energy, digital agriculture, and fintech. Two diaspora engagement platforms were developed and launched in 2023, namely, the ConnectMeJA portal and the Jamaica Diaspora Engagement Model (JAMDEM), which were designed to enhance diaspora engagement and connectivity globally, ensuring that Jamaicans living abroad stay informed, involved, and empowered to contribute to national development. Other programmes include the Diaspora Skills Database, a portal of over 5 000 professionals willing to contribute expertise to Jamaican institutions through virtual and short-term assignments. The Diaspora Mentorship Academy was launched in 2024 to pair diaspora professionals with Jamaican students and early-career professionals. Since its establishment, there have been approximately 350 active mentoring relationships on record.

Whereas the technology and skills transfer are developing areas of cooperation, the diaspora and economic migrants contribute directly to development through the transfer of remittances. Remittances in Jamaica are used to supplement household income for necessities such as food, utilities and education.¹⁵⁵ Data from the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions indicate as at 2021, 8.7 per cent of households receive remittances as the main source of income. By region, rural area households are more likely to rely on remittances as the main source of income (10.2 per cent) to 6.9 per cent in the Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area and 8.6 per cent in other urban centres. Female-headed households are also more likely to receive remittances as the main source of livelihood, 11.1 per cent, compared with 6.7 per cent of households headed by males.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁵ Bank of Jamaica. 2011. Remittances to Jamaica: Findings from a National Survey of Remittance Recipient

¹⁵⁶ Planning Institute of Jamaica and Statistical Institute of Jamaica, Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (Kingston: Planning Institute of Jamaica and Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2023)

The volume of remittances entering Jamaica represents the second largest source of foreign exchange, following tourism expenditure, valued at US\$3.3 billion in 2024, reflecting a growth of 50.0 per cent from 2015. Key ratios for remittance value the transfers at US\$1 228.9 per capita and 15.3 per cent of GDP.¹⁵⁷ The consistent flow of funds represents a critical asset to Jamaican citizens and a cushion to external shocks in the economy, amid ongoing global uncertainties. Due to the importance of remittances to domestic consumption and investment, the GOJ has implemented measures to reduce remittance transfer costs through competition policies and regulation by the Bank of Jamaica.

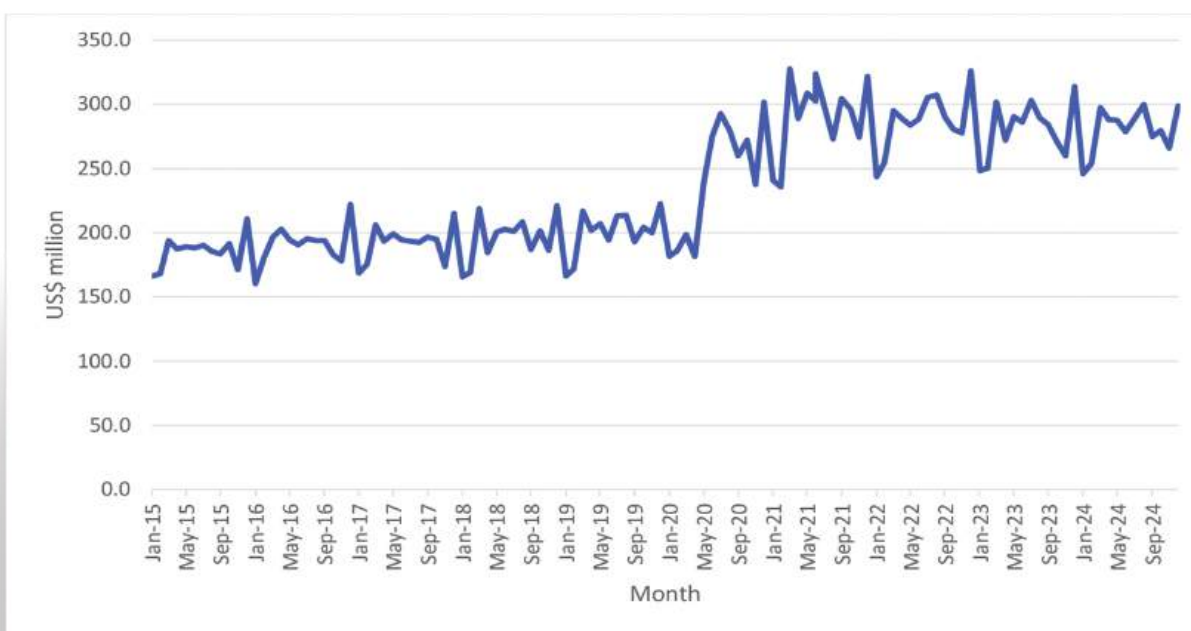


FIGURE 18 Monthly Remittances into Jamaica
SOURCE: Bank of Jamaica Statistics Department

While labour mobility programmes and a strong diaspora provide economic benefits, Jamaica faces challenges from the emigration of highly skilled professionals, particularly in healthcare and education. The “brain drain” presents a major challenge to labour productivity, economic growth and reducing inequality. Like other countries in the Caribbean region, the majority of migrants from Jamaica are female, 57.5 per cent according to data from the population division of the Department for Economic and Social Affairs.¹⁵⁸ The departure of trained professionals threatens the development of industries, such as healthcare where a considerable number of nurses receive training domestically and are recruited for their expertise. In 2025, the government launched Jamaica’s first Health Labour Market Analysis to comprehensively understand the health labour market dynamics and address critical workforce shortages. This study is the first of its kind in the Latin America and Caribbean region. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has also implemented initiatives to recruit specialist nurses from the diaspora to address critical shortages in the health sector. The programme supports the circulation of skills and diaspora engagement. It facilitates the return or temporary engagement of highly skilled

¹⁵⁷ Bank of Jamaica Remittance Bulletin December 2025

¹⁵⁸ Jaupart, Pascal. “International Migration in the Caribbean”. Background paper for the World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees and Societies, April 2023.

health professionals to strengthen healthcare delivery and improve service quality. The initiative also promotes knowledge transfer, builds local capacity, and helps mitigate the effects of brain drain.

Involuntary Migration

Involuntary migration presents complex challenges for policymakers due to the variability in arrivals and unplanned nature of the movement. It is a humanitarian and development issue to be navigated by small island developing states in the context of limited capacity to monitor and implement provisions for displaced persons. Conflicts and natural hazards increase the likelihood of displacement. The ability to anticipate and integrate these populations into national planning presents an opportunity to support growth.

Involuntarily Returned Migrants

The integration and reintegration of involuntary returned migrants (IRMs), represents a significant challenge with implications for social cohesion and inequality. Over the past decade, an average of 1 019 persons have been returned annually to the island, from the three main host countries. These issues are further compounded by the fragmented mechanism that currently exists across entities with responsibility for the integration and reintegration of these individuals. As a result, persistent challenges continue in the areas of:

- **Stigma and Discrimination:** pervasive stigma against IRMs, who are often stereotyped as criminals despite most being deported for immigration violations rather than criminal activities. This stigma creates barriers to employment, housing, and social integration. The government plans to initiate public education campaigns and community dialogues to address these perceptions. This issue received national attention at the 2026 hosting of the Symposium of Best Practices in Social and Community Development.
- **Service Delivery Gaps:** IRMs face multiple barriers to accessing services. Many lack valid Jamaican identification, preventing access to banking, healthcare, and social services. There are also limited accommodation facilities, which can force IRMs, especially the elderly, into homelessness or precarious living situations. Additionally, some IRMs experience trauma from their migration experiences and abrupt returns, yet mental health services are limited.

In response to these persistent challenges, the government has adopted a more sustainable reintegration approach to address the safe and dignified reintegration of these individuals. Actions being undertaken or under consideration include:

- **Deportation Response Action Plan (2025):** This framework aims to strengthen national systems for responding to deportation, particularly by improving reintegration support mechanisms and institutional coordination for returning migrants.

- **Draft National Policy on the Integration of Voluntary and Involuntary Returned Migrants:** which provides a framework to strengthen governance arrangements and improve procedures related to deportation management and reintegration.
- **Multi-agency Task Force:** re-establishment of the Technical Working Group on Voluntary and Involuntary Returned Migrants (IRMS) with oversight responsibility for the development and implementation of the policy.
- **Partnerships with Civil Society:** Faith-based organisations and community groups provide essential services, including temporary shelter, counselling, and job placement.
- **Provision of Care Packages upon Arrival:** Involuntary returned migrants are provided care parcels with essential items to provide a smooth transition upon return, a collaboration between the Ministry of National Security and Peace and the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

Climate-Induced Displacement

A threat to sustainable development is the potential for displacement, due to the increased frequency and intensity of climate events. Small states like Jamaica contend with the hazards brought on by the Atlantic Hurricane season, which can lead to internal and cross border migration.

Many of the island's residents live within two kilometres of the coast, faced with the threat of high winds and storm surge. This displacement has already been felt in recent events such as Category 5 Hurricane Melissa, which made landfall in 2025. Damage to homes and community basic services such as schools and health centres has forced the movement of people across parishes in the island. External shocks present a new challenge to Jamaica and other countries in the region. Consequently, the National Disaster Risk Management Act is being revised to explicitly include provisions for displaced persons, including migrants in irregular situations. Regional cooperation through the Caribbean Community, CARICOM and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, CDEMA enhances preparedness and response capacities.

Resource Requirements

Despite marked progress over the period, Jamaica continues to face significant challenges in fully realising the orderly, safe, regular and responsible movement of people. Key challenges to monitoring migration and the potential impacts on inequality, relate to data availability, institutional capacity and availability of partners and financing for projects.

- **Incomplete Migration Statistics:** Administrative data systems do not capture irregular migration flows, circular migration patterns, or diaspora characteristics comprehensively.

- **Limited Disaggregation of data:** Available data often lacks disaggregation by gender, age, disability, migration status, and other relevant characteristics. This weakens national planning and restricts timely responses to emerging migration trends and issues.
- **Coordination Complexity:** Despite established mechanisms, inter-agency coordination remains fragmented, resulting in duplication of efforts across entities, weak information-sharing mechanisms and service delivery.
- **Resource Constraints:** Limited funding for reintegration programmes for IRMs, including insufficient pre- and post-return counselling services, the absence of structured temporary accommodation, and access to employment opportunities or capital for entrepreneurial activities. The lack of formally established reception facilities for IRMs adds to the mental and emotional distress of this vulnerable group.
- **Capacity Limitations:** Frontline staff often lack specialised training on existing and emerging issues such as climate displacement, trafficking in persons and mental health support.

Beyond 2030

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Jamaica's efforts to facilitate the role of migration in development demonstrates both significant progress and challenges. The country has established pioneering policy frameworks, innovative diaspora engagement mechanisms, and comprehensive approaches to migrant protection. These achievements provide a platform for Jamaica in migration governance.

Migration as a fulcrum to development requires careful monitoring to allow for adherence to human rights laws and regulations and provision of decent work without exploitation. Well-managed migration channels resources to vulnerable households, transfers skills and knowledge, builds transnational networks, and fosters cultural exchange. However, unmanaged migration can exacerbate inequalities, disrupt families and communities, and create new vulnerabilities.

With the emerging challenges from climate change, natural hazards, and political conflicts, small states like Jamaica cannot escape the outcomes from increased voluntary and involuntary migration. Improvements to domestic and global frameworks are needed to adapt to changing patterns and needs of people. In this effort the GOJ has committed to:

- **Institutionalise a fully operationalised National Migration Database** through the establishment of data sharing protocols between data providers, including those in source, transit, and destination countries.
- **Finalise and implement the National Policy and Plan of Action** on Voluntary and Involuntary migration.

- Strengthen community level reintegration and inclusion mechanisms for new and returning migrants
- Deepen regional cooperation through the adoption and implementation of the draft CARICOM Regional Migration Policy Framework
- Complete revision of the National Refugee Policy
- Implement the National Diaspora Policy and its Five-Year Implementation Plan
- Expand bilateral labour agreements to new destinations
- Integrate migration into climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans
- Scale up the inclusion of migration issues into local sustainable development planning, utilising lessons learnt from the pilot conducted in the parish of Clarendon
- Continue the process to integrate migration considerations in all sectoral policies and programmes
- Implement a national case management system for vulnerable migrants

Further to these efforts, the international community is being called upon to:

- **Strengthen Global Governance:** Support effective implementation of the Global Compact for Migration through adequate funding for the UN Migration Network and robust review mechanisms.
- **Enhance Regional Cooperation:** Accelerate development of the CARICOM Regional Migration Policy and establish regional mechanisms for skills recognition, social protection portability, and crisis response.
- **Increase Development Finance:** Dedicate greater proportions of official development assistance (ODA) to migration-related programmes, particularly for climate displacement preparedness, diaspora engagement and migrant reintegration.
- **Improve Data Sharing:** Establish secure, ethical frameworks for migration data exchange between countries to inform policy, protect rights, and enhance cooperation.
- **Address Root Causes:** Invest in development programmes that address drivers of forced migration, including poverty, conflict, governance deficits, and the impact of climate change.

- **Protect Vulnerable Migrants:** Strengthen international protection systems for refugees, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied children, and migrants in irregular situations.

Migration represents both a challenge and an opportunity for sustainable development. Through collective action, shared responsibility, and partnership, migration systems can be designed to reduce inequalities, protect human dignity, and contribute to prosperous, inclusive societies for all.

Regional Analysis

Pattens of migration in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are evolving, driven by political unrest, economic instability, environmental shocks, and shifting migration policies. Flows to North America or Europe continue, albeit in the face of tighter restrictions and more punitive border enforcement, which means that longstanding policy concerns such as the loss of human capital, dependence on remittances, and diaspora relations continue to be relevant. At the same time, there has been an increase in intra-regional migration. In countries where population ageing is more advanced and where the working age population is falling, economic development is increasingly dependent on migrants, and therefore regional governments are adopting a more balanced approach to managing migration, seeking to take advantage of the benefits and mitigate the challenges.

Over 25 million migrants from the LAC region were residing in North America in 2020 with 5 million more in Europe (McAuliffe, M. and L. Oucho, 2024). Many of these migrants send remittances back to the region which serve as a lifeline for households that may be facing income instability, disaster impacts, and food insecurity. Many are also skilled workers that were educated in the region, but whose skills are now being put to work in developed countries, which undermines productive development as well as health and education services at home. Governments attempt to mitigate this loss of human capital through working with diaspora organizations to promote investment, skills exchange and return migration.

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Migration flows are becoming more diversified and complex with northbound flows fluctuating according to policy shifts in both receiving and transit countries. Tighter border controls including the increased use of arrest, detention and deportation have reduced or diverted the flow of irregular migrants. There has also been increased restrictions on immigrant visa processing which is having some effect on regular migration. As a consequence, migrants from countries such as Cuba, Haiti and Venezuela, are increasingly moving within the region, to countries including Brazil, Chile and Guyana. Secondary migration and return migration are also part of this more complex picture.

In receiving LAC countries, there has been rising pressure on systems providing asylum, temporary protection and long-term integration. For example, in response to the Venezuelan crisis, other LAC countries issued temporary permits to Venezuelan migrants and many now have permanent status in their host countries although a sizeable minority remain undocumented facing precarious conditions, limited access to services, and increased xenophobia.

Climate-related hazards—hurricanes in the Caribbean, droughts in Central America, and flooding in South America—have become increasingly frequent and costly. When Caribbean countries are hit by storms, they suffer an average loss equivalent to 13.0 per cent of GDP (UNDP, 2024), a figure which can be expected to increase in the coming decades. This intersection of environmental pressures with economic vulnerabilities will increasingly contribute to both short-term displacement and structural migration.

In recognition of the increasing complexities surrounding migration in the region and its interaction with sustainable development, CARICOM Member States have been developing a Regional Migration Policy Framework for the Caribbean Community. This will support CARICOM members in navigating this more complex environment and developing a balanced approach to migration that promotes free movement while safeguarding national security and takes advantage of the opportunities presented by migration.

Jamaica has a large diaspora, relative to its resident population, with more than a million of our nationals living in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. In contrast, the number of non-nationals living in Jamaica is much smaller. Similarly for intra-Caribbean migrants, there are many more Jamaican nationals in other Caribbean countries, than nationals of those countries in Jamaica, with significant Jamaican populations in the Cayman Islands, Bahamas, and Antigua and Barbuda. Many of our nationals also participate in temporary labour migration programmes, such as those that facilitate travel to the US and Canada for farm work. This means that national migration policy, including the 2017 National Policy on International Migration and Development, has been concerned primarily with the costs and benefits of labour emigration and diaspora relations. Given the opportunities elsewhere, retaining highly skilled workers in the country has been relatively difficult and, therefore, these concerns remain very relevant.

Population ageing and declining working age populations, as well as the trend towards more restrictive migration policies in developed countries, provide the context for a renewed focus on building and retaining human capital for development within the country. This changing political landscape could present an opportunity to staunch the flow of skilled workers to developed countries and, in the health and education sectors, to challenge unethical recruitment practices so that we can retain more of our doctors, nurses and teachers. In addition to retaining more highly skilled nationals within the economy, the migration of skilled non-nationals to Jamaica could also play a much larger role than it does at present. The challenge, therefore, is to design migration policies that facilitate more balanced migration of skilled workers, thereby facilitating more sustained accumulation of human capital within the national economy.



Every Jamaican, regardless of gender, income level, ability, or location, now has a fair chance to succeed... Communities thrive because no one is left behind, and development reaches both urban centers and rural parishes like St. Thomas.

► **RAMONA WILLIAMS,**
Seaforth High School

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Migration was discussed by five of the six groups consulted. The Private Sector group focused on the diaspora's potential as a source of professional expertise and investment, noting that this resource is systematically underutilised in national development planning. Youth participants discussed migration as a rational response to limited opportunity at home — noting that brain drain is not an irrational choice but a predictable outcome of inadequate domestic opportunity — while also acknowledging the appeal of return migration for those who have built skills abroad. Local Authorities and Community Representatives raised the rural dimension of internal migration: the outward flow of educated and economically active residents from rural parishes to Kingston and to the diaspora drains parishes and communities of the human capital they need to develop. The NGO group raised the experience of involuntary returned migrants as a specific population group requiring targeted reintegration support.

The cross-cutting message is that migration is neither simply a loss nor simply an opportunity for Jamaica — it is a structural feature of the Jamaican economy that interacts with development priorities at multiple levels.



Goal 11

Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



2016

Hurricane Matthew, \$145.2 million in estimated damage



2017

Heavy rainfall March to June and November, \$4.4 billion in estimated damage to infrastructure and some agricultural producing areas.



2018

Heavy rainfall in January and May of 2018 resulting in damage and losses of over \$500 million to agriculture, infrastructure and households and the loss of one life.



2021

In 2021, three storms impacted the island, with only one making landfall. Tropical Storm Elsa in July led to \$838 million in losses to infrastructure and agriculture. In August Tropical Storms Grace and Ida brought damages, only Grace made landfall. Cumulative damage from both storms was \$2.7 billion across sectors.



2020

In October and November 2020, the country experienced heavy rains as a result of Tropical Storms Zeta and Eta. Damage and losses related to infrastructure and the agriculture sector from these events were estimated at \$6.7 billion with an additional \$762.1 million estimated for further road improvement and rehabilitation.



2019

The country was impacted by drought conditions that affected the agriculture sector as well as domestic water supply. Losses to the agriculture sector were estimated at \$61.4 million



2022

In 2022, the island experienced heavy rainfall in January and February affecting the agriculture sector mainly with \$76.8 million in crop losses. In September Tropical Storm Ian led to infrastructure and agriculture sector damage of \$14 billion.



2023

Potential Tropical Cyclone Number 22 was the only system that affected Jamaica for the 2023 Atlantic Hurricane Season and resulted in loss and damage totalling over \$844.5 million



2024

In 2024 Hurricane Beryl made landfall June 28 and led to devastation across western Jamaica with loss and damage of \$56.7 billion; four lives were lost and 74 injured. Tropical Storm Rafael passed the island in November and produced over 75 mm of rainfall leading to flooding, landslides and damage of \$13 billion and 2 lives lost.



2025

Hurricane Melissa made landfall October 28, 2025 and caused the most damages of any disaster in the country's history. Loss and damages of \$19 trillion across sectors were incurred and 45 lives lost.

SPATIAL PLANNING

Context

Land as a finite resource will always attract competing interests- from residential development and industrial placement to the preservation of nature reserves. Balancing these demands is paramount to sustainable development. Small states face a particularly acute challenge of resource management, navigating the crises brought on by climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. Addressing the demand for land across sectors goes beyond traditional land use management and places spatial planning at the centre of the policy response.

In making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; SDG 11 incorporates targets that seek to improve housing, transport, urbanisation, cultural heritage, disaster risk management and achieve harmony with the natural environment. These attributes as a whole complement the ethos of the 2030 Agenda and align with myriad SDGs related to poverty, economic growth and the environment. In the 2024 study on accelerating the SDGs in Jamaica, SDG 11 had strong positive correlations with SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth, SDG 13 (climate action) and SDG 15 (life on land).¹⁵⁹ It is therefore prudent not only to place emphasis on these attributes but to accelerate the legislative and programmatic work to respond to rapid urbanisation, disaster risk reduction, cultural heritage retention and socioeconomic development.

Globally, urbanisation is expected to continue at a rapid pace, placing increasing strain on cities and other urban areas while also undermining rural development. Jamaica is no exception, with the share of urban population growing by 11.0 per cent between 2011 and 2022. Increased urbanisation brings challenges related to transport, waste management, water distribution, appropriate housing solutions and socioeconomic inclusion if not properly regulated and managed. Government action to address the growing rural-urban gap through targeted investment, effective regulation and responsive planning – is essential when internal migration concentrates pressure on cities and other urban areas.

In Jamaica, community development carries added significance given the island's strong cultural heritage and sporting prowess. Preservation of cultural assets and development of sport from grassroots level add a further layer of complexity to planning and design. Notwithstanding, heritage sites contribute to economic growth and improved livelihoods, bringing genuine utility to conservation.

Jamaica's location in the Atlantic places it within a zone subject to the annual threat of tropical storms and hurricanes, compounded by five major fault lines within the Caribbean tectonic region that elevates earthquake risk. As a result, disaster risk vulnerability is increasingly built into policy development.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Tennant, Tracey & Tennant. 2025. Acceleration of SDG Implementation in Jamaica. Prepared for the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

With over 300 of the island's 947 communities considered highly vulnerable to hazards according to the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM),¹⁶¹ regulating development and enforcing building codes within appropriate spatial boundaries must be directed by national spatial planning regulations.

Thematic Discussion

Spatial planning supports the achievement of the 2030 Agenda through integrated development planning that extends well beyond land utilisation. Spatial planning methods seek to balance the competing demands of society, economic interests and environmental resilience by deploying technology, building stakeholder consensus and exercising strong governance. In the context of achieving the SDGs, spatial planning encompasses a collection of tools and resources from public and private partners to create "rational territorial organization of land uses and the linkages between them, to balance demands for development with the need to protect the environment and to achieve social and economic development objectives"¹⁶²

Spatial planning techniques vary along a spectrum from directive to collaborative. Directive approaches are top down, rooted in planning authority in central government and statutory planning authorities. Collaborative approaches are flexible and informed by community experiences. In Jamaica, a mixed approach is adopted to achieve development objectives, recognising that the island is not a homogenous geographic space - coastal regions, peri-urban spaces, mountainous or hilly terrains and the agricultural plains each have distinct needs and priorities.

Physical plans dating between 1970 and 1978 emphasised the need for citizen collaboration in planning and design. It was noted "no institutionalised system exists to ensure and encourage inputs from all the strata of the society in order to produce plans which are moulded by the hands of the entire society". Formal structures for inclusion of the



AIMS OF SPATIAL PLANNING

- a. Promote territorial cohesion through a more balanced social and economic development of regions, and improved competitiveness;
- b. Promote territorial cohesion through a more balanced social and economic development of regions, and improved competitiveness;
- c. Promote more balanced accessibility;
- d. Develop access to information and knowledge;
- e. Reduce environmental damage;
- f. Enhance and protect natural resources and natural heritage;
- g. Enhance culture heritage as a factor for development;
- h. Develop energy resources while maintaining safety;
- i. Encourage high-quality, sustainable tourism;
- j. Limit the impact of natural disasters.

Source: UNECE (2008)

¹⁶⁰ Jamaica's disaster management framework is guided by the Disaster Risk Management Act (2015) and Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy 2020 - 2040

¹⁶¹ Ministry of Local Government and Community Development. 2020. Jamaica's Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy and Strategy 2020 - 2040

¹⁶² United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). Spatial Planning: Key Instrument for Development and Effective Governance with Special Reference to Countries in Transition. Geneva: United Nations, 2008.

population in planning decisions, reflected in SDG indicator 11.3.2, are now embedded in development practice. The update of Parish Development Orders between 2013 and 2024 was a rigorous exercise with public comment invited through community consultations, and the release of draft materials at post offices, municipal corporations, and parish libraries.

Area based management tools are one such method, which work to ensure preservation of ecologically sensitive spaces, balancing terrestrial and marine conservation with economic activity. Applications include the designation of marine protected areas, forest management zones, and special economic zones for heavy infrastructure and commercial development.

As the needs of society change, flexibility is embedded in spatial planning through adaptive techniques that can monitor land use changes, migration patterns and economic activities. Jamaica's ageing population presents an emerging challenge, as accessibility and mobility become increasingly critical considerations in planning and design.

Urban and Rural Development

Despite declining population growth overall, internal migration has driven increasing urbanisation in Jamaica. The 2022 National Population and Housing Census identified a 12.0 per cent shift in the rural-to-urban share of enumeration districts between 2011 and 2022, from 50:50 to 39:61 – consistent with global predictions that 60.0 per cent of the world's population will reside in cities by 2030.

The increase in urban population brings with it a range of challenges:¹⁶⁵

- **Traffic congestion and emissions:** The Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area (GKMA) is home to over one million persons with commuting workers further adding to traffic volumes. The Human Resource Management Association of Jamaica estimates persons spend 90 minutes daily in traffic, whether in public or private transport.¹⁶⁶ Vehicle ownership has increased since 2015, with certificates of fitness issued through the Island Traffic Authority moving from 339 625 in 2015 to 640 219 vehicles in 2024. Public transport supply has contracted over the same period: the number of scheduled bus routes declined from 96 in 2015 to 68 in 2024, and the monthly frequency of bus services fell from 426 to 168.¹⁶⁷ This combination of increased private vehicle use and declining public transport has intensified emissions in urban areas, with annual average in 2024 ranged between 26 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 77 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for PM_{10} and ranged between 8 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 24 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ for $\text{PM}_{2.5}$.
- **Water access:** Despite Jamaica's exploitable water resources of 3 930 million cubic metres (6.0 per cent of effective rainfall) being more than sufficient to meet annual demand of 1 813 million cubic metres, access to safely managed water services remains deeply unequal. While

¹⁶⁵ UNCTAD. Challenges of sustainable urban development Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Urban Development in a Post-pandemic World. 2022. United Nations. <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210018920c004>

¹⁶⁶ Jamaica Economy Panel. 2023. Discussion on the Economics of Congestion

¹⁶⁷ PIOJ. 2025. Economic and Social Survey 2024

78.0 per cent of households nationally report access to an improved drinking water source, only 32.5 per cent of Rural Area households access water via an indoor tap/pipe, compared to 78.5 per cent in the GKMA. Service reliability is also a persistent issue: 8.2 per cent of households experience water lock-offs, with GKMA residents averaging 8.7 lock-offs in the 30-day survey period in 2023, to 8.6 in other towns and 7.5 in rural areas.¹⁶⁸ These access inequalities also increase the risk of communicable diseases where unregulated sanitation practices and pollution coexist.

- **Crime and safety:** The perception of safety profoundly shapes where people choose to live and work, driving economic disparities and widening inequality. The 2023 National Crime Victimization Survey reports that 89.9 per cent of persons nationally feel safe walking alone in their community during the day, with 87.5 per cent in urban areas and 92.4 per cent in rural areas. This significantly declines for those at night to 69.4 per cent of persons on average, 63.4 per cent in urban areas and 76.2 per cent in rural areas.¹⁶⁹

Squatting represents more than a rural or urban challenging – it is a national issue requiring a national strategy. Informal settlements undermine socioeconomic development for individuals and, in some cases, harm the natural environment. The National Squatter Management Policy (2022) identifies three main types of informal settlements in Jamaica; residential, commercial and agricultural. In eight of the fourteen parishes completed for the squatter management survey, there were 407 informal settlements covering 8 642.8 hectares (0.7 per cent of land mass) where 81.0 per cent of residents were long term residents of their communities.¹⁷⁰

Prolonged occupancy of informal settlements can exacerbate generational poverty as the absence of secure legal tenure prevents use of dwellings as collateral for formal financial arrangements. The chronic housing shortage intensifies squatting pressure as affordable homes become increasingly inaccessible. Nationally 57.5 per cent of persons reside in a home owned by a household member, and 47.3 per cent of persons own their land. In response to the housing deficit, the National Housing Policy and Implementation Plan (2023) sets a target of 15 000 new units per annum plus the renovation of 2 400 units - linked to complementary policies on gender, persons with disabilities, transport and squatting. It is this compendium approach which is used in a broader national spatial plan.

Effective spatial plans combine the bottom-up insights from consultation and information gathering that can address needs of citizens and businesses, as well as the legally binding capabilities of an act of parliament. This dual character is critical when incorporating disaster risk management principles that not only seek to protect the environment but to prevent loss of life and livelihoods from natural hazards.

¹⁶⁸ PIOJ.2026. Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023.

¹⁶⁹ Statistical Institute of Jamaica & Ministry of National Security. 2025. 2023 Jamaica National Crime Victimization Survey (JNCVS) Report, Kingston, Jamaica: STATIN

¹⁷⁰ National Squatter Management Policy and Implementation Plan (2024)

Disaster Risk Reduction

Jamaica's vulnerability to natural hazards demands strong and sustained policy responses to lessen the risks posed by climate-related events. The increased frequency of significant weather events driven by climate change makes building resilience an urgent priority. Vulnerability assessments conducted by the University of the West Indies, Mona, found that an estimated 271 118 households are exposed to flood waters from excess rainfall at varying degrees of intensity; 174 communities face the risk of critical wind velocities; and 285 communities are at risk of storm surge.¹⁷¹

The Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy and Strategy, (CDRM) - the first of its kind - employs a multisectoral approach to building resilience. The CDRM identifies spatial and sectoral planning as core tools in risk reduction, with a completed national spatial plan designated as a key policy tool for implementation by 2040. A key component of the CDRM is the importance of social protection to address vulnerability to poverty resulting from natural hazards, including the large segment of the population that is underinsured or uninsured.

A key concern in the development of communities, rural or urban, is the high risk of natural hazards and low number of insured properties. This is further exacerbated by the prevalence of informal communities. Estimates from the Insurance Association of Jamaica are that 20.0 per cent of homes are insured, and of this number, 95.0 per cent are underinsured. This creates significant fiscal pressure for the government, which has to rebuild infrastructure, maintain budgetary allocations and the social safety net. Initial damage assessment from Hurricane Melissa estimates US\$3.674 billion to the housing stock.¹⁷²

Spatial planning applied at the local and national level, with adaptive technology to mitigate hazards and risks to communities and development is the best approach to ensure resilience and recovery. Currently Jamaica's Systemic Risk Assessment Tool (J-SRAT) is one such technique that supports both pre-disaster planning and post-disaster assessment, informing hazard risk evaluations and guiding policy makers on appropriate locations for development. The tool recently identified communities vulnerable to the impact of Hurricane Melissa, which made landfall in October 2025. As Jamaica rebuilds the western region and seeks to strengthen resilience in other areas, hazard-prone mapping and no-build zoning will need to be enforced to reduce risk.

COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY PERSPECTIVES:

Land tenure was identified by community representatives from Westmoreland, St. Elizabeth, Hanover, and other parishes as a systemic and unresolved barrier to housing security, disaster resilience, and access to services. Many households are long-term residents on land to which they hold no formal title, due in part to historical informal sales by persons who did not hold legal authority. This situation leaves occupants unable to secure titles.

The consequences are wide-ranging. Without proof of ownership, households cannot access housing improvement support, disaster relief assistance, or social protection benefits tied to residency. Following Hurricane Melissa, many occupants who had lived on land for generations were excluded from post-disaster support. Participants stressed that piecemeal administrative fixes are insufficient and called for legislative intervention to regularise tenure, address historical irregularities, and establish secure pathways for long-standing occupants and informal settlers on both public and private lands.

¹⁷¹ The University of the West Indies, Mona (Eds.). 2022. Risk / Vulnerability Assessments and Preparation of Climate Change Adaptation Strategies / Plans for Five Priority Sectors: Housing, Coastal Resources, Water, Health and Tourism. Produced for the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Jamaica.

¹⁷² World Bank. 20205. Global Rapid Post-Disaster Damage Estimation Report: Hurricane Melissa 2025 Jamaica.

The systems approach applied in spatial planning is suited for mitigating disaster risk as effective spatial plans focus on long term planning, are consultative, and recognise unique and community-based approaches, while applying science and technology to modelling.

Localisation

The strategic value of spatial planning lies in its requirement for collaboration and interdisciplinary integration that builds communities. Jamaica has for years emphasised community development and localisation of development practices that ensure synergy between national development objectives and ground-level actions. The Local Governance Act (2016) and Building Act (2018) foster inclusive, participatory and sustainable urbanisation and human settlement planning. The Local Governance Act (2016) makes provision for community participation; facilitating local action and access to services that promote growth and development at the local level. It facilitates the establishment of local level governance systems that enable citizens to become active agents in the development process.

Governance at the local level is further exercised in the structure of community development. The hierarchical structure has at the base, community development committees which are representative of different community-based organisations. These are then represented at regional and municipal levels. This structure not only supports local development but remains instrumental in disaster risk management and recovery efforts by enabling access to citizens and directing resources to those in greatest need.

Further entrenching development at the local level, the number of Local Sustainable Development Plans (LSDPs) is expected to grow in the medium term, with the addition of the Portmore municipality and the parishes of St Thomas and St James to the existing list of Manchester, Trelawny, St Elizabeth, Clarendon and St Catherine. LSDPs promote the orderly development of a parish and major towns; guiding the local planning authorities on infrastructure, business/industrial and housing needs. In keeping pace with current issues, the LSDP for Clarendon was updated to reflect the migration patterns affecting its local population.

In localising spatial planning, the role of cultural assets in development emerges due to the large cadre of heritage sites and the socio-economic relevance of these sites to communities. These encompass, built, natural and underwater sites and are a major part of national identity as well as economic assets for community tourism, or as major standalone tourist attractions. Governed by the Jamaica National Heritage Act, five heritage districts – Spanish Town, Port Royal, Black River, Titchfield Hill and Falmouth— support myriad economic activities while managing vulnerabilities to disaster.¹⁷³ Jamaica further has World Heritage List inscriptions of The Blue and John Crow Mountains (BJCM) in 2015 and The Archaeological Landscape of 17th Century Port Royal in 2025. Inscriptions of World Heritage Sites encourage, and support increased economic growth and provide sustainable livelihoods, both traditional and alternative, for the communities where they are situated. Cultural/Heritage/Community

tourism is encouraged, and traditional knowledge and ways of life are actively protected. Natural sites such as BJCM protect endemic species and landscapes which promote climate resilience and diversity in nature. Within the BJCM are the Windward Maroon communities - Moore Town, Charles Town and Scotts Hall.

Beyond 2030

As Jamaica seeks to accelerate achievement of the 2030 Agenda, effective spatial planning has catalytic effects across multiple goals. The application of robust spatial planning can serve to reduce poverty by mitigating disaster risk, stimulating economic development and preserving the natural environment through area-based management tools, and aiding in the design of safe, secure and vibrant communities for social wellbeing. The immediate challenges to be addressed include, but are not limited to:

- Balancing the increase in density in urban areas with requisite infrastructural support for water, energy and waste management and housing
- Reducing the number of unplanned settlements on marginal and environmentally sensitive lands, particularly in urban areas by enforcing building protocols and implementing managed relocation programmes where necessary
- Strengthening public transportation systems; expanding route coverage in rural areas; improving access for vulnerable social groups; and increasing the frequency and reliability of urban transport services
- Reviewing the requirements for environmental impact assessments to extend to projects beyond the present scope.¹⁷⁴

The implications for achievement of SDG 11 support broad achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Anchor legislation in the form of a spatial plan directs government regulation and supports orderly, efficient development across the country. A more consultative and participatory approach is needed to ensure transparency in development approvals and meaningful citizen and community engagement. Beyond 2030, effective spatial planning will be a critical tool for small island developing states like Jamaica, enabling them to harness the benefits of urban density, reduce informality, strengthen disaster resilience, and achieve sustainability outcomes.

¹⁷³ The historic town of Black River was completely devastated by Hurricane Melissa and presents a unique challenge for rebuilding due to the historical value of some sites.

¹⁷⁴ Tennant, Tracey & Tennant. 2025. Acceleration of SDG Implementation in Jamaica. Prepared for the Planning Institute of Jamaica

Regional Analysis

Although the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) region has made progress in the implementation of 11 to create inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities, there are several challenges that stymie their progress. Being geographically located in the most disaster-prone zone in the world makes it extremely critical that Caribbean SIDS improve or establish their Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) to support disaster risk management (DRM) (Michel et al, 2023).

The Caribbean Geospatial Development Initiative (CARIGEO) of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management, UN-GGIM: Americas has been assisting the region in promoting and strengthening the geospatial information infrastructure and management capacities. Alongside several national, regional and international stakeholders, it hosted the first regional United Nations Integrated Geospatial Information Framework (UN-IGIF) in 2023 in Saint Lucia. This framework is key to aiding countries streamline, strengthen and maximise their geospatial information management. Michel et al (2023) further identified gaps in the existing SDI in SIDS which should be reconciled to ensure it can respond to DRM issues. Similarly, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) acknowledges the importance of spatial planning and recognizes the use of geospatial technologies as effective tools that enhance data collection and analysis to aid in the sustainable development of SIDS. Furthermore, spatial planning is cross-cutting as it addresses several thematic areas. For example, urban settlement includes people, housing, critical infrastructure, and vital economic sectors such as tourism, transportation, manufacturing (ECLAC, 2024).

Mycoo and Bharath (2021) call on Caribbean countries to amplify their efforts to further advance SDG 11, especially considering that the SDGs window is quickly closing. Advancing this goal would require navigating the political complexities of the country. Their paper referenced the applicability of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) as it makes way for the development of more robust planning and governance to realise sustainable cities and communities. Recommendations emerging from this study included the need for Caribbean SIDS to build synergies between SDG 11 and the NUA utilising effective partnerships across the national landscape to address social, economic and planetary complications that nations must face. Also, the development of an urban governance framework enabling the integration of spatial planning and adoption of new technologies were highlighted.

The Economic and Social Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC (2024) provides some policy guidelines for Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago to treat with the challenges posed by the disproportionate increase in urbanised areas in relative to populations. The study examined the spread of low-density urban settlements which is a serious concern for SIDS. Some of the policy considerations the study offers includes climate change and adaptation policies which arrest the physical spread of low-density urban settlements; the development and enforcement of land use policies surrounding existing urban settlements; geospatial institutional capacities and cross-sectoral

cooperation; access and production of timely geospatial information and statistics disaggregated at the sub-national levels.

Jamaica has made significant advances in spatial planning and we are considered a leader in the utilisation of geospatial technologies as we continue to seek the successful achievement of our national and international sustainable development goals.

Having recently completed our national IGIF workshop, the second in the region, it is another accomplishment in our journey as we move towards improving our capacity to fully realise SDG 11.



By 2035, Jamaica has achieved 95% renewable energy, powered by the relentless Caribbean sun, wind farms in St. Elizabeth and advanced geothermal projects. The island is a lush, green oasis. Kingston, once bustling with chaotic traffic, is now a model of smart-city infrastructure. Electric, autonomous public transit glides silently through clean, tree-lined streets, and high-speed, green-powered trains connect the island from Negril to Morant Bay.

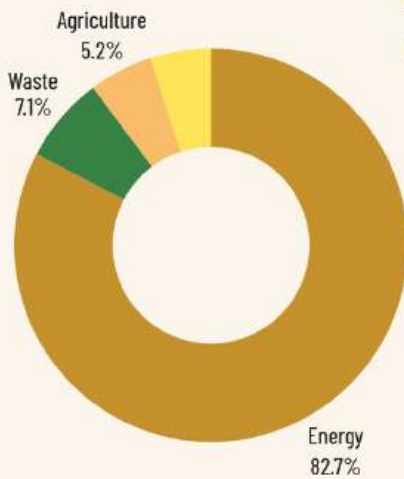
▶ **GREG MCDUFFUS,**
Seaforth High School



Goal 12

Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Greenhouse Gas Emissions (2022)



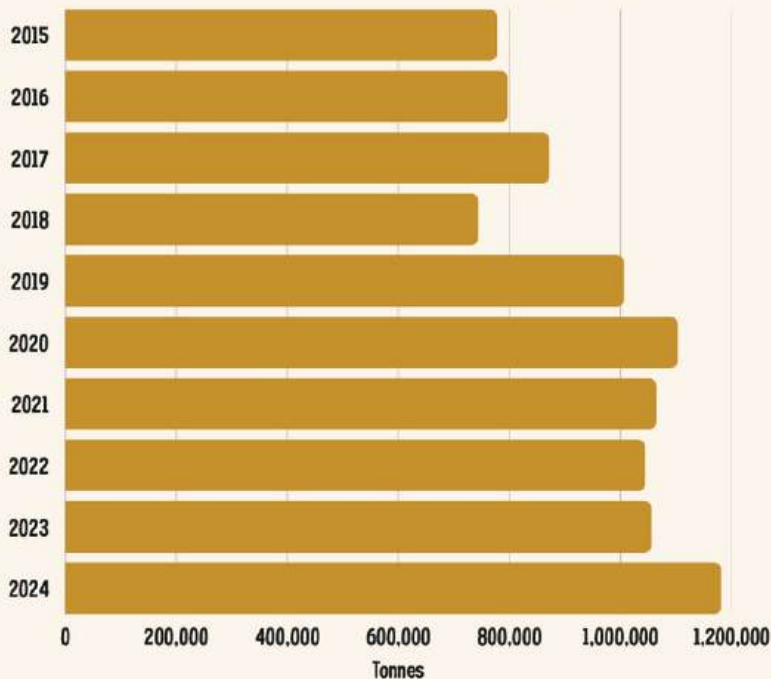
+14.7%

Increase from 2015



26.4%
households burning garbage (2023)

National Solid Waste Collection (2024)



51%
recycling rate of plastic bottles (2025)

CIRCULAR ECONOMIES

Context

The interconnectedness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reflects the dynamism of sustainable development and the confluence of issues that countries face. This is represented in SDG 12 - to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. In practice, achieving SDG 12 bridges environmental and economic concerns, targeting industrial and household practices through government regulation, international cooperation and public private partnerships.

The complementary approach to environmental and economic development was a recurring theme of the Rio+20 Conference, where the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Production and Consumption (10YFP) was established. The 10YFP recognised the need for “decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation by improving efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources and production processes and reducing resource degradation, pollution and waste”.¹⁷⁵ The decoupling of growth from environmental degradation is a notable acknowledgement in efforts to move away from linear production and consumption which lead to increased waste and degraded ecosystems.

In moving away from linear economic models, the circular economy has emerged as an approach to maximise the value of products. Through strong ecological principles, the circular economy aims to eliminate waste and pollution and regenerate nature through sustainable design principles that are low in environmental impact.



FIGURE 19 Linear Economy vs Circular Economy Source: United Nations Environment Programme

Thematic Discussion

The circular economy as a concept has increasingly gained traction in sustainable development practice, owing to the potential broad impact for not only reducing, but also reversing some effects of the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. As the concept is developed further through practice and adoption by countries and firms, a social dimension has been suggested by Murray et al to present the circular economy as an economic model wherein planning, resourcing, procurement, production and reprocessing are designed and managed, as both process and output, to maximise ecosystem functioning and human well-being.¹⁷⁵

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has proposed 15 core indicators for the circular economy based on four frameworks: material lifecycle and value chain which includes indicators for production and waste generation; interactions with the environment covering greenhouse gas emission and pollutant discharge; responses and actions of government and firms through taxes or investments; and socioeconomic opportunities for a just transition related to jobs in the circular economy sectors.¹⁷⁷

The circular economy can therefore be integrated across the SDGs due to the relevance to resilience, sustainable food production, pollution, resource efficiency in industry and ecosystem restoration, among other areas. Different aspects of the circular economy have been adopted across the globe, with emphasis on recycling and remanufacturing or reshaping agricultural production and mining practices to lessen ecological impact. Some European countries have been working to reduce raw material use, close material loops and work towards circular systems. The Netherlands, for example, has set a target of 2050 for its transition to a circular economy, with a primary goal of zero waste. The phased approach presented foresees 50.0 per cent reduction in the use of primary raw materials (minerals, fossil fuels and metals) by 2030.¹⁷⁸

In Jamaica's context, the circular economy presents a supportive framework for sustainable development. While the economy is heavily dominated by services accounting for 79.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), the value to be derived from goods-producing industries remains largely untapped, and continues to affect growth. Furthermore, production and consumption have increased owing to technological improvements, increased purchasing power and the growing tourism market, contributing to waste generation, air and marine pollution.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations. The Future We Want: Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). A/CONF.216/5. New York: United Nations, 2012. <https://docs.un.org/en/A/CONF.216/5>

¹⁷⁶ Murray, A., Skene, K. & Haynes, K. The Circular Economy: An Interdisciplinary Exploration of the Concept and Application in a Global Context. *J Bus Ethics* 140, 369–380 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2693-2>

¹⁷⁷ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Circular Economy: From Indicators and Data to Policy-Making. Nairobi: UNEP, 2023. <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/44842/Circular-Economy-from-Indicators-and-Data-to-Policy-making.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

¹⁷⁸ Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment and Ministry of Economic Affairs. A Circular Economy in the Netherlands by 2050. The Hague: Government of the Netherlands, September 2016. https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/sites/default/files/17037circulaireeconomie_en.pdf (https://circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform/sites/default/files/17037circulaireeconomie_en.pdf)

Business and household practices are crucial to advancing the circular economy as consumer behaviour and firm output operate in tandem. This relationship impacts the natural environment at both ends of the value chain through raw material use, energy consumption and waste generation. Unsustainable household and business practices were identified as binding constraints to advancing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Jamaica by Tennant et al, 2025, specifically in the achievement of SDGs 2, 6, 11 and 15.

Waste

Waste management is a primary motivator for pursuing circular approaches, and household behaviour has been identified as a barrier to improving systems at municipal and national levels.¹⁷⁹ Data from the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) show that for 2023, formal garbage disposal methods are used by 69.5 per cent of households, while burning is the method for 26.4 per cent of households. Burning is the most used method of disposal for households in rural areas (46.7 per cent) and by the poorest quintile (48.7 per cent). Open air burning of garbage can lead to increased amounts of black carbon, found in the fine PM_{2.5} particles. Jamaica has committed to limiting levels of PM_{2.5} to below 15 µg/ m³ per annum.

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In 2024, annual averages for PM₁₀ ranged between 26 µg/m³ and 77 µg/ m³ while annual averages for PM_{2.5} ranged between 8 µg/ m³ and 24 µg/ m³ in the urban areas monitored by the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA). The upper bound of both pollutants exceeded the annual ambient standard of 40 µg/ m³ and 15 µg/ m³ respectively.^{[1][2]} Lowering these levels is a focus of policies including the Emissions Policy Framework (2021) and the Climate Change Policy Framework (2023) which support efforts at low-carbon development. Recent regulatory amendments demonstrate Jamaica's commitment to improving ambient air quality. The Road Traffic Regulations 2022, (which now include motor vehicle exhaust emission standards), and the 2024 Natural Resources Conservation Authority Ambient Air Quality Standards Regulations—have tightened the limits that were in place for over three decades and introduced a new standard for PM_{2.5} which had not previously been regulated.

Pollution events reported to the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) have declined relative to a peak of 87 in 2015, averaging 51 per annum in 2024. Of the 57 incidents in 2024, the largest category was uncontrolled trade effluent discharge. Recent data show a shift from prior years when air pollution incidents were the most prevalent category reported.¹⁸⁰

Pollution is further degrading the marine ecosystem, with marine water quality indicators for nitrates, phosphates, biochemical oxygen demand and faecal coliform exceeding minimum standards at all sites tested in 2024.¹⁸¹ Jamaica seeks to ensure the marine ecosystem is protected from terrestrial pollution through its accession to the Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region (Cartagena Convention). The island's coasts and marine

^{[1][2]} These standards were revised in the 2024 amendment to the Natural Resources Conservation (Ambient Air Quality Standards) (Amendment) Regulations, 2024.

¹⁸⁰ Economic and Social Survey 2024

¹⁸¹ *ibid*

spaces are key economic resources for the tourism and fisheries sectors, as well as home to coral and mangroves that provide natural hazards protection. The implications for responsible practices that limit environmental impact are spread across economic and social interests, as improper disposal of waste, illegal mining and deforestation can affect livelihoods and destabilise communities.

Global efforts to reduce the impacts of littering and pollution have been ongoing in Jamaica for decades. One notable activity is the International Coastal Cleanup coordinated by the Ocean Conservancy. Jamaica has participated in the Cleanup since 1993, starting with 75 volunteers and approximately 1.6km of land.¹⁸² Up to 2024, 6 099 persons contributed to the collection of 31 757 kg of trash from 198.9km of coastline.¹⁸³ Plastic materials are ninth of the top ten collected items globally. In Jamaica, the leading items collected annually are plastic beverage bottles, caps, and plastic bags. From the 2024 cleanup, Jamaica's reported plastic bottle collection accounted for 15.1 per cent of the global total and one third below the Philippines' (20.9 percent) and the Dominican Republic's (23.6 per cent).¹⁸⁴

Other initiatives to combat marine pollution include the Ocean Cleanup project, in collaboration with Clean Harbours Jamaica and the Grace Kennedy Foundation, which uses interceptors at gullies around Kingston and St Andrew to reduce the flow of trash—an estimated 900 tonnes annually— into the Kingston harbour and surrounding sea.

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In measuring the circular economy, environmental impact across goods-producing sectors is covered through material flow accounts. Domestic material consumption measures the total amount of material (biomass, fossil fuels, metal ores and non-metallic minerals) in the economy enabling monitoring and targeting of regulations in conjunction with environmental impacts related to pollution. The aim is not to reduce output in isolation, but to ensure production is done sustainably – reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, limiting pollution, and maintaining or improving biodiversity.

INDICATOR	2015	2024	%CHANGE
CROP PRODUCTION (1000s TONNES)	2 279	1363	-40.2%
NON-CANE SUGAR PRODUCTION (1000s TONNES)	707	934	32.1%
MINERALS (1000s TONNES)	19 785	11 158	-43.6%
NON-METALLIC MINERALS (1000s TONNES)	1 612	1 673	3.8%
PETROLEUM PRODUCTS (1000s LITRES)	1 310 186	885 652	-32.4%

TABLE 6 Domestic Production

SOURCE: Economic and Social Survey Jamaica

¹⁸² Center for Marine Conservation. 1994. International Coastal Cleanup Results. Washington DC:

¹⁸³ Ocean Conservancy. 2025. International Coastal Cleanup 24 – 25 Report. Washington DC:

¹⁸⁴ ibid

Agriculture

In circular economies, agricultural production is closely monitored owing to its direct interaction with natural systems – land and water – and the potential for waste generation. Globally, biomass accounts for 26.4 per cent of domestic material footprint, below non-metallic minerals (47.8 per cent). In the Caribbean, however, biomass accounts for 47.3 percent of domestic material - leading other categories highlighting the salience of this industry.¹⁸⁵ As such, sustainable agricultural practices become necessary in pursuit of not only food security and ending hunger, but for environmental best practice that preserves watersheds and land management.

The available data on production from the industry domestically have fluctuated over the period 2015-2024. Total crop production has decreased due to the phasing out of sugar cane production, whereas non-cane production has grown 32.1 per cent since 2015. Hectares reaped increased by 18.5 per cent from 42 644 in 2015 to 50 564 in 2024.¹⁸⁶ Imports of agricultural products increased from 661 869 tonnes in 2015 to 1 332 342 tonnes in 2023 adding to the domestic flow of products and raw materials for processing or direct consumption.¹⁸⁷

Sustainable agricultural practices are promoted by the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) across product cycles to limit waste and spoilage, improve water use and maintain soil health. The Agro Parks and production zones managed by the Agro-Investment Corporation (AIC)—approximately 3 480 hectares—allow for farmers to use cluster development services, following Global Gap management systems and other best practice methods to boost production. In addition, water harvesting practices are utilised and promoted across the sector to reduce dependency on ground water and mitigate effects of drought periods.

Monitoring water demand from this sector remains a policy priority and is covered in the National Water Resources Master Plan. Agriculture demand is estimated as the third largest daily user (1.2 million m³), behind industry (2.7 million m³) and tourism (1.57 million m³).¹⁸⁹

Balancing production and biodiversity management has led to improvements in forest cover. Between 2013 and 2023, 3 922.29 hectares of secondary forest were converted for farming, and overall forest cover has grown by 7.9 per cent to 47.9 per cent of the island's land mass.¹⁹⁰

Industry

Manufacturing, mining and quarrying account for 10.2 per cent of goods and services production (2024) and 94.3 per cent of domestic export earnings (2024). The economic importance of these industries

¹⁸⁵ United Nations Statistics Division. 2025. UNdata. <https://unstats.un.org/>

¹⁸⁶ Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Mining Crop Area Reaped

¹⁸⁷ Commodity codes 02 International Trade Centre, Trade Map, accessed November 14, 2025, <https://www.trademap.org/>.

¹⁸⁸ Includes manufacturing, mining and quarrying

¹⁸⁹ Water Resources Authority. 2024. A National Water Resources Master Plan for Jamaica

¹⁹⁰ Forestry Department. 2024. State of Jamaica's Forests 2024.

therefore cannot be overstated. This value is juxtaposed by Jamaica's emission profile: industry accounts for 16.9 per cent of GHG emissions in 2022, down from 29.8 per cent in 2015.¹⁹¹ The industry's performance is influenced by market dynamics as mineral production has declined 43.6 per cent since 2015 due to a cessation of bauxite mining at some plants. In contrast, the reduction in petroleum products has resulted from the increased use of natural gas and renewable sources to power electricity generation, a trend that is expected to continue if energy targets are to be met.

Unlike the metallic minerals which have been declining in output—and are a finite resource—cement production has remained steady and, based on trends in infrastructure development, can rise. This trend is observed in Jamaica's revised nationally determined contribution (NDC) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. In Jamaica's NDC 3.0 submitted in 2025, industry was included, specifically the emissions from cement manufacture. The business as usual (BAU) approach estimated the cement industry emissions would increase by 22.0 per cent by 2035; however, the proposed mitigation measures, target an increase of 11.0 per cent, representing a potential decrease of 40ktCO₂.¹⁹² The key mitigation measure for industry relates to energy use and technological adoption. As cleaner sources are added to the energy mix, these can reduce the carbon footprint and coupled with low carbon technologies improve the profile of industrial production.

In applying circular economy methods, public private partnerships (PPPs) have been adopted across industries to support the energy transition and pollution reduction. The current project between the GOJ and Caribbean Cement to utilise end of use pneumatic tires from landfills as fuel in cement production extends the life cycle of the product, removes excess waste from landfills and provides an alternative fuel source. The Recycling Partners of Jamaica initiative, which targets a collection rate of 75.0 per cent of all plastic bottles sold locally is an islandwide recycling project led by manufacturers and distributors. As at 2024, the project has a 38.0 per cent recovery rate or 385 500 000 plastic bottles. Targeting plastic bottles for recycling can further contribute to the impact of waste in landfills, as plastic accounted for 16.8 per cent of waste up to 2022.

Energy

Energy is the largest contributor to GHG emissions and, as a result, has been the target of policies and strategies to lower reliance on fossil fuels. In executing circular economy approaches, energy is meant to be optimised in the manufacturing process at the design stage, from a mix of sources including renewables and through deriving energy from waste. In Jamaica, energy is primarily sourced from fossil fuels. Though the composition of fuel sources has changed since 2015, the share of fossil fuels in Jamaica's energy consumption has remained relatively unchanged from 96.1 per cent to 97.2 per cent in 2024. The introduction of liquefied natural gas has added a cleaner source to the mix, though still a fossil fuel that emits carbon dioxide (CO₂).

¹⁹¹ Climate Watch Historical GHG Emissions. 2025. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Available online at: <https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions>.

¹⁹² Climate Change Branch, 2025. New and Updated Nationally Determined Contribution of Jamaica – Jamaica's NDC 3.0

Petroleum-based fuels have declined in the energy mix but are still heavily used, with consumption growing by 14.9 per cent from 20.1 million barrels of oil equivalent (BOE) in 2015 to 23.1 million 2024. The increase in consumption is largely driven by the transportation sector, which consumed 59.6 per cent of petroleum products in 2024, up from 50.8 per cent in 2015.

Approaches to lowering transport emissions and applying circular concepts require a higher share of vehicles with alternative energy sources (hybrid and electric) using batteries and equipment that can be repurposed, alongside improvements to mass transit systems for movement of persons. The Electric Vehicle Policy (2023) is one such action that aims to encourage electric vehicle (EV) ownership and support the Strategic Framework for Electric Mobility with targets of 12.0 per cent and 16.0 per cent of private and public transport vehicles, respectively, having electric motors by 2030.

Energy is a crucial component for economic growth, as it supports every sector in the economy. The circular economy seeks to shift to sustainable production practices and not cease production. The energy efficiency targets in SDG 7 related to energy intensity, support the attainment of these objectives. Global energy intensity has declined from 4.26 megajoules per unit of GDP in 2015 to 3.87 in 2022, and in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, from 3.01 megajoules to 2.86. In contrast, for Jamaica it has increased from 3.86 megajoules to 4.03 over the same period.¹⁹³ With Jamaica's economic growth still averaging 1.0 to 1.5 per cent per annum, the expansion needed for the country to achieve other development targets has to be done in a manner that does not compromise environmental commitments.

Circular approaches therefore provide a roadmap for the policy coherence needed for different pieces of legislation to achieve a common goal. In the revised 2022 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) - A 20 Year Roadmap to Sustain and Enable Jamaica's Electricity Future, the GOJ sets new standards for renewable energy generation and updated 2020 obligations under the Paris Agreement. The revised IRP has a renewable energy portfolio standard of 50.0 per cent by 2030, up from 35.0 per cent in the 2018 IRP.¹⁹⁴ In conjunction with the IRP, the Long-Term Emissions Reduction Strategy targets net zero emissions by 2060 and mitigation measures are highly contingent on energy efficiency.

Lessons Learnt/Best Practice

Advancing a circular economy requires strong local action at its core. The involvement of community actors in monitoring and implementing household and business practices is essential. This is evidenced by the special projects across the island led by the GOJ, private sector and development partners which target specific regions. Support from communities has been strong for short-term projects and events with high visibility.

In contrast, achieving the long-term dimensions of the circular economy requires strong legislative frameworks for regulation and ensuring compliance, evidenced in the approach to plastic waste

¹⁹³ United Nations Statistics Division. 2025. UNdata. <https://unstats.un.org/>

¹⁹⁴ Ministry of Science, Energy, Telecommunications and Transport, 2023. 2022 Jamaica Integrated Resource Plan 2018 IRP Review and Update A 20 Year Roadmap to Sustain and Enable Jamaica's Electricity Future

reduction. A persistent gap is the capacity to measure impact and maintain efforts once a project has concluded, and the data systems to report on national and local level indicators.

Resource Requirements

Capacity-building programmes and public education about the benefits of sustainable consumption and production remain fundamental to achieving SDG 12. Key to implementing circular approaches is the data capacity to monitor the impacts of production and consumption practices. Jamaica's current capacity to report on SDG 12 indicators remains challenged. Changing household behaviour, continuous messaging and engagement on reuse and recycling, supported by the physical infrastructure to do so – particularly a sanitary landfill, waste-to-energy facilities, and remanufacturing sites.

The high concentration of food waste and garden waste presents an organic recovery potential of 39.5 per cent, with an additional 33.4 per cent from paper, cardboard and other material waste.¹⁹⁵ This first step towards circularity can support recycling and reuse efforts, creating opportunities for private enterprise to support circular transitions.

Despite the existence of the Trade (Plastic Packaging Materials Prohibition) Order (2018) and the Natural Resources Conservation Authority (Plastic Packaging Materials Prohibition) Order (2018) to reduce plastic pollution, a national recycling facility and remanufacturing centres remain absent – limiting the extent to which product life cycles can be extended at scale.

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Beyond 2030

At the current pace of efforts, SDG 12 will not be achieved by 2030. As a result, Jamaica and partners have been working to improve resource efficiency and waste collection, as well as limit pollution. Applying principles of long-term development planning, the IRP and Long-Term Emissions Reduction Strategy present roadmaps that can be achieved by a series of mitigation measures grounded in circular economy fundamentals.

Jamaica's small open economy relies on resource extraction, land utilisation and the natural environment to supply food, construction materials and economic development. However, the harm being done to the environment through air and marine pollution can reverse the economic gains being made, and worsen the impacts of natural hazards like flooding and storm surges, leading to deteriorated social prospects. Further, with high energy intensity, achieving economic growth targets without resource efficient methods could further harm the environment and reverse or counteract other mitigation measures. As we look beyond 2030, applying principles of the circular economy present an opportunity to advance development that is inclusive and lasting.

¹⁹⁵ Inter-American Development Bank. 2022. Waste Characterization Study in Jamaica,

Regional Analysis

We recognize that the traditional “take-make-dispose” linear growth model is no longer viable for small island developing states. Transitioning to a circular economy is, therefore, not only an environmental imperative but a strategic necessity for ensuring long-term economic resilience. Along this line, CARICOM’s *Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Framework (2024-2025)* identifies sustainable consumption and production as a core theme. Furthermore, ECLAC’s 40th Session document underscores that transitioning to a circular economy is a key pathway out of development traps and towards productive transformation.

However, countries across Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) face common pressures in this transition. According to ECLAC’s 2024 *Natural Resources Outlook*, while economic structures vary across the region, natural resource exports remain a dominant feature in most national economies, particularly in South America (e.g., copper and lithium in Chile and Peru, agricultural products in Argentina and Brazil). ECLAC has identified this pattern of heavy reliance on natural resources with exports concentrated in low-value-added primary products as a root cause of the region’s low-growth trap. Meanwhile, waste management remains a critical concern across the LAC. According to a May 2025 *World Economic Forum*, the average recycling rate in LAC remains around 4.0 per cent, far below Europe’s 49.0 per cent, largely due to limited infrastructure and the dominance of informal waste collection. Most member states also lack centralized sewage treatment systems, leading to untreated effluent and polluted runoff directly impacting the marine environment. New challenges are also emerging. The rapid adoption of electric mobility, for instance, introduces waste management for batteries and electronic components, as highlighted by a GIZ (2025) regional study.

Addressing these challenges within a circular economy framework is essential, not only to mitigate environmental risks, but to transform waste streams into opportunities for resource recovery, innovation, and the creation of a truly sustainable economic model.

Region’s Best Practices

- I. In the circular economy transition, Barbados emerges as a leader in the e-mobility sector not just by electrifying transport, but by closing the loops on batteries. As of January 2026, the Barbados Transport Board has added 35 new electric buses to its fleet, bringing the total number of electric vehicles in the country to over 700, supported by more than 130 public charging stations. Throughout the process, the manufacturer BYD, a global leader in electric buses, has established a local presence in Barbados to support technical operations and maintenance. The Government has partnered with BYD to train local technical teams to work alongside the BYD team, ensuring maintenance efficiency and fleet longevity. Barbados has simultaneously invested heavily in both road and charging infrastructure. The country began building its

charging network in 2013, with the Light & Power Company not only helping finance charging stations but also serving as an early adopter by integrating EVs into its own fleet. Starting with the electrification of DHL's delivery fleet, the government progressively expanded to public transport. For battery recycling, Barbados-based company Megapower has an established program collecting and repurposing used EV batteries for applications such as solar energy storage, offering a valuable regional model for exploring "second life" battery applications.

II. In urban solid waste management, the city of Salvador, Brazil, launched the RODA project in July 2025. The pilot project offers scheduled door-to-door collection of recyclables: residents and businesses book pickups via an online platform or WhatsApp, and formally contracted waste picker cooperatives collect the materials using electric tuk-tuks, ensuring low-emission transport. The project is authorized under Brazil's Recycling Incentive Law (Lei 14.260/2021), allowing companies to direct up to 1 per cent of their tax liability and individuals up to 6 per cent to support the initiative, providing sustainable financing for the circular economy. In its first 100 days of operation (through December 2025), the project collected over 34.5 tons of recyclable waste, served 284 registered participants, reduced 348 kg of CO₂ emissions, and achieved a 35.0 per cent increase in cooperative members' income and a 21.0 per cent increase in recyclable material recovery, with a rejection rate of just 5.0 per cent. The project was showcased as a Brazilian innovation case at the official COP30 agenda. This integrated model of clean logistics, data intelligence, and social inclusion offers valuable lessons.

The circular economy is intrinsically linked to climate action (SDG 13), the blue economy (SDG 14), and gender equality (SDG 5). Achieving a sound circular economy is not isolated, but a nexus invigorating all parts of society. For example, Barbados's investment in electric buses simultaneously advances decarbonization, protects coastal ecosystems from pollution, and creates new technical opportunities across genders, while Brazil's RODA project demonstrates how waste pickers, often marginalized, can become core contributors to a circular economy, directly advancing SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work).

However, achieving this transition is not easy, and ECLAC's TOPP framework (ECLAC 2024) serves as a guide for us and other Caribbean SIDS. For Jamaica, strengthening these capabilities aligns with the sustainable financing principles of the Sevilla Commitment and responds to our need to build inclusive and sustainable futures as advocated by ECLAC. By doing so, we can transform our waste challenges into opportunities following Barbados' lead in e-mobility and battery circularity, and Brazil's model of inclusive waste management that turns marginalized waste pickers into core contributors to the circular economy, building a resilient, inclusive, and truly circular economy for the Caribbean.

“

*There were colorful trash bins everywhere!
Every single house was recycling...
The big gully down the road?
Totally clear! No old tires or snack bags anywhere.
It was so clean I felt like I was walking in a park.*

▶ **JOTHAM MAIS,**
Morris Knibb Preparatory School

Goal 13



Take urgent action to abolish climate change and all its impacts



Jamaica has made bold steps in climate action, and this is evident in its commitments and follow-up actions through the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change



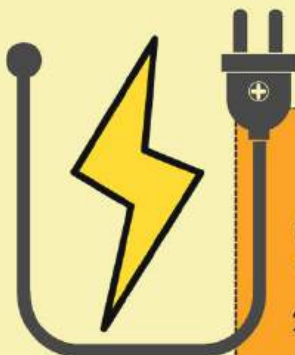
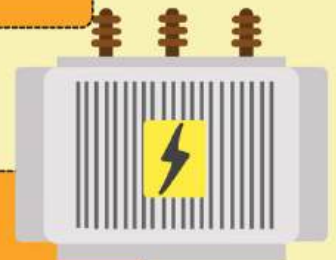
FIRST NDC

Scope on energy and emissions in 2005 measured at 10.5 MtCO₂eq. Modelled business-as-usual (BAU) of 14.4MtCO₂eq in 2030 and unconditional target of 7.8% reduction of BAU and conditional target of 10% reduction of BAU.



SECOND NDC

Scope changed to energy, land use change and forestry, base year emissions in 2005 measured at 8.2 MtCO₂eq. Modelled BAU of 7.2 MtCO₂eq in 2030 and unconditional target of 25.4% reduction of BAU and conditional target of 28.5% reduction of BAU.



THIRD NDC

Scope revised to energy, land use change, forestry and industry, base year emissions in 2012 measured at 5.8 MtCO₂eq. Modelled BAU of 7.2 MtCO₂eq in 2030 and unconditional target of 26.2% reduction of BAU and conditional target of 30.5% reduction of BAU.



CLIMATE CHANGE NEXUS

Context

Climate change represents one of the most pressing challenges confronting the global community, and its effects fall disproportionately on the most vulnerable, like Small Island Developing States (SIDS). While not a new phenomenon, the accelerating trajectory of climate-related events has elevated the issue to crisis levels. The call for action from all stakeholders was made in Jamaica's first statement to the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Berlin Conference in 1995, where delegates were urged to use the multilateral system to galvanise support, inform the populace and create checks and balances through non-state actors to ensure compliance at the national and international levels.¹⁹⁶ Since then, Jamaica's approach to addressing climate change has combined domestic mitigation and adaptation action with sustained advocacy for equity in dialogue and financing.

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Unlike other development issues, climate change is a problem for all, irrespective of development status. SIDS like Jamaica support discourse on the disproportionate impacts of climate change, despite their nominal contribution to emissions. Jamaica accounts for less than 0.02 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and is ranked 146th globally,¹⁹⁷ while facing severe impacts across environmental, economic, and social sectors. In many cases, vulnerability is exacerbated by weak capital bases for countries to build resilience. The recently launched Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) seeks to add more layers to country analysis, going beyond economic output and measuring the vulnerability to exogenous shocks that can impede development. Jamaica's environmental vulnerability score is 58.2, the highest of the three MVI dimensions and reflects an overall score of 49.6, which is 3.2 points below the global median of 52.8.

While acknowledging the scale of vulnerability, SIDS are increasingly utilising data to better inform decision making and drive action. Climate mainstreaming has emerged as a central policy tool in planning across social, environment and economic sector. The majority of finance for climate change adaption is funded from the national budget. This is complimented through partnership with international development partners, civil society and non-government organisations. Jamaica has pursued a targeted approach to improve climate data, integrate risk management and implement comprehensive disaster management practices, among others.

¹⁹⁶ Statement delivered by the Special Advisor on International Environmental Matters to the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework on Climate Change, Berlin 1995 <https://archive.unfccc.int/cop1-high-level-segment-statement-jamaica-19950406>

¹⁹⁷ Climate Watch Historical GHG Emissions. 2025. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Available online at: <https://www.climatewatchdata.org/ghg-emissions>

This is reflected in:

- Vision 2020 Jamaica National Development Plan and accompanying Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework MTFs
- The Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy and Strategy, (2020–2040)
- The Climate Change Policy Framework (2023)
- The National Natural Disaster Risk Financing Policy (2023)
- The 2050 Long-term Emission Reduction and Climate Resilient Strategy for Jamaica (2025)
- Third Updated Nationally Determined Contribution of Jamaica to the UNFCCC (2025)

Thematic Discussion

Sustainable development and climate change are inextricably linked, given the pervasive nature of climate impacts on lives and livelihoods. As planners design strategies and programmes, embedding climate risk management is no longer best practice but a necessity to avoid reversing progress and building resilience. Jamaica's approach combines two mutually reinforcing priorities: adapting to immediate and projected climate threats, and the two-pronged approach of adapting to the immediate and forecast threats, and mitigating the more severe potential impacts, both of which require a whole-of-society implementation framework supported by data-driven monitoring and decision making.

A look at Jamaica's historical data shows that climate change is evident in changes in air temperature, rainfall patterns, tropical cyclones and sea level rise. Mean temperatures have been warming at a rate of 0.16°C per decade over the period 1900 to 2019. The data do not provide consensus on drying or increase in rainfall over the period, however the variability has worsened. Notwithstanding the established El Niño and La Niña effects in the region, there have been prolonged droughts and periods of excess rainfall in the traditional wet and dry months. These effects are compounded by the increase in named storms passing along a track within 200 km of Jamaica, peaking at 22 for the period 2000 to 2019, up from seven between 1980 to 1999 and 10 between 1960 to 1979.¹⁹⁸ In the years 2020 to 2024, 10 storms passed within 200km of Jamaica of which seven were tropical storms and one category four hurricane.¹⁹⁹

These indicators have cascading effects across the development landscape to varying degrees and are the reason adaptation is embedded in development strategies. In its third edition, the State of the Jamaican Climate (SOJC) report details the outsized impact of climate change on Jamaican society, economy and environment. The SOJC continues best practice in monitoring and utilising climate data to inform decision making and build resilience. Table 5 summarises how events can shape social, economic and environmental outcomes and are detailed throughout this review.

¹⁹⁸ Climate Studies Group, Mona. State of the Jamaican Climate Volume III: Information for Resilience Building. Kingston: Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022.

¹⁹⁹ <https://coast.noaa.gov/hurricanes/>

 TEMPERATURE	 RAINFALL PATTERNS	 TROPICAL CYCLONES	 SEA LEVEL RISE
HEALTH: heat stress, increased vector-borne diseases	AGRICULTURE: loss of crops from arid conditions or inundation and livestock from dehydration or flooding	SOCIETY: displacement of the population, increased health risks and loss of life	INFRASTRUCTURE: shoreline erosion, loss of habitat and damage from storm surge
EDUCATION: reduced learning outcomes from lower productivity	HOUSING: planned and unplanned settlements in vulnerable areas	INFRASTRUCTURE: damage to utilities, transportation network, homes and commercial facilities	TOURISM: beach erosion, flooding
AGRICULTURE: livestock health, lower crop yield, increase in pests	BIODIVERSITY: loss of habitat and species	FINANCE: increased costs of insurance and reinsurance, higher rates of non-performing loans	AGRICULTURE: salinity in wells and soil
FISHERIES: warmer seas, bleaching coral reef and marine life mortality		Freshwater availability declines from contamination and salination	EDUCATION: damage and loss of infrastructure disruption of teaching and learning
Adapted from the State of the Jamaica Climate (Volume III)			

TABLE 7 Impact of Climate Change on Development

With risks well documented, adaptation to climate change has been an ongoing feature of development planning, featuring in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in relation to poverty reduction and food security. This trend has continued, and expanded across sectors to include tourism, housing, infrastructure, health and culture within the 2050 Long-term Emission Reduction and Climate Resilient Strategy for Jamaica. In recognition of the present and forecast deleterious effects on development; adaptation for vulnerable sectors, aids in building resilience from the business-as-usual projections and some worst-case scenarios.

Poverty Reduction

The intersection of climate change and social development is demonstrated in its effects on vulnerable groups and the wider population through impacts on inequality, food security, health, education, gender and migration. As a result, approaches to adaptation and mitigation require multisectoral focus, which is increasingly embedded in new programmes and strategies. While gaps arise, analysis of key policies and programmes show policy coherence in building resilience to improve livelihoods. As the poor are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change across all parameters, poverty reduction efforts have treated climate action as a cross-cutting issue, with targeted steps to empower rural communities, women entrepreneurs and persons with disabilities.

The National Poverty Reduction Programme (NPRP) adopted SDG target 1.5 and has identified stakeholders to support vulnerable groups including small farmers, micro enterprises and persons in ecologically sensitive areas. The work of the Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience and the GOJ/ Adaptation Fund Programme and others have supported the NPRP, targeting increased natural resource management through prevention and mitigation to strengthen sustainable livelihoods of the poor in areas vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. A broad range of actions was implemented through coastal protection measures, climate smart agriculture and disaster risk management training.²⁰⁰

Agriculture and Food Security

As Jamaica seeks to eradicate extreme poverty and food insecurity, adaptation to climate change becomes even more critical. Agriculture and fisheries are vulnerable to: increasing temperatures, drought, variable and extreme rainfall, storms, sea level rise; which affect crop production, livestock health and availability of fish for capture. Projected climate scenarios highlight the challenges facing the sector, given significant dependence on rainfall for crops and livestock. The agriculture sector is estimated as the third largest daily user of water resources at 1.2 million m³, after industry²⁰¹ (2.7 million m³) and tourism (1.57 million m³).²⁰²

Domestic crop production has been increasing over the past decade with improvements in yield as more hectares are brought into production (See figure 20). The sector continually weathers changing conditions with some events having significant impacts on output. The “whiplash” effect from swings between wet and dry extremes in an individual year leaves farmers reeling from crop and livestock losses. In 2017, periods of heavy rainfall from March to June, led to sustained losses for the sector affecting 8 862 crop farmers and 1 402 livestock farmers suffering damage amounting to \$794.2 million.²⁰³ In 2023, prolonged drought conditions depressed output for three quarters and one storm made landfall, causing damage to infrastructure and products valued at \$430 million and affecting over 2 000 farmers. In the preceding year, Hurricane Beryl made landfall affecting the southern parishes, costing \$6.4 billion in damage, mainly from crop losses (\$3.1 billion).²⁰⁴

In October 2025, Hurricane Melissa made landfall in the island’s primary agricultural parishes, delivering an immediate and severe blow to the sector. Assessment of the damage, loss and additional costs to the sector indicate \$36.1 billion across 48 016 hectares of farmland, affecting over 66 000 farmers, with losses from livestock and crops comprising 1.4 million animals and 38 000 hectares of crops. Crop losses were equivalent to 76.0 per cent of the hectares of crop reaped in 2024.

²⁰⁰ Poverty Reduction Coordinating Unit. National Poverty Reduction Programme Medium-Term 2021-2024

²⁰¹ Includes manufacturing, mining and quarrying

²⁰² Water Resources Authority. 2024. A National Water Resources Master Plan for Jamaica

²⁰³ Planning Institute of Jamaica. 2018. Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2017. Kingston: PIOJ

²⁰⁴ Planning Institute of Jamaica. 2024. Post-Disaster Needs Assessment of the Impact of Hurricane Beryl on Jamaica – July 3, 2024.

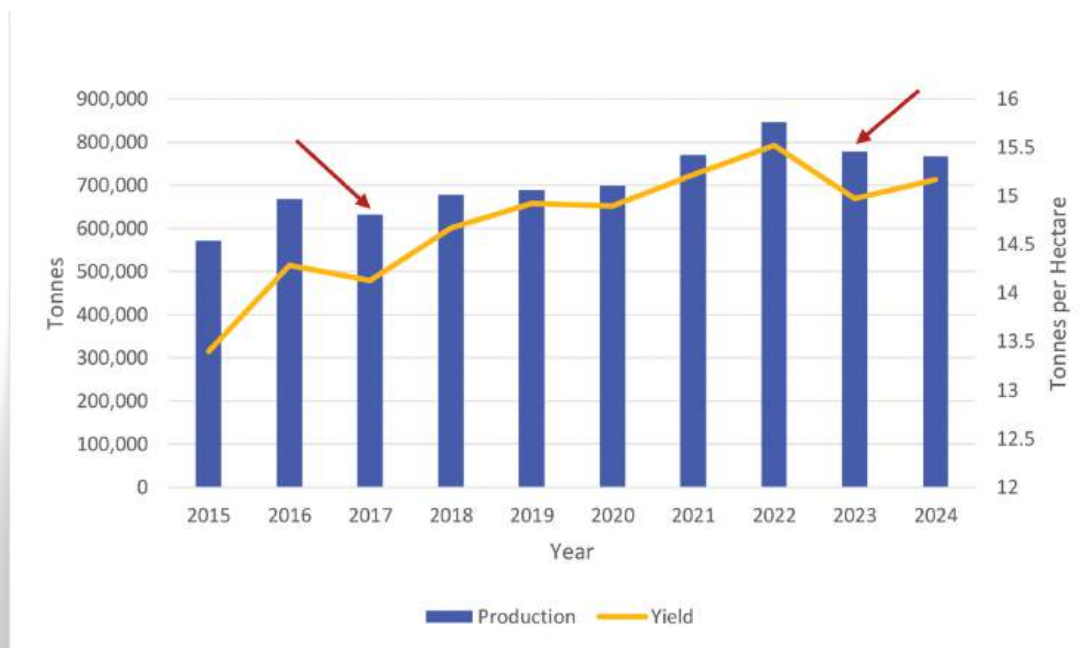


FIGURE 20 Agricultural Production and Climate Related Events

SOURCE: Data adapted from Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries Crop Area Reaped, Domestic Crop Production

Tourism

Jamaica's tourism sector is fundamentally shaped by the health and stability of the natural environment, with coastal areas attracting guests to the island. Inland attractions associated with rivers, waterfalls and other nature reserves face the effects of droughts and heavy rainfall which can immediately shutter operations. The sector is highly vulnerable to sea level rise, flooding, drought, warm temperatures and tropical cyclones. Efficient use and management of these resources that prioritise adaptation while adopting practices to mitigate emissions is required.

Analysis of the sector's exposure to hazards indicates an estimated one per cent increase in mean annual rainfall would result in a decrease in tourism expenditure of 0.08 per cent. Similarly, a one per cent increase in mean annual temperatures could lead to a decrease of 13.09 per cent in tourism arrivals.²⁰⁵

The passage of Hurricane Melissa resulted in the closure of some hotels due to infrastructure damage, disruption to cruise ship ports and the diversion of travellers to other destinations. Stopover arrivals for November 2025 fell by 68.0 per cent and cruise passenger arrivals declined in October and November, 34.9 per cent and 44.3 per cent respectively.²⁰⁶ The damage, losses and additional costs to the sector are estimated at \$601 billion.

Through the Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and its agencies, Jamaica has been working to integrate climate risk in tourism management. The Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre – established in Jamaica – provides exposure to digital tools for resilience, crisis management, and policy advice among others. The MOT and Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management,

²⁰⁵ The University of the West Indies, Mona (Eds.). 2022. Risk/Vulnerability Assessments and Preparation of Climate Change Adaptation Strategies/Plans for Five Priority Sectors: Housing, Coastal Resources, Water, Health and Tourism. Produced for the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation, Jamaica.

²⁰⁶ Jamaica Tourist Board. Monthly Statistical Report. November 2025, Volume XXXV, Issue 11

have been collaborating since 2006 under the Climate Change and Multi-Hazard Contingency Programme. The Programme falls under the National Emergency Management Framework for managing and responding to emergencies and disasters and supports the Tourism Emergency Management Committee. It aims to enhance the sector's resilience through the development of comprehensive disaster risk-reduction and economic recovery strategies for the tourism sector.

Up to and following the passage of Hurricane Beryl in 2024, support has been in building capacity of hoteliers in coastal zones in Business Continuity Planning and Disaster Risk Management Plan Development, and the staging of simulation exercises to enhance preparedness and response to disasters. In the weeks following Hurricane Melissa, a survey of 158 hotel properties across the main resort areas, reported 81 hotels were open, offering 8 926 rooms, while 63 hotels were closed, representing 14 030 rooms. The GOJ and partners mobilised over \$1 billion in relief funding to support small stakeholders and workers in the industry in the immediate aftermath of the hurricane.

Lessons Learnt/Best Practice

The broad stakeholder consensus on the realities of climate change has enabled Jamaica to develop a measured, evidenced-based approach to both mitigation and adaptation. By recognising the nexus between climate change and socio-economic development, the Government and partners have facilitated work that targets the core contributors to climate change, particularly energy, while applying a gender lens to climate action and plan for the long term.

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In support of achieving the country's revised NDCs, the Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) was developed for Jamaica's energy consumption and includes ambitious targets for electricity generation. Energy accounts for 82.69 per cent of Jamaica's greenhouse gas emissions and efforts to improve access to clean fuels directly contribute to lowering emissions. The IRP programmes a reduction in annual GHG emissions from 2.15 million tonnes in 2022 to 1.29 million tonnes in 2030 through the phase out of fossil fuels.²⁰⁷

Furthering best practice in development planning, the GOJ has integrated climate risk into the public investment management project lifecycle. The methodology requires the inclusion of more rigorous screening for climate risks at the project concept stage, which determines progression at proposal stage and final outcomes. This is expected to improve the management of fiscal risks by identifying them early in the project stage.

A gender lens is also integrated into climate policy as best practice for recognising differential socioeconomic impacts of climate change and calibrating responses accordingly. The Jamaica Gender and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (GCCSAP) 2022 - 2025 developed to support the National Adaptation Plan contributes to climate policy and response to hazards through providing recommendations for best serving communities and individuals who would otherwise be missed in

²⁰⁷ <https://www.mset.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/2022-Jamaica-Integrated-Resource-Plan.pdf>

general approaches. The plan in part supports these interventions recognising, for example, at the sectoral level more men than women are employed in the agricultural sector, and therefore face a higher risk of income insecurity from losses to the sector; or the particular health circumstances faced by women and girls following a disaster.

Jamaica's commitment to the Paris Agreement is further demonstrated through compliance with Article 4.19, which states "all Parties should strive to formulate and communicate long-term low greenhouse gas emission development strategies". Jamaica joins 79 other member states in completing the 2050 Long-term Emission Reduction and Climate Resilient Strategy, which outlines the path to reducing emissions by 73.0 per cent from 2020 levels by 2050.

Resource Requirements

Jamaica's response to climate change requires resources that span technical, technological and financial dimensions. Availability of climate financing remains a significant obstacle to accelerating efforts to combat climate change. Supportive climate finance frameworks must move beyond crisis response to accelerating SDG implementation. For SIDS like Jamaica, climate resilience is a constant in policy and programme development. Leveraging innovative and integrated financing can unlock gains across the Sustainable Development Goals by:

- Utilising the MVI to model financing agreements – recognising that vulnerabilities should not be priced in as risks, leading to lower interest rates for development financing that can strengthen resilience in vulnerable sectors like agriculture, tourism, infrastructure.
- Increased private investment in clean energy projects, guided by the Integrated Resource Plan which seeks to grow the share of renewable energy in the grid – examining the binding constraints to achievement and unlocking gains by lowering emissions from electricity production, reduced food storage and refrigeration costs, and improving productivity through lower domestically supplied energy costs.
- Aligning finance with the National Water Resources Master Plan to improve supply side constraints which affect household consumption, irrigation for agriculture and commercial use in manufacturing, construction and tourism among other industries.

In addition to financing, the human and technological capacity to monitor climate change and its impacts on development are required. The resources for enforcement and action that can prevent unregulated developments by poorer communities in hazard prone areas as well as unregulated commercial practice are lacking and present a risk to poverty reduction, sustainable production and fostering growth. Improved data for modelling and targeting can also support planners across industries to monitor mitigation efforts and support best practice in executing objectives of the long-term strategies.

In tandem with tangible requirements to support climate action, a vital component is the social capital to adopt key national plans and actions, and implement at the community/local/household level. Adaptation and mitigation efforts can face challenges without efforts to advance target 13.3 to improve education and raising awareness on climate change. In a survey of 2 000 households across Jamaica, awareness of climate change was high at 91.6 per cent in 2021, up from 82.6 per cent in 2012, with persons well aware of the effects of climate change on their daily lives, highlighting flooding, rising temperatures and drought. However, there were gaps in education regarding components like greenhouse gases, carbon footprint and the greenhouse effect.²⁰⁸

Increasing awareness of climate change and monitoring the effectiveness of campaigns require ongoing programme spending. This ensures localisation of efforts and increases the adoption of best practices from households and other stakeholders who, though aware of climate change, have little knowledge of actions.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDERS PERSPECTIVE:

Highlighted their front-line role in disaster response and mitigation as parish-level chairs of disaster committees. Municipal corporations are responsible for practical pre-hurricane interventions including drain cleaning and infrastructure maintenance. Stakeholders emphasised that these functions are resource intensive and require sustained, predictable financing from national government.

Beyond 2030

Jamaica has established a robust policy framework for climate adaptation and mitigation, with strategies updated as new data become available – notably the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and NAP Financing Strategy. For SIDS like Jamaica, climate action is embedded in development planning. In a new global framework beyond 2030 climate action should feature as a cross-cutting issue measured across the goals. This can aid domestic action and enable targeted support from multilateral partners.

Domestic action has to be met with corresponding action from international development partners. Jamaica is one of 29 SIDS, which are middle-income countries, grappling with fiscal resilience in the context of climate change, while pursuing a strategy to combat no or low growth through economic diversification, technology adaptation and human capital development. For Jamaica, sustainable development advancement is balanced with fiscal prudence; as the country remains focused on macro targets. This dual focus highlights the importance of data on the multiple

LOCAL AUTHORITY STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVE:

Hurricane Melissa exposed serious weaknesses in Jamaica's disaster preparedness infrastructure. Shelter conditions were described as unsafe, with at least one death in a shelter reported. Stakeholders called for a fundamental rethink of shelter management and readiness, and stressed that social protection frameworks must explicitly incorporate disaster response as a core function rather than treating it as an ad hoc emergency measure.

²⁰⁸ Hope Caribbean Company Limited. 2021. Report on KAP Study Improving Climate Data & Information Management Project. Prepared for the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ)

dimensions of vulnerability and requirements for inclusive growth, as resources have to be utilised to guarantee high redistributive impact of public policy.

The impact of Hurricane Melissa in 2025 has imposed a severe shock on the development trajectory, with significant losses to gross domestic product, and thousands of people displaced. Recovery from Melissa presents an opportunity to continue the climate mainstreaming actions, through omnibus legislation that recognises the climate nexus with all facets of development. This brings together strategies for:

- **Social protection:** recognising the vulnerabilities of the poor and other groups to health-related risks, availability of healthy and affordable food, livelihood sustainability and income security for various groups
- **Blue and Circular economies:** leveraging environmental assets to drive economic activity while ensuring circularity to reduce waste and pollution, and providing nature-based solutions to climate change
- **Halting and reversing biodiversity loss:** restoring the natural environment while developing the economic infrastructure for growth and,
- **Financing:** embedding climate risk in the appraisal, development and implementation of public and other large capital projects, as well as establishing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to track the effectiveness of climate investments.

As we look beyond 2030, the approach taken to ensure sound fiscal management through legislated targets for debt reduction, and primary surplus in the economic reform programme present a model for climate resilience. Integrating targets on spending on adaptation, emissions reduction and other areas within control of the GOJ can support climate mainstreaming across policies and targeted communication to galvanise and maintain support. The plans are in place; consistent and effective execution is essential.

Regional Analysis

Many climate-related vulnerabilities are shared by countries of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), particularly those in coastal and tropical regions. The Latin America and the Caribbean region is experiencing increasing climate risks that affect interconnected systems including energy, food production, water resources, infrastructure, and ecosystems.

Climate change is a core structural barrier to development, contributing to the key development traps of the LAC region (ECLAC, 2024). These development traps manifest through low economic growth due to climate shocks, inequality due to more vulnerable groups being more susceptible to climate shocks, and weak institutions due to limited capacity to respond and mitigate against climate risks. Moving away from climate as a siloed issue and integrating it across policies in all sectors with the adequate financing and governance is needed.

Globally, the Paris Agreement is the legally binding global treaty that seeks to limit global temperature rise to well below two degrees Celsius, while establishing a framework for countries to submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which strengthen adaptation, mobilise finance and enhance accountability (Paris Agreement, 2015). Many countries in the region have integrated climate policies into sectors like energy, agriculture and infrastructure through their NDCs. By January 2026, 23 of 33 countries in the region have submitted their NDCs (NDC LAC, 2026). In this respect, Jamaica has completed its NDC and long-term lower emissions strategy, and is currently progressing on its national adaptation plan per the requirements of the Paris Agreement.

There are many examples from the broader LAC region of countries addressing various aspects of the climate nexus. Regarding the climate-energy nexus, Costa Rica has set out a comprehensive road map to achieving net zero emissions by 2050, while focusing on sectors like energy and agriculture that are equally relevant to us (Government of Costa Rica, 2019). On the climate-food-water nexus affecting agricultural sectors across the region, Peru has integrated watershed management practices to support water security for urban populations and agricultural producers (OECD, 2021). In a majority of LAC countries, populations and economic activity are concentrated around the coasts, which face increasing exposure to various climate hazards. To address this, Belize is developing and implementing an integrated coastal zone management plan, which ensures the economic and environmental viability by ensuring sustainable use and development of coastal zones (Coastal Zone Management Authority & Institute, 2025).

For Small Island Developing States, the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) further emphasises the need to embed climate action into national development policies across key sectors, prioritising climate resilient infrastructure, disaster risk reduction systems and protection and restoration for coastal ecosystems (United Nations, 2024). The ABAS highlights the issues faced by both SIDS and non-SIDS in the region, including high debt and limited access to finance, the need to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and needed global cooperation to reduce global temperature rise.

Regionally, Jamaica is party to a number of frameworks and agreements that guide its national policies on climate issues. Under the Caribbean Community Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Framework, Jamaica prioritises empowering local communities to sustainably manage forests, water, and coastal ecosystems as a foundation for climate resilience (CARICOM, 2022). Through Comprehensive Disaster Management, guided by the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency, we strengthen our capacity to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to climate related hazards such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts, embedding risk reduction across the development cycle (CDEMA, 2014). Other regional frameworks to which we are party, strengthened support regional coordination, improved data systems and mobilisation of finance to support the energy transition. Taken together, these frameworks enable us to address the climate change holistically across many sectors and through various leverage points.



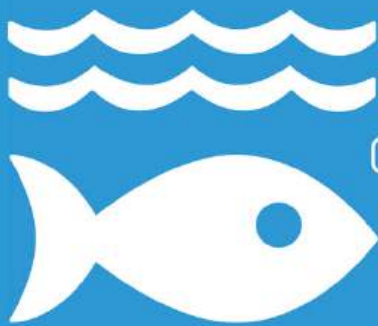
Mangroves, once threatened, now stretched thick and healthy along the coast, protecting communities from storms... Coastal communities were protected by restored coral reefs and mangrove forests that absorbed the storm's force... Jamaica had invested deeply in climate science, blending modern technology with traditional knowledge.

► **JOTHAM MAIS,**
Seaforth High School

STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

Climate change and disaster preparedness were raised — in varying depth — by all six groups, making this the most widely shared theme alongside social protection. The Private Sector group referenced the hurricane private sector task force as a model of public-private coordination and raised the urgency of the energy transition decision window. Youth participants engaged most substantively with the climate science and framed climate change as an intergenerational justice issue. Local Authorities raised the concrete infrastructure challenges: coastal erosion, inadequate drainage, and the disconnect between national climate policy and local-level implementation capacity. Community Representatives identified disaster preparedness as a community survival issue, noting that formal disaster management systems do not adequately engage community networks. The NGO group addressed disaster risk management as an area where civil society organisations play an underrecognised operational role. The Persons with Disabilities group raised the accessibility dimension with particular emphasis: emergency shelters are not accessible to persons with mobility impairments, emergency information is not available in accessible formats, and back-to-back hurricane seasons have exposed the invisibility of disability in disaster planning.

The most common insight is that climate resilience cannot be addressed at the national level alone: it requires local authority capacity, community engagement, private sector investment, and disability inclusion to be effective.



Goal 14

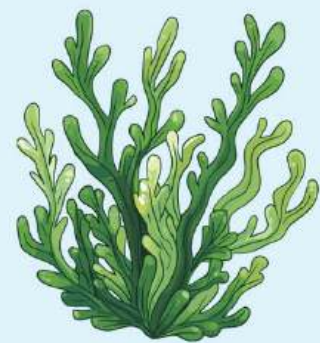
Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development



Plastic bottles and caps 39.1% products collected at Coastal Cleanup



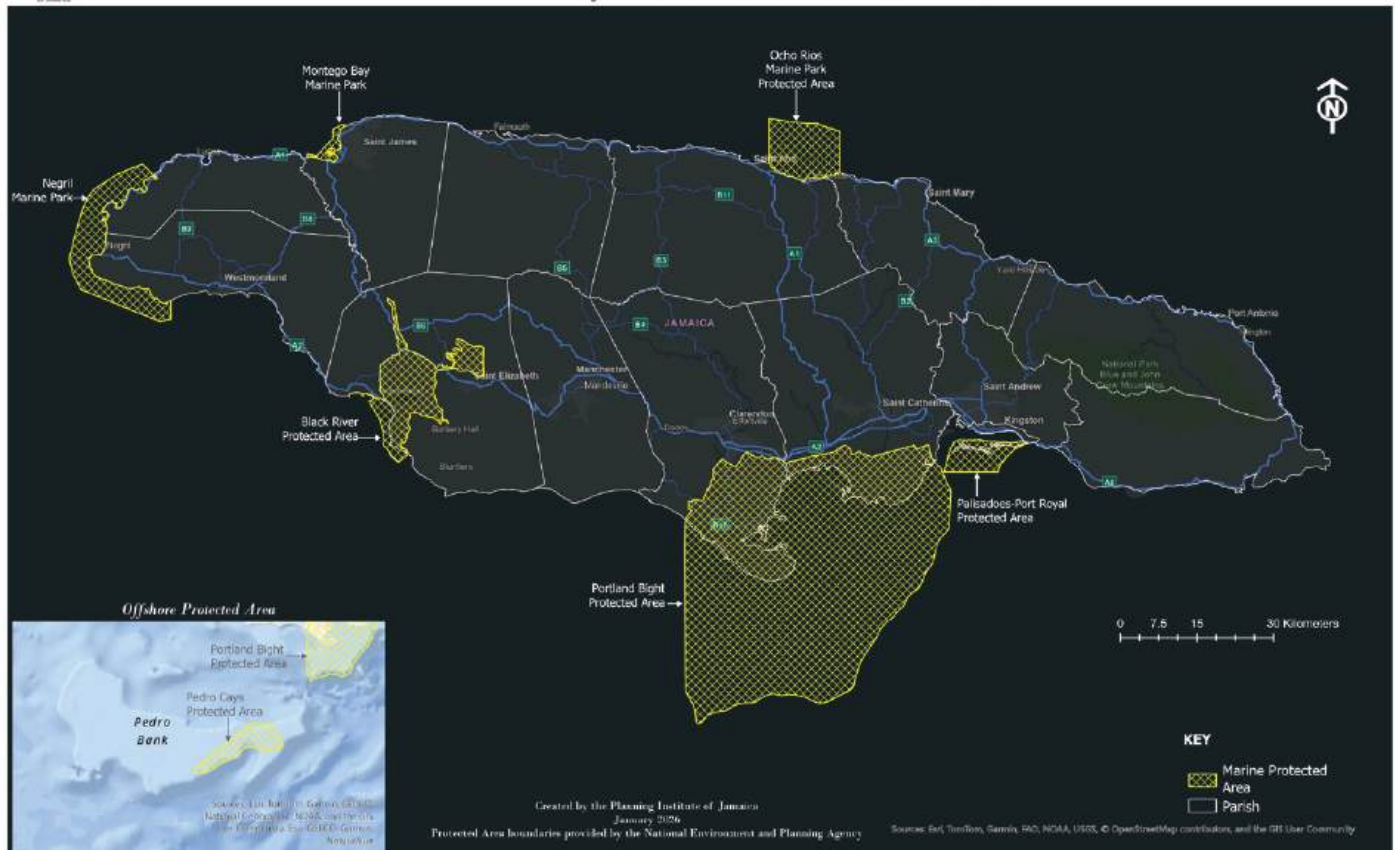
Mangrove forests: 11,978 ha



Seagrass beds: 55,678 ha



Major Gazetted Marine Protected Areas in Jamaica



BLUE ECONOMY

Context

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14 addresses the critical imperative to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. For Jamaica, as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) surrounded by the Caribbean Sea, this goal holds particular significance. The nation's marine and coastal resources are fundamental to economic prosperity, food security, livelihoods, and cultural identity. Jamaica's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) encompasses approximately 266 000 square kilometres, representing a marine area substantially larger than the island's terrestrial landmass of 10 991 square kilometres. This vast marine domain presents both tremendous opportunities and significant responsibilities for sustainable ocean governance and economic development.

Jamaica's approach to SDG 14 is shaped by broader global commitments and regional challenges common to SIDS, where ocean health is inextricably linked to national development prospects. Jamaica has strategically positioned the Blue Economy as a central pillar for achieving SDG 14 targets while simultaneously advancing national development objectives articulated in Vision 2030 Jamaica - National Development Plan. The Blue Economy concept, as adopted by Jamaica, seeks to promote economic growth, social inclusion, and the preservation or improvement of livelihoods while ensuring environmental sustainability of the oceans and coastal areas.

Under Vision 2030 Jamaica, SDG 14 aligns principally with National Outcome 12 (Internationally Competitive Industry Structures, particularly Agriculture and Fisheries) and National Outcome 13 (Sustainable Management and Use of Environmental and Natural Resources). This alignment ensures that ocean conservation and sustainable use are integrated into national planning frameworks, budgeting processes, and sectoral strategies across government ministries, departments, and agencies.

Key Achievements and Indicators

Jamaica has made measurable progress toward several SDG 14 targets, though challenges persist. The country made a commitment at the 2017 Ocean Conference to increase maritime protected area coverage by an estimated 2.0 per cent by 2019 through the declaration of the Pedro Cays and surrounding waters and the Black River protected landscape/seascape.²⁰⁹ Jamaica's commitment to marine conservation extends to sites with significant cultural and environmental value. RAMSAR

²⁰⁹ Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System pg 48

designations for Palisadoes-Port Royal (2011) and Portland Bight Wetlands and Cays (2006) exemplify this integrated approach, protecting ecosystems that support both marine biodiversity and cultural heritage. These designations recognise that many of Jamaica's coastal and marine areas – including Port Royal, Pedro Cays, Black River, and Mason River – hold multiple values spanning culture, environmental conservation, fisheries, and forestry. The Protected Areas System Plan strategically coordinates management across these overlapping designations to ensure efficient resource use and comprehensive protection of Jamaica's marine and coastal heritage.

The establishment of Special Fishery Conservation Areas (SFCAs) represents a cornerstone achievement in Jamaica's efforts to protect near-shore marine biodiversity and build resilience to climate change. These designated no-fishing zones serve as sanctuaries for fish reproduction and habitat regeneration, directly contributing to the restoration of fish stocks and the sustainability of artisanal and commercial fisheries. The National Fisheries Authority has implemented the Pelagic Fisheries Management Plan to ensure evidence-based management of offshore fish stocks, addressing concerns about overfishing and promoting sustainable harvesting practices.²¹⁰

In March 2023, Jamaica declared fifteen Ecologically Sensitive Areas (ESAs) across the island.²¹¹ These geographic designations acknowledge areas that play crucial roles in maintaining hydrological and ecological functions essential to sectors including agriculture, fisheries, health and tourism. This regulatory framework demonstrates Jamaica's integrated approach to environmental protection, recognising that terrestrial ecosystems directly influence marine and coastal health through watershed connectivity and land-based pollution pathways.

Legislative and policy actions have complemented conservation efforts. Jamaica has taken steps to address marine pollution, including the implementation of restrictions on single use plastics to reduce marine debris and protect marine life from the harmful impacts of plastic pollution. These measures align with SDG Target 14.1, which calls for the prevention and significant reduction of marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution by 2025.

²¹⁰ JM2736_Pelagic_Fisheries_Management_Plan_Final_V3.pdf

²¹¹ Ecologically sensitive areas identified for protection | News | Jamaica Gleaner

TARGET	INDICATOR (BASED ON DATA AVAILABILITY)	BASELINE	MOST RECENT DATA	STATUS
14.1. By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution	14.1. 14.1.1. (a) Index of coastal eutrophication; and (b) plastic debris density	7 instances of trade effluent discharge; and 3 cases of 'fish kill' (2021) 31.0 per cent (2015) of collected garbage comprised plastic beverage bottle	18 instances of trade effluent discharge; and 8 cases of 'fish kill' (2022) 35.9 per cent (2022) of collected garbage comprised plastic beverage bottle	Regressing
14.2 By 2020, sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, including by strengthening their resilience, and take action for their restoration in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans	14.2.1. Number of countries using ecosystem-based approaches to managing marine areas	Coral Reef Health Index (CRHI) 2.2 in 2019 ¹	CRHI 1.8 (2023)	Regressing
14.4. By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics	14.4.1. Proportion of fish stocks within biologically sustainable levels	15 Special Fishery Conservation Areas (2016)	15 Special Fishery Conservation Areas	Stagnating
14.5 By 2020, conserve at least 10.0 per cent of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on the best available scientific information	14.5.1 Coverage of protected areas in relation to marine areas	15.0 per cent	15.0 per cent	Achieved

TABLE 8 Jamaica SDG 14 Indicator Status

The regression in pollution indicators (14.1.1) despite policy interventions reflects the challenge of changing entrenched practices and the time lag between policy implementation and measurable environmental outcomes. The declining CRHI score signals growing economic risks for tourism and fisheries sectors that depend on healthy reef ecosystems. While the 15.0 per cent protected area

²¹² Coral Reef Health Index (CRHI)

target has been achieved, stagnation in fishery conservation areas suggests challenges in expanding management coverage despite recognised need.

Blue Economy Development Progress

The World Bank, with significant contributions by the Government of Jamaica completed comprehensive assessments in 2023 documenting opportunities and challenges for Blue Economy development. The Recommendations for a Blue Economy Roadmap for Jamaica provides evidence-based analysis for government and stakeholders to consider in developing finance and investment flows into ocean based economic sectors.²¹³

In 2019, the Maritime Authority of Jamaica indicated its intention to advance legislation governing the exploration and development of a sustainable Blue Economy, recognizing the need for comprehensive legal frameworks to guide emerging ocean-based industries including marine biotechnology, ocean renewable energy, sustainable aquaculture, and marine tourism.²¹⁴ In May 2023 the Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO) identified the Blue Economy as a priority sector for investment attraction and economic diversification, targeting value-added industries that leverage Jamaica's resources sustainably.²¹⁵

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The expansion of Jamaica's protected area system reflects a multi-year commitment to conservation, with acceleration observed between 2020 and 2024. The declaration of 15 ESAs in 2023 and the ongoing establishment of additional SFCAs demonstrate intensified conservation action aligned with international biodiversity targets established under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. Climate change indicators underscore urgency for building marine ecosystem resilience. Jamaica has experienced increased frequency of coral bleaching episodes linked to rising sea surface temperatures, threatening the structural integrity of reef systems that provide coastal protection, habitat for fisheries and tourism appeal.²¹⁶ Sea level rise projections indicate that Jamaica will face accelerated coastal erosion, saltwater intrusion into freshwater aquifers, and inundation of low-lying areas, necessitating adaptation measures including ecosystem-based coastal defence approaches.²¹⁷

Thematic Discussion

The Blue Economy: Jamaica's Pathway to Sustainable Ocean Management and Conservation

Jamaica's approach to achieving SDG 14 integrates ocean conservation with economic development through the Blue Economy Framework, which recognises marine resources as drivers of prosperity

²¹³ Recommendations for a Blue Economy Roadmap for Jamaica - The Planning Institute of Jamaica

²¹⁴ Maritime Authority to Push for Blue Economy Legislation – Jamaica Information Service

²¹⁵ Jampro targets blue economy for growth – Ministry of Industry, Investment & Commerce

²¹⁶ State-of-the-Environment-Report-Jamaica-2017_0.pdf, pg 257

²¹⁷ Bahamas, Jamaica, Cayman, Turks and Caicos face sea level rise by end of century | United Nations Development Programme

rather than treating conservation and economic activity as separate concerns. This represents a shift from treating ocean protection and economic use as competing goals to recognising their interdependence. The Blue Economy concept as articulated in the Recommendations for a Blue Economy Roadmap for Jamaica, represents an integrated development paradigm that promotes economic growth and social inclusion while ensuring environmental sustainability of oceans and coastal areas.²¹⁸ This integrated approach recognizes that marine ecosystems provide essential services including coastal protection from storms and erosion, climate regulation, nutrient cycling, and cultural and recreational values fundamental to quality of life and resilience.²¹⁹ The sustainability of ocean-based economic activities depends on maintaining healthy marine ecosystems.²²⁰

SDG Interlinkages and Cross-Sectoral Impacts

The interconnection between ocean health and Jamaica's broader development objectives manifests clearly through SDG interlinkages. Climate change (SDG 13) profoundly affects ocean health through warming, acidification, and sea level rise, while ocean-based solutions including blue carbon sequestration and ocean renewable energy contribute to climate change risk mitigation. Jamaica's climate adaptation strategies necessarily include marine and coastal components recognising ecosystem-based adaptation approaches. The fisheries sector contributed over JMD \$30 billion (approximately 1.04 per cent of GDP) in 2023, representing the first time in several years the sector achieved at least one per cent contribution to national GDP, providing direct and indirect employment for thousands of Jamaicans in coastal communities impacting outcomes on goals 1 and 8.²²¹

Tourism which falls under SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) is Jamaica's largest foreign exchange earner, demonstrating the economic value of healthy marine ecosystems. The sector earned US \$4.3 billion in 2024,²²² with coastal and marine attractions playing central roles in the sector's appeal. Jamaica's beaches, coral reefs, coastal scenery, and marine biodiversity generate billions of dollars in revenue annually and support hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs, creating strong economic incentives for conservation. The quality of marine water directly influences both tourism attractiveness and public health outcomes (SDG 3 and SDG 6). Assessment of marine sector equality conducted at seven focal areas across the island in 2022, using four indicators (nitrates, phosphates, biological oxygen demand (BOD) and faecal coliform) revealed exceedance of the minimum acceptable standards for all indicators. The majority of sites monitored (89.0 per cent) exceeded acceptable standards for phosphates, while 77.0 per cent recorded higher than standard levels of nitrates. The highest level of phosphates was recorded at Sirgany within the Hope River watershed focal area (2.97 mg/L), while the highest level of nitrates was recorded at Mobay 4 within the Montego Bay River watershed focal area (13.51 mg/L), and the highest level of faecal coliform (436 MPN/100mL) was recorded at Mobay 3 within the same watershed focal area.²²³

²¹⁸ RECOMMENDATIONS-FOR-A-BLUE-ECONOMY-ROADMAP-FOR-JAMAICA.pdf pg 9.

²¹⁹ World Bank Document

²²⁰ RECOMMENDATIONS-FOR-A-BLUE-ECONOMY-ROADMAP-FOR-JAMAICA.pdf

²²¹ Fisheries Sector Contributes Over \$30 Billion to GDP – Jamaica Information Service

²²² Jamaica Earns US\$4.3 Billion from Tourism – Jamaica Information Service

²²³ ESSJ, 2023

This deterioration in water quality reflects the inadequacy of wastewater treatment and sanitation infrastructure, demonstrating that investments in water infrastructure (SDG 6) reducing nutrient and pathogen loading to marine environments benefit both goals. The Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) 2024-2027 identifies water and sanitation infrastructure improvement as priorities with marine water quality co-benefits.

Jamaica's performance on the Ocean Health Index's Clean Water Score provides additional evidence of ongoing challenges. This score measures the degree to which marine waters under national jurisdictions have been contaminated by chemicals, excessive nutrients (eutrophication), human pathogens, and trash. The Sustainable Development Report (2024) assesses Jamaica's score as indicating that major challenges remain, with a stagnating trend (the score increasing at less than 50.0 per cent of required rate).²²⁴

Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) relates to SDG 14 through consumption patterns affecting marine pollution, particularly plastic waste, and the importance of sustainable seafood consumption. Jamaica's efforts to reduce single-use plastics, improve solid waste management, and promote certified sustainable seafood contributes to both goals. Circular economy approaches transforming waste into resources and minimising pollution support both responsible consumption and ocean health. Emerging initiatives in Jamaica include exploring the utilization of sargassum seaweed for fertilizer and biofuel production, converting a coastal nuisance into economic opportunity while addressing marine pollution.²²⁵

Gender Equality (SDG 5) is relevant to SDG 14 because women play significant roles in small-scale fisheries worldwide, representing approximately 19.0 per cent of those directly engaged in fisheries and aquaculture globally, with even higher percentages in post-harvest activities including processing, marketing and trade. In Jamaica's fishing communities, women contribute substantially to the fisheries value chain, yet often face barriers to resource access, participation in decision-making processes, and economic opportunities due to traditional gender roles and limited recognition of their contributions.²²⁶

Life on Land (SDG 15) intersects with SDG 14 at the land-sea-interface where coastal ecosystems including mangroves, coastal forests, and watersheds influence marine water quality and habitat integrity. Integrated ecosystem-based management recognises these connections, addressing deforestation, soil erosion, and wetland drainage that affect marine ecosystems. Jamaica's declaration of Ecologically Sensitive Areas reflects this integrated approach, acknowledging areas that play crucial roles in maintaining hydrological and ecological functions essential to multiple sectors including fisheries.

²²⁴ Sustainable Development Report, 2024

²²⁵ Microsoft Word - WECAFCXX 2025 9_ENG_Impacts of Sargassum pg 2

²²⁶ Earth Today | Civil society supports gender equality for healthier oceans | News | Jamaica Gleaner

Marine Ecosystem Health and Threats

The health of Jamaica's marine ecosystems faces multiple and interconnected threats that must be addressed through the Blue Economy framework. Climate change and human behaviour impacted the fisheries sub-sector including key commercial and artisanal fish stocks, with some species experiencing population declines that threaten both food security and fisher livelihoods.²²⁷ Near-shore reef fish populations, which support artisanal fisheries critical to coastal community livelihoods, have declined due to overfishing, destructive fishing practices, and habitat degradation.²²⁸

Coral reef health has deteriorated significantly, representing one of the most concerning trends for Jamaica's marine environment. The Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (ESSJ, 2015) reported that the quality of coral reefs was poor. By 2023, reef health was rated as critical. Comprehensive assessments conducted at 29 reef sites using the Coral Reef Health Index (CRHI) showed an overall average score of 1.8 in 2023 compared with 2.2 in 2019. Site-specific calculations revealed that 59.0 per cent of sites were ranked as critical (17 sites) and 41.0 per cent as poor (12 sites). Similar to 2019, no reef was ranked as good or very good.²²⁹

One critical indicator of coral reef health - the abundance of herbivorous fish that help prevent algae from overgrowing corals - showed dramatic decline. The average herbivorous biomass declined to 299.45 g/100m² from 610.07g/100m² in 2019. All but one of the sites assessed were ranked as critical for the herbivorous fish abundance indicator.²³⁰ This decline in herbivorous fish directly threatens reef recovery capacity, as algae can smother coral preventing regeneration.

The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ, 2022) notes that Jamaica's coastal and marine resources face major threats including climate change impacts along with pollution and illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing, which together contribute to beach erosion, poor health of coral reefs and a decline in fish biomass and biodiversity.²³¹

Coastal development, pollution, and climate impacts, have in some instances resulted in habitat degradation. These pressures are exacerbated by coral bleaching related to ocean warming, sedimentation and an increase in destructive storms which reduce coral cover and reef productivity.²³² Jamaica has lost significant mangrove area over past decades, diminishing the coastal protection, nursery habitat, and blue carbon sequestration services these ecosystems provide. In 2013, there was 9 900 hectares of mangrove in Jamaica, mostly on the south coast. More than 770 hectares of mangroves have been lost in Jamaica over the past two decades from 1996-2016.²³³ More recently, during the aftermath of Hurricane Beryl in July 2024, environmental assessments revealed widespread damage to coastal ecosystems, mangroves, and seagrass beds, particularly in southern parishes.

²²⁷ National Fisheries Authority | JAMAICA FISHERIES Statistics, 3RD QUARTER | 2022 [Apr. – Sept.] pg 26.

²²⁸ JM2722_Final-Draft_Community-Based_Strategy-and-Action-plan.pdf pg 16

²²⁹ ESSJ, 2023

²³⁰ ESSJ, 2023

²³¹ www.pioj.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/VNR_Goal_14.pdf

²³² M2722_Final-Draft_Community-Based_Strategy-and-Action-plan.pdf pg 32

²³³ World Bank Document pg 15

Approximately 54.0 per cent of coastal sites assessed showed some level of damage. The natural environment was impacted by strong winds, heavy rainfall and storm surges from the passage of the hurricane. The forestry and coastal ecosystems were the main ecosystem impacted. These features of the hurricane caused significant structural damage and uprooting of mangroves in wetlands and coastal ecosystems.²³⁴

Land-based sources of pollution represent a major threat to marine water quality and ecosystem health. Inadequately treated wastewater from both municipal systems and on-site sanitation facilities discharge nutrients, pathogens, and other contaminants into coastal waters, contributing to eutrophication,²³⁵ harmful algae blooms, and degradation of coral reefs and seagrass beds.²³⁶ The Vision 2030-National Development Plan notes that land use pressures are greatest in the coastal and urban areas, manifesting in several destructive ways. The growth in tourism has precipitated the concentration of infrastructure along the narrow coastal zone. This has led to the destruction of wetlands and mangroves to facilitate the construction of hotels, piers and marinas. It is estimated that 30.0 per cent of mangrove forests has been lost due to activities such as infilling for construction of hotel and housing developments. Marine habitat has been destroyed due to dredging, sea grass removal, damage to coral reefs and discharge of sewage into offshore areas.

Manufacturing has adversely affected water quality both in rivers and in places such as the Kingston Harbour. This has been caused by the discharge of sewage and trade effluent. It is noted that of the 47 reported pollution incidents in 2023, uncontrolled trade effluent discharge accounted for the largest number of incidents (17), followed by oil spills (13), fish kill (7) and sewage discharge (7). The highest reported number of incidents was in Kingston, followed by Clarendon and St Catherine.²³⁷

Agricultural runoff containing sediment from eroded soils impacts water quality in estuaries and near-shore marine areas. Solid waste that enters waterways and the marine environment through inadequate waste management systems, littering, and storm water runoff accumulates on beaches, in mangroves, and in the water column, harming marine life through ingestion and entanglement.²³⁸ Improper waste disposal at the household level and low levels of sewer connection is also a major threat to the marine ecosystem. The PIOJ (2022) notes that approximately a third of Jamaican households use improper methods of waste disposal, with about 3.0 per cent of the population disposing garbage by either dumping directly into gullies/river/sea/pond or by burying.²³⁹

Climate change represents an overarching threat multiplier that exacerbates existing stresses on marine ecosystems. Ocean acidification, driven by increased absorption of atmospheric carbon dioxide, threatens shell-forming organisms including corals, molluscs, and plankton that form the base of marine food webs.²⁴⁰ The damaging effects of recent extreme weather such as Hurricane Beryl in

²³⁴ Hurricane-Beryl-Post-Disaster-Needs-Assessment_Cabinet-Approved.pdf pg 129-134

²³⁵ Harmful algal blooms, dead zones, and fish kills are the results of a process called eutrophication, which begins with the increased load of nutrients to estuaries and coastal waters. What is eutrophication?

²³⁶ Land-Based Sources of Marine Pollution | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ESSJ, 2023

²³⁸ The influence of agricultural runoff on river water quality pg 22

²³⁹ www.pioj.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/VNR_Goal_14.pdf

²⁴⁰ Ocean acidification | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

July 2024 and Hurricane Melissa in October 2025, combined with inadequate waste disposal practices, contributes to marine pollution and coral reef decline.²⁴¹ Sea level rise magnifies the effect of storm surge and waves on coastal areas, leading to shoreline erosion. Between 2022 and 2023, beach width at sites in Portland, Trelawny, and Westmoreland declined significantly.²⁴² Changes in ocean currents, temperature regimes, and storm patterns affect fish distribution, migration and productivity, requiring adaptive management of fisheries and marine protected areas.

Jamaica's Blue Economy Sectors: Opportunities and Challenges

Fisheries and Aquaculture:

The fisheries sector represents a foundational element of Jamaica's Blue Economy, contributing to food security, nutrition, livelihoods, foreign exchange earnings, and cultural identity. Jamaica's fisheries are predominantly artisanal, with thousands of small-scale fishers operating from coastal communities using small boats and a variety of gear types including fish pots, nets, lines, and spear guns.

According to the Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) 2024-2027, Jamaica has prioritised the development of internationally competitive industry structures in agriculture and fisheries as part of National Outcome 12 under Vision 2030 Jamaica.²⁴³ The Government committed to developing and promulgating the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy to improve the competitiveness of the sector and promote sustainable harvesting practices.²⁴⁴ The establishment of additional fish sanctuaries through Special Fishery Conservation Areas aims to increase fish populations by protecting critical breeding and nursery habitats, allowing spill-over effects to enhance fishable stocks in adjacent areas.

Climate-smart fisheries management has emerged as a strategic priority, acknowledging that climate variability requires flexible approaches to maintain long term viability. The National Fisheries Authority (NFA) has put in place climate-responsive measures to encourage the adoption of sustainable practices among fishers, including:

- Launching a pilot initiative for offshore pelagic fishing operations, starting a pilot project to create a Recirculating Aquaculture System (RAS) facility, emphasizing water conservation, training for users, and technology transfer in RAS systems;
- Delivering a capacity development programme to enhance the skills of Sea Moss and Oyster farmers, improving their technical knowledge and encouraging sustainable aquaculture methods;

²⁴¹ www.pioj.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/VNR_Goal_14.pdf

²⁴² ESSJ, 2023

²⁴³ MTF-2024-2027.pdf pg 12

²⁴⁴ STRATEGIC BUSINESS PLAN NFA 2025/26-2028/29, Legal pg 31

- Updating and executing a comprehensive climate-resilience framework for the fisheries sector, incorporating climate change education and adaptive management strategies, broadcasting support to at-risk fishing communities through customized pilot programmes to strengthen practices aligned with community requirements.²⁴⁵

Notwithstanding these efforts, fisheries remain in a degraded state. For the herbivorous and commercial fish indicators, all sites assessed were ranked as critical. The average commercial fish abundance increased to 112.02g/100 m² from 64.66g/100 m² in 2019, but all but one of the sites assessed were ranked as critical for the commercial fish abundance indicator. As of 2018, 30 fish species were threatened in Jamaica.²⁴⁶ Fish biomass and biodiversity are impacted by IUU fishing, along with broader challenges to the marine ecosystem.²⁴⁷

Capture fisheries production, which measures the volume of fish catches landed by a country for all commercial, industrial, recreational and subsistence purposes, has reduced significantly in Jamaica between 2015 and 2022.²⁴⁸ By contrast, aquaculture production increased significantly between 2015 and 2019, reduced during the pandemic, and has experienced some recovery thereafter. Such production positively impacts SDG 14 targets, as it provides an alternate source of sustainable food.

The fisheries sector is confronted by substantial obstacles including restricted access to dedicated affordable financing; insufficient infrastructure and facilities that meet international standards; low confidence levels from key stakeholders, especially artisanal fishers; inadequate information management and ICT systems; and limited capacity in the NFA's ability to effectively address issues affecting fishers. To tackle these obstacles, the NFA is actively building its capacity and exploring opportunities for expansion to both aquaculture and capture fisheries. This encompasses developing new and underutilized fisheries, expanding and diversifying aquaculture operations (such as maricultural and ornamental fish farming), and cultivating partnerships to support the sector's advancement.²⁴⁹

Marine and Coastal Tourism

Tourism represents Jamaica's largest foreign exchange earner and a major employer, with coastal and marine attractions playing central roles in the sector's appeal. In 2024, Jamaica earned US\$4.3 billion, with the sector finishing the year strong despite slight shortfalls in arrival figures due to aviation disruptions, Hurricane Beryl, and travel advisories. Jamaica's beaches, coral reefs, coastal scenery, and marine biodiversity attract millions of visitors annually, generating billions of dollars in revenue and supporting hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs.

²⁴⁵ <https://www.fisheries.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/NFA-Strategic-Business-Plan-2025-2026-FINAL.pdf> pg 17

²⁴⁶ ESSJ, 2023

²⁴⁷ www.pioj.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/VNR_Goal_14.pdf

²⁴⁸ <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/world-development-indicators/series/ER.FSH.CAPT.MT>

²⁴⁹ <https://www.fisheries.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/NFA-Strategic-Business-Plan-2025-2026-FINAL.pdf> pg 23

The Recommendations for a Blue Economy Roadmap for Jamaica identified marine and coastal tourism as a priority sector for a thriving blue economy, with opportunities for growth in eco-tourism and community-based tourism that generate local benefits. This can attract a high-value clientele and could create opportunities to work together with local communities and NGOs developing sustainable resorts, conserving and rehabilitating the natural environment.²⁵⁰ However, tourism development has also contributed to coastal degradation in some locations. Uncontrolled coastal development, inadequate wastewater treatment from tourism facilities, beach alteration, and visitor impacts on sensitive habitats including coral reefs and seagrass beds have degraded marine ecosystems.²⁵¹ The concentration of tourism in specific coastal areas creates localised pressures that exceed carrying capacity, manifesting in water quality deterioration, habitat destruction, and conflicts with fishing communities over resource access.

Climate change poses significant risks to coastal tourism infrastructure and marine attractions. Sea level rise and increased storm intensity threaten beachfront properties, coastal roads, and tourism facilities. Coral bleaching and reef degradation diminish the quality of dive and snorkel sites. Beach erosion reduces the width and quality of beaches that are fundamental to Jamaica's tourism product. These climate impacts necessitate adaptation investments in coast protection, building codes, and ecosystem restoration.

Maritime Transport and Port Services

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Jamaica's geographic position in the Caribbean makes maritime transport vital for trade, with majority imports and exports moving by sea. The country operates several ports including Kingston Container Terminal, one of the Caribbean's largest transshipment hubs, along with ports in Montego Bay, Ocho Rios, and Port Antonio serving cargo, cruise, and fishing vessel traffic. Port operations and maritime transport contribute significantly to Jamaica's economy, with the broader services sector accounting for over 70.0 per cent of GDP.²⁵²

The Blue Economy Framework recognizes maritime transport as a key sector requiring sustainable development to minimize environmental impacts while supporting economic growth.²⁵³ Jamaica has drafted a Port Waste Management Plan (PWMP) to safeguard marine environments from ship-generated pollution, establishing a regional benchmark for environmentally responsible port operations. The Maritime Authority of Jamaica enforces international maritime safety and environmental conventions including MARPOL, reducing vessel-source pollution in Jamaican waters.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁰ RECOMMENDATIONS-FOR-A-BLUE-ECONOMY-ROADMAP-FOR-JAMAICA.pdf pg 16

²⁵¹ ECoastal Management and Beach Restoration Guidelines Jamaica FINAL.pdf pg 17-18

²⁵² Jamaica | Economic Indicators | Moody's Analytics

²⁵³ AMCOECCBlueEconomyDevelopmentFramework.pdf

²⁵⁴ Jamaica leads way in sustainable port waste management | Shipping Association of Jamaica

Emerging Blue Economy Sectors

Jamaica's Blue Economy Roadmap identifies several emerging sectors with growth potential including marine renewable energy, marine biotechnology, ocean-based climate solutions, and marine spatial planning services. Ocean renewable energy, particularly offshore wind and wave energy, represents an emerging opportunity that could diversify Jamaica's energy mix and enhance energy security while creating new industries and employment.

Marine biotechnology, including the discovery and development of pharmaceuticals, nutraceuticals, and industrial products from marine organisms, represent a high-value opportunity leveraging Jamaica's rich marine biodiversity. The country's universities and research institutions have capacity for marine bioprospecting and product development, though commercialisation requires partnerships with industry and intellectual property frameworks to ensure benefit sharing.

Blue carbon initiatives focusing on mangrove and seagrass conservation and restoration can generate climate mitigation benefits while providing ecosystem services including coastal protection, fisheries habitat, and water quality improvement.²⁵⁵ Carbon finance mechanisms, including participation in voluntary carbon markets, could provide revenue streams to support coastal ecosystem restoration and conservation, creating economic incentives aligned with environmental objectives.

Governance, Institutional Frameworks and Partnerships

Effective governance is fundamental to Blue Economy development and SDG 14 achievement. Jamaica's institutional framework for ocean and coastal management involves multiple government entities with distinct but interconnected mandates. The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) serves as the principal regulatory authority for environmental management, administering environmental impact assessments, issuing permits for coastal development, and managing the system of protected areas.²⁵⁶ The National Fisheries Authority holds responsibility for fisheries management including licensing, regulation development and enforcement, stock assessment, and fisheries development.²⁵⁷ The Maritime Authority of Jamaica addresses maritime safety, security, marine pollution from vessels, and implementation of international maritime conventions.²⁵⁸

Even though the total coverage of protected marine areas in Jamaica is estimated to be above the SDG target, challenges remain. The management of protected areas is hindered by inadequacy of data and research, lack of adequate (and sustained) funding for full operationalisation, and insufficient legislative support for enforcement. The ESSJ (2023) further notes that in 2022, protected area coverage

²⁵⁵ ActionableBlueCarbonEcosystems_2023.pdf pg 2

²⁵⁶ Agency Profile | National Environment & Planning Agency

²⁵⁷ Home - National Fisheries Authority

²⁵⁸ Our Responsibility

increased with the gazetting of the National Resources Conservation (Pedro Cays Protected Area) Order (2023), covering some 882km², to conserve the rich ecological and socio-economic value of the cays and surrounding waters. Of the areas protected, Jamaica has done a credible job at selecting those of importance to maintaining biodiversity.²⁵⁹

The MTF 2024-2027 emphasises the importance of strengthening governance, institutional coordination, and policy coherence for natural resource management. The establishment of a Blue Economy coordinating mechanism, as recommended in the Blue Economy Roadmap, would enhance inter-agency coordination, facilitate stakeholder engagement, and provide strategic direction for Blue Economy development.

Policy frameworks guiding ocean governance include the National Council on Ocean and Coastal Zone Management, which is tasked with, among other things, formulating marine sector policies and sensitizing the public to the importance of the marine sector to the sustainable development of Jamaica.²⁶⁰ The National Strategy and Action Plan on Biological Diversity in Jamaica 2016-2021 addresses marine biodiversity conservation as part of Jamaica's commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity, including targets for protected area coverage, threatened species conservation, and invasive species management.²⁶¹ The Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System (Green Paper) aims to strengthen coherence and effectiveness of protected area management across terrestrial and marine environments, addressing funding, governance, capacity, and community engagement.²⁶²

Marine spatial planning has emerged as a critical tool for managing competing uses of Jamaica's marine resources. As ocean-based economic activities expand, effective spatial planning becomes essential to balance tourism, fisheries, maritime transport, and emerging blue economy sectors while protecting ecologically and culturally significant areas. Sites such as Port Royal – designated both as a RAMSAR wetland and a World Heritage site – exemplify the complexity of managing underwater cultural resources alongside traditional fishing grounds and emerging commercial uses. Integrated spatial planning frameworks can help prevent conflicts between uses and ensure sustainable management of Jamaica's marine space.

Legislative frameworks include the Natural Resources Conservation Authority Act providing the legal foundation for environmental protection and protected areas declaration; the Fisheries Act establishing rules for fishing activities; and the Beach Control Act regulating coastal development and beach access. However, challenges remain in enforcement capacity, coordination between regulatory agencies, and addressing cumulative impacts from multiple small-scale developments that collectively exceed ecosystem carrying capacity.

²⁵⁹ ESSI, 2023

²⁶⁰ National Council On Ocean And Coastal Zone Management | National Environment & Planning Agency

²⁶¹ CBD Strategy and Action Plan - Jamaica (English version) – Executive Summary

²⁶² Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System – Executive Summary

Partnerships are essential for Blue Economy development given resource constraints, technical complexity, and the need for diverse expertise. The government collaborates with academic institutions including the University of the West Indies, which conduct marine research, train marine professionals, and provide scientific advice to inform policy.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) including environmental groups, community-based organisations, and fisher organisations support conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and policy advocacy. Private sector engagement brings investment, innovation, and market-based solutions to Blue Economy development, with tourism operators, fishing companies, and emerging sectors including renewable energy and biotechnology as key stakeholders. International Development Partners (IDP) provide technical and financial support for ocean conservation and sustainable use. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the World Bank, the Caribbean Development Bank, the European Union, and bilateral development agencies have supported projects addressing marine protected area management, sustainable fisheries, pollution reduction, and climate change adaptation. These partnerships facilitate technology transfer, capacity building, and resource mobilisation beyond national budgetary capacity.

International Conventions and Commitments

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Jamaica's participation in international environmental and ocean governance agreements shapes domestic policy and provides frameworks for cooperation and accountability. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) establishes Jamaica's rights and responsibilities within its territorial sea, contiguous zone, exclusive economic zone, and continental shelf, defining where Jamaica exercises sovereignty or jurisdiction for resource management, environmental protection and maritime regulation.²⁶³

The Convention on Biological Diversity ratified by Jamaica, requires development and implementation of national biodiversity strategies addressing conservation, sustainable use, and benefit-sharing. Jamaica's marine biodiversity, including endemic species and globally significant ecosystems, falls within conservation obligations.²⁶⁴ The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing establishes rules for accessing marine genetic resources and sharing benefits from their utilization, relevant to biotechnology development.²⁶⁵

The Cartagena Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment of the Wider Caribbean Region and its protocols address pollution from ships, land-based sources, and dumping, as well as the conservation of specially protected areas and wildlife. As a party, Jamaica commits to measures preventing and controlling marine pollution and protecting critical habitats including coral reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ UNCLOS+ANNEXES+RES.+AGREEMENT

²⁶⁴ Chapter 2 The Convention on Biological Diversity

²⁶⁵ nagoya-protocol-en.pdf

²⁶⁶ Cartagena Convention | The Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP)

In 2024, Jamaica signed the Agreement under UNCLOS on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) which was ratified in 2025. This Agreement focuses on conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, for the present and in the long-term, through effective implementation of the Convention and further international cooperation and coordination.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change establishes commitments for mitigation and adaptation, with ocean-based climate solutions including blue carbon conservation and ocean renewable energy contributing to national targets. Jamaica's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) include coastal and marine components recognizing the importance of ocean ecosystems for climate resilience and mitigation.²⁶⁷ The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted at COP15 establishes ambitious targets including protecting 30.0 per cent of terrestrial and marine areas by 2030,²⁶⁸ requiring Jamaica to substantially expand marine protected area coverage.

Jamaica also signed the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice on Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Escazu Agreement) in 2019.²⁶⁹ This is the first regional environmental agreement with provisions for the protection of the environment through access to information, public participation and access to justice, and the first regional agreement with scope for inclusion of "Environmental Defenders" who undertake protecting the natural environment.²⁷⁰

Localisation

The localisation of SDG 14 and Blue Economy development in Jamaica involves translating national commitments into action at the parish and community levels where marine resources are directly accessed, impacts are immediately felt, and benefits must be equitably distributed. Local authorities, including municipal corporations, play roles in coastal zone management through land use planning, solid waste management, wastewater infrastructure, and development approvals affecting marine environments.

The primary bottleneck to effective localisation is capacity and resource constraints at the municipal level, limiting full implementation of locally driven plans despite policy alignment. The MTF emphasises alignment of Local Sustainable Development Plans (LSDPs) with Vision 2030 Jamaica, ensuring that local development priorities integrate ocean conservation and sustainable use principles. Municipal corporations in coastal parishes have incorporated coastal management, beach protection, fisheries support, and marine pollution reduction into their development plans. These align with national priorities under Vision 2030 Jamaica, particularly National Outcome 13 (Sustainable Management and Use of Environmental and Natural Resources).

²⁶⁷ Jamaica's NDC Implementation Plan

²⁶⁸ 15/4. Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 3, pg9

²⁶⁹ JAMAICA'S SIGNATURE OF THE ESCAZU AGREEMENT | Jamaica

²⁷⁰ TRE-160060.pdf

Community-based fisheries management initiatives represent a key approach to localising SDG 14. These initiatives engage fishers and coastal communities in decision-making about resource management rules monitoring of fish stocks and fishing effort, and enforcement of regulations. The Promoting Community-Based Resilience in the Fisheries Sector project is one such initiative that seeks to strengthen the fisheries policy and regulatory framework, making it climate smart; investing in the diversification and viable alternative livelihoods that enhance sustainable fisheries; and investing in capacity building to raise awareness among the fishing and fish farming communities.²⁷¹

Beach management represents another arena for localisation. Community groups, tourism operators, local government, and environmental organizations collaborate through Beaches and Coastal Resources Conservation Committees (BCRCC) to address beach conservation, pollution, access rights, and visitor impacts. Committees such as the BCRCC enable locally appropriate solutions balancing conservation with livelihood needs and recreational use.²⁷²

Environmental education and awareness programmes conducted in schools, community centres, and through media campaigns contribute to building a culture of ocean stewardship at the local level. The School's Environment Programme (SEP) stands as Jamaica's longest-running educational initiative, implemented in over 350 schools with an estimated reach exceeding 400 000 students and 700 teachers over more than two decades. The Jamaica Environment Trust (JET) is the designated National Coordinator, implementing the programme, which is administered by NEPA, with support from the Natural Resource Conservation Authority (NRCA) before July 2021. The programme is still being implemented by JET but with a limited scope primarily with funding from the Jamaican private sector. The programme engages youth in waste management, greening school grounds, strengthening or establishing environmental clubs and environmental research.

JET has also served as the designated National Coordinator for the International Coastal Cleanup since 2008, with support from the Tourism Enhancement Fund, Ocean Conservancy and various Jamaican private sector organisations. As National Coordinator, JET is responsible for the collation and submission of data to the international database.

Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

The designation of Special Fishery Conservation Areas (SFCAs) has demonstrated effectiveness in supporting fish stock recovery and enhancing marine biodiversity where adequate enforcement and community support exist. Scientific monitoring in established SFCAs has documented increases in fish abundance, biomass, and size structure, validating the approach as a management tool. Community engagement in SFCAs establishment and management has enhanced local buy-in and compliance, demonstrating the value of participatory approaches.

²⁷¹ Promoting Community-Based Resilience in the Fisheries Sector – Pilot Programme for Climate Resilience Jamaica

²⁷² BAMP_GreenPaper.pdf pg 20

Partnerships between governments, the private sector, and civil society have proven valuable in mobilising resources and expertise for marine conservation. Tourism operators who have invested in coral reef restoration, marine protected area support, and environmental education recognise the business value of healthy marine ecosystems. Public-private partnerships demonstrate that conservation and economic interest can align, creating win-win outcomes that attract private investment to conservation while securing ecosystem services that underpin economic activities.

The prohibition of single-use plastic bags implemented in 2019 and expanded restrictions on plastic products represent policy interventions addressing a significant source of marine pollution. While enforcement challenges remain and behavioural change requires time, the legislation establishes a norm, provides a legal framework for action, and has been accompanied by public awareness campaigns that increased consciousness about plastic pollution impacts. A Waste Characterization Study conducted in June 2022 revealed that only 0.03 per cent of plastic found in Jamaica's waste disposal facilities consist of the banned items. Despite this success, some challenges persist as plastic bags continue to be used by individuals and distributed by some business.²⁷³

The establishment of the Blue Economy Roadmap through consultative processes involving diverse stakeholders represents an institutional best practice. The Government of Jamaica's collaborative approach of conducting assessments, engaging stakeholders through validation workshops, and developing evidence-based recommendations created ownership and legitimacy for the roadmap.

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Insufficient enforcement capacity has limited the effectiveness of fisheries regulations and protected area designations in some locations. The vast maritime area that Jamaica must monitor, combined with limited patrol vessels, fuel budgets, and personnel, enables illegal fishing to continue despite regulatory prohibitions.

Weak coordination among government agencies with overlapping mandates for coastal and marine management has led to duplication of efforts, gaps in coverage, and occasionally conflicting policies. The absence of a formal Blue Economy coordinating mechanism has perpetuated fragmentation, with agencies operating in silos rather than collaboratively. Economic incentives that favour short-term exploitation over long-term sustainability have undermined conservation efforts in some contexts. When the economic benefits of illegal fishing, destructive practices, or unsustainable coastal development outweigh the costs including the minimal risk of penalties, rational economic actors may choose non-compliance. Poverty in fishing communities can drive destructive practices when alternative livelihoods are unavailable and immediate survival needs override long term sustainability considerations.

Data gaps regarding fish stocks, marine biodiversity, water quality, and pollution sources limit the capacity for evidence-based adaptive management. Without robust baseline data and monitoring

²⁷³ Government's Ban on Single-Use Plastics Bearing Fruit - MEGJC: Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation

systems, managers cannot reliably assess if interventions are achieving desired outcomes or whether adjustments are needed. Scientific research capacity constraints including limited funding, specialised expertise, research vessels, and laboratory infrastructure, perpetuate these knowledge gaps. Inadequate public awareness about the importance of marine ecosystems and the connections between individual behaviours and ocean health results in continuing harmful practices. Environmental education in schools and public awareness campaigns have reached some audiences but have not achieved the scale and consistency needed for broad behavioural change.

Land-use planning and development approval processes that inadequately account for coastal and marine impacts have allowed developments that degrade marine ecosystems. Weak enforcement of environmental impact assessment requirements, inadequate technical capacity to review assessments, and insufficient integration of marine considerations into land-use planning contribute to this problem. Cumulative impacts from multiple small developments that individually meet approval thresholds but collectively overwhelm ecosystem capacity are often not adequately addressed.

Resource Requirements and Recommendations

Achieving the vision and targets for SDG 14 and Blue Economy development, requires mobilisation of diverse resources including financial capital, human capacity, technology and infrastructure, institutional frameworks, and partnerships. The scale of investment needed to fully implement marine protection, sustainable fisheries management, pollution reduction, and climate adaptation exceeds resources available within Jamaica's national budget, necessitating creative financing approaches and international support.

Financing

Comprehensive cost estimates for SDG 14 implementation in Jamaica have not been published, but indicative estimates from sectoral plans and project proposals provide a sense of magnitude. Expanding marine protected area coverage to 30.0 per cent of Jamaica's maritime area and ensuring effective management would require capital investments for infrastructure, patrol vessels, as well as recurrent cost for personnel, operations, monitoring, and community engagement.

Diversifying financing sources for ocean conservation and sustainable use beyond government budgets through accessing international climate finance from the Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, and bilateral sources for adaptation and mitigation projects establishing marine conservation trust funds generating sustainable revenue streams from endowments, user fees, and other sources are innovative means of mobilising resources. Efforts should be made to establish marine conservation trust funds providing sustainable financing for protected area management, fisheries management, and marine research through endowments generating investment returns, sinking funds with time-

limited capital, and revolving funds capitalised by fees and replenished by revenues. Furthermore, engagement of the private sector through corporate social responsibility programmes directing investments toward ocean conservation and supporting community-based initiatives are also required. Additionally, wastewater treatment infrastructure for coastal towns represents a major investment potentially requiring hundreds of millions of dollars depending on scale and technology selected. The MTF 2024-2027 identifies water and sanitation infrastructure as priority investments. This requires government budgetary allocation and potential private sector participation through public-private partnerships. International development finance institutions including the World Bank, Caribbean Development Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank may provide concessional lending or grants for water infrastructure that reduces pollution and enhances climate resilience.

Blue Economy sector development including aquaculture, marine biotechnology, offshore renewable energy, ocean monitoring and surveillance among others, will require both public sector finance for investment in enabling infrastructure, research and development, and regulatory frameworks, as well as private sector investments in productive assets.

Policy and Governance

Enacting comprehensive ocean governance legislation that consolidates and modernises laws governing marine resources, allows for the establishing of clear institutional mandates, providing for integrated coastal zone management, and creating effective enforcement mechanisms. Current fragmentation across multiple laws and agencies creates inefficiencies and gaps. Unified legislation would enhance coherence while updating provisions to reflect current scientific understanding and management approaches. In addition to this, focus should be placed on strengthening the capacity of government agencies responsible for ocean governance through training programmes for personnel, adequate budgetary allocations enabling effective operations, modern equipment including patrol vessels and monitoring technology, and performance management systems ensuring accountability. Technical cooperation with bilateral, regional and international partners with advanced ocean governance systems can facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building.

Fisheries Management

Strengthened enforcement of fisheries regulations through investment in surveillance technology including vessel monitoring systems, aerial surveillance, and electronic reporting; increased patrol capacity with additional vessels and fuel budgets, meaningful penalties for violations including fines proportional to economic benefits from violations and license suspensions for repeat offenders; and community-based monitoring systems engaging fishers in surveillance and reporting. Coordination with the Jamaica Defence Force Coast Guard and regional enforcement networks enhances coverage. Support is required for fisher organisations to engage in co-management, develop sustainable

livelihoods, and access markets for certified sustainable seafood. Fisher organisations strengthen fishers' capacity for collective action, provide platforms for engagement in management processes, and facilitate access to technical assistance and financing. Additionally, modernising fishing infrastructure including handling facilities, cold storage, and processing facilities can enable value addition and market connections facilitating access to high-value markets. Infrastructure improvements reduce post-harvest losses, improve product quality and prices, and enhance fisher incomes. Public-private partnerships can mobilise investment for infrastructure while ensuring accessible user-fees for small-scale fishers.

Capacity Building

Investment in tertiary education and research capacity for marine sciences including scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students, research infrastructure including vessels, laboratories and field stations, support for faculty research programmes, and incentives attracting and retaining qualified marine scientists remain a priority. Collaboration between the University of the West Indies, Caribbean Maritime University, and other institutions with international partners can facilitate student exchanges and joint research projects.

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Training programmes could be established for marine resource managers, enforcement officers, coastal planners, and other professionals responsible for ocean governance. Community-based organisations working on coastal and marine issues could be strengthened through institutional development support including governance training, financial management training, and strategic planning assistance.

Beyond 2030

Looking beyond 2030, Jamaica faces both challenges and opportunities in the realm of ocean conservation, sustainable use, and Blue Economy development. Climate change projections indicate continued warming of Caribbean sea surface temperatures, with increased frequency and severity of coral bleaching events expected. Sea level rise projections for Jamaica range from 0.3 to 1.0 metres by 2100 depending on emission pathways, with substantial impacts on coastal infrastructure, communities, and ecosystems.

The global population is projected to exceed nine billion by 2050, increasing demand for food including seafood. Jamaica's fisheries will face pressure to increase production while maintaining sustainability, requiring more efficient management, enhanced aquaculture development, and potentially greater reliance on imported seafood to meet domestic demand without overexploiting local stocks.

The Blue Economy presents opportunities for economic diversification if appropriate investments and policy frameworks are established. Global Blue Economy sectors including marine biotechnology,

ocean renewable energy, and sustainable aquaculture are projected to grow substantially, with the ocean economy potentially doubling in value by 2030 compared to 2010 levels. Jamaica can position itself to capture a share of this growth through strategic investments in research and development, workforce training, infrastructure, and enabling policies.

Technological advances including remote sensing, artificial intelligence for data analysis, underwater robotics for ecosystem restoration and monitoring, blockchain for seafood traceability, and synthetic biology for marine product development offer tools for more effective conservation and resource management. Jamaica's capacity to access and adopt these technologies will influence progress towards ocean health objectives and competitiveness in Blue Economy sectors. International partnerships facilitating technology transfer and capacity building will be critical.

Regional and global governance frameworks will continue to evolve, potentially including new international agreements on high seas biodiversity conservation, plastic pollution treaties, enhanced mechanisms for climate finance, and stronger enforcement of existing environmental agreements. Jamaica's active participation in these processes can secure benefits including resource mobilisation, technology transfer, and influence over rules affecting the Caribbean region and SIDS.

Demographic trends including urbanisation, ageing populations, and youth unemployment will shape coastal management needs and Blue Economy development opportunities. Urban migration concentrates populations in coastal cities including Kingston, increasing pressure on coastal resources and infrastructure while potentially reducing fishing pressure in some rural areas. Youth unemployment creates urgency for economic opportunities, with the Blue Economy offering potential employment in emerging sectors if education and training systems prepare young people with relevant skills.

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Accelerating Progress and Way Forward

Accelerating progress on SDG 14 beyond 2030 requires strategic investments, policy reforms, institutional strengthening, and sustained political commitment. Priority areas for acceleration include:

Expansion of Marine Protected Areas

Achieving the target of protecting 30.0 per cent of marine area by 2030, a global commitment under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, requires Jamaica to double current marine protected area coverage. This can be achieved through declaration of additional marine parks, expansion of Special Fishery Conservation Areas, establishment of Other Effective-Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs),²⁷⁴ and strengthening management effectiveness of existing protected areas. Protected area expansion should follow systematic conservation planning, identifying priority areas based on biodiversity value, ecological connectivity, representativeness across habitat

²⁷⁴ Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) were formally defined through CBD Decision 14/8. OECMs are geographically defined areas distinct from traditional Protected Areas (PAs) but managed in ways that yield positive sustained, and long-term outcomes for biodiversity conservation, including associated ecosystem functions, services, and, when applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally significant values. OECMs | IUCN

types, and community support. Adequate resources for management including personnel, equipment, sustainable financing mechanisms, and enforcement capacity are essential to ensure protected areas achieve conservation objectives.

Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management

Moving from single-species management approaches to holistic ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM) by taking into account the entire ecosystem of the species being managed that considers ecological interactions,²⁷⁵ habitat requirements, climate impacts, and socioeconomic factors will enhance sustainability. EBFM implementation requires enhanced scientific capacity for ecosystem assessments, participatory processes engaging fishers in management design and implementation, harvest control rules accounting for ecosystem considerations, and adaptive management systems responding to monitoring data and changing conditions. The National Fisheries Authority's capacity for EBFM must be strengthened through training and adequate budgetary resources.

Blue Economy Development

Realising the economic potential of ocean resources while maintaining ecological sustainability requires sectoral strategies to ensure prioritisation. Blue Economy sectors include sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, marine and coastal tourism, maritime services, ocean renewable energy, and marine biotechnology. The Blue Economy Roadmap provides a foundation, but implementation requires translating recommendations into actionable policies, investment programmes, regulatory frameworks, and public-private partnerships. Specific actions include:

- Developing a comprehensive aquaculture strategy with spatial planning identifying suitable sites, environmental management frameworks, hatchery infrastructure for seed production, training programmes for aquaculture technicians, and market development for aquaculture products.
- Establishing regulatory frameworks for ocean renewable energy development including marine spatial planning, environmental impact assessment protocols, grid connection procedures, and permitting processes that balance renewable energy goals with marine conservation and other ocean uses.
- Building marine biotechnology research and development capacity through investments in laboratory infrastructure, training programmes for marine biotechnologists, partnerships between universities and industry, and intellectual property frameworks ensuring benefit-sharing from marine genetic resources.

²⁷⁵ Understanding Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management | NOAA Fisheries

Circular Economy Approaches

Addressing marine pollution, particularly plastic waste, requires transitioning to circular economy models that eliminate waste through redesign, reduce, reuse materials and recycle products. This encompasses waste reduction at source through sustainable production and consumption patterns, improved waste collection and recycling infrastructure particularly in coastal communities, development of alternatives to single-use plastics and support for businesses adopting alternatives, extended producer responsibility schemes making manufacturers accountable for product end-of life management, and clean-up of accumulated marine debris through coordinated programmes. The MTF 2024-2027 emphasizes sustainable consumption and production patterns as priorities requiring intersectoral coordination.²⁷⁶

Climate Change Adaptation

Building resilience of coastal communities and ecosystems to climate change impacts requires integrated adaptation strategies combining ecosystem-based approaches with infrastructure solutions. Priority actions include restoration of natural coastal defences including mangroves, wetlands, and coral reefs and offshore cays that are crucial for the island's economy and livelihoods, providing the protection of coastlines, source of food, income, and nurseries and feeding grounds for fishable resources;²⁷⁷ implementation of nature-based solutions for erosion control including beach nourishment using appropriate sediment sources and living shorelines using vegetation; integration of climate risk analyses into coastal development planning through updated building codes, setback regulations, and prohibition of development in high risk zones. The Government through the Ministry of Economic Growth and Infrastructure Development launched the Jamaica Systemic Risk Assessment Tool (J-SRAT) as a means to increase the country's capacity to undertake more informed climate risk analyses to assist in decision-making within the public sector with respect to major infrastructural investments.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ MTF 2024-2027 pg 160

²⁷⁷ Adaptation Communication for Jamaica.pdf pg 3

²⁷⁸ Updated-Climate-Change-Policy-Framework_with-message-16032023.pdf pg 34

Regional Analysis

Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) depend on the blue economy for their livelihoods, where the marine environment supports and provides resources to sectors such as fisheries, tourism, maritime transport and ecosystem services. As a result, governments across the region are adopting a blue economy framework to sustainable ocean-based development.

In LAC, persistent development traps, such as economic dependency on limited resource sectors, social inequality, and weak institutional capacity, can constrain growth (ECLAC, 2024). This holds true regionally and for Jamaica in the development of the blue economy, where there are opportunities for sustainable growth and climate resilience in the use of ocean resources, but realising these opportunities requires overcoming governance, financing, and technological barriers and accounting for inequality.

The main international agreement governing development of the blue economy is the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which establishes rights over Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) (United Nations, 1982). EEZs are the foundation of sustainable use of marine resources as it outlines rights for the purpose of using and exploiting natural resources (fishing, aquaculture and energy) and jurisdiction for regulatory actions by authorities.

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There are many examples from the broader LAC region of countries which have implemented blue economy policies that are relevant to us. Brazil, Mexico, Chile and Columbia have surpassed the target of 10.0 per cent of marine and coastal areas under protection, with Chile on track to raise their seas under some form of protection to 42.0 per cent (UNEP, 2018). Colombia is also developing and implementing a National Plan of Action for Small-Scale Fisheries that aims to strengthen governance of the small-scale fisheries sector, protect biodiversity and aquatic resources and ensure equitable livelihoods (FAO, 2025). We consider these as blueprints in implementing initiatives that will benefit the sustainable development of our own blue economy.

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) emphasises the need for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to conserve, restore, and sustainably use their oceans, marine resources, and biodiversity. It calls for international support and partnerships to strengthen these efforts, recognizing the ocean as central to livelihoods, food security, and economic activity for island states (United Nations, 2024). ABAS highlights that the sustainable management of marine resources is essential for building resilient economies and for protecting ecosystems that underpin the well-being of island populations.

There are two regional policies that Jamaica is party to, which affect the blue economy. The Caribbean Community Common Fisheries Policy provides a regional framework for the sustainable management and conservation of fisheries and marine ecosystems across CARICOM states (CARICOM Secretariat, 2013). It promotes the ecosystem and precautionary approaches to ensure fishing practices do not

compromise fish stocks or biodiversity, directly enabling the development of a sustainable blue economy. The Caribbean Community Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Framework provides a regional blueprint for the protection, conservation, and sustainable use of environmental and natural resources, including ocean and marine resources, recognising their fundamental role in regional development and resilience (CARICOM Secretariat, 2024). Both policies create conditions for sustainable economic activity linked to healthy ocean ecosystems, laying foundations for a resilient blue economy across CARICOM.



Lately, however, Isabela noticed changes. The beaches and rivers were shrinking due to erosion, the sea sometimes flooded the roads after heavy rains, and garbage washed ashore more frequently.

One Friday, during science class, her teacher explained why.

'Climate change is real. Stronger storms, rising sea levels, and hotter days are affecting Jamaica. Building climate resilience means preparing for these changes and protecting our environment.'

Inspired to act, Isabela and her friends launched a ***'Green and Clean'*** initiative, promoted recycling, and helped plant mangroves along the coastline to reduce erosion and protect their community.

► **DHILLECIA ANDERSON,**
Duhaney Park Primary School



Goal 15

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss



**Jamaica's forest cover increased
7.9% to 527,394.5 hectares
47.9% forest cover
23% forest cover under management**



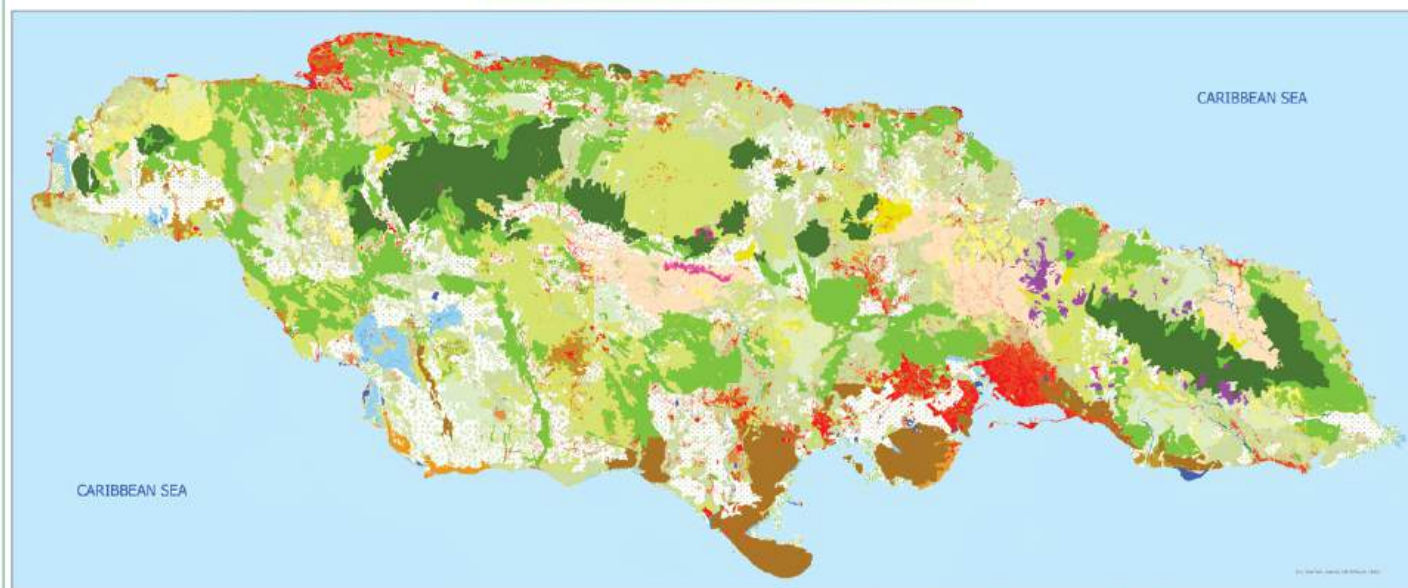
**574,300 targeted
gallons of water
filtered**

**3,027,593 trees
planted in National
Tree Planting
Initiative**



**17,662 tons of
CO2 absorbed**

2023 Land Use/Land Cover of Jamaica



Land Use Classification

- Agriculture Plantation: Tree Crops, Shrub Crops, Sugar Cane, Banana
- Bamboo
- Bamboo and Fields
- Bare Land
- Bare Rock
- Bauxite Extraction
- Buildings and Other Infrastructures
- Closed Broadleaf Forest
- Disturbed Broadleaf Forest
- Fields and Bamboo
- Fields and Secondary Forest
- Fields or Secondary Forest/Pine Plantation
- Hardwood Plantation: Eucalyptus
- Hardwood Plantation: Mahoe

Hardwood Plantation: Mahogany

- Hardwood Plantation: Mixed
- Herbaceous Wetland
- Herbaceous Crops, Fallow, Cultivated Vegetables
- Mangrove Forest
- Open Dry Forest - Short
- Open Dry Forest - Tall (Woodland/Savanna)
- Pasture and grassland
- Plantation: Pine
- Quarry
- Secondary Forest
- Secondary Forest and Fields
- Swamp Forest
- Urban Tree Cover ("Forest")
- Water Body

Projected Coordinate System: JAD 2001
Geographic Coordinate System: JAD 2001
Datum: O Jamaica 2001
Prime Meridian: Greenwich
Angular Unit: Degree

The information indicated on this map has been compiled by Forestry Department staff from a variety of sources and is subject to change without notice. The Forestry Department makes no representations or warranties, express or implied, as to accuracy, completeness, timeliness, or rights to the use of such information. This document is not intended for use as a survey product. The Forestry Department shall not be liable for any general, special, indirect, incidental, or consequential damages including, but not limited to, lost revenues or lost profits resulting from the use or misuse of the information contained on this map. Any sale of this map or information on this map is prohibited except by written permission of The Forestry Department.

Scale: 1:280,000



BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

Context

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 15 focuses on protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. For Jamaica, an island nation ranked 5th globally among islands for plant endemism with over 3 000 recorded plant species,²⁷⁹ SDG 15 is fundamental to sustainable development, economic prosperity and national resilience. Jamaica's terrestrial biodiversity encompasses approximately 3 304 species of vascular plant, 600 species of ferns, 136 species of butterflies, and 106 known bird species 31 of which are indigenous to Jamaica and are migratory.²⁸⁰ This biological diversity, concentrated in key ecosystems such as the Cockpit Country, Blue and John Crow Mountains, and the Black River Morass, provides essential ecosystem services including watershed protection, carbon sequestration, coastal defence, and support for key economic sectors including tourism and agriculture.

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Jamaica has demonstrated significant progress towards SDG 15 targets with several notable accomplishments through 2025. The country's forest cover has increased from 40.0 per cent in 2013 to 47.9 per cent in 2023, representing 527 394.51 hectares.²⁸¹ This net gain in forest cover is attributed to natural regeneration on underutilized agricultural lands, reforestation initiatives, and strengthened forest management policies.²⁸² Eleven of Jamaica's fourteen parishes have achieved the international target of 30.0 per cent forest cover.^{283 284}

In terms of protected area coverage, Jamaica has made substantial strides towards the global 30x30 target. As of 2025, approximately 25.0 per cent of Jamaica's land mass is protected, up from 8.0 per cent in 2016, surpassing the global 2020 target for the SDGs. This expansion includes the declaration of the Cockpit Country and the Black River Morass as protected areas, along with plans to declare additional areas including the Long Mountain. Jamaica's marine protection is currently confined to its archipelagic waters and has reached 14.0 per cent with further expansion anticipated through implementation of the Marine Spatial Plan, which aims to enhance marine biodiversity conservation, promote sustainable use of marine resources, and balance competing uses of Jamaica's marine space.²⁸⁵

²⁷⁹ NEPA Newsletter, pg 2-3

²⁸⁰ CBD Strategy and Action Plan - Jamaica (English version) pg, 9

²⁸¹ State_of_Jamaica_s_Forests_Report_2024-2.pdf pg 28

²⁸² State_of_Jamaica_s_Forests_Report_2024.pdf pg 4-5

²⁸³ State_of_Jamaica_s_Forests_Report_2024.pdf pg 32

²⁸⁴ The data were provided prior to the impact of Hurricane Melissa in October 2025. At the time of preparation of this report, assessments to determine the extent of the impact on forest cover were still ongoing. Given the effects of Hurricane Melissa on forest cover, these figures are likely to change pending confirmation from the Forestry Department.

²⁸⁵ Land mass protection on target, says PM - Jamaica Observer

Jamaica's Protected Area System reflects the integration of cultural heritage and biodiversity conservation. The inscription of the Blue and John Crow Mountains on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2015 recognises the outstanding universal value for both natural and cultural significance. The designation of key wetland areas as RAMSAR sites – including the Mason River Protected Bird Sanctuary, Black River Lower Morass, Palisadoes-Port Royal (2011), and Portland Bight Wetlands and Cays (2006) – demonstrates Jamaica's commitment to conserving ecosystems critical for biodiversity, water regulation, and coastal protection. These internationally recognised sites provide essential habitats for migratory birds, endemic species, and commercially important fisheries while supporting climate resilience and traditional livelihoods in surrounding communities.

The National Tree Planting Initiative launched in October 2019 with a target of planting three million trees in three years, has distributed and planted over 3 027 593 by October 2024. This initiative has generated measurable environmental benefits, including the removal of over 59.9 tonnes of pollutants from the air, filtration of 574 300 gallons of water, and absorption of more than 17 000 tonnes of carbon dioxide since the project's inception.²⁸⁶

Thematic Discussion

Life on land is intrinsically linked to Jamaica's identity, culture, and economic development and future. The island's terrestrial ecosystems provide fundamental services that underpin national development, from watershed protection that ensures water security for the population and agriculture, to forest cover that mitigates climate change impacts and protects against soil erosion. Jamaica's forest, wetlands, and unique karst limestone formations support biodiversity, contributing to the country's distinctive natural heritage and attracting eco-tourism that generates significant revenue.

The relationship between SDG 15 and Jamaica's development trajectory is multifaceted. Ecosystem degradation directly threatens food security, water availability, disaster resilience, and economic sectors worth billions of dollars annually. Conversely, sustainable ecosystem management creates employment opportunities, enhances climate resilience, and supports poverty reduction in rural communities. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of healthy ecosystems, as disrupted ecosystems increase zoonotic disease risks and economic shocks disproportionately affect communities dependent on natural resources.²⁸⁷

Jamaica's terrestrial ecosystems are integral to achieving Vision 2030-Jamaica's National Development Plan, which encompasses four goals aimed at: empowering Jamaicans to achieve their fullest potential, fostering a secure cohesive and just society, building a prosperous economy, and maintaining a healthy natural environment. Ecosystem services directly contribute to National Outcome 13 (Sustainable Management and Use of Environmental and Natural Resources), National Outcome 14 (Hazard Risks Reduction and Adaptation to Climate Change), and National Outcome 15 (Sustainable Urban and Rural Development).²⁸⁸

²⁸⁶ Forestry Department | The National Tree Planting Initiative

²⁸⁷ The COVID-19 pandemic is intricately linked to biodiversity loss and ecosystem health - PMC

²⁸⁸ MTF-2024-2027.pdf

The Cockpit Country, Jamaica's largest contiguous forest, provides water for an estimated 40.0 per cent of the island's population and supports agriculture, tourism, and bauxite mining operations.²⁸⁹ The Blue and John Crow Mountains, designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, safeguard watersheds supplying Kingston and eastern parishes while providing habitat for endemic species. Coastal wetlands including the Black River Morass and Negril wetlands, buffer against storm surges, filter pollutants, support fisheries nurseries, and provide livelihood opportunities for surrounding communities.

Climate change poses existential threats to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through increased hurricane intensity, prolonged droughts, altered rainfall patterns, and sea level rise affecting coastal ecosystems.²⁹⁰ Jamaica's high vulnerability to climate impacts necessitates ecosystem-based adaptation strategies. Jamaica's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0) reflects the country's strengthened climate commitments, incorporating blue and green economy approaches that recognise mangroves and coastal wetlands as critical biodiversity assets requiring protection and restoration. These ecosystems provide essential climate adaptation and mitigation functions while supporting livelihoods and economic activities.

The 2024-2025 hurricane season demonstrated escalating climate threats with Hurricane Beryl in July 2024 causing J\$4.73 billion in agricultural damage followed by Hurricane Melissa in October 2025 – the strongest hurricane on record to strike Jamaica, causing catastrophic damage to terrestrial ecosystems. With sustained winds of 185 mph and rainfall totalling 18-24 inches, over 51.0 per cent or 272 943.89 hectares of Jamaica's forests suffered damage. The Forestry Department estimates that recovery from forest damage will require three to fifteen years. The storm damaged 41 390 hectares of farmland, affected over 70 000 farmers, and caused agricultural losses totalling J\$29.5 billion, demonstrating the urgent need for climate-resilient ecosystem management.²⁹³

Regionally, Jamaica participates in Caribbean-wide initiatives including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Framework (CENRPF) which is a strategic blueprint for sustainable environmental stewardship aimed to guide the responsible management of land, water, air, marine resources, biodiversity, and forest²⁹⁴ and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Seas Programme – a global flagship programme implemented through regional frameworks for cooperation, management and protection of shared marine and coastal environments.²⁹⁵ Jamaica has also benefitted from partnerships with the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), such as the Management Planning and Implementation in the Portland Bight Protected Area funded by the CEPF 2022 – 2025.²⁹⁶

²⁸⁹ Forestry Department | News

²⁹⁰ Small islands are increasingly affected by climate change: IPCC report | United Nations in the Caribbean

²⁹¹ IMERG Observes Heavy Precipitation from Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica | NASA Global Precipitation Measurement Mission

²⁹² Hurricane damage to forests still being assessed; Forestry Dept warns of severe consequences - Jamaica Observer

²⁹³ Preliminary Assessments Reveal \$29.5B in Agricultural Damage from Hurricane Melissa – Jamaica Information Service

²⁹⁴ Caribbean Community Environment and Natural Resources Policy Framework – CARICOM

²⁹⁵ Regional Seas Programme | UNEP - UN Environment Programme

²⁹⁶ Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund CEPF - CCAM

At the local level, Jamaica faces challenges common to developing SIDS: competing land use demands, resource constraints, capacity limitations, and the need to balance conservation with economic development. Bauxite mining, identified as the single largest cause of deforestation historically, requires ongoing rehabilitation efforts.²⁹⁷ Agricultural expansion, urban development, and infrastructure projects, create pressures on natural habitats. Climate-induced disasters, exemplified by Hurricane Melissa, causes significant ecosystem damage requiring long-term recovery strategies.

Jamaica's response integrates international best practices with locally appropriate solutions. The country has aligned national policies with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, committing to the 30x30 targets through its membership in the High Ambition Coalition. National strategies emphasise community participation, recognising that sustainable outcomes require local ownership and equitable benefit-sharing.

Internal and External Factors Influencing Progress

Internal Factors

Institutional Capacity – Jamaica has established robust institutional frameworks through the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA), Forestry Department, and the National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica (NCTFJ), which manage 350 geographically defined zones or National Protected Areas (NPAs) across forest reserves, marine parks, and heritage sites. However, resource constraints limit enforcement capabilities, scientific monitoring, and management effectiveness. Staff capacity, technological resources, and operating budgets require enhancement to meet expanding mandates. Specific capacity gaps include insufficient forest rangers to patrol the expanded protected area network, limited technical expertise in biodiversity monitoring and data analysis, inadequate surveillance technology and vehicles for effective enforcement, and chronic staffing shortfalls that undermine the implementation of management plans across the 350 geographically defined zones.

Policy Coherence – The Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) 2024-2027 integrates environmental sustainability across sectoral strategies, demonstrating whole-of-government commitment.³⁰⁰ Challenges persist in policy implementation, inter-agency coordination, and aligning sub-national planning with national frameworks.

Socio-economic Pressures – Poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality drive unsustainable natural resource exploitation, including illegal logging, hunting of protected species, and squatter settlements in sensitive areas.³⁰¹ Limited economic alternatives for rural communities create dependencies on unsustainable resource extraction. Gender dimensions of natural resource management require greater attention as women play critical roles in agriculture and community-based conservation but face barriers to land ownership and decision-making participation.

²⁹⁷ Forest and Innovation in Jamaica - Caribbean Climate Network

²⁹⁸ Jamaica Joins International Movement to Protect 30-percent-of-Global-Ecosystems-by-2030.pdf

²⁹⁹ Who we are | NCTFJ

³⁰⁰ MTF-2024-2027.pdf pg44

³⁰¹ Causes and Measures of Poverty, Inequality, and Social Exclusion: A Review | MDPI

External Factors

Climate Change: Climate impacts necessitate ecosystem-based adaptation strategies. Climate change exacerbates existing stressors, altering species distributions, increasing wildfire risks, and threatening montane ecosystems.³⁰² The country's Nationally Determined Contributions and Long-Term Strategy recognise ecosystem conservation as essential for climate resilience.³⁰³ Hurricane Beryl's July 2024 impact demonstrated the cascading effects of climate-intensified storms on terrestrial ecosystems, with the storm causing total losses at agricultural research stations including 100 per cent damage to commercial crops at Bodles Research Station, collapse of citrus budwood facilities, and severe damage exceeding 80.0 per cent to banana crops in the parishes of Portland and St. Mary.³⁰⁴ Hurricane Melissa caused unprecedented damage to Jamaica's terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The Black River Protected Area and surrounding wetlands suffered significant damage from flooding and saltwater intrusion, threatening critical habitat for endemic species and migratory birds. Coastal mangrove forests that provide natural barriers against storm surges experienced substantial destruction, compromising their protective function for inland communities and fisheries nurseries. Marine protected areas including portions of the Portland Bight Protected Areas sustained damage to coral reefs and seagrass beds from storm-driven sedimentation and debris. The storm's impact reinforces the urgent need for climate resilient ecosystem management and restoration strategies that can withstand increasingly intense tropical cyclones.

Financial Resources: Jamaica's high debt burden constrains public investment in conservation. The country receives support through international climate finance, including the Green Climate Fund, Global Environment Facility, and bilateral partnerships.³⁰⁵ Innovative financing mechanisms, including the Blue-Green Facility (targeting US\$500 million over 5 years) and the Jamaica Stock Exchange's Green Bond Plus platform, aim to mobilise private sector investment in nature-based solutions.³⁰⁶

Technology Transfer: Access to conservation technologies, including remote sensing for forest monitoring, genetic technologies for species conservation, and renewable energy alternatives, depend on international partnerships and South-South cooperation. Jamaica benefits from technical assistance through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and bilateral programmes.

Governance and Partnership

Jamaica's governance architecture for SDG 15 encompasses multiple stakeholders operating at the national, parish and community levels. The Planning Institute of Jamaica integrates SDG 15 into national development planning through Vision 2030 Jamaica and successive Medium-Term Socio-Economic

³⁰² Ranging from approximately 5,600 feet – 9,500 feet in elevation, the montane ecosystem includes meadows along with Ponderosa pine, Lodgepole pine and Douglas fir forested area. In Jamaica, montane cloud forests are found only in the Blue Mountains. Occurring at elevations 1,000 metres and higher is characterised by broadleaf trees with only two native conifers e.g. Juniper Cedar and Mountain Yacca. (Blue & John Crow Mountains - Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust)

³⁰³ Jamaica's NDC 3.0

³⁰⁴ Agriculture ministry reports severe damage to its facilities, projects - Jamaica Observer

³⁰⁵ (PDF) Jamaica: A Case Study in Debt Sustainability and Sustainable Development

³⁰⁶ DBJ to launch Blue Green Fund - Jamaica Observer

Policy Frameworks.³⁰⁷ The Ministry of Economic Growth and Infrastructure Development (MEGID) formerly the Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation and the Ministry of Water, Environment, and Climate Change provide policy oversight for environmental and climate matters, coordinating with sector ministries responsible for, inter-alia Agriculture, Tourism, Mining and Local Government.³⁰⁸

The National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) serves as the principal environmental regulatory and management agency, responsible for environmental permits, including the review of environmental impact assessments (EIAs), protected area management, and pollution control.³⁰⁹ The Forestry Department manages forest reserves, implements reforestation programmes, and provides technical guidance on sustainable forest management.³¹⁰ The National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica (NCTFJ) mobilises resources and coordinates protected area management through public-private partnerships.³¹¹

Local governance engages municipal corporations and Community Development Committees in spatial planning and natural resource management. Parish Development Committees integrate environmental considerations into local sustainable development plans.³¹² The localisation of SDG 15 through these structures promotes context-specific interventions and community ownership. Civil society plays vital roles through organisations including the Jamaica Environment Trust, Caribbean Council Area Management Foundation, Windsor Research Centre, Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust, and university-based research institutions. These entities conduct research, implement conservation projects, advocate for policy reforms, and engage communities in environmental stewardship. The private sector contributes through corporate social responsibility initiatives, sustainable business practices, and innovative financing mechanisms.

International partnerships leverage Jamaica's frameworks with global resources and expertise. Multilateral partners (UNDP, UNEP, FAO, World Bank) provide technical and financial support for policy development, capacity building, and project implementation. Bilateral partners (United States, United Kingdom, Canada, European Union) support specific initiatives. Regional organisations (Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, Caribbean Natural Resources Institute) facilitate knowledge exchange and coordinate action.

International Conventions and their Influence

Jamaica is party to multiple international environmental agreements that shape national approaches to SDG 15.

³⁰⁷ Vision 2030 Jamaica - National Development Plan - The Planning Institute of Jamaica
³⁰⁸ Ministry Overview - Ministry of Economic Growth and Infrastructure Development (MEGID)
³⁰⁹ Agency Profile | National Environment & Planning Agency
³¹⁰ Forestry Department | Who We Are
³¹¹ NCTFJ | Preserving Jamaica's Protected Areas
³¹² Governance | Local Authorities of Jamaica

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): Jamaica submitted its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) 2016-2021, aligning national targets with Aichi Targets and subsequently the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.³¹³ The NBSAP guides conservation priorities, including protected area expansion, invasive species management, and biodiversity mainstreaming across sectors. Jamaica's participation in CBD processes influences national policy development and access to Global Environment Facility resources.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD): Although desertification is not a primary concern, land degradation from mining, agriculture, and erosion affects Jamaica significantly. UNCCD commitments inform land restoration strategies and support access to funding for degraded land rehabilitation.

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES): Jamaica's CITES obligations guide protection measures for the trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora. Trade controls prevent illegal wildlife trafficking while sustainable use provisions support livelihood strategies.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: Jamaica has designated the Black River Lower Morass and other wetlands as Ramsar sites, committing to their conservation and wise use.³¹⁴ This designation attracts international support and elevates these ecosystems in national planning priorities.

UNESCO World Heritage Convention: The Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park's World Heritage designation (2015) recognises its outstanding universal value and obligates Jamaica to maintain its integrity. This status enhances tourism potential while requiring rigorous management standards.

Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Jamaica's NDC includes forest conservation and restoration as key mitigation measures, recognising the forest's role in carbon sequestration. The Long-Term Emission Reduction and Climate Resilience Strategy (LTS) to 2050 emphasises ecosystem-based adaptation, integrating SDG 15 with SDG 13 (Climate Action).³¹⁵

Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Access to Justice on Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Escazú Agreement): Jamaica signed the Escazú Agreement in 2019, becoming party to the first regional environmental agreement with procedural provisions supporting the right to a healthy environment through access to information, public participation, and access to justice. Significantly, the agreement includes provisions for the protection of environmental defenders – individuals and groups who undertake defending the natural environment. This commitment strengthens Jamaica's framework for transparent environmental governance and community engagement in conservation decision-making.

³¹³ CBD Strategy and Action Plan - Jamaica (English version)

³¹⁴ Microsoft PowerPoint - RAMSAR BROCHURE 4.ppt

³¹⁵ NDC_Report_Oct12.pdf

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS): Jamaica has played a pivotal and historical role in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), demonstrating consistent leadership in ocean governance. The country actively participated in the negotiation of UNCLOS which was signed in Montego Bay in 1982 establishing Jamaica's foundational connection to international ocean law. More recently, Jamaica led the CARICOM negotiating team for the BBNJ Agreement. The country signed the BBNJ Agreement in September 2024 and ratified it in June 2025 at the UN Ocean Conference. As host country of the International Seabed Authority and the only Caribbean SIDS represented at the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, Jamaica maintains strategic institutional connections to ocean management.³¹⁶

United Nations Forum on Forests: Jamaica is a member of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), participating in global policy dialogue on sustainable forest management and contributing to the implementation of the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030.³¹⁷ Through UNFF, Jamaica engages in knowledge sharing on forest conservation, restoration and sustainable use while accessing technical and financial support for national forest programmes.

These conventions provide frameworks for domestic legislation, guide national strategies, facilitate technical cooperation and resource mobilisation. Jamaica's active participation in convention processes enhances the country's voice in global environmental governance while accessing knowledge networks and funding mechanisms.

Localisation

Jamaica has made significant strides in localising SDG 15 through Vision 2030 Jamaica's localisation framework and National Outcome 15 on Sustainable Urban and Rural Development. The localisation process involves aligning Local Sustainable Development Plans (LSDPs) with national strategies, engaging communities in conservation initiatives, and empowering local governments to integrate environmental considerations into development planning.³¹⁸ All 14 parishes are required to develop and regularly update their LSDPs aligned with Vision 2030 Jamaica. Five of 14 municipal corporations have prepared LSDPs to date, all referencing the four goals of Vision 2030 Jamaica. Most incorporated specific SDGs and relevant targets, including actions on SDG 13 on climate change, protection of the natural environment (SDGs 14, and 15), gender equality (SDG 5), and human settlements (SDG 11), among others.³¹⁹ Municipal corporations collaborate with NEPA and the Forestry Department to implement local conservation measures, enforce environmental regulations, and promote community awareness.

³¹⁶ JAMAICA WELCOMES ENTRY INTO FORCE OF 'UN HIGH SEAS TREATY' - MFAFT - Jamaica

³¹⁷ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/documents/un-strategic-plan-for-forests-2030/index.html>

³¹⁸ Report-on-Jamaicas-Development-Results-Update_December-2021.pdf

³¹⁹ Voluntary national review 2022 pg 13

Jamaica has established Local Forestry Management Committees (LFMCs) in priority areas including the Cockpit Country, bringing together community members, government agencies, non-government organisations (NGOs), and private sector stakeholders. These committees participate in forest monitoring, patrol activities, reforestation efforts, and sustainable livelihood development. Participatory approach enhances local ownership while providing employment and income opportunities for community members. The Southeast Cockpit Country LFMC supported by the Jamaica Environment Trust and international partners has implemented climate vulnerability assessments and local adaptation plans developed collaboratively with community members. These initiatives demonstrate how localisation can build resilience while addressing community needs.

CIVIL SOCIETY
PERSPECTIVE:

A cross-sector environmental literacy programme was proposed to build community capacity to identify, document, and report environmental violations.

Parish Level Achievements and Statistics:

Trelawny: Has achieved the highest forest cover among Jamaican parishes, demonstrating effective local forest management and conservation efforts.³²⁰ The parish benefits from protected areas including the Cockpit Country and has implemented community-based conservation programmes.

St. Ann: Has recorded an 11.0 per cent reduction in deforestation rate between the period 2013-2023,³²¹ attributed to strengthened enforcement, reforestation programmes, and community engagement. The parish faces ongoing pressures from tourism development and requires continued vigilance.

Portland: Contains significant portions of the Blue and John Crow Mountains National Park and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Community-based tourism initiatives provide alternative livelihood while promoting conservation awareness. The parish has established conservation partnerships between coffee farmers and environmental organisations to promote sustainable agriculture practices compatible with forest conservation.

Clarendon and Manchester: Face challenges from bauxite mining but have implemented rehabilitation programmes coordinated with mining companies. The Jamaica Bauxite Mining partnership with the Forestry Department aims to plant 20 000 trees in rehabilitation areas.³²²

Urban Localisation: Kingston and St. Andrew have integrated urban forestry into development planning, recognising ecosystem services provided by urban and peri-urban forests. The planned Long Mountain reserve designation will protect watersheds serving the capital region while providing recreational opportunities. Urban tree planting initiatives engage schools, community groups, and corporate volunteers in enhancing green infrastructure.³²³

³²⁰ State_of_Jamaica_s_Forests_Report_2024-2.pdf pg 24
³²¹ State_of_Jamaica_s_Forests_Report_2024-2.pdf pg 42
³²² Forest News_Partners Edition_December 2023 pg 3
³²³ State_of_Jamaica_s_Forests_Report_2024-2.pdf pg 39-40

Youth Engagement: The Forestry Department's #MyTreeLegacy initiative engages Jamaican students in tree-planting campaigns, connecting students with their alma maters through conservation. This programme builds environmental stewardship among youth while addressing generational disconnection from nature. Youth-led conservation groups conduct monitoring, awareness campaigns, and restoration projects in local communities.³²⁴

Lessons Learnt and Best Practices

What Has Worked:

Integrated Policy Frameworks and Protected Area Expansion: Vision 2030 Jamaica's integration of environmental sustainability across all national goals has provided coherent policy direction. The successive MTFs demonstrates sustained political commitments across administrations, ensuring continuity in environmental strategies despite political transitions. This cross-governmental approach has translated directly into effective protective area expansion, while Jamaica's progress toward 10x30 targets demonstrates effective policy implementation. The declaration of the Cockpit Country as a protected area exemplifies this success, requiring extensive stakeholder consultation, scientific justification, and political will to secure legal protection and protection for this critical eco-system that safeguards vital watershed services and biodiversity habitat for future generations.³²⁵

Public-Private Partnerships and Community Engagement: The National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica exemplifies successful partnership models that mobilize resources from multiple sources to support protected area management³²⁶ with partnerships involving tourism operators, bottled water companies, and other private entities generating sustainable funding streams. These collaborative approaches are reinforced by strong community participation, particularly through Local Forestry Management Committees, which have enhanced conservation outcomes while simultaneously building local capacity and generating livelihood benefits. The Southeast Cockpit Country Project demonstrates how community involvement in vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning produce locally appropriate, implementable solutions.³²⁷

National Tree Planting Initiative and Public Mobilisation: This flagship programme has mobilised widespread public participation in reforestation, engaging government agencies, schools, corporations, community groups, and individuals across Jamaica. Free seedling distribution through the Forestry Department nurseries has removed barriers to participation,³²⁸ making conservation accessible to all citizens. The initiative's measurable environmental benefits – including pollutant removal, water filtration, and carbon absorption – provide tangible evidence of collective impact, reinforcing

³²⁴ Forestry Department | News

³²⁵ Overarching Policy for Jamaica's Protected Areas System

³²⁶ NCTFJ | Preserving Jamaica's Protected Areas

³²⁷ Adapting together: A climate change journey in Jamaica's Cockpit Country

³²⁸ Forestry Department | The National Tree Planting Initiative

continued participation. This success demonstrates how national mobilisation, when supported by accessible entry points and visible results can transform environmental conservation from a government mandate into a genuinely participatory movement that builds environmental stewardship across generations.

International Recognition, Regulatory Strengthening, and Data Improvements: Jamaica's leadership in global coalitions, particularly the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, successful Voluntary National Review (VNR) presentations, and active engagement in international processes have enhanced the country's reputation and access to technical and financial support. The Blue and John Crow Mountains' UNESCO World Heritage designation has attracted international attention and resources,³²⁹ elevating Jamaica's conservation profile globally. This international engagement has been supported by domestic frameworks, including, amendments to environmental legislation, development of sector-specific policies such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, Protected Areas Policy, and capacity building for regulatory agencies. These regulatory improvements have been further enhanced by data and monitoring advancements, particularly the Land Use and Land Cover Change Assessment (LULCA) which provides critical baseline data enabling evidence based decision-making. Remote sensing technologies, including Light Detection and Ranging LiDAR and satellite imagery, have improved forest monitoring capabilities,³³⁰ while biodiversity databases and invasive species information systems have enhanced Jamaica's capacity to track environmental change and respond adaptively to emerging threats.

What Has Not Worked:

Resource Constraints and Enforcement Challenges: Protected areas continue to lack adequate staffing, equipment, and operational budgets, fundamentally compromising management effectiveness across Jamaica's conservation estate. Persistent budgetary limitations constrain protected area management, enforcement capabilities, and scientific monitoring. Jamaica's high debt burden limits public investment in conservation infrastructure and personnel, while dependence on external funding creates sustainability concerns and vulnerability to shifting donor priorities. These resource gaps directly undermine enforcement effectiveness, as limited personnel and weak penalties that fail to deter violations, and corruption mitigate risks enable illegal activities including logging, hunting and squatter encroachment to continue in protected areas. Coordination among enforcement agencies – including NEPA, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, and the Jamaica Defence Force – requires substantial improvement, as fragmented responsibility without clear protocols weakens enforcement. Without addressing these fundamental resource and coordination gaps, even well-designed conservation strategies and strengthened legislation cannot achieve their enforcement potential.

³²⁹ Blue and John Crow Mountains - UNESCO World Heritage Centre

³³⁰ FD_LULCA__Presentation_2024.pdf

Land Tenure Insecurity and Limited Economic Alternatives: Unclear land ownership, informal settlements, and contested claims complicate conservation efforts across many of Jamaica's most ecologically significant areas, with many critical eco-systems lacking formal protection due to land tenure complexities that defy simple resolution. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive land tenure reform,³³¹ which faces significant political and logistical obstacles including entrenched interests, administrative capacity limitations, and the sheer scale of informal land occupation. This tenure insecurity is compounded by the lack of viable livelihood alternatives for rural communities dependent on resource extraction. Programmes promoting ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem based enterprises have achieved limited scale due to capital constraints, market access challenges, and insufficient technical support, perpetuating a cycle where communities choose between environmental protection and economic survival. Until tenure security improves and alternative livelihoods achieve meaningful scale with sustained technical assistance and market facilitation, conservation investments remain vulnerable to competing claims, and community resistance driven by legitimate economic needs.

Policy Implementation Gaps and Fragmented Approaches: While Jamaica has developed comprehensive policies addressing environmental conservation, implementation frequently lags due to capacity constraints, coordination challenges, competing priorities, and inadequate follow through. For example, the National Invasive Alien Species Strategy and Action Plan (2014-2020) identified critical actions³³² for controlling ecosystem threats, but implementation has been partial due to resource limitations and insufficient inter-agency coordination. This implementation challenge is exacerbated by fragmented sectoral approaches, where sectoral planning sometimes conflicts with conservation objectives. Agricultural expansion, mining operations, and infrastructure development proceed with inadequate environmental integration despite policy commitments, as economic development pressures compete with conservation priorities. Strengthening environmental mainstreaming across sectors remains challenging, requiring stronger coordination mechanisms, clearer hierarchies of decision making-authority, and further integration of environmental considerations into economic planning rather than as separate or competing concerns.

Data Gaps and Climate Change Impacts: Comprehensive data on many SDG 15 indicators remain unavailable, hampering evidence-based decision-making on the extent of land degradation, ecosystem services valuation, and detailed biodiversity status, which requires systematic monitoring. The absence of national natural capital accounts limit ability to integrate environmental considerations into economic decision-making, allowing development decisions to proceed without full considerations of ecosystem service losses. These information deficits are particularly problematic given escalating climate change impacts, where increasing disaster frequency and intensity overwhelm restoration efforts, erasing conservation gains requiring repeated rehabilitation investments. Hurricane Beryl caused extensive forest damage and agricultural losses totalling J\$4.73 billion, while Hurricane Melisa in October 2025 caused even more damage, affecting over 51.0 per cent of Jamaica's forests with recovery projected

³³¹ content

³³² National Invasive Alien Species Strategy & Action Plan for Jamaica 2014-2020 pg 16-17; pg 31-33

to require three to 15 years. Climate-induced forest fires have increased in frequency and severity, destroying hundreds of acres annually. Without adequate data systems to track these impacts and predict future vulnerabilities, and without substantially enhanced resilience measures, and dedicated restoration financing, climate change threatens to systematically undermine decades of conservation investment and progress.

Resource Requirements

Financial Resources

Achieving Jamaica's SDG 15 targets requires substantial financial investment. Current expenditure on environmental conservation and natural resource management falls significantly short of identified needs, necessitating a comprehensive approach to resource mobilisation from diverse domestic and international sources. Annual resource requirements for effective SDG 15 implementation encompass multiple critical areas. Protected area management demands adequate funding for staffing, operations, and infrastructure across Jamaica's 249 protected areas. Reforestation and forest management activities require sustained investment to maintain planting targets and implement management interventions. Biodiversity conservation programmes, including species conservation, research, and monitoring activities, necessitate dedicated resources. Invasive species management, encompassing prevention, early detection, and control programmes, represents another essential funding priority. Capacity building and institutional strengthening activities require consistent investment, while environmental monitoring and data systems demand similar sustained support. Budgets must also include resources to prepare Local Sustainable Development Plans for the remaining nine parishes to ensure comprehensive coverage and localisation of SDG 15 across all parishes. Community-based conservation and livelihood programmes require adequate resources to ensure local participation and equitable benefit sharing from conservation efforts.

Beyond annual operational requirements, significant capital investments are essential for long-term SDG 15 achievement. Restoration of degraded lands, particularly areas affected by mining and agricultural activities, demands considerable resources over the medium term. Climate adaptation infrastructure supporting ecosystem resilience requires strategic investment. Technology and equipment needs, including monitoring systems, vehicles, and communications infrastructure, necessitate sustained capital allocation.

International climate finance represents a critical resource stream for Jamaica's SDG 15 implementation. The Green Climate Fund has provided substantial resources for climate projects, with portions supporting ecosystem-based adaptation. The Global Environment Facility has historically allocated significant funding for biodiversity and land degradation projects. The Adaptation Fund presents potential for additional resource mobilisation for ecosystem-based adaptation projects, while Climate Investment Funds accessible through multilateral development banks provide supplementary financing opportunities. Multilateral and bilateral support remains essential, with contributions from the World

Bank environmental programmes, Inter-American Development Bank natural capital initiatives, Caribbean Development Bank regional environmental programmes, and bilateral development assistance from partners including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Canadian cooperation programmes, and European Union (EU) financing mechanisms. Technical and financial support from United Nations agencies including UNDP, UNEP, and FAO complement these resources.

Technical Capacity Requirements: Jamaica faces critical human resource gaps that constrain effective ecosystem management. Recruitment of additional personnel, including forest rangers, protected area managers, and environmental officers, is necessary to achieve adequate staffing levels across protected areas and regulatory agencies. These personnel require comprehensive training programmes covering biodiversity monitoring techniques, ecosystem assessment methodologies, geographic information system (GIS) and remote sensing technologies, climate adaptation planning, and enforcement techniques. Professional development for senior management in strategic planning, financial management, and partnership development strengthens institutional leadership. Capacity building for municipal corporation enforcement before officers enhances local-level implementation, while training for community-based conservation leaders and Local Forestry Management Committee members builds grassroots capacity for sustainable natural resource management.

Technology and equipment investments are essential for effective monitoring, enforcement, and adaptive management. Remote sensing and GIS systems enable comprehensive forest monitoring and land use change detection, providing data essential for evidence-based decision-making. Institutional strengthening encompasses organisational restructuring to enhance coordination among environmental agencies, reducing fragmentation and improving policy coherence. Establishment of a national natural capital accounting office would systematically integrate ecosystem values into economic planning and decision-making. Creation of biodiversity research institutes or strengthening of university-based research centres builds long-term scientific capacity for biodiversity conservation.³³³

Beyond 2030

Projections and Pathways for Accelerating Progress

Maintaining current trajectories, Jamaica is positioned to exceed 50.0 per cent forest cover by 2030, potentially reaching 55.0 per cent by 2040. This optimistic projection depends on sustained policy commitment and the absence of major climate-related setbacks. Recent hurricanes, including Beryl and Melissa, demonstrated how extreme weather events can rapidly erode conservation gains, underscoring the critical importance of building ecosystem resilience. While the country is progressing towards 30.0 per cent terrestrial and marine protection by 2030, post-2030 efforts must balance expanding coverage with enhancing management effectiveness and establishing landscape-level conservation corridors.

³³³ Asian Development Bank: Harnessing Natural Capital Accounting for Sustainable Development – Regional Knowledge Sharing Initiative

Persistent Challenges and Biodiversity Threats: Despite improvements in forest cover, Jamaica faces significant biodiversity challenges. The Red List Index reveals a concerning decline in species survival rates. Between 2016 and 2021, threatened animal species increased dramatically: critically endangered species rose from 20 to 25, endangered from 30 to 49, and vulnerable from 47 to 55. Plant biodiversity faces similar pressures, with 42 critically endangered, 55 endangered, and 116 vulnerable species recorded in 2021.³³⁴ These trends indicate that forest expansion alone cannot safeguard biodiversity without targeted species protection and habitat quality improvements.

The underlying pressures remain substantial. Approximately 94.0 per cent of Jamaica's forest show signs of human disturbance, with over 20.0 per cent of forest reserve lands affected by human activities. The country has already lost 30.0 per cent of its mangrove forest to coastal development, while urban and coastal land-use pressures intensify erosion, flooding, and water resource degradation. Protected terrestrial sites important to biodiversity increased from approximately 11.41 per cent in 2015 to 15.39 per cent by 2023.³³⁵

A critical gap limiting effective conservation decision-making is the absence of comprehensive cost-benefit analysis data comparing the economic value of existing and preserved ecosystems against the short-term gains from their destruction or removal. Additionally, the lack of systematic annual or quinquennial mapping of protected areas, ecologically sensitive areas, and other natural environments hampers the ability to track changes over time and make evidence-based decisions about conservation priorities and development approvals. Establishing robust monitoring systems with regularly updated spatial data would significantly strengthen Jamaica's capacity for sustainable land-use planning.

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS:

Raised concerns about the limited transparency in environmental decision-making. Environmental impact assessments for new developments are not consistently shared with or discussed in affected communities, undermining informed participation and the ability of residents to flag concerns before construction proceeds.

Participants identified land tenure insecurity as a cross-cutting structural challenge with direct implications for SDG 15. Historical practices of informal land sales by persons without legal authority have left many long-standing community residents unable to secure titles to the land they occupy. This not only affects housing and social protection access, but also constrains communities' capacity to manage and steward local natural resources, as formal environmental obligations and land-use rights depend on recognised ownership.

Strategic Acceleration Pathways: Accelerating progress requires scaling proven initiatives while addressing systemic constraints. The National Tree Planting Initiative, which distributed over 2 995 185 trees between 2019 and 2024, should transition from a project to a permanent programme. However, emphasis must shift from planting quantity to ecosystem quality, monitoring seedling survival rates, and prioritising native species that enhance habitat connectivity and biodiversity value. In 2023 alone, 95.8 hectares of denuded land were reforested, exceeding targets set in the National Forest Management and Conservation Plan and bringing cumulative reforested area beyond 800 hectares.³³⁶ Institutional capacity remains a binding constraint that demands urgent attention. Chronic funding and staffing shortfalls undermine monitoring capabilities, enforcement effectiveness, and invasive species management. Protected areas require sufficient personnel, equipment and operational resources to advance effective active management.

³³⁴ PIOJ, 2022 pg169

³³⁵ PIOJ 2022, pg 171

³³⁶ PIOJ 2022, pg 174

Enhanced coordination among the Forestry Department, NEPA, municipal corporations, the Jamaica Constabulary Force, and the Jamaica Defence Force is essential to combat illegal logging, poaching, and encroachment. This coordination must be supported by enhanced training for enforcement personnel on environmental legislation including the Natural Resources Conservation Act (NRCA), Endangered Species Act, and Wildlife Protection Act. Strengthened enforcement capacity requires investment in surveillance technology, dedicated environmental crime units, and clearer protocols for inter-agency cooperation. Regulatory modernisation is also necessary, including comprehensive amendment or overhaul of the Wildlife Protection Act and the NRCA to incorporate international environmental standards and address climate resilience requirements for Jamaica's natural resources.

The completion of the 10-year Land-Use Land-Cover Classification and Change Assessment provides critical baseline data for evidence-based decision making, complementing ongoing efforts to integrate natural capital accounting into national economic planning.

Financing Innovation and Livelihood Alternatives: Financial sustainability necessitates diversifying funding beyond traditional government budgets and the Blue-Green Facility. Jamaica would benefit from developing biodiversity offset mechanisms, expanding conservation trust funds, and implementing Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes that generate sustainable revenue streams. These mechanisms simultaneously create economic alternatives for rural communities currently dependent on resource extraction. Ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, and ecosystem-based enterprises show promise but require substantial capital investment, market access facilitation, and technical support to achieve meaningful scale.

Private sector engagement must expand beyond corporate social responsibility toward systematic recognition of ecosystem service dependencies. The success of the National Conservation Trust Fund of Jamaica, which manages 350 geographically defined zones, provides a replicable model. In 2024, the Private Forestry Programme registered 229 private planters. This brought the number of registered private planters to 6 680 and planting sites to 6 689. In addition, 26 999 seedlings were distributed to 383 new and existing planters, demonstrating potential for scaling community-based initiatives with appropriate support structures.³³⁷ The potential for this programme is significant, particularly if coupled with Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes that compensate private landowners for conservation outcomes, certification programmes that add market value to sustainably produced timber and non-timber forest products, and preferential financing for forestry enterprises that adopt biodiversity-friendly practices. Scaling such initiatives from hundreds to thousands of participants requires streamlined registration processes, mobile extension services reaching remote communities, and marketing support connecting producers with premium markets valuing sustainably sourced products.

³³⁷ ESSJ 2024.pdf chapter 3 page 3.11

Addressing Systemic Barriers: Poor agricultural and forestry practices, habitat loss from fires and encroachment, and land tenure insecurity constitute fundamental obstacles requiring systemic solutions. Comprehensive extension services, incentive frameworks favouring sustainability, and rigorous environmental standard enforcement can transform agricultural and forestry sectors. Land tenure reform—addressing unclear ownership, informal settlements, and contested claims—is politically challenging but essential for securing ecosystems currently lacking formal protection.

Forest maintenance activities in 2023 included weeding 405.4 hectares of plantations and maintaining 52 kilometres of fire lines, yet these efforts remain insufficient given the scale of threats. Climate change amplifies existing pressures through increased fire risk, intensified storms, and altered precipitation patterns. The implementation of the National Mangrove and Swamp Forest Management Plan (2023–2033) exemplifies the sectoral planning required across all critical ecosystems.³³⁸ Exacerbated risks from climate-related disasters necessitate enhanced preparedness, ecosystem-based adaptation strategies, and dedicated restoration funding. Declining forestry offences detected in 2023 suggest improving compliance, yet sustained vigilance remains necessary.

Technology, Research, and Community Engagement: Advancing conservation science through biodiversity research, genetic technologies, and artificial intelligence applications will strengthen evidence-based management. Remote sensing capabilities using LiDAR and satellite imagery have already improved forest monitoring and should be expanded alongside biodiversity databases and invasive species detection systems. Sustained investment in scientific capacity and technology transfer is non-negotiable for long-term success.

Community ownership drives sustainable outcomes. Local Forestry Management Committees operating in priority areas like the Cockpit Country demonstrate effective participatory governance that deserves institutionalisation with secure funding. Youth engagement initiatives such as #MyTreeLegacy cultivate intergenerational environmental stewardship by connecting students with conservation through their alma maters. Biodiversity conservation activities in 2023 included monitoring game bird populations, endangered Jamaican Iguanas, and sea turtle nesting—efforts that engage local communities while generating essential ecological data.³³⁹

Regional cooperation leverages shared Caribbean challenges and resources. Jamaica's participation in CARICOM's Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Framework, UNEP's Regional Seas Programme, and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund facilitates knowledge exchange, technical cooperation, and coordinated action on transboundary species conservation and climate adaptation. The expansion of protected areas to include the Pedro Cays demonstrates commitment to marine conservation that complements terrestrial efforts.

³³⁸ PIOJ 2022, pg 175

³³⁹ PIOJ 2022, pg 174

Transformation Beyond 2030

Jamaica's vision for life on land beyond 2030 must transcend quantitative metrics to achieve profound qualitative ecosystem transformation. Forest cover exceeding 55.0 per cent should comprise biodiverse, resilient ecosystems rather than monoculture plantations. Protected area coverage surpassing 30.0 per cent should demonstrate management effectiveness measured through species population trends, ecosystem service provision, and community wellbeing indicators including income diversification, food security, and access to natural resources. The Red List Index, currently showing alarming declines with critically endangered species rising from 20 to 25 between 2016 and 2021, must reverse course through targeted species recovery programmes, systematic habitat restoration prioritizing connectivity corridors, and rigorous invasive species control addressing the most threatening alien species identified in Jamaica's invasive species strategy.³⁴⁰

Watersheds, which currently suffer near-universal degradation from industrial effluents, sewage discharge, agricultural runoff, and sedimentation, should exhibit measurably improved health through pollution loads, enhanced water quality parameters meeting international standards for drinking water and aquatic life support, and strengthened water security ensuring reliable supply for households, agriculture, and industry even during drought periods intensified by climate change. Mangrove forests should recover towards historical baseline levels through active restoration, strict enforcement of coastal development regulations, and recognition of their triple value in strengthening coastal defences against storm surge and sea level rise, supporting commercial and subsistence fisheries through critical nursery habitat provision, and enhancing carbon sequestration contributing to Jamaica's climate mitigation commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Economic sectors must fully recognise ecosystem dependencies, integrating natural capital into national accounts and corporate strategies. Rural communities should access equitable conservation benefits through sustainable livelihoods generating income comparable to or exceeding resource extraction.

Jamaica's international leadership on SDG 15 should continue, sharing implementation lessons, advocating for enhanced SIDS support, and contributing to global knowledge on island ecosystem management. Success beyond 2030 depends on maintaining cross-administration political commitment, securing diverse financing, building institutional capacity, ensuring equitable community engagement, and adapting strategies through continuous monitoring and learning. Ultimately, life on land represents not merely an environmental objective but a foundation for Jamaica's economic prosperity, cultural identity, and national resilience across generations.

³⁴⁰ National Invasive Alien Species Strategy & Action Plan for Jamaica 2014-2020

Regional Analysis

The global commitment to biodiversity is anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically SDG 15. Recent international breakthroughs have provided a more robust legal architecture for Small Island Developing States. The adoption of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction represents a historic milestone. For the Caribbean, this “High Seas Treaty” ensures for the first time that the benefits derived from marine genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably, while providing a framework for establishing large-scale marine protected areas in international waters.

In parallel, we are aligning our regional strategies with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. A cornerstone of this framework is the 30x30 target, the global commitment to protect at least 30.0 per cent of the world’s terrestrial and marine areas by 2030. As a sub-region that manages 10.0 per cent of the world’s coral reefs and 12.0 per cent of its mangroves, achieving this target is not only an environmental necessity but an economic imperative to preserve the ecosystem services that sustain our tourism and fisheries sectors.

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As a member of the Caribbean community, our support for biodiversity is deeply interconnected with the region’s economies and cultural identities. The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS 2024–2034) has emerged as the renewed declaration for resilient prosperity. The ABAS prioritises the scaling up of biodiversity and ocean-based actions, promoting sustainable management of our land and marine biodiversity. The Caribbean SIDS are major global biodiversity hotspots hosting 11 000 plant species, 72 of which are endemic to the sub-region (Walker & Clauzel, 2023).

Regional efforts are further bolstered by the Cartagena Convention and its Specially Protected Areas and Wildlife Protocol, which remains the primary instrument for protecting the marine environment of the wider Caribbean. Through the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism, we are advancing the responsible utilisation of our marine resources. The Caribbean Community Environmental and Natural Resources Policy Framework 2024-2025 emphasises the need for stronger conservation measures, sustainable resource use, improved monitoring of biological resources, and greater recognition of traditional knowledge to ensure that biodiversity continues to support the wellbeing and development of the region.

We are also prioritising the “bioeconomy” to foster sustainable production chains that value traditional knowledge. This “sociobiodiversity” approach links biological diversity with traditional agricultural systems and the culture of family farmers. However, the capacity to execute these transformations is often constrained by the “middle-income trap,” where limited fiscal space hinders incentives for large-scale biodiversity protection (Salazar-Xirinachs et al., 2024).

We also seek to address the management of biodiversity in synergy with other development priorities.

These include:

Food Security and Invasive Alien Species: Invasive species pose a severe threat to our biodiversity and inflict substantial economic damage. In our marine environment, the lionfish has emerged as a significant threat to our reef ecosystems. In our coastal waters, we are also monitoring the rapid spread of the invasive seagrass *Halophila stipulacea*. The Pink Hibiscus Mealybug, caused losses of US\$138 million in the Caribbean (Saravanakumar et al., 2023). These biological invasions represent a global socio-economic burden, with total costs to island nations estimated at over US\$36 billion between 1965 and 2020 (Bodey et al., 2022). We recognise that effective controls of invasive species have to be in coordination with our regional and international partners.

Habitat Degradation and Loss: Overexploitation of biological resources, habitat destruction, and fragmentation are often driven by unsustainable agricultural practices, changes in land use (including coastal zones), unplanned urbanisation, and other forms of commercial development. These factors have led to a significant loss of biological resources and ecosystems.

Climate Change Impacts: Climate change is considered the greatest threat to SIDS biodiversity. The impacts of climate change and climate variability contribute to the degradation of land, freshwater systems, coastal, and marine ecosystems. The scientific community considers the effects of climate change as one of the significant contributing factors fuelling the recurring massive Sargassum blooms affecting the Central Atlantic Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, and the Gulf of Mexico sub-regions (Dubrie, A. and Katwaroo, A., 2025).

Pollution: Pollution remains a critical driver of ecosystem and by extension biodiversity decline. Approximately 80.0 per cent of marine pollution in the Caribbean originates from land-based sources, including agricultural runoff and untreated wastewater (Diez, S.M., et.al 2019). Untreated domestic sewage has been linked to the eutrophication of coral reefs, leading to reef die-offs and the subsequent collapse of local fisheries (Degeorges et al., 2010). Additionally, toxic contaminants such as lead and mercury can bioaccumulate in the food chain, posing severe long-term risks to human health, including neurological and endocrine dysfunction.³⁴¹

³⁴¹ : The Main Drivers of Biodiversity Loss: A Brief Overview, Journal of Ecology and Natural Resources (2023), <https://medwinpublishers.com/JENR/the-main-drivers-of-biodiversity-loss-a-brief-overview.pdf>, cited November 14, 2025



Jamaica has shifted from a debt-burdened economy to an innovation-driven one... We guard the massive solar farms... We are the protectors of the 'Healthy Environment' goal... our wealth comes from our high-value knowledge industries and our protected environment.

► **TERAN CARR,**
Seaforth High School



Goal 16

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

83%

SUPREME COURT
CASE CLEARANCE
(2024)

MURDER RATE (2024)

42.3 per 100,000

44 PER 100,000
POPULATION (2015)

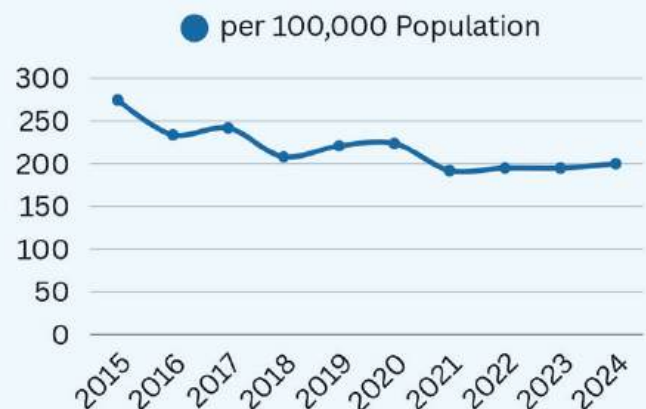
KEY GOVERNANCE INDICATORS

Index	2023
Voice and Accountability	0.56
Rule of Law	-0.17
Government Effectiveness	0.41
Control of Corruption	-0.11
Regulatory Quality	0.1

Government Expenditure on Public Order and Safety by Financial Year



Category 1 Crime Rate per 100,000 Population



STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Context

Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. In Jamaica, SDG 16 is central to achieving Goal 2 of Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan, which recognises that strong institutions underpin national security, good governance, economic stability, effective service delivery, and public trust. Between 2015 and 2024, Jamaica’s approach to SDG 16 evolved to reflect an integrated whole-of-government strategy, combining security and justice reforms with governance strengthening, digital transformation, fiscal accountability, and social development. This comprehensive approach recognises that strong institutions extend beyond law enforcement and judicial systems to encompass the entire framework of public administration and citizen engagement.

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Progress was made in strengthening institutional effectiveness, accountability, and service delivery, consistent with SDG 16 targets 16.6 and 16.7. Digitalisation and e-governance initiatives improved transparency, administrative efficiency, and programme reach across sectors, including justice, social protection, and local government. Fiscal governance and accountability frameworks were reinforced through public financial management reforms and oversight mechanisms supporting fiscal discipline and development financing. Improvements in public investment management and procurement systems enhanced transparency, inclusivity, and value-for-money in government expenditure.

Despite progress, persistent challenges remain. High levels of major crime, public perceptions of corruption, and declining trust in institutions continue to shape reform priorities. Global evidence highlights that trust in public institutions remains a critical determinant of governance effectiveness. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD’s Government at a Glance Report indicates declining trust trends globally, reinforcing the importance of strengthening accountability, transparency, and citizen engagement mechanisms (OECD 2025).

Thematic Discussion

Strong institutions constitute the foundation of sustainable development, underpinning peace, justice and trust in governance. For Jamaica, these imperatives hold particular significance given the persistent challenges to strengthen public confidence in state institutions. High homicide rates, gaps in judicial efficiency, and the need for stronger accountability frameworks, drive reforms that have focused on

building more transparent, efficient, and resilient institutions, while integrating governance priorities into the wider national development agenda.

Governance Transformations Supporting National Development

Digital Transformation of Government Services

Digital transformation has emerged as a key driver of institutional strengthening in Jamaica. Between 2016 and 2024, the Government expanded digital platforms to improve service delivery, transparency, and administrative efficiency. These reforms aligned with Vision 2030 Jamaica's Goal 2, which emphasises effective and accountable institutions. Key initiatives such as the Trade Facilitation Electronic Single Window (TFESW) have streamlined import and export procedures by allowing traders to submit documentation digitally through a single platform. Additionally, the expansion of Tax Administration Jamaica (TAJ) eServices has enabled more online services improving tax compliance and reducing processing times. Similarly, the Government of Jamaica Electronic Procurement System (GOJEP) has been improved to strengthened transparency and accountability in public procurement, complemented by the Public Investment Management System (PIMS), which enhances the appraisal, prioritisation, and monitoring of public investment projects. Internal administrative efficiency has also been improved through systems such as MyHR+, being implemented to transition from manual, paper-based human resource processes to a fully automated digital system, reducing administrative bottlenecks alongside budget management tools including the Jamaica Budget Information System (JaBIS) and the Budget Preparation and Management System (BPMS), which support results-based budgeting and fiscal planning. More recent innovations, including the Jamaica Business Gateway, have further simplified business registration and approvals, allowing easy access to information, providing guidance on government requirements and support for registered investments and contributing to an improved business environment.

Beyond core government functions, digitalisation has also supported transformation in social sectors, improving access, inclusion, and service targeting. The National Identification System (NIDS) since 2022, has progressed from legislative enactment to operational implementation, officially launching in 2024 with the first, secure biometric cards issued. A National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA) was established to manage NIDS and is now expanding enrolment, digitising millions of civil records and enabling 24/7 digital services as the Registrar General's Department now the Office of the Registrar-General which is within the NIRA. These processes aim to provide a secure and reliable framework for identifying individuals, thereby enhancing access to public services and enabling more precise targeting of social programmes. In the health sector, the National Health Fund's Quick Prescript system has improved efficiency in pharmaceutical services by facilitating electronic prescription processing and collection. Additionally, the digitisation of payments under the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH) has strengthened transparency, reduced leakages, and promoted financial inclusion among vulnerable populations. Collectively, these

initiatives align with Vision 2030 Jamaica's Outcome 11: A Technology-Enabled Society, and underscore the role of digital governance in strengthening institutional performance, enhancing accountability, and ensuring that public services are more accessible and responsive to the needs of citizens.

Public Financial Management and Fiscal Discipline

Jamaica's fiscal governance reforms have significantly strengthened macroeconomic stability and institutional credibility. The implementation of the Fiscal Responsibility Framework and sustained fiscal discipline contributed to the reduction in the country's public debt from 135.6 per cent in FY 2012/13 to 62.4 per cent in FY 2024/25 improving investor confidence and Jamaica's sovereign credit ratings. Strengthened budget transparency and medium-term fiscal planning through the Medium-Term Fiscal Framework and Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework (MTF) improved predictability in public expenditure and development financing.³⁴²

Procurement, Public Investment Reform and Anti-Corruption Systems

Institutional accountability has been reinforced through legislative and institutional reforms. The Procurement Act (2015) and the operationalisation of the Public Procurement Commission in 2018, introduced more transparent and standardised procurement procedures across government.

The Integrity Commission Act (2017) consolidated anti-corruption oversight functions, strengthening asset declaration systems, investigative capacity, and enforcement mechanisms. These reforms improved Jamaica's compliance with international obligations under the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC).³⁴³

Results-Based Planning and Monitoring

Jamaica strengthened results-based governance through the integration of SDG indicators into Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan and successive Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Frameworks (MTFs) beginning in 2018. These frameworks established performance measures to which ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) align, improving cross-sectoral coordination and strengthening monitoring of national development outcomes. The Planning Institute of Jamaica continues to publish annual progress reports tracking SDG implementation and national development indicators, reinforcing accountability and evidence-based policymaking.³⁴⁴

Institutional Strengthening in Health

Institutional reforms in the health sector improved service delivery and strengthened governance systems. The National Health Fund (NHF) operates an electronic pharmacy claims processing

³⁴² Ministry of Finance and the Public Service, 2024; Government of Jamaica, 2022; International Monetary Fund, 2023

³⁴³ Integrity Commission 2023; Organization of American States

³⁴⁴ Government of Jamaica, 2022; Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2023

system that enhances transparency in the management of pharmaceutical benefits and strengthens monitoring of prescription drug subsidies. The Ministry of Health and Wellness also advanced digital health information systems to improve patient data management and coordination across public health facilities, supporting more efficient service delivery and strengthening health system capacity. These digital initiatives improved information management and coordination across healthcare institutions in Jamaica.³⁴⁵

Institutional Strengthening in Social Protection

Institutional strengthening in social protection has been anchored in Jamaica's National Social Protection Strategy, which provides a coherent framework for improving coordination, targeting and service delivery across programmes. This strategic approach has enhanced policy alignment and strengthened governance arrangements within the social protection system. Implementation has been supported by reforms to key programmes, including the Programme of Advancement Through Health and Education (PATH), which continued to strengthen administrative systems and expand electronic benefit payment mechanisms, improving efficiency, transparency and financial inclusion among beneficiaries. The programme supported approximately 350 000 beneficiaries annually, including children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Advances in data management and beneficiary identification systems have further improved the targeting of vulnerable households. Jamaica has also strengthened the shock-responsiveness of its social protection system through the integration of data driven tools such as the Jamaica Household Damage and Impact Assessment (JH-DINA), introduced in 2020, which enables rapid, household-level assessment of socio-economic impacts following shocks. Together, these measures have strengthened institutional effectiveness, inclusivity and accountability, while improving the system's capacity to respond to economic and environmental shocks.

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Justice, Peace and Security System Reforms

Justice sector reform remains a central pillar of institutional strengthening under SDG 16. The Justice System Reform Programme accelerated modernisation efforts, including expanded digital case management systems and improved court infrastructure. These reforms carry implications beyond institutional efficiency. For marginalised youth – particularly young men who are disproportionately affected by delayed court proceedings and prolonged pre-trial detention, faster and more predictable justice outcomes reduce time spent on remand, limit disruption to education and employment, and lower the risk of long-term exclusion from the labour market. By minimising unnecessary detention and ensuring timely resolution of cases, justice reforms can help prevent deeper entrenchment in poverty and support improved livelihood prospects, thereby linking effective justice delivery directly to poverty alleviation and social inclusion.

Justice sector reform produced measurable improvements in court performance between 2019 and 2024. The Supreme Court case clearance rate increased to 83.0 per cent in 2024, while Parish Courts consistently exceeded 100.0 per cent, disposing of current and outstanding cases. Despite these

³⁴⁵ (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2023; Pan American Health Organization, n.d.)

operational gains, public confidence in the judiciary has continued to weaken. Data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) Americas Barometer indicate that only 46.0 per cent of Jamaicans in 2023 believed the judiciary would punish a criminal. Governance and anti-corruption efforts were strengthened through the Integrity Commission Act (2017), supported by civil-society oversight from organisations such as the National Integrity Action, which plays a role in public education, advocacy, and independent monitoring of integrity and anti-corruption reforms.

Building on these reforms, targeted investments in infrastructure, technology, and alternative dispute resolution further strengthened access to justice. Courts were equipped with high-speed fibre-optic connectivity across multiple locations, improving digital operations and reliability. In 2022, approximately J\$577 million was invested in court infrastructure, supporting rehabilitation, expansion, and accessibility improvements, including facilities for persons with disabilities.

The expansion of restorative justice programmes also contributed significantly to improved justice delivery, with more than 7 500 conferences conducted between 2022 and 2025 and a resolution success rate of 79.8 per cent. These interventions helped to reduce case backlogs and improve efficiency across the justice system. In parallel, digital transformation was advanced through the implementation of the Integrated Electronic Case Management System (IECMS) and the Justice Services Statistical System (JSSS), which enhanced case tracking, real-time data management, and coordination across investigative, prosecutorial, and judicial processes. These systems support data-driven decision-making, improve transparency, and strengthen the overall responsiveness of the justice sector. Collectively, these initiatives demonstrate Jamaica's commitment to strengthening access to justice through modern, efficient, and inclusive institutional systems in alignment with SDG Target 16.3.

Institutional strengthening under SDG 16 was further supported by a suite of legislative reforms, including the Integrity Commission Act (2017), amendments to the Access to Information Act (2019), the Restorative Justice Act (2017), amendments to the Proceeds of Crime Act, statutory reinforcement of the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA), and legislative reforms accompanying the constitutional entrenchment of local government. Together, these measures strengthened transparency, accountability, access to justice, citizen participation, and inter-agency coordination, reinforcing the effectiveness and inclusivity of Jamaica's public institutions at both national and local levels.

Jamaica's 2018 Voluntary National Review identified major institutional challenges affecting peace and security, including the availability of illegal firearms, low homicide clear-up rates, and a court backlog exceeding 30 000 cases. These challenges underscored the need for coordinated institutional reform, extending beyond enforcement-based responses to address prevention, accountability, and access to justice. Jamaica's 2022 VNR identified these structural challenges while highlighting progress in response measures, including the strengthening of intelligence-led policing, the expansion of Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs), the operationalisation of the Citizen Security Secretariat, legislative

reforms to enhance anti-corruption oversight, and continued implementation of the Justice System Reform Programme. The 2022 review also emphasised a shift towards prevention through community-based interventions and multi-sectoral coordination, signalling continuity in institutional reform efforts while acknowledging that issues such as organised crime, judicial backlog, and public trust in institutions remained ongoing concerns.

Lowering the levels of crime and violence remains a priority for the government. In terms of measurable outcomes, Jamaica continued to grapple with high homicide rates over the reporting period 2015 to 2024, although modest improvements were recorded. The murder rate declined from 44 per 100 000 population in 2015 to 42.3 per 100 000 in 2024, representing a 3.9 per cent reduction and one of the lowest levels recorded in recent years.

Trends in Category 1³⁴⁶ crimes further illustrate the broader security context. Category 1 crimes per 100 000 population declined overall between 2015 and 2024, falling from 275 per 100 000 in 2015 to 200 per 100 000 in 2024, despite periods of fluctuation. The sharp reduction observed between 2020 and 2021 coincided with intensified security operations and targeted interventions in high risk communities, followed by relative stabilisation in subsequent years. This downward trajectory reinforces the role of coordinated security, justice, and prevention measures in improving public safety outcomes.

Security outcomes were supported by intelligence-led and coordinated policing strategies, including earlier initiatives such as Operation Resolve (2015) and Operation Fairplay (2016) as well as later initiatives such as Operation RELENTLESS II, Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs), States of Emergency (SOEs), the Joint Anti-Gang Task Force (JAGTF), and Operation VIGILANCE. These interventions strengthened inter-agency collaboration, disrupted organised criminal networks, and enhanced visible policing and rapid-response capacity. Complementing enforcement efforts the National Commission on Violence Prevention (2019) and the Citizen Security Secretariat (established in 2020) advanced a multi-sectoral, prevention-oriented approach through the Citizen Security Plan, engaging ministries responsible for national security, education, youth, social protection, local government, and community development. Public perceptions of safety reflected a mixed picture. A higher proportion of Jamaicans reported feeling safe at home in 2023 (91.3 per cent) compared with 2019 and fewer persons felt safe walking in their communities at night in 2023 (60.0 per cent) compared with 2019. This suggests that although national-level security interventions contributed to reductions in serious violence, community-level vulnerabilities and fear of crime persisted, reinforcing the importance of broader institutional and social responses.

The decline in murders from 1 209 in 2015 to 1 147 in 2024 also demonstrates that strengthened policing and governance structures can deliver tangible improvements in public safety, reinforcing the value of accountable and transparent institutions. Progress has been shaped by both internal and external factors. Domestically, socio-economic inequalities, the persistence of organised criminal activity and ongoing challenges in building institutional trust, continue to influence patterns of violence. Jamaica's

³⁴⁶ Category 1 crimes are major crimes and include murder, shooting, rape, aggravated assault, robbery, break-ins and larceny

exposure to transnational organised crime, due to its geographic location, necessitates regional cooperation. Engagement with CARICOM IMPACS, and adherence to international frameworks such as United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), have strengthened intelligence-sharing, border security, and institutional coordination. These cooperations continues to shape Jamaica's law enforcement and accountability reforms, while alignment with the 2030 Agenda has provided a framework for integrated development.

Strengthening institutions also yields broader benefits: safer communities, support human rights and gender equality, stronger governance builds investor confidence and economic stability, and transparent frameworks are essential for climate action, disaster resilience, and education outcomes. These interlinkages demonstrate that advancing Goal 16 not only strengthens institutions but also creates the enabling environment for progress across the wider sustainable development agenda.

Institutional Strengthening in Local Governance

Institutional strengthening at the local level reinforced participatory governance and community accountability. The constitutional entrenchment of Local Government through amendments enacted in 2016 clarified the legal status and functions of municipal corporations and strengthened the framework for local governance. In parallel, Parish Development Committees (PDCs), established to facilitate citizen participation in local planning, continued to support community engagement in development planning and monitoring of parish-level projects. These mechanisms improved alignment between national development priorities and community needs, strengthening local service delivery and contributing to social cohesion and crime prevention initiatives in vulnerable communities.³⁴⁷

Localisation

The localisation of SDG 16 has been advanced through participatory governance and community based interventions. Mechanisms such as Parish Development Committees and local governance frameworks have been used to ensure citizen participation in decision-making, while community based planning has increasingly integrated safety, justice and accountability as crosscutting priorities. This approach has enabled national strategies to be aligned with local realities, ensuring that the most vulnerable communities are directly included in Jamaica's pursuit of peace, justice and strong institutions.

Building on this foundation, targeted interventions have been implemented in high-risk communities through coordinated, multi-agency approaches. The Community Renewal Programme (CRP) has played a central role in advancing localisation efforts by strengthening community leadership, fostering trust between residents and state actors, and coordinating service delivery at the local level. The CRP

³⁴⁷ Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2022; Social Development Commission, 2022

advances and coordinates localisation through seven interrelated mechanisms, including partnerships, harmonised and coordinated action, catalytic interventions, resource mobilisation, monitoring and evaluation, and research. Harmonisation and coordination are operationalised through Parish Inter-Agency Networks and Thematic Working Groups, which facilitate collaboration among government entities, civil society organisations, and community stakeholders.

These partnerships have resulted in the coordinated delivery of more than 50 programmes, benefitting over 1 000 community members across the CRP's target parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew (KSA), Clarendon, St. James, and Westmoreland. Interventions have included youth empowerment through sports, psychosocial support for youth and parents, business development and capacity-building training for community entrepreneurs, disaster risk reduction initiatives, and governance conferences aimed at strengthening institutional and community structures.

Complementing these efforts, Project STAR (Social Transformation and Renewal) —a major peacebuilding initiative implemented through collaboration between the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) and the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ)—demonstrated measurable outcomes within 26 months of its launch in July 2022, engaging over 3 500 residents in community planning, supporting more than 6 000 participants, including youth, in cohesion and development programmes, facilitating 575 local entrepreneurial opportunities, and enabling employment placements for more than 60 at-risk young people. In addition, the expansion of restorative justice centres across several parishes in 2024 resulted in the facilitation of over 2 000 restorative justice conferences, the majority of which were court-referred, thereby diverting cases from the formal justice system, reducing backlog pressures, and promoting reconciliation and social cohesion. During the same period, more than 3 600 stakeholders were trained in restorative justice practices.

Together, these efforts illustrate how the localisation of Goal 16 through community-based governance structures, coordinated service delivery, and targeted social and peacebuilding interventions have strengthened institutional visibility at the grassroots level while producing tangible outcomes that advance Jamaica's national commitments under SDG 16.

Lessons Learnt/Best Practice

Key lessons from Jamaica's experience include the effectiveness of combining enforcement-based and prevention-oriented social interventions. Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs) effectively stabilised communities by pairing policing with social services, while the use of technology in the courts improved efficiency. Community initiatives such as Project STAR and restorative justice centres also demonstrated the value of citizen participation in sustaining peace. However, the use of short-term enforcement measures such as States of Emergency (SOEs), although frequently linked to temporary reductions in crime, has generated ongoing discussion regarding its effectiveness. Resource constraints have also limited the reach of anti-corruption agencies and local governance structures.

Mitigation strategies have included scaling up social programmes in high-risk areas, expanding youth employment initiatives and strengthening institutional oversight. These approaches helped to balance enforcement with prevention, making progress under Goal 16 more sustainable.

Beyond 2030

Looking beyond 2030, Jamaica recognises that building strong institutions is a long-term endeavour. Sustaining progress under Goal 16 will require consolidating crime reduction gains, deepening judicial reforms and embedding anti-corruption measures across all sectors.

Key priorities include:

- Achieving a sustained decline in violent crime.
- Modernising the justice system with expanded use of technology.
- Strengthening integrity, transparency, and citizen oversight mechanisms.
- Deepening citizen engagement to improve trust.
- Enhancing collaboration between central government and local communities to sustain peacebuilding.

Jamaica's experience demonstrates that building strong institutions is a long-term process requiring sustained investment, policy coherence, and inclusive governance. Continued progress under SDG 16 will be critical to achieving broader sustainable development outcomes.

Regional Analysis

In Latin America and the Caribbean, we stand at a development crossroads marked by three mutually reinforcing institutional traps of low capacity for economic growth, high inequality and social mobility, and weak institutional capacities and ineffective governance (ECLAC, 2024a). These institutional constraints have undermined progress toward the 2030 Agenda and weakened the ability of member states to respond to economic, social and climate pressures. Across the region, governments are attempting to strengthen institutional frameworks, improve transparency and expand social protection systems.

Improving public trust in democratic institutions “requires transparent institutions that promote public participation and ensure accountability” (ECLAC, 2025a). While most of the countries surveyed in the Open Budget Survey (OBS) recorded strong performance in transparency (scores of 50 or higher), the overall results show stagnation or decline in transparency across many of the countries (see Figure 21). One manifestation of this is that only half of the countries surveyed publish the mid-year review, thus limiting real-time accountability. In this regard, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago and Honduras recorded the highest improvement in transparency scoring. Another facet of institutional strengthening is the experience of Caribbean States in pioneering institutional innovations that offer critical lessons for us to replicate. Barbados completed the world’s first climate resilience debt swap, with loan terms that include a clause that will offer debt service relief in the event of a natural disaster or pandemic. Further, through its Bridgetown Initiative, the country proposes a pathway to mobilize US\$3-5 billion for climate finance without requiring new capital, thus demonstrating leadership in reshaping global financial governance (ECLAC, 2024b).

The data revolution presents both opportunities and challenges for institutional strengthening and supporting evidence-based governance. CARICOM has observed that national statistical offices in the Caribbean continue to be affected by technological limitations which affect their ability to modernize data generation, collection, management, and reporting processes (CARICOM, 2019). Further, in many countries of the Caribbean, statistical laws have not been updated to reflect modern standards. These weak governance frameworks and outdated statistical legislation constrain the development of effective and coordinated national data systems in the Caribbean which are especially needed to monitor progress broadly on the 2030 Agenda and support the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States, and therefore highlight the scale of transformation that we require to build a resilient and responsive data ecosystem (ECLAC, 2025b).

Strengthening institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean requires coordinated action, including in the areas of transparency, urban governance, and data systems. Caribbean innovations, particularly in climate finance and disaster-responsive governance, demonstrate what is possible when institutions adapt to emerging challenges. A renewed regional commitment to institutional strengthening is essential to advance towards a more productive, inclusive, and sustainable future.

For Jamaica, these trends have direct implications for our governance systems and public administration. We operate in a context where climate-related disasters can disrupt essential services, where global financial volatility impacts fiscal space, and where digital transformation is both an opportunity and a challenge. As a country with strong democratic traditions, we recognise that strengthening institutions is essential to sustaining social cohesion, improving service delivery, and advancing human rights. The rise of artificial intelligence and data-driven governance requires us to modernise regulatory frameworks and protect privacy, while ensuring that digital tools enhance, rather than undermine equity and accountability.

Ultimately, we reaffirm that strong institutions are both a foundation and an outcome of sustainable development and we remain committed to strengthening governance systems that are transparent, resilient, rights-based and capable of responding to the complex regional and global dynamics shaping our development trajectory.

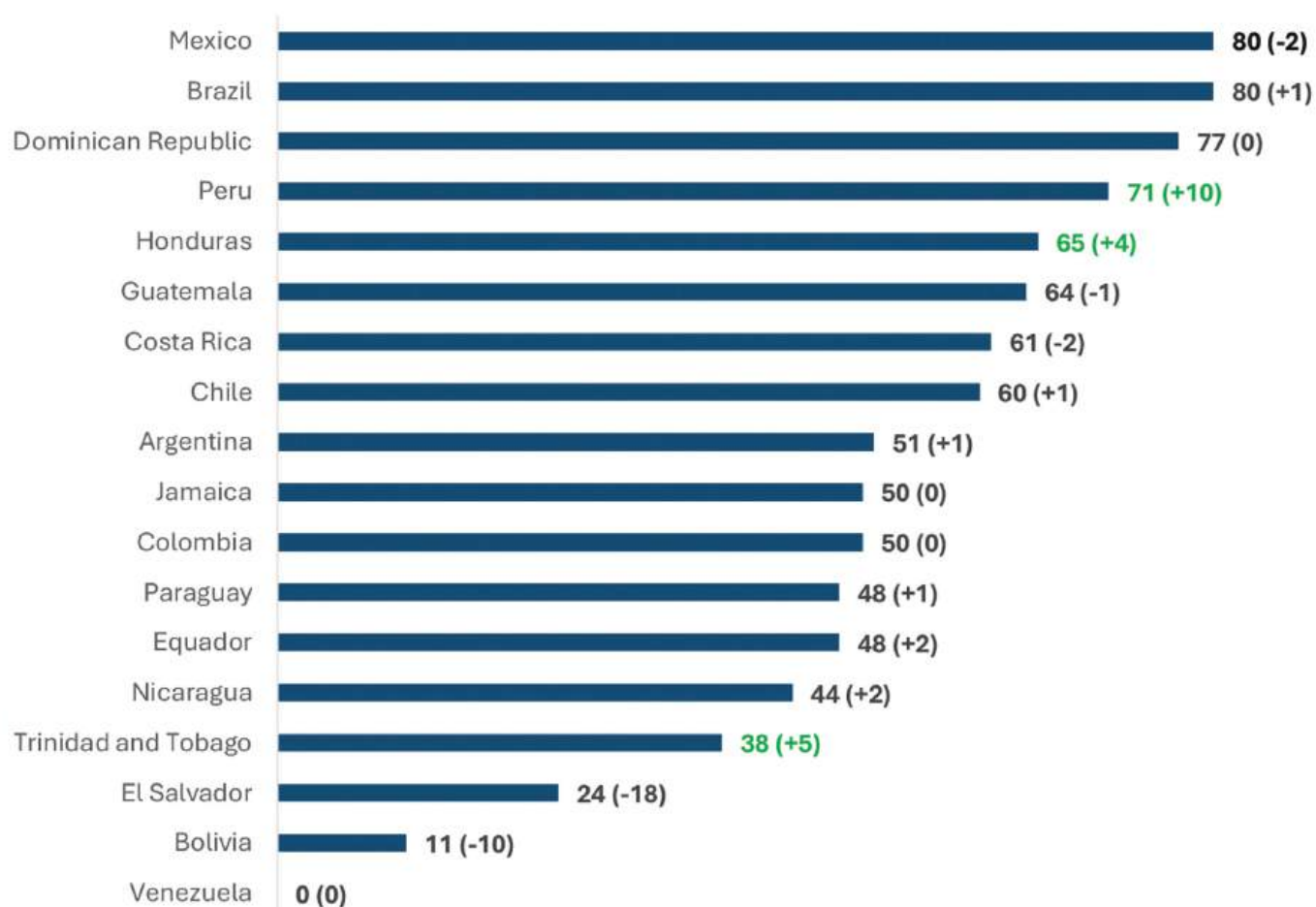


FIGURE 21 Scores by country in the transparency of the 2023 OBS and change compared to 2021

SOURCE: ECLAC Regional Observatory on Planning for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean

“

The JDF and JCF work in perfect harmony, supported by a government that uses technology to ensure transparency... Crime has plummeted because the 'workplaces' promised... actually materialized... When young men and women have good-paying jobs... the temptation of 'road life' disappears

► **TERAN CARR,**
Seaforth High School

“

In this future Jamaica, the government worked closely with the people. Leaders listened, made fair decisions, and protected everyone's rights. Young people were empowered, and our ideas mattered. I saw one governing party that worked together to fix problems and truly understand the people. My Carrot Eyes also saw laws being followed by everyone, and police officers who were kind and helpful, even with small matters

► **NADISHA BYFIELD,**
Christel House



Goal 17

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels



FY24/25

30.3%

Government revenue
as a proportion of GDP

FY24/25

68.8%

Government expenditure
as a proportion of GDP

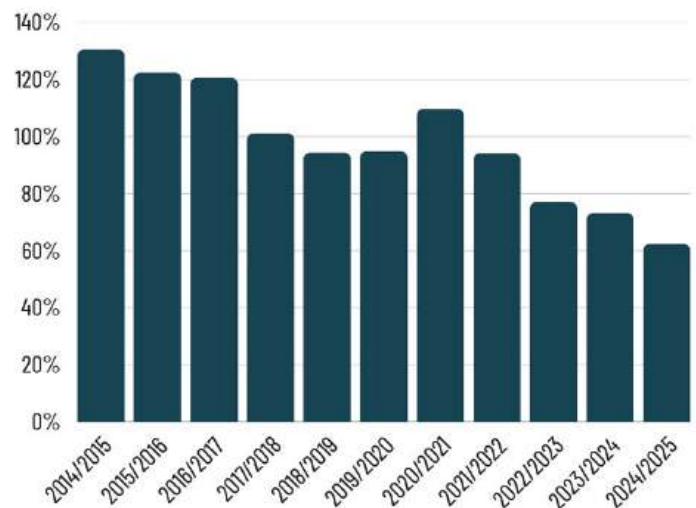


2024

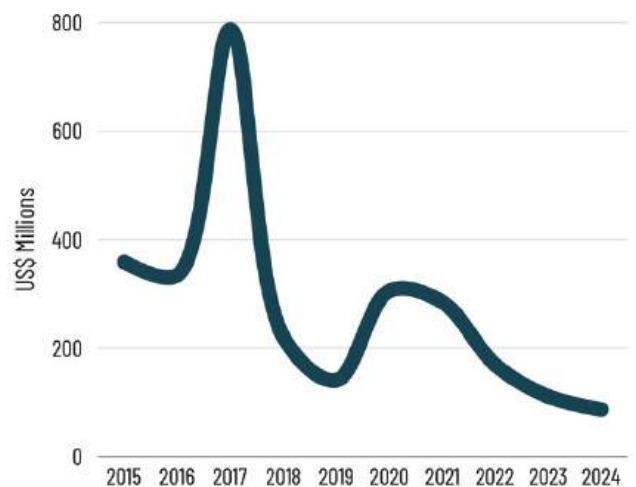
81.8%

Down from 150.42% in 2015
Public issued external debt
outstanding as a share of goods,
services and current transfers

Public Debt % of GDP



New ODA into Jamaica



MULTILATERALISM

Context

For a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) with limited natural resources and heightened vulnerability to external shocks, the multilateral system is not merely a diplomatic arena – it is a critical enabler of Jamaica’s sustainable development. Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 17 speaks directly to this reality: without strong, equitable partnerships for the goals, no amount of national effort can compensate for the structural disadvantages SIDS face in accessing financing, technology, and markets. Sustainable Development Goal 17 seeks to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development. For Jamaica, as a SIDS, multilateralism is critical, ensuring that all states, regardless of size, have a voice, enabling meaningful participation in global governance such as the Group of Seventy-Seven (G77) and China, the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC).

This chapter tells the story of how Jamaica has leveraged multilateral engagement, diversified its partnerships, mobilized resources, and advocated for a reformed global architecture that reflects the realities of countries like Jamaica – and what remains to be done to translate commitments into meaningful progress.

Jamaica’s development planning architecture, anchored in Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan and operationalised through successive Medium Term Socio-Economic Policy Frameworks (MTFs), is strategically designed to advance national progress toward global competitiveness, resilience, and inclusive growth. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are integrated directly into these frameworks, guiding priority areas such as poverty reduction, climate resilience, social protection, education, institutional strengthening, and sustainable economic growth. Since the SDGs are 98.0 per cent aligned to Vision 2030 Jamaica (updated from the initial 91.3 per cent alignment established in 2016), there is a natural synergy in the approach and engagement at the multilateral level on the SDGs, which has culminated in projects and programmes being implemented. Each MTF cycle sets out sectoral outcomes and flagship programmes aligned with specific SDG targets, ensuring coherence between national development objectives and international commitments. Implementation of this agenda is strongly supported through multilateral cooperation, which facilitates access to development financing, technical assistance, and policy support.

Since becoming an independent nation, Jamaica has established diplomatic relations with over 165 countries. These partnerships and our membership in international organisations like the United

Nations have allowed the country to harness cooperation programmes that support our national development priorities, including the SDGs. Since the SDGs are significantly aligned to Vision 2030 Jamaica –National Development Plan there is a natural synergy in the approach and engagement that we have at the multilateral level on the SDGs through engagement of bilateral and multilateral partners.

Multilateral cooperation is essential for Jamaica to achieve the SDGs. The intersection of declining traditional Official Development Assistance (ODA), climate change impacts, and evolving global partnership modalities requires Jamaica to diversify its partnerships approaches while maintaining active engagement in multilateral fora. Recent global developments have underscored both the importance and fragility of multilateral cooperation. The outcomes from major United Nations (UN) summits—including the 2023 SDG Summit, SIDS4, Summit of the Future, FfD4, UNOC3, and COP30—have laid important foundations for renewed cooperation, though implementation remains critical. These forums have highlighted persistent challenges including inadequate SDG financing (estimated at US\$4.0 trillion annually for developing countries), insufficient climate finance, and the need for reformed international financial architecture that accounts for SIDS vulnerabilities beyond per capital income measures.

The prevailing global challenges including climate change, pandemics, limited access to adequate healthcare, armed conflict, food shortage, and persistent poverty, inter alia, require multilateral responses. It is for this reason that Jamaica remains committed to the principles of multilateralism, while supporting continued reform of the multilateral system to better respond to country realities.

Thematic Discussion

Jamaica’s Active Role in Multilateralism

Jamaica contributes actively in the multilateral system through its participation in key committees and leadership on important issues such as SDG financing. Jamaica’s contributions to multilateralism include:

CURRENT ENGAGEMENT	PERIOD
Co-Chair — Informal Ad Hoc Working Group (IAHWG) under Workstream 2 of the UN80 Initiative	September 2025 – present
Co-Chair — Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs	Since May 2018
Member — Group of Friends on Women, Peace and Security	Since October 2015
Committee of Experts on Public Administration	August 2025 – July 2029
Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters	2025 – 2029
Council of the Food and Agricultural Organization	2025 – 2028

TABLE 9 International Representation by Jamaica

PAST ENGAGEMENT	PERIOD
Member of the Advisory Board for the Multinational Security Support Mission on Haiti	2023
Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters	2021 – 2025
Council of the International Civil Aviation Organization	2022 – 2025
CARICOM Coordinator — UN Ad Hoc Committee for a Cybercrimes Treaty	Recent
Co-facilitator — Implementation Mechanism for the UN Declaration on Future Generations	Recent
International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)	2014 – 2018
Chair — First Committee of the UN General Assembly	2014 – 2015
Judge — International Court of Justice (ICJ)	2015 – 2024
Member — Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)	Multiple terms
International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY)	1998 – 2015
Chair — Group of 77 and China	1977 and 2005
Ambassador Patricia Durrant, OJ — First UN Ombudsman	2002
Member — United Nations Security Council	1979–1980; 2000–2001
President — United Nations Security Council	July 2000; November 2001
Host — International Seabed Authority (selected as site)	November 1994
Host — Conference adopting the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea	December 1982
Chair — Memorial Committee for The Ark of Return (Transatlantic Slave Trade Memorial)	2007
Piloted initiative to designate 1968 as International Year for Human Rights	1960s
Joined the United Nations	18 September 1962
Lead — Adoption of the International Declaration Against Apartheid in Sports	1950s
Lead — International Convention Against Apartheid in Sports	Historical

TABLE 10 Past International Representation by Jamaica

Jamaica's participation in the multilateral system extends far beyond passive membership. Since joining the United Nations on 18 September 1962, Jamaica has demonstrated consistent leadership across a range of multilateral bodies – contributing substantively to global norms, international law, and collective decision-making on issues of critical importance to developing countries.

In the area of international finance and taxation, Jamaica's participation in the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (2025-2029) has positioned the country to contribute to the development of fairer international tax norms that reduce illicit financial flows and support domestic resource mobilisation in developing countries. Similarly, Jamaica's seat on the Council of the Food and Agricultural Organization (2025-2028) allows the country to advocate for food security frameworks responsive to the vulnerabilities of SIDS and Caribbean economies.

Jamaica's co-chairmanship of the Informal Ad Hoc Working Group under Workstream 2 of the UN80 Initiative reflects the country's active engagement in the reform of the United Nations system itself – advocating for a more effective, efficient, and responsive multilateral architecture. As Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Children and the SDGs (since May 2018), Jamaica has championed intergenerational equity and the rights of children as central to sustainable development.

At the highest level of international law and diplomacy, Jamaica has served as a Judge on the International Court of Justice (2015-2024), chaired the First Committee of the UN General Assembly (2014-2015), and served twice on the United Nations Security Council (1979-1980; 2000-2001), including the Presidency. Notable recent achievements include co-chairing the SDG Stimulus Leaders Group with Canada (2024-2025), addressing issues of debt, climate and development finance, and Jamaica's active role in the Summit of the Future preparatory process, co-facilitating the Declaration on Future Generations.

Recent UN summits established critical frameworks and commitments that shaped Jamaica's partnership strategies for achieving the SDGs. These outcomes addressed persistent gaps in financing, governance, and multilateral cooperation essential for SIDS development.

2023 SDG Summit

The mid-point review of the 2030 Agenda confirmed that achievement of the SDGs is in peril, with most goals either progressing too slowly or regressing below the 2015 baseline. Member states committed to enhanced global, regional, national and local partnerships and renewed multilateralism to accelerate progress. As a follow-up, the UN Secretary General established the SDG Stimulus Leaders Group, co-chaired by Jamaica and Canada, to address immediate financing constraints facing developing countries. Jamaica's co-leadership focuses specifically on debt, climate, and development finance—issues central to meaningful SDG acceleration for SIDS.

Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4)

The Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for Small Island Developing States (ABAS) establishes a 10-year programme addressing SIDS-specific vulnerabilities through four pillars: economic resilience and diversification; climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and the blue economy; data, technology, and institutional capacity; and partnerships, finance, and governance. The ABAS provides essential recognition of SIDS' unique vulnerabilities and establishes frameworks for tailored support mechanisms. Jamaica committed to the full implementation of ABAS priorities, securing major climate financing (US\$764.0 million International Monetary Fund, IMF Resilience and Sustainability Facility), advancing digital transformation through the Data4Development Platform, and establishing the US\$500.0 million Blue-Green Facility for blended climate investment. The pursuit of national development priorities under Vision 2030 Jamaica supports the implementation of the ABAS. Jamaica has also participated in the preparation of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the ABAS including the review of proposed indicators against available data.

A key feature distinguishing the ABAS from its predecessor framework is the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, which was endorsed by Member States during the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in December 2025. Following this, endorsement, a Sub-regional Capacity Building Workshop was convened with the objective of developing capacity for the synergistic implementation of the SDGs and ABAS in alignment with national development priorities, and to prepare SIDS for implementation and reporting commencing in 2026.

The ABAS M&E Framework encompasses 82 indicators spread across seven thematic areas, combining existing SDG-aligned measures with newly developed indicators specific to SIDS. Of these 82 indicators, Jamaica is currently reporting on 33, representing approximately 40.0 per cent of the total indicator set. A further nine indicators (11.0 per cent) are not currently being reported on by Jamaica. The remaining 39 indicators (48.0 per cent) are predominantly newly developed SIDS-specific measures for which national data collection and reporting mechanisms are still being established, with one additional indicator (1.6.2, relating to SIDS' share of global exports) recorded as applicable only to Least Developed Countries and therefore not directly applicable to Jamaica as a result of its Upper-Middle-Income categorisation. These figures reflect both the strength of Jamaica's existing statistical infrastructure – particularly across the economic, social and environmental resilience pillars – and the considerable work ahead in building the data systems required to fully track the country's progress against the ABAS commitments.

Summit of the Future

The Summit of the Future renewed multilateral commitments through 56 specific actions across sustainable development financing, international peace and security, science and technology, youth and future generation, and transforming global governance. Jamaica co-facilitated the Declaration on

Future Generations, ensuring intergenerational equity considerations are embedded in multilateral frameworks.

Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)

The “Compromiso de Sevilla” (Seville Commitment) commits to reforming the international financial architecture to reflect current development realities. Key outcomes critical to Jamaica included the commitment to operationalise the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) for Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) allocations, strengthen developing country representation in economic decision-making, implement innovative financing mechanisms, and incorporate Climate Resilient Debt Clauses. These reforms directly addressed Jamaica’s advocacy for financing frameworks that account for SIDS structural vulnerabilities beyond per capita income measures.

Third UN Ocean Conference (UNOC3)

The Nice Declaration (Our Ocean, Our Future: United for Urgent Action) acknowledged that SDG 14 has received the least financial support despite the ocean’s vital role in climate regulation. Current ocean sustainability investment (US\$1.5 billion annually) falls dramatically short of the estimated US\$175 billion required to meet SDG 14 targets. Jamaica co-chaired Ocean Action Panel 3 on mobilising ocean finance, advocating for innovative finance solutions (blue bonds, blue carbon credit, debt-for-nature swaps), enhanced concessional finance access and use of the MVI for eligibility criteria. Jamaica ratified the Agreement on Biological Diversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), demonstrating commitment to sustainable ocean governance.

COP30 and Climate Finance Commitments

COP30 outcomes remained critical for SIDS, with Jamaica advocating for preservation of the 1.5°C temperature goal, operationalisation of SIDS’ Special Circumstances, finalisation of Loss and Damage Fund mechanisms, and substantially increased climate finance through the New Collective Quantified Goal. The devastating impacts of Hurricane Beryl and Hurricane Melissa underscored the urgency of adequate, accessible, and predictable climate finance for SIDS adaptation and resilience. Jamaica continued to advocate for Climate Resilience Debt Clauses as essential mechanisms to enable countries to respond to climate disasters without debt distress. This commitment to climate leadership was further recognised in December 2025, when Jamaica was elected to the Presidency of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) - a testament to the confidence placed in the country’s standing on environmental and climate issues.³⁴⁸

These multilateral frameworks collectively established important commitments for reformed financing architecture, recognition of SIDS vulnerabilities, and enhanced partnership modalities. However, implementation remains the critical test as Jamaica’s continued advocacy focuses on translating

³⁴⁸ Government of Jamaica Welcomes Election of Minister Samuda as President of the United Nations Environment Assembly – Office of the Prime Minister

summit declarations into concrete financing flows, policy reforms and partnership mechanisms that enable accelerated SDG progress for SIDS.

Official Development Assistance

Official Development Assistance (ODA) is one of the primary mechanisms through which multilateral cooperation is operationalised, comprising grants, concessionary loans, and technical cooperation that support social welfare and economic development. Jamaica's multilateral partners, including the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and the Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean (CAF), support Jamaica's development agenda by providing financing and technical support for recovery and infrastructure projects. These partners—several of whom have offices in Jamaica—work to align funding with the Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan.

The Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica 2024, highlights that new and ongoing ODA totalled US\$1.4 billion targeting productive and social sectors, as well as governance (including public sector reform), environment and national resource management. However, ODA inflows to Jamaica declined over the last 5 years, falling from US\$305.8 million in 2020 to US\$87.0 million in 2024; representing a 71.6 per cent decrease. This decline reflects multiple factors, including shifts in geopolitical priorities by donors, reduced grant funding associated with Jamaica's upper middle-income country classification, and Jamaica's own efforts to strengthen domestic resource mobilisation.

Domestic Resource Mobilisation

Jamaica continues to pursue sustainable financing including greater resource self-reliance emphasising the scaling up of domestic capacity, innovation, and strategic partnerships. The 2025 Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP)—the government-led framework for planning, financing, and implementing capital projects that contribute to national development objectives—highlights the scope of nationally implemented projects and reaffirms the Government's commitment to sustained development progress. Approximately 58.0 per cent of the PSIP revised expenditure for fiscal year 2024/25 was government expenditure, demonstrating its commitment to mobilising domestic resources—a critical element of the means of implementation—in financing national development priorities. This represents a strategic shift resulting from years of fiscal prudence.

Jamaica's active participation in the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (2025-2029) reflects both a commitment to global fiscal reform and a direct effort to strengthen Jamaica's own resource mobilisation capacity. Through this engagement, Jamaica contributes to the development of international tax norms that combat illicit financial flows, reduce tax avoidance, and promote fairer cross-border cooperation – all of which have a direct bearing on Jamaica's ability to

retain and grow its tax base. This international engagement has complemented domestic reforms: Jamaica's tax-to-gross domestic product (GDP) ratio has shown improvements through enhanced tax administration and compliance measures. The government has implemented reforms to broaden the tax base, improve compliance, and enhance revenue collection efficiency through digitalization and modernized tax administration systems. The country continues to strengthen capacity for combatting tax avoidance and implementing international tax standards while ensuring that tax reforms support domestic resource mobilisation without creating undue burden on businesses or vulnerable populations. Further strengthening of domestic revenue collection capacity remains essential to sustain development financing.

Innovative and Blended Finance

While Jamaica pursues economic self reliance, graduation to Upper Middle-Income country status has contributed to declining ODA inflows, particularly for grant financing. In response to declining traditional ODA, Jamaica has engaged in alternative sources of funding to support sustainable development. Two major responses have been the use of blended funding and scaling up of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) to mobilise non-traditional funding sources, reduce long-term reliance on external grants, and stimulate shared responsibility between Government, businesses, and communities. An example of blended approaches is the Boosting Innovation, Growth and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems (BIGEE), project funded by a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and grant funding from the European Union (EU). The programme focuses on business investment, growth, and employment through private sector-led development. BIGEE demonstrates how leveraging domestic private capital can stimulate productivity, support Micro, Small, and Medium sized Enterprises (MSME) development, and create economic resilience.

Public-private partnerships present a viable avenue to diversify financing mechanisms, unlock private sector capital, and boost investment in development priorities. PPPs have enabled Jamaica to pursue development initiatives, while ensuring that national priorities remain aligned with Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs. One example is Project STAR (Social Transformation and Renewal), a multi-stakeholder social transformation initiative driven by the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ) and the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF), supported by community partners. Project STAR illustrates how collaboration between public entities, private sector actors, and civil society can address social challenges through integrated approaches to violence prevention and community renewal.

Another emerging example of partnership-driven development financing is the European Union's Global Gateway Initiative, which reflects the EU's transition from predominantly grant-based support toward more blended and private sector leveraged investments. While the EU has historically been a strong grant provider to Jamaica, recent trends indicate a gradual reduction in direct grant flows, with a growing emphasis on mobilising private capital. Global Gateway seeks to create a partnership with private sector to generate business investments that contribute towards sustainable development.

The EU's Team Europe (EU institutions and EU Member States jointly) expects to mobilize €300.0 billion of investments from 2021 to 2027. Global Gateway activities in Jamaica currently include digital transitioning, waste management, transportation and green energy investments.

The Green Bond Plus platform on the Jamaica Stock Exchange, an important financial innovation, allows the country to trade in sustainable finance, attracting investment for climate-resilient infrastructure.

Strengthening collaborative mechanisms across government, private sector, multilateral partners, NGOs, and community organisations remains central to enhancing national resilience, accelerating SDG implementation, and advancing growth under Vision 2030 Jamaica.

South-South and Triangular Cooperation

Jamaica is increasingly exploring South-South and Triangular Cooperation as complementary pathways to sustain development progress. South-South Cooperation (SSC) involves technical, financial, and knowledge exchange among developing countries, allowing nations with similar development trajectories to share solutions, strengthen institutional capacity, and enhance ownership of their development agendas. Triangular cooperation strengthens south-south cooperation by including a third partner who facilitates the interactions between the beneficiary countries and provide financial or technical assistance to support the objectives of the cooperation for each country.

Through SSC, Jamaica has a greater opportunity to access regional expertise, agricultural and climate resilience innovations, digital transformation models, and capacity-building programmes offered by fellow developing states. Unlike traditional ODA, SSC encourages mutual benefit, peer learning, and culturally relevant solutions rather than dependency-based assistance arrangements. This provides a space for Jamaica to share its own best practices while also drawing on the experiences of other countries facing similar challenges.

SSC therefore represents an important strategic opportunity for Jamaica to diversify partnership modalities, strengthen resilience, and mitigate the development financing gap associated with the reduction of ODA. South-south activities have included technical assistance to Jamaica such as training in social policy by National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy, CONEVAL in Mexico, knowledge exchange on disaster risk management with regional partners and collaborative initiatives on climate adaptation and blue economy development.

Debt

Debt sustainability is inextricably linked to the multilateral system: it is through multilateral development banks, international financial institutions, and global advocacy that Jamaica seeks reformed financing mechanisms appropriate to its SIDS context. The following discussion situates Jamaica's debt trajectory within this multilateral framework, and demonstrates why Hurricane Melissa makes the case for Climate Resilient Debt Clauses more urgent than ever.

Jamaica has made significant progress in fiscal conditions and debt reduction over the past decade. Sustained fiscal reform reduced the public debt-to-GDP ratio from 135.6 per cent at the end of FY 2012/13 to 62.4 per cent at the end of FY 2024/25, reflecting sustained fiscal discipline, economic management reforms, and strategic debt management initiatives. This achievement demonstrates Jamaica's commitment to long-term debt sustainability and provides fiscal space for development investments. However, the recurring impact of natural disasters poses ongoing threats to debt sustainability. Hurricane Melissa in October 2025 caused damage, losses and additional cost of \$1 953.2 billion or 56.7 per cent of 2024 GDP – representing one of the most catastrophic single events in Jamaica's history. Jamaica is currently balancing the need to borrow for reconstruction with the goal of keeping the debt-to-GDP ratio stable, highlighting the critical need for Climate Resilient Debt Clauses in agreements with Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), which would suspend payments on loans for countries affected by natural disasters.

Jamaica continues to advocate for reformed debt financing mechanisms that acknowledge the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS. Key priorities include longer loan tenors with lower interest rates for more sustainable benefit, interest rate caps in loan contracts to prevent rates from rising beyond certain levels, and financing models that accurately reflect the economic realities of SIDS. These models should allow for expansion of investments geared toward sustainable development without fear of incurring liability and financial crises, considering multidimensional vulnerability beyond per capita income classification.

The use of the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index by Multilateral Development Banks represents a critical reform priority. The MVI would provide a more comprehensive assessment of SIDS vulnerabilities—including exposure to climate change, natural disasters, economic shocks, and structural constraints—rather than relying solely on per capita income, which often excludes middle-income SIDS from concessional financing despite their significant vulnerabilities. These priorities were central to Jamaica's advocacy at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) held in Spain (June–July 2025), which adopted the “Compromiso de Sevilla” (Seville Commitment) committing to reform of the international financial architecture.

Science and Technology Transfer

Jamaica prioritised digital transformation and technology adoption as enablers of sustainable development. In alignment with the Antigua and Barbuda Agenda for SIDS (ABAS) framework, initiatives such as the Jamaica Business Development Corporation's Digital Transition Programme (2023–2024) and the PSOJ-Digitopia AI Readiness Partnership have expanded digital and innovation capacity, creating opportunities for new technology-driven sectors and reducing dependence on traditional industries.

The Planning Institute of Jamaica's Data4Development Platform (2023) was launched to track Vision 2030 Jamaica and SDG progress, complemented by the proposed launch of the "One Jamaica" app for digital government services, and the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the University of Technology (UTech) and Y Smart Data which is aimed at improving geospatial data systems. These initiatives strengthen data systems and institutional capacity to enhance policymaking, climate adaptation, and accountability while fostering domestic innovation and reducing reliance on external expertise.

The Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth and Information in partnership with the United Nations launched the "Empowering Jamaica's Future: SDG Joint Programme on Digital Transformation for Education" in 2025 with the goal to promote inclusive, sustainable development by leveraging technology to expand educational access and quality. Jamaica continues to advocate for technology transfers and capacity building as essential components of the global partnership for sustainable development, particularly for SIDS that face constraints in accessing cutting-edge technologies and technical expertise.

Trade and Export Development

As a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Jamaica currently trades with the Organisation's 166 members on the basis of the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) and National Treatment principles. Exceptions include regional or multilateral trade agreements, such as CARICOM/CSME, Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) with the US, CARIBCAN with Canada and the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) which the CARIFORUM grouping has concluded with the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom. Through these arrangements, Jamaica secures preferential access for its goods.

Jamaica continues to participate actively in key aspects of the work programme of the WTO, particularly in the areas of trade negotiations and consultations; administration and implementation of the existing WTO agreements; monitoring and transparency; dispute settlement; Electronic Commerce (E-Commerce); and supporting development and building trade capacity. In the last few years, the attention of WTO members has focused on concluding the negotiations on fisheries subsidies and advancing the negotiations on agriculture; two key legacy areas from the Doha Round. Members have

committed themselves to conclude comprehensive and effective disciplines that prohibit certain forms of fisheries subsidies that contribute to overcapacity and overfishing and eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing while ensuring that appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is an integral part of the outcome of the negotiations. Work has advanced in the negotiations in recent years with the key objectives of developing countries, including Jamaica, being that an outcome on fisheries subsidies is balanced and equitable and takes into account the needs and concerns of developing countries and LDCs. An outcome on fisheries subsidies will result in the implementation of SDG target 14.6 as it relates to environmental sustainability and the use of marine resources for sustainable development.

During the WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13), held in the United Arab Emirates, Jamaica advocated for levelling the playing field for small vulnerable economies. Jamaica's core message emphasised that trade must be a tool for resilient development especially in the face of climate change and digital transformation. Additionally, Jamaica, as the current facilitator for the WTO's Work Programme on E-Commerce, has been engaging members on the concrete contributions the WTO could make, particularly towards addressing issues relating to the digital divide. Since Jamaica cannot out-compete larger economies on volume, the country leverages its competitive advantages; carving out export niches based on high value products and services, branding, location and culture. High value Jamaican products such as Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee, rum, and scotch bonnet peppers have maintained their premium quality and reputation and are protected through measures such as geographical indicators.

Nearly 90.0 per cent of Jamaican exports enter the United States (US) under the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). Unilateral tariffs threaten to erase this competitive edge, making Jamaican goods more expensive for consumers in the US. There is also the possibility of increased production costs in Jamaica, because a significant percentage of raw materials and machinery is imported from the US.

Following Hurricane Melissa in October 2025 Jamaica experienced unprecedented damage to the southern and western parishes of the country. The agriculture sector is among the worst-affected sectors. The economic effects includes \$10 billion in damage to assets and productive infrastructure, \$22.6 billion in losses to productive flows, and approximately \$3.5 million in additional costs required to restore productive capacity.³⁴⁹ This caused a temporary halt in exports of bananas, plantains, and tubers, leading to a "trade gap" where Jamaica must import food it normally grows.

The services sector and heavy industries restored infrastructure quickly. As of mid-December 2025, the tourism sector was declared 71.0 per cent operational. The mining sector (bauxite & alumina), had experienced a 14.8 per cent increase in bauxite exports, prior to the hurricane. While the storm caused temporary production halts, the sector's heavy infrastructure proved resilient, and it remains

³⁴⁹ Assessment of the Effects and Impacts of Hurricane Melissa in Jamaica, 2026 (DaLa Report), pg 22

a critical stable source of foreign exchange during the reconstruction period. In the manufacturing sector, approximately 80.0 per cent of manufacturers have resumed normal operations. In the food and beverage sector, 25.0 per cent of firms suffered severe structural damage; however, the majority have pivoted to re-building “smarter” with more resilient supply chains.

Climate Change and Resilience

Climate change represents an existential threat to SIDS, requiring coordinated multilateral action on both mitigation and adaptation. Jamaica’s climate vulnerability is demonstrated through recent catastrophic events. Despite contributing less than one per cent of global greenhouse emissions, Jamaica actively engages multilateral climate frameworks to advance both global emission reductions and SIDS-specific adaptation needs. Jamaica has updated its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement and developed a 2050 Long-term Emission Reduction and Climate Resilient Strategy demonstrating commitment to global climate goals even as a minimal emitter.

Jamaica has leveraged multiple multilateral financing mechanisms to strengthen climate resilience, including a US\$764 million Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) from the IMF (2023) and the Blue Green Facility (2024), a US\$500.0 million blended-finance mechanism for climate investment. The country has also pioneered innovative risk financing through the Caribbean Catastrophe Reinsurance Facility (CCRIF) and became the first small island state to independently sponsor a Catastrophe Bond in 2021, demonstrating leadership in mobilising climate finance through diverse mechanisms.

The scale of climate finance available to SIDS remains grossly inadequate relative to vulnerability and need. Hurricane Melissa’s damage—equivalent to more than half of Jamaica’s insert 2024 GDP—starkly illustrates the devastating economic impact of single climate events on SIDS and underscores the urgent need for substantially scaled climate finance, accessible Loss and Damage Fund mechanisms, and Climate Resilient Debt Clauses. At COP30, Jamaica advocated alongside CARICOM for operationalisation of SIDS’ Special Circumstances, increased access to climate finance through the New Collective Quantified Goal, finalisation of operational mechanisms for the Loss and Damage Fund and adaptation measures tailored to SIDS vulnerabilities. The integration of Climate Resilience Debt Clauses into financing agreements with MDBs represents a critical priority, enabling suspension of debt payments following natural disasters.

Jamaica’s institutional framework for climate action includes the Climate Change Focal Point Network (CCFPN) for cross-governmental coordination, the Climate Change Advisory Board (CCAB) for high-level guidance, and the appointment of an Ambassador/Special Envoy for Climate Change, Environment, Ocean and the Blue Economy to strengthen Jamaica’s voice in international climate negotiations. The CCFPN comprises representatives from MDAs to further integrate and mainstream climate change efforts into decision-making processes. To this end, the CCFPN is tasked with providing

guidance and advice on integrating climate change into policies, plans, projects, and programmes of their respective portfolio sectors. Further, there was the recently reconstituted Climate Change Advisory Board (CCAB), which provides high-level guidance on matters related to the subject area.

This governance architecture ensures Jamaica can effectively engage multilateral climate processes while coordinating domestic implementation aligned with Vision 2030 Jamaica. The fundamental challenge remains the disconnect between SIDS' minimal contribution to climate change and disproportionate climate impacts, necessitating substantially scaled multilateral climate finance commitments, technology transfer, and institutional support from major emitters to enable meaningful adaptation and resilience-building.

Jamaica has also used the Sendai Framework as a strong foundation to build out its Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy Framework. This framework includes a multi-layered suite of financial instruments such as the:

- Annual contingency allocation in the budget
- National Natural Disaster Fund
- Credit contingent claim with the Inter-American Development Bank
- Caribbean Catastrophe Reinsurance Facility (CCRIF)
- Catastrophe Bond which Jamaica became the first small island state in the world to independently sponsor in 2021, and which was renewed in 2024.

The country continues to do its part to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement. To this end, Jamaica has taken steps towards climate resilience, including adoption of a National Climate Change Policy Framework; updated its NDC; and developed a 2050 Long-term Emission Reduction and Climate Resilient Strategy. Jamaica also promulgated an Emissions Policy Framework and a Gender and Climate Strategy and Action Plan.

Despite these local efforts, the support of the international community remains critical. In addition to the need for ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, there is equally a need for accessible and predictable climate financing, even as the global community discusses the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance commitment to be made to support climate mitigation and adaptation in developing countries. Debt cancellation and the issuance of special drawing rights (SDRs) are also helpful financial tools providing fiscal space for climate resilience efforts.

At COP30 in Belém, Brazil, Jamaica joined with CARICOM in advocating for the inclusion of SIDS priorities including preservation of the 1.5°C Goal in the Paris Agreement, operationalisation of SIDS' Special Circumstances advocating for increased access to climate finance, and finalisation of operational mechanisms for the Loss and Damage Fund. This advocacy also included adaptation measures tailored to SIDS, robust support for capacity building, and technology transfer and development including for emerging technologies as well as enhanced transparency to enable meaningful participation in climate markets.

Localisation

SDG 17 implementation occurs primarily at the national level through institutional frameworks and international engagement. However, localisation manifests through parish-level development planning, community-based partnerships in development projects, and local participation in trade and economic development initiatives.

Parish Development Committees integrate national development priorities into local planning processes, ensuring that global partnership frameworks translate into community-level benefits. The Special Economic Zones established under the Global Logistics Hub Initiative create local employment opportunities and economic development in specific geographic areas.

Community-based organisations and civil society groups play crucial roles in partnership initiatives such as Project STAR, bringing local knowledge and grassroots engagement to national development priorities. The private sector is a key driver of SDG 17 localisation. Project STAR is a private-sector led initiative, spearheaded by the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica in collaboration with the Jamaica Constabulary Force and community partners. This exemplifies how private enterprises, business associations, and industry groups serve not only as financing partners but as implementers of social transformation at the community level. Businesses across Jamaica also contribute to SDG 17 through their participation in trade partnerships, adoption of global standards, and investment in community development programmes aligned with Vision 2030 Jamaica priorities. The localisation of partnership frameworks ensures that benefits of multilateral cooperation, trade agreements, and development financing reach communities across Jamaica, not just concentrated in urban centres.

Lessons Learnt

Several key lessons have emerged from Jamaica's experience implementing SDG 17:

1. **Diversification of partnerships is essential:** Over-reliance on traditional donor partnerships creates vulnerability when geopolitical priorities shift or donors reduce aid flows. Jamaica's pursuit of South-South Cooperation, private sector partnerships, and innovative financing mechanisms demonstrates the importance of diversified partnership modalities.

2. **Alignment between national and global frameworks enhances effectiveness:** The strong alignment between Vision 2030 Jamaica and the SDGs (98.0 per cent) facilitates coherent implementation and ensures that global commitments directly support national priorities.
3. **Active multilateral engagement amplifies impact:** Jamaica's leadership roles in international fora –including co-chairing the SDG Stimulus Leaders Group and serving in UN committees– provide platforms to advocate SIDS priorities and influence global policy frameworks.
4. **Climate shocks threaten partnership gains:** The devastating impacts of Hurricanes Beryl and Melissa demonstrates that even strong partnerships and development progress can be rapidly reversed by climate events, underscoring the need for climate-resilient development financing and Climate Resilient Debt Clauses.
5. **Graduation to higher income classification creates financing challenges:** Jamaica's reclassification as Upper Middle-Income has reduced access to concessional financing despite ongoing vulnerabilities, highlighting the need for multidimensional vulnerability assessments rather than income-based criteria alone.
6. **Domestic resource mobilisation must complement external financing:** As traditional ODA declines, strengthening domestic revenue collection and fiscal management becomes increasingly critical to sustaining development progress.

Resource Requirements

Achieving SDG 17 targets requires substantial resources across multiple categories:

Financial Resources: Enhanced access to concessional financing, climate finance, and innovative financing mechanisms including operationalisation of commitments made at FfD4 mobilising the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance and ensuring adequate funding for SIDS through MVI Informed allocations.

Technical Assistance: Continued support for capacity building in areas including tax administration, trade facilitation, digital transformation, statistical systems, and climate resilience planning.

Institutional Strengthening: Resources for enhancing coordination mechanisms across government, strengthening partnership platforms, and building capacity for partnership management and monitoring.

Technology Transfer: Support for technology access and transfer, particularly in areas of renewable energy, digital infrastructure, climate adaptation technologies, and data systems.

Partnership Platforms: Sustained engagement with international partners including MDBs, UN agencies, bilateral donors, regional organisations, private sector, and civil society requires dedicated resources for coordination, communication, and joint programming.

Beyond 2030

Looking beyond 2030, several priorities emerge for strengthening partnerships for sustainable development:

Reformed International Financial Architecture: The international financial system must be reformed to reflect current realities facing SIDS and middle-income countries. This includes operationalising the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, providing adequate and affordable climate finance, Implementing Climate Resilient Debt Clauses, and ensuring that financing mechanisms account for structural vulnerabilities rather than income levels alone.

Sustained Multilateral Engagement: Jamaica will continue active engagement in multilateral fora, including maintaining leadership roles in the SDG Stimulus Leaders Group, AOSIS, G77, and other groupings that advocate for SIDS and developing countries priorities. Strengthening multilateral institutions and reforming global governance structures to enhance representation and voice for smaller states remain essential.

Enhanced South-South and Triangular Cooperation: Expanding South-South partnership provides opportunities for peer learning, knowledge exchange, and solutions tailored to developing country contexts. Jamaica will continue to strengthen these partnerships while sharing its own experiences and best practices with other developing nations.

Deepened Private Sector Engagements: Public-private partnerships and blended finance mechanisms will become increasingly important as traditional development assistance declines. Creating enabling environments for private investments while ensuring development objectives are met requires continued policy innovation and regulatory frameworks.

Digital Transformation: Technology and digitalisation will be central to the post-2030 development. Ensuring equitable access to technology, building digital capacity, and leveraging technology for sustainable development will require sustained international cooperation and technology transfer mechanisms.

Climate Resilience Integration: All partnership and financing mechanisms must integrate climate resilience. As climate impacts intensify, development progress will only be sustainable if resilience is embedded in all interventions from the outset.

Data and Evidence Systems: Continued investment in data systems, statistical capacity, and monitoring frameworks is essential for post-2030 development agendas. Strengthening these systems will enable better targeting, more effective interventions, and robust accountability.

As Jamaica seeks to recover from Hurricane Melissa, support from the multilateral community will feature more prominently, not just as it pertains to funding but more so for technical expertise in building back better and greener. Jamaica will continue to engage with the private sector, South-South cooperation, and drive development and resilience.

Regional Analysis

Global multilateralism shapes the financial, social, and governance environment in which Latin America and the Caribbean must operate. The region's vulnerability to global shocks, including climate change, rising interest rates and financing costs, and the emergence of new geopolitical tensions and conflict, have intensified inequality, strained public finances, and limited governments' ability to respond effectively. These major forces, which are shaping the region's trajectory, underscore the need for stronger international cooperation and reforms, and for "strengthening multilateralism and cooperation to further the sharing of experiences, technical knowledge and institutional learning" (ECLAC, 2025c, p.19). The global development agenda, therefore, remains a central reference point for the region.

However, because these challenges operate across borders, the region requires a form of multilateralism that simultaneously works at two levels:

- Global multilateralism, which shapes financial flows, climate governance, and global development agendas through global commitments; and
- Regional multilateralism, which aligns national policies, strengthens institutions, and supports shared social and economic priorities evidenced by regional cooperation.

This integrated approach to multilateralism is essential for accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda and strengthening the region's resilience.

Within this context, Latin America and the Caribbean is "off track" (ECLAC, 2025b) on many Sustainable Development Goals, which makes global support through renewed commitment and stronger international mechanisms essential for accelerating progress. Indeed, the recently convened Second World Summit for Social Development, which Latin America and the Caribbean leveraged as a platform to advocate for social protection, care systems, and labour inclusion, offered a unique opportunity to address inequalities (ECLAC, 2025c, p. 19).

While global frameworks have shaped the broad development agenda, regional cooperation mechanisms translate these commitments into shared priorities, policy alignment, and institutional strengthening. In particular, we have found that regional multilateralism provides the institutional backbone for coordinated action. For example, the Regional Agenda for Inclusive Social Development is "a multilateral strategy for overcoming challenges", which emphasizes shared priorities such as social protection, labour inclusion, and institutional strengthening (ECLAC, 2025c, p. 22). These mechanisms have helped countries of the region to address structural inequalities that cannot be resolved through isolated national policies. More specifically, regional multilateralism has enabled us to align our national

strategies with the broader regional commitments in the areas of poverty reduction, inequality, climate resilience, and institutional strengthening, to create coherence across policy domains.

In this regard, Jamaica, together with our other Caribbean member states, play a distinctive role in this regional landscape. Our experiences with climate vulnerability, small-scale economies, and external shocks offer valuable insights into regional policy design. Thus, while regional benchmarking and shared standards have supported improvements in transparency and accountability, which are critical prerequisites for effective social policy and sustainable development financing, we have contributed significantly to regional discussions, to broaden the regional agenda and ensure that the diverse territorial realities and needs of the Caribbean SIDS are fully integrated into regional priorities. Ultimately, for us, regional multilateralism has thus served as a bridge between national policy efforts and global commitments, providing the institutional space for us to coordinate strategies, share knowledge, and strengthen capacities, all necessary for overcoming the development traps identified by ECLAC (ECLAC, 2024).

Finally, we believe that data governance is the key connector between global and regional multilateralism. The world is undergoing a data revolution that is transforming our societies. For this, stronger statistical systems are essential for effective participation in global monitoring frameworks. Countries like ours must have the ability to generate and harmonize high-quality data (ECLAC, 2025a). Our commitment, in this regard, was especially demonstrated by our participation as a beneficiary country in the recently concluded United Nations Development Account project, “Resilient and Inclusive Public Management Systems for Sustainable Development in Latin America and the Caribbean” (DA 2225O), jointly implemented by United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs UNDESA and ECLAC/ Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning ILPES during the period 2022-2025. Moreover, our leadership in data innovation also strengthens regional monitoring frameworks, thus aligning with ECLAC’s call to adapt to the “data revolution” (ECLAC, 2025d).

ACCELERATING SDG CONVERGENCE FOR JAMAICA:

Policy Insights from the Prioritising Sustainable Development Transformation Study

Context and Analytical Overview

The need to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals has underscored the importance of assessing not only the investments required, but also the time horizon over which such investments are likely to yield measurable results, the sequencing of interventions needed to maximise impact, and the financing instruments most capable of mobilising and intermediating resources efficiently. In the context of only modest projected improvements in SDG performance over the remainder of the 2030 Agenda period, Jamaica will need to markedly accelerate implementation efforts to close its most significant development gaps. The Prioritising Sustainable Development Transformation study,³⁵⁰ conducted in 2025, advances earlier analytical work on SDG accelerators in Jamaica by examining the key constraints affecting the timing of impact, identifying evidence-based policy responses and development solutions, and evaluating practical financing options to facilitate implementation.

Analytical framework

The study adopts an integrated analytical framework that combines the concepts of SDG convergence, economic transformation, and productive capacities to assess how SDG acceleration can be advanced through targeted policy interventions and strategic investment pathways. Using advanced statistical methods to analyze the influence of UNCTAD's productive capacities on SDG convergence, the study identifies the structural and institutional levers with the greatest potential to drive faster progress.

The analytical approach adopted in this study is grounded in earlier work on productive capacities and structural transformation, which provides an important foundation for the SDG convergence framework. A previous study titled 'Productive Capacities and the SDGs: Critical but nuanced relationships'³⁵¹ demonstrates that productive capacities are not just critical to SDG progress, but that their effects are differentiated, non-linear, and often shaped by threshold conditions across individual goals. Moreover, the related paper titled 'Unequal structural transformation potential and the SDGs: Considerations for SIDS',³⁵² extends these insights by showing that the development impact of productive capacities is further conditioned by broader structural transformation dynamics, particularly export diversification and economic complexity, and that these interactions generate important trade-offs

³⁵⁰ The study was led by Stuart Davies, Ph.D., of the UNRCO to support Jamaica's Voluntary National Review process. Nadine McCloud, Ph.D., served as Chief Consultant, supported technically by Wendel Ivey, Chrisan Junior, and Soyeon Chae. At the time the VNR was being prepared, the study was in its final stage of development. Its findings were presented to the National SDG Core Group for consideration and will also be featured at a side event during the 2026 High-Level Political Forum. Publication is anticipated later this year.

³⁵¹ D. Tennant, Davies, S, Tennant, S, and Whitely, P: Productive Capacities and the SDGs: Critical but Nuanced Relationships: Managing Global Transitions: Vol. 22 No. 4: 2024 <https://doi.org/10.26493/1854-6935.22.230-20>. This study was presented at the 2024 SDG Oversight Committee organized by PIOJ.

³⁵² D. Tennant, Davies, S, Tennant, S, and Whitely, P: Unequal structural transformation potential and the SDGs: Considerations for SIDS: Inequality and its solutions in Latin America and the Caribbean: Chapter 10: Ed. K. Williams, Benfield, W, and Leslie, Dacia: Routledge Publications: 2026 (sent to publishers)

across economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Taken together, these studies underpin the present SDG convergence analysis by showing why progress cannot be explained by investment levels alone, but must instead be understood through the interaction of productive capacities, structural constraints, sequencing, and country context. In this sense, they provide the conceptual and empirical basis for the study’s focus on bottlenecks, turning points, and targeted policy intervention as the foundation for accelerating SDG convergence in Jamaica.

Core findings and Convergence Dynamic

Core findings on convergence and productive capacities

The study finds evidence of sustainable development convergence since 2000, based on both unconditional (sigma) and conditional (beta) convergence measures. The conditional convergence analysis further shows that the rate of convergence is shaped by the strength of productive capacities, including human capital, natural capital, ICT, energy, transport, structural transformation, institutions, and private sector development. Importantly, the findings indicate that investments in productive capacities do not have uniform effects on SDG convergence. Rather, their influence is often non-linear, suggesting that the impact of such investments varies depending on underlying conditions and thresholds.

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Table 11 shows turning points by PCI dimension alongside Jamaica’s 2024 position.

PCI DIMENSION	JAMAICA	TP RANGE	SDGS AFFECTED	JAMAICA'S REGIME
Human Capital	46	47 – 76	0, 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11	Below TP – decelerating
Energy	49	45 – 81	0, 1, 4, 7, 9	Within trap zone
ICT	57	39 – 50	0, 1, 4, 7, 9, 17	Above TP for SDGs 1, 7, 9
Natural Capital	30	34 – 44	0, 4, 7, 9	Below/within TP
Institutions	60	39 – 120	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 11	Beyond TP for SDG 1
Private Sector	45	43 – 58	7, 8, 9	Within trap for SDGs 7, 8
Structural Change	50	64 – 66	1, 4	Below TP for SDGs 1, 4
Transportation	44	51 -	11	Within SDG 11 trap zone

NOTE: TP – MODEL IMPLIED TURNING POINT. **ORANGE** – BOTTLENECK ZONE, **GREEN** - ACCELERATING

TABLE 11 Model-Implied Turning Points by PCI Dimension and Jamaica’s 2024 Position

Why sequencing and targeting matter

Countries at intermediate levels of productive capacity can face temporary slowdowns in convergence when weaknesses in the enabling environment and other complementary factors limit the effectiveness of investment. This highlights the importance of carefully targeted and properly sequenced development interventions to avoid such traps. In Jamaica's case, the analysis suggests that strategic investments in productive capacities could reduce the convergence gap by several years.

Institutions as a cross-cutting accelerator

A central finding of the study is that strong institutions serve as a “universal convergence engine” and, as such, warrant prioritisation across all stages of development. At the same time, the evidence points to important differences in how institutional strengthening affects progress across individual goals. While stronger institutions can accelerate convergence for some SDGs, the relationship is more nuanced for others: for SDGs 3 and 4, incremental institutional improvements may initially constrain outcomes, whereas for SDG 5, faster convergence appears to require very high levels of institutional maturity. Institutions, therefore, should be understood not simply as administrative infrastructure but as the enabling architecture through which investments in human capital, digital technology, and energy are converted into sustained development results.

Human capital and institutions as compliments

The study further demonstrates that investment in human capital and institutional strengthening must advance together. Expanding education and skills without the institutional capacity to effectively absorb, align, and utilise talent can, under certain conditions, slow convergence, as gains are diluted by labour market mismatches, skills migration, weak coordination, and limited policy implementation. Human capital and institutions, therefore, function as complements rather than substitutes: the development returns to education depend on the strength of the systems that translate learning into employment, productivity, and wider socio-economic outcomes. Sustained and coordinated investment in both will be essential if Jamaica is to convert improvements in human capital into accelerated progress on the SDGs.

ICT as a high-leverage accelerator

The study identifies ICT as one of Jamaica's clearest high-leverage accelerators because its impact is highly threshold-dependent. Once digital capacity exceeds the relevant turning-point range, investments in connectivity, digital infrastructure, and complementary systems can support sustained convergence gains across multiple SDGs by improving coordination and enabling network effects to accumulate. Below this threshold, however, weak coverage and limited digital penetration constrain coordination and dampen the developmental returns to ICT investment. This suggests that

concentrated and strategically targeted investment in ICT can generate durable, system-wide benefits once the country has moved beyond the key bottleneck zone.

This is reinforced by the study 'The implications of the fourth industrial revolution for Jamaica'³⁵³, which highlights that digital infrastructure, smart systems, and stronger ICT integration will be essential to Jamaica's future competitiveness, service delivery, and economic transformation. In this respect, the report supports the study's finding that ICT is not only a sectoral input, but a cross-cutting enabler through which gains in productivity, coordination, and innovation can contribute to faster SDG convergence once the necessary institutions, skills, and governance systems are in place.

Implications for targeting and sequencing

Other notable findings of the study relate to how PCI levels shape the urgency, sequencing, and likely effectiveness of investment. Four main conclusions emerge:

- Absolute capacity levels can be misleading for targeting. A country with a mid-range PCI score may warrant more urgent support than a lower-capacity country if it sits in a bottleneck zone where convergence is slowest.
- Uniform capacity expansion is inefficient. Because turning points vary across SDG-PCI combinations, generic investment strategies can fund both accelerating and decelerating zones at once, reducing overall impact. More effective results come from targeted, sequenced investment aligned to a country's position relative to those thresholds.
- Convergence is uneven across goals and sectors. Countries may progress quickly on some SDGs while remaining constrained on others, so diagnostics must operate at the level of specific SDGs and PCI dimensions rather than relying on aggregate national scores.
- The route through bottleneck zones matters as much as the endpoint. Front-loading investment to reduce the time spent in slow-convergence phases can generate larger cumulative development gains than waiting until progress has already stalled

Priority Policy Levers and Sector Bottlenecks

Policy levers with the greatest acceleration potential

Although the study identifies clear pathways to accelerate Jamaica's progress on the SDGs, it also demonstrates that the effectiveness of productive capacity investments depends on the country's current stage of development. The expected returns to additional investment vary across sectors, individual SDGs, and Jamaica's position within the productive-capacity distribution. Against this

³⁵³ This is UNRCO commissioned study which was presented at the 2025 SDG Oversight Committee by Stuart Davies, Ph.D and Anthony Clayton Emiratus Professor at the University of the West Indies organized by PIOJ.

backdrop, the study draws on model-implied bottleneck analysis and the global Best Buys evidence base to identify the policy levers with the greatest potential to accelerate convergence in the near- to medium-term.

Human capital bottleneck and priority interventions

The study identifies human capital as Jamaica's most pervasive productive-capacity bottleneck. With a current human capital PCI score of 46, Jamaica remains below the relevant turning points for the overall SDG index and for SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, and 11. The analysis also shows that Jamaica is statistically situated within the bottleneck zone for SDGs 1, 3, and 9, while for the composite index and SDGs 4, 5, 7, and 11, the country remains below the threshold beyond which convergence is expected to accelerate. Under these conditions, marginal increases in human capital may slow rather than accelerate convergence unless they are matched by stronger institutional capacity for absorption, coordination, and implementation. In response, and drawing on both the implementation-gap analysis and the global "Best Buys" evidence base, the study highlights several priority interventions, including the scale-up of structured pedagogy supported by continuous teacher coaching, the deployment of Teaching at the Right Level through system-wide diagnostic regrouping by learning level, and the integration of parent-directed early childhood stimulation including into existing social protection programmes such as PATH or the national health system.

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Energy bottlenecks and policy response

At Jamaica's current Energy PCI level, the study finds that the country remains within an energy bottleneck that is impeding progress across several priority SDGs. The analysis indicates that Jamaica is statistically located within the bottleneck zone for the composite SDG index and for SDGs 1, 7, and 9, while current energy capacity levels continue to constrain convergence, particularly in relation to SDGs 1, 4, and 7. SDG 9 stands out as a notable exception, as additional investment in energy has the potential to accelerate progress in industry, innovation, and infrastructure. In response, the study identifies a focused package of policy actions, including grid modernisation, renewable energy integration, regulatory reform to support coordinated private sector participation and de-risking long term infrastructure investment, and regional interconnection to strengthen resilience and reduce energy costs. The study further emphasises the need to mobilise concessional and development finance to enable Jamaica to move more quickly through this bottleneck zone.

ICT as a near-term accelerator

Within the ICT dimension, Jamaica is already positioned beyond key bottleneck thresholds, having exceeded the relevant turning points for SDGs 1, 7, and 9. Under these conditions, additional investment in ICT is associated with faster convergence across SDGs 1, 4, 7, 9, and 17, making ICT the productive-

capacity domain with the strongest near-term development returns for Jamaica. On this basis, the study identifies ICT as one of the country's most important levers for accelerating progress on the SDGs, particularly through universal broadband expansion, the deployment of digital public goods, and stronger digital governance to ease service delivery bottlenecks in health, education, and social protection. The study also highlights the need for digital literacy and complementary measures to ensure that ICT adoption translates into productivity gains and broader development outcomes, rather than reinforcing existing inequalities.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution paper also reinforces ICT as a near-term accelerator by showing that digital infrastructure and smart systems are becoming essential to competitiveness, innovation, and service delivery across Jamaica's economy. This strengthens the case that targeted ICT investment can generate early, system-wide gains and support faster SDG convergence.³⁵⁴

Institutional priorities

The study identifies institutional capacity as a critical enabler of SDG progress in Jamaica, particularly given its existing contribution to faster convergence on SDG 1. At the same time, the findings point to a more complex relationship for SDG 5, where the very high turning point suggests that, at any currently feasible PCI level, institutional strengthening alone is unlikely to produce markedly faster gender-equality outcomes. More broadly, the study conceptualises institutions as the absorptive and coordinating platform through which investments in human capital, ICT, energy, and other priority areas are converted into measurable development gains. Against this backdrop, it identifies a set of institutional priorities: deploying labour market information systems to improve alignment between TVET and tertiary training and productive-sector demand; strengthening regulatory quality in the energy and ICT sectors; embedding cross-sector accountability frameworks that link education, health, social protection, and labour market interventions to shared SDG convergence metrics; and deepening diaspora engagement to facilitate knowledge transfer and skills circulation.

Other sector-specific constraints

The study highlights a series of sector-specific constraints across Jamaica's productive-capacity profile. Within the private sector dimension, Jamaica's current score places it in the bottleneck zone for SDGs 7 and 8 and below the threshold required to accelerate convergence on SDG 9. Structural change likewise remains below the relevant turning points for SDGs 1 and 4, while transportation continues to fall within the bottleneck zone for SDG 11. Natural capital constitutes an additional constraint, with Jamaica's score below the turning points for the composite SDG index and for SDGs 4, 7, and 9. Collectively, these findings underscore the study's broader conclusion that the effectiveness of further investment depends not only on aggregate capacity levels, but also on the specific productive-capacity dimension, the SDG under consideration, and Jamaica's position in relation to the relevant turning points.

³⁵⁴ Ibid 4

Implementation Architecture

Implementation challenge

Ultimately, the study indicates that Jamaica's principal challenge lies not in the absence of sound policy ideas, but in weaknesses in implementing proven interventions at scale and in a coordinated manner across sectors. Accelerating SDG progress will depend on expanding strategic interventions in education, health, labour market development, and social protection, while overcoming the fragmented delivery structures that limit their effectiveness. Doing so will require stronger systems integration, including shared performance metrics, co-located programme delivery, and common accountability frameworks that tie interventions to measurable convergence outcomes. The core task, therefore, is not merely to increase the volume of intervention but to establish a more coherent implementation architecture capable of translating investment into sustained and measurable development gains.

Financing for SDG Acceleration

Financing implications

The study further draws attention to structural weaknesses in the international financing architecture, particularly the continued application of concessional-finance eligibility criteria that place middle income SIDS such as Jamaica at a disadvantage. By relying too heavily on income-based thresholds, these frameworks overlook the reality that countries may remain trapped in multiple productive capacity bottlenecks, significantly slowing the rate of SDG convergence. In Jamaica's case, the issue is not only one of constrained fiscal space, but also the need for front-loaded investment to accelerate movement through these capacity traps and unlock faster development progress. The study therefore points to the importance of reorienting development finance around convergence needs, including through middle-income transition instruments such as blended finance facilities, contingent grants, and results-based transfers linked to PCI bottleneck-exit milestones.

JAMAICA AND THE UNITED NATIONS AT 80:

A Living Record of Partnership

The story of Jamaica and the United Nations (UN) is best understood through the tangible improvements in people's lives and the strengthening of national systems over many decades, across sectors, and communities. What began with foundational health and population initiatives in the 1960s and 70s has evolved into a comprehensive forward-looking partnership spanning climate resilience, inclusive growth, digital transformation, disaster preparedness, and cultural heritage. Jamaica's engagement with the United Nations has also been defined by sustained multilateral leadership. Successive Jamaican governments have treated participation in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) as a core instrument of foreign policy, consistently using the organisation as a platform to advance the concerns of small island developing states, defend multilateralism, and champion fairer global governance.

This partnership also developed in tandem with the changing UN development architecture in Jamaica. As global development priorities transited from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals, the UN's support increasingly aligned with Jamaica's own long-term planning framework, Vision 2030 Jamaica. UN policy documents and cooperation frameworks positioned the partnership not only around projects, but also on initiatives focusing on capacity development, coordinated policy support, data systems, and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This shift helped to shape the Jamaica–UN relationship into one that was more integrated and strategic, linking national planning to global commitments in areas such as democratic governance, social protection, environmental management, resilience, and sustainable livelihoods.

1962–1969: Foundations - Recognition, Rights and Basic Services

Jamaica became a member of the United Nations on 18 September 1962, following a unanimous Security Council recommendation on 12 September 1962. Barely a year later (1963), already showing its multilateral leadership, Jamaica proposed the designation of 1968 as the International Year for Human Rights and pressed for a global review conference, placing human rights at the heart of early foreign policy.

Jamaica established the Jamaica National Commission for UNESCO (1965) to mobilize literacy, library planning and heritage cooperation including early technical assistance for submarine archaeology at Port Royal an investment vindicated decades later by World Heritage inscription. In 1965, the World Health Organization declared Jamaica malaria-free after a national eradication campaign of the country's earliest UN-anchored public-health milestones.

Primary health gains that set the pace (1970s–1990s)

In the 1970s, Jamaica made bold moves to advance family planning and primary health care, mainstreaming services through the Ministry of Health (1974) and spearheading national awareness ‘Two Is Better Than Too Many’ via the National Family Planning Board. By the end of that decade, an islandwide clinic network was operating, and the birth rate had dropped markedly, with UN partners (notably United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA) supporting contraceptive security and system strengthening. At the same time, Jamaica joined Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization PAHO/WHO’s Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI), launched regionally in 1977. Through the EPI and PAHO’s Revolving Fund, Jamaica steadily built out cold-chain capacity and coverage; over the next four decades, the country contributed to the Americas’ landmark eliminations of polio and historic control of measles enduring public-health dividends of multilateral action.

A turning point in disaster risk governance (1980s–1990s)

Hurricane Gilbert (1988) was devastating, but it proved catalytic in the country’s resolve to have in place institutions and systems to deal with disasters. The UN General Assembly called for broad multilateral support, tasking the Secretary-General and UN system to mobilize relief and reconstruction assistance. That moment helped consolidate Jamaica’s disaster risk management architecture, including the evolution of the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management, ODPEM’s national role and planning. From the 1990s onward, UN-supported projects in partnership with ODPEM ranged from community-based disaster management to hazard and storm-surge assessments (e.g., Old Harbour Bay under a United Nations Development Programme UNDP South-South pilot), embedding risk-informed development across vulnerable locales.

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Caribbean marine protection with Jamaica at the centre (1980s–today)

Jamaica’s leadership in marine protection is reflected most concretely in Kingston’s role as the host city to the International Seabed Authority, which was established under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, came into existence in 1994, became fully operational in 1996, and remains headquartered in Jamaica. The presence of the Authority in Kingston has made Jamaica a permanent centre of global ocean governance and deepened the country’s long-standing contribution to international rulemaking on the sustainable management of the oceans.

The United Nations Environment Programme UNEP Caribbean Environment Programme established its Regional Coordinating Unit in Kingston in 1986, serving as the Secretariat of the Cartagena Convention, the Wider Caribbean’s binding treaty for the marine environment. From oil-spill response and land-based pollution control to specially protected areas and wildlife (SPAW), Jamaica’s hosting role positioned it as a node for regional ocean governance and capacity building culminating in Kingston’s hosting of Cartagena Convention COP18 in October 2025.

Ozone leadership and green transitions (1990s–2020s)

Under the Montreal Protocol, Jamaica phased out chlorofluorocarbons, CFCs by 2006 (four years early) and is set to complete hydrochlorofluorocarbons HCFC phase-out by 2030, pairing policy with hands-on training and equipment for technicians work advanced with UNDP/UNEP and the Multilateral Fund.

In addition, the UN helped develop the Revised Code of Practice for the Refrigeration and Air Conditioning (RAC) industry, provided refrigerant identifiers to Jamaica Customs to stop illegal imports, and supported ratification of the Kigali Amendment to phase down HCFCs.

Peace, Security and Rule of Law: Strengthening Jamaica's Safety Architecture (1990s–2025)

UN support in peace and security has contributed to some of Jamaica's most impactful governance and safety gains. UNDP and United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, UNLIREC strengthened Jamaica's small-arms control architecture through improved weapons stockpile management, marking and tracing, and the safe disposal of obsolete firearms—directly supporting national efforts to curb armed violence. In parallel, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC expanded Jamaica's capacity to counter transnational crime by enhancing border intelligence units at airports and seaports, strengthening criminal-justice responses to illicit firearms trafficking, and providing specialised training on financial investigations and trafficking in persons. Together, these reforms helped modernise Jamaica's security institutions and reinforced the rule of law, producing lasting impact in reducing system vulnerabilities and supporting safer communities.

Health equity and inclusive cities (2010s–2020s)

Jamaica's health partnerships with the UN have continued to save lives and reduce inequalities. Kingston joined the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS UNAIDS-backed Fast-Track Cities network (formalized 2019), aligning municipal action to expand testing, treatment, and stigma-free services. In 2021, COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access, COVAX delivered vaccines to Jamaica, the first in the Caribbean, underscoring the equity promise of multilateralism. In 2024, WHO/PAHO validated Jamaica's elimination of mother-to-child transmission of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and syphilis (EMTCT), the product of years of integrated primary care and rights-based services.

Beyond social programming, the UN partnership has also contributed to strengthening public institutions and access to justice. UN-supported reforms helped expand legal aid and improve court and case-management systems, while Jamaica's Mobile Justice Units brought free legal services closer to underserved communities and widened practical access to the justice system.

Culture and identity on a global stage (2015–2025)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognition has amplified Jamaica's cultural and natural heritage. The Blue and John Crow Mountains inscription (2015) and Kingston's designation as a UNESCO Creative City of Music (2015) affirmed our global cultural footprint. In 2025, the World Heritage Committee inscribed The Archaeological Landscape of 17th Century Port Royal Jamaica's second World Heritage Site and the first of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean with the official certificate handed over in Kingston that August.

Shock response and resilient systems (2024–2025)

After Hurricane Beryl (July 2024), the UN mobilized Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) funding and coordinated multi-agency support for shelter repairs, cash-based assistance, and child-focused psychosocial services, while investing in preparedness (warehousing, connectivity, rapid digital assessments). Months later, as Hurricane Melissa (Oct–Nov 2025) swept the region, World Food Programme (WFP) activated logistics lifelines (air/sea lift, mobile warehouses, generators) and planned to assist up to 200 000 people in Jamaica at the Government's request.

The UN has also supported shock-responsive social protection in Jamaica through a US\$1.1 million joint programme (2022–2024) with UNICEF, UN Women, and the World Food Programme (WFP) to modernise systems for better emergency response, particularly for vulnerable households and persons with disabilities. This effort involved digitising cash transfers, enhancing social registries, and aligning policy frameworks to improve resilience against crises. To develop inclusive and gender responsive policies, the UN undertook a gender-gap analyses of social protection frameworks and strengthening the Jamaica Council of Persons with Disabilities' management information system to ensure targeted support.

Data, learning and services at scale (2020–present)

During and after the COVID-19 period, UNDP also supported the development of Jamaica's External Support Coordination Platform, a digital mechanism designed to improve the coordination, tracking, and allocation of emergency assistance. These efforts illustrate an important but sometimes less visible dimension of the partnership: helping the Jamaican state modernise systems, expand access, and respond more effectively in moments of stress.

In 2025, the government and UN partners launched a US\$3.7 million Digital Transformation for Education programme to modernise Open Education Management Information System, OPEN-EMIS, enabling real-time attendance tracking, learning analytics, teacher management, and a digital school-feeding module for approximately 450 000 students. This upgrade created Jamaica's first centralised education data system, improving resource allocation and evidence-based

decision-making across schools. UN agencies also strengthened national data systems in partnership with the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN)—enhancing surveys, census processes, administrative data, and Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, MICS implementation—while supporting the development of the National Address Register and the modernisation of the migration database. With improved SDG indicator platforms and digital dashboards, Jamaica now produces more timely, accurate national statistics that strengthen service delivery, emergency response, digital governance, and evidence-based planning under Vision 2030 Jamaica.

Climate action that connects global goals to local livelihoods

Jamaica's Nationally Determined Contributions NDC 3.0 sharpened ambition with expanded sectoral coverage and an unconditional 16.3 per cent reduction target from 2012 levels by 2030 supported by UNDP's Climate Promise and partners. In parallel, the Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO and Canada launched a regional gender-responsive climate-smart agriculture programme with targeted activities in Jamaica to upgrade value chains and expand climate-smart technologies for women and youth.

UNDP and the International Labour Organization, ILO created a model to assess the social and employment impacts of green growth, forecasting up to 7 500 new jobs in green industries, agriculture, and tourism, with a focus on opportunities for youth and women. UNDP also assisted the Jamaica Stock Exchange in developing a "Green Bond Plus" platform for sustainable finance, enabling investment in green projects.

Respecting and advancing human rights and protections

The UN Human Security programme launched in 2018 in Northern Clarendon and West Kingston brought together water and sanitation improvements, livelihood support, climate adaptation, and local governance measures for more than 43 000 residents (about twice the seating capacity of Madison Square Garden). Together, these initiatives show how the Jamaica–UN relationship has increasingly moved towards integrated responses that connect protection, empowerment, and resilience at the community level. Another important strand of the partnership has been the effort to address violence, exclusion, and community vulnerability.

Through the Spotlight Initiative, launched in Jamaica in 2020 with European Union funding and UN implementation, the partnership expanded support to prevent and respond to family violence and violence against women and girls, combining policy work, survivor services, community engagement, and public advocacy.

During and after the COVID-19 period, UNDP also supported the development of Jamaica's External Support Coordination Platform, a digital mechanism designed to improve the coordination, tracking,

and allocation of emergency assistance. These efforts illustrate an important but sometimes less visible dimension of the partnership: helping the Jamaican state modernise systems, expand access, and respond more effectively in moments of stress.

A Cooperation Model Built for Delivery

Looking to the 2026 Voluntary National Review, Jamaica's partnership with the UN has shown consistent value: programmes that deliver, treaties that transform, and systems that scale—from immunization and family planning in the 1970s to digital education platforms and cultural heritage in 2025. With the Vision 2030 Jamaica as the compass, and UN80 reforms for speed and coherence, Jamaica and the UN are equipped to turn global commitments into tangible national and community outcomes.



REFLECTIONS

Ten Years of SDG Implementation in Jamaica

Introduction

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015 marked a watershed moment in global development cooperation, committing nations across the world to a universal, integrated, and transformative framework anchored by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For Jamaica, this commitment was not simply an international obligation but a natural extension of the national development vision enshrined in Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan – which had been articulated five years earlier and shares much of the same spirit of long-range, people-centred, and sustainable progress.

As Jamaica presents its third Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2026, this chapter serves a distinctive purpose within the broader report. While the preceding chapters provide detailed, goal-by-goal assessments of progress, challenges, and emerging opportunities, this concluding chapter steps back to offer a whole-of-agenda reflection on a decade of implementation. It asks the harder questions:

- What has the journey looked like in aggregate?
- Where have our systems and institutions served us well?
- Where have they fallen short? What has the evidence – including rigorous independent research – revealed about the trajectory of Jamaica’s SDG performance?
- And crucially, what must change if Jamaica is to accelerate meaningful progress in the years that remain before 2030, and in the development agenda that will inevitably succeed it?

These reflections are offered not in a spirit of self-criticism but of constructive national accountability – to the Jamaican people, to multilateral partners, and to the global community committed to the proposition that sustainable development is both necessary and achievable.

A Decade in Review: Jamaica’s SDG Performance, 2015-2025

Overall Trajectory

Jamaica’s overall SDG Index score improved modestly from 68.2 in 2015 to 69.5 in 2023 – a gain of 1.3 points over eight years. While this represents a positive directional trend, it also underscores the scale of the challenge. With a target of 100, Jamaica remains substantially below the threshold of full SDG achievement, and the pace of improvement is insufficient to close that gap within the 2030 timeline.

A rigorous assessment conducted in 2025 forecasts a point estimate of 70.9 per cent by 2030 under baseline assumptions, rising only marginally to 71.2 under a favourable scenario. These projections confirm what the evidence already suggests: without transformative intervention, the SDGs will not be achieved in Jamaica by 2030.

The COVID-19 pandemic inflicted measurable damage on Jamaica's SDG performance trajectory. The overall score declined in 2021 with no recovery registered in 2022, and further worsening was recorded in 2023. Jamaica is among a small number of comparator Small Island Developing States (SIDS) whose SDG Index score in 2023 remained below its pre-pandemic 2018 level – a sobering indication of how disproportionate the pandemic's development impact has been for this island economy, and how incomplete the recovery remains.

Goals Furthest from Target

Analytical work commissioned by the Planning Institute of Jamaica identified eight SDGs currently in need of priority attention, drawing on gap analysis, trend performance, and forecasting to 2030. These are:

- **SDG 2:** Zero Hunger
- **SDG 4:** Quality Education
- **SDG 6:** Clean Water and Sanitation
- **SDG 9:** Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- **SDG 10:** Reduced Inequalities
- **SDG 11:** Sustainable Cities and Communities
- **SDG 15:** Life on Land
- **SDG 16:** Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Of particular concern are SDGs 2, 10, and 15, which are simultaneously furthest from target and trending in a negative direction. Progress in both SDG 2 and SDG 15 has declined over the review period, and forecasts project continued stagnation. The persistence of these challenges, despite sustained policy attention, speaks to their deep structural character and the degree to which they are embedded in longer-standing issues of inequality, land access, environmental governance, and social vulnerability.

The research also flagged SDGs 6 and 16 as facing forecasted worsening between 2023 and 2030 – an increase in the distance from target rather than a reduction. For a country that has invested heavily in security and justice reform, the trajectory of SDG 16 is particularly challenging and warrants continued rigorous examination.

What Has Not Worked: Coordination Challenges and Binding Constraints

Coordination Gaps

The architecture for SDG coordination, while improving, has encountered persistent structural challenges. The dispersion of responsibility across multiple ministries, departments, and agencies — each with their own planning cycles, reporting mechanisms, and institutional cultures — has at times contributed to fragmentation in implementation. The SDGs are inherently cross-cutting, but government systems are inherently vertical, and bridging that tension requires continuous, resourcing-intensive effort. When competing priorities, staff turnover, or budget constraints interrupt the coordination function, resulting gaps in implementation coherence are challenging to navigate.

Monitoring and evaluation has been a particularly persistent challenge. Many SDG targets require granular, disaggregated data to track effectively — by geography, gender, age, income level, and other dimensions of inequality. Jamaica's statistical system, while credible and improving, has not always been able to generate the consistent time series of data needed for rigorous evidence-based decision-making. This data gap affects completeness of VNR reporting and, more critically, the ability of policymakers to understand which interventions are working and for whom.

The SDG acceleration research identified data prioritisation and collection as a critical cross-cutting process issue. This is not unique to Jamaica — it is a challenge faced by SIDS more broadly — but it is one that directly limits the country's ability to hold itself accountable for progress and to design policy with precision.

Deep-Rooted Structural Challenges

Beyond coordination, the evidence points to binding constraints that resist policy intervention precisely because they are deeply structural, multidimensional, and often self-reinforcing. Inequality in access to education, land, capital, and economic opportunity perpetuates cycles of disadvantage that no single programme or ministry can address. Insecurity imposes a persistent toll on productivity, investment, and community wellbeing. Climate vulnerability intersects with all of the above, amplifying the impact of every other challenge and threatening to erode gains that have taken years to build. Hurricane Melissa, the most recent and devastating manifestation of this vulnerability, has reinforced what Jamaica has long known: that climate resilience is not merely an environmental priority but a cross-cutting theme in development.

Stakeholder Perspectives on SDG Implementation in Jamaica

Jamaica's 2026 Voluntary National Review was informed by a whole-of-society engagement process. Two consultations were convened as part of the VNR preparation: the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDA) Consultation and the Joint Stakeholder Consultation. Both provided a platform for participants to share perspectives on 10 years of SDG implementation in Jamaica and to contribute views on priorities for a development framework beyond 2030. Participants at each session were invited to respond to a short survey, generating 60 responses from across sectors of government and 35 responses from youth, civil society organisations, private sector representatives, and local authorities. Both consultations asked participants to respond to their experience of SDG implementation in Jamaica noting the level of integration into plans and implementation processes. Across both sessions, the dominant view was that there has been some integration of the SDGs into national plans and operations. MDA Consultation participants were more positive overall, with 45.0 per cent indicating some integration and 11.0 per cent considering implementation to be well advanced. Joint Consultation participants registered a more measured view, with 19.0 per cent of participants indicating some integration and 7.0 per cent indicating that integration in policies and programmes is well advanced. This reflects the gaps identified in SDG localisation.

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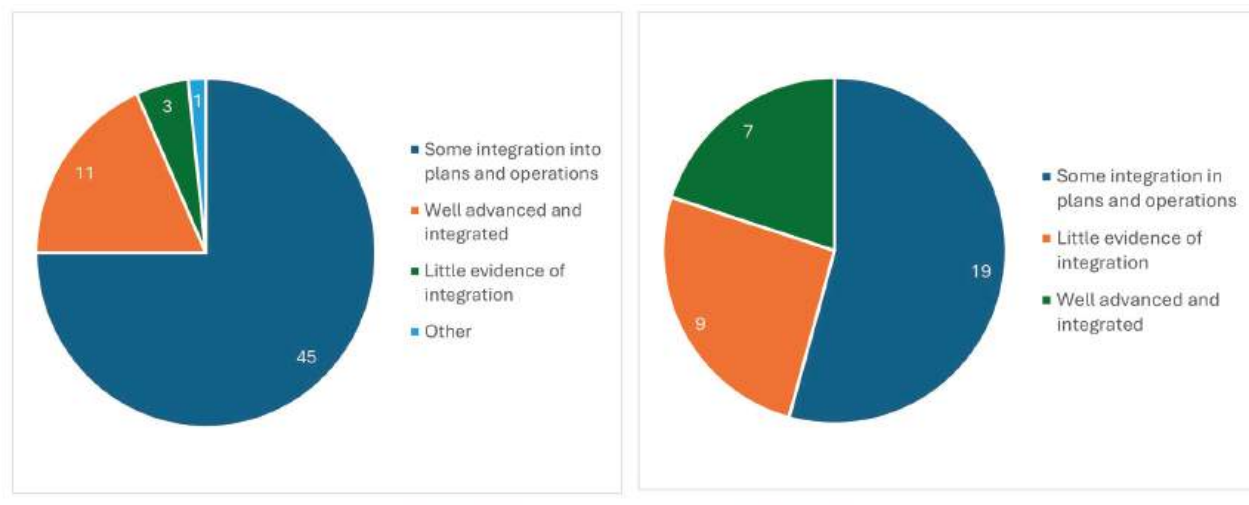


FIGURE 22 MDA Consultation

FIGURE 23 Joint Stakeholders Consultation

Evaluating the SDG Framework: MDA Consultation

MDA Consultation participants scored seven dimensions of SDG implementation on a five-point scale from very poor to excellent. The chart below presents the distribution of responses. Stakeholder engagement received the most favourable ratings, with the largest combined share of good and excellent responses. Financing and Means of Implementation drew the most critical response, with the highest concentration of poor and very poor ratings, reflecting the well-documented challenges of declining official development assistance and the financing constraints associated with Jamaica's upper-middle-income classification. Focus on Structural Inequalities was the second most critically rated dimension.

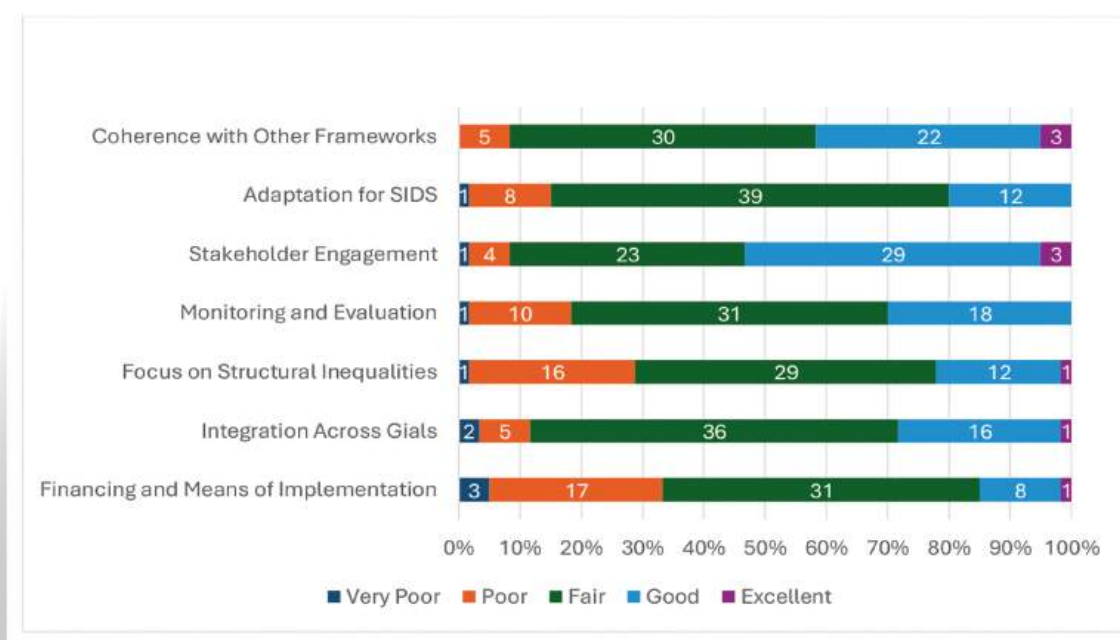


FIGURE 24 MDA Consultation — Rating of SDG Implementation

The Post-2030 Development Agenda

MDA Consultation participants provided perspectives on the need for a global development agenda beyond 2030. Forty-seven of 60 (78.0 per cent) said yes, nine (15.0 per cent) indicated maybe, and four (7.0 per cent) said no. This near-consensus reflects a shared recognition of the importance of shared global commitments in advancing sustainable development.

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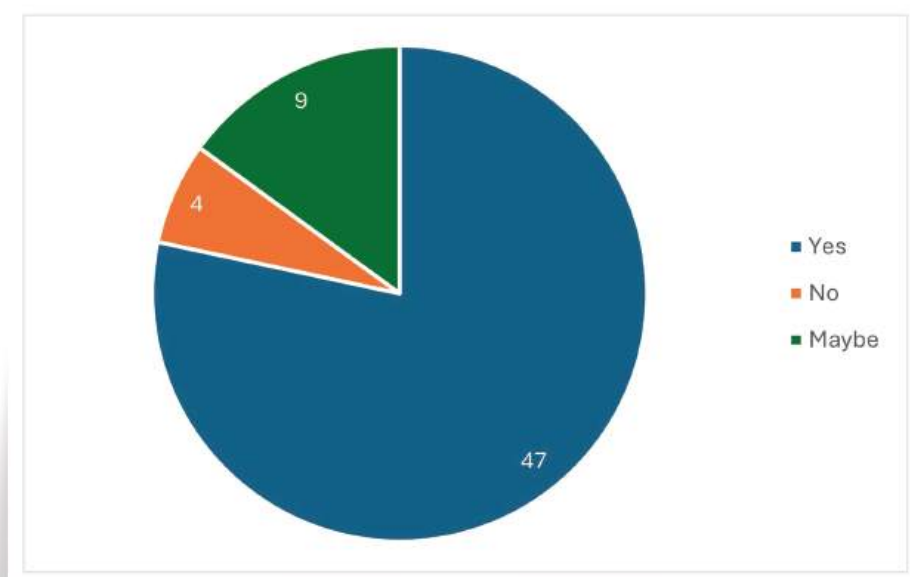


FIGURE 25 Is there a need for a new global development agenda post 2030? (MDA Consultation)

Participants also shared open-ended views on what should be carried forward from the 2030 Agenda and what should shape any successor framework, summarised below.

WHAT HAS WORKED AND CAN BE SCALED UP	WHAT SHOULD BE EMBEDDED IN A POST-2030 FRAMEWORK
Stakeholder engagement and partnership models that bring government, private sector, and civil society to a common table	Dedicated and accessible financing for SIDS, with simplified access to climate and development funding
Integration of the SDGs into national planning frameworks, particularly the alignment with Vision 2030 Jamaica	Stronger whole-of-government integration and joined-up planning, underpinned by legislative reform
Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that support data-driven decision-making and greater accountability	Climate resilience and disaster risk management embedded across all goals
Collaborative and consultative approaches to reporting and implementation across sectors	Digital transformation and artificial intelligence recognised as tools for sustainable development
Advances in poverty reduction, child welfare, and key education targets	Culture recognised as a substantive priority within the global framework
Conservation gains, including protected areas and forest management	Specific, time-bound targets supported by ongoing public information campaigns
Progress on energy diversification and climate action	Greater inclusion of persons with disabilities and the most vulnerable across all planning processes

TABLE 12 Summary of MDA Consultation Perspectives on the Post-2030 Agenda

SDG Priorities: Joint Stakeholder Consultation

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Joint Consultation participants were asked to rank the eight priority SDGs in order of urgency. SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) was cited as the top priority by 12 of 35 participants. SDG 4 (Quality Education) received the second highest number of first-place rankings. No participant ranked SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) as their top priority. These findings are broadly consistent with the analytical conclusions of this VNR, reinforcing SDGs 2, 4, 6, 9 and 10 as areas most urgently requiring concentrated effort.

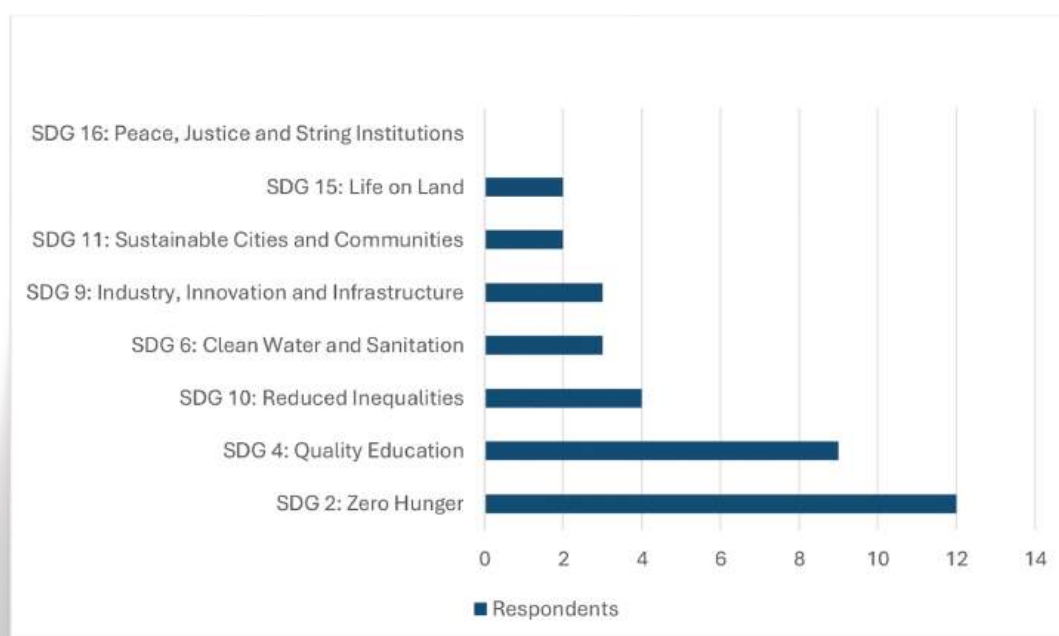


FIGURE 26 Joint Stakeholder Consultation — SDG Priority Rankings (n=35)

The Data Challenge: Measuring What Matters

Jamaica's capacity to produce the data required for comprehensive SDG monitoring has improved significantly over the decade, but important gaps remain. Of the 231 unique SDG indicators established by the United Nations Statistical Commission, a substantial proportion cannot be reported by Jamaica due to limitations in data availability, methodology, or collection infrastructure. This creates an asymmetry: goals and targets for which data are available receive analytical attention, while others — sometimes including those most directly relevant to the most vulnerable — remain in the shadow.

Several structural factors contribute to this challenge. Survey cycles for major household data instruments do not always align with reporting needs. Administrative data systems across government agencies remain insufficiently harmonised, making cross-sectoral analysis labour-intensive. The statistical infrastructure to produce disaggregated sub-national data — essential for tracking inequality and localisation outcomes — is uneven. The human and other resource requirements for sustained, high-quality statistical production are consistently underfinanced.

Area	Key Challenge	Direction of Travel
SDG Indicator Coverage	Incomplete time series for many priority indicators	Improving but gaps persist
Disaggregated Data	Limited sub-national and demographic breakdowns	Incremental progress
Administrative Data Harmonisation	Siloed agency systems limit cross-sectoral analysis	Ongoing reform needed
Statistical Capacity	Resource constraints on STATIN and line ministry data units	Requires sustained investment

TABLE 13 Selected Data Challenges in Jamaica's SDG Monitoring Framework

Beyond 2030

The 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals is now less than five years away. The evidence presented in this report, and the forecasts that accompany it, make clear that Jamaica — like most countries — will not achieve full SDG realisation by that date. This is not cause for abandonment of the agenda but for honest recalibration and renewed commitment.

Several issues will shape Jamaica's development trajectory in the post-2030 period. The transition away from traditional ODA towards more complex, blended, and conditioned forms of development finance will require sophisticated institutional capacity to structure, negotiate, and manage. The deepening fragmentation of the multilateral system — and the rise of more transactional, geopolitically-driven approaches to development partnership — will require Jamaica to be both a skilled diplomatic actor and a more self-reliant development engine. The accelerating pace of climate change will make adaptation and resilience not just a priority but an existential imperative, demanding that every area of policy — from education and health to urban planning and industrial strategy — be designed with climate risk embedded at its core.

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The human development challenges that the SDGs have exposed will carry forward into the new framework that the international community adopts for the post-2030 era, and they will demand the same sustained, evidence-based, and coordinated attention that the SDGs have helped to focus. Jamaica is committed to contributing to shaping that post-2030 agenda, particularly as a voice for the distinctive development realities of Small Island Developing States.

Most fundamentally, the decade of SDG implementation has demonstrated that Jamaica possesses the analytical capacity, the institutional infrastructure, and the cross-sector relationships to drive sustainable development progress. What is required now to concentrate that capacity where it matters most, to invest in the data and systems that make accountability real, and to bring to the final years of the 2030 Agenda — and the development era beyond — the same ambition that animated the vision of a better Jamaica that was articulated a decade ago.

APPENDIX 1 - EXTENDED HEALTH REPORT



Context

Jamaica is undergoing a significant demographic transition characterized by declining fertility rates, increasing life expectancy, and a growing proportion of older adults. These shifts are reshaping the population dynamics and placing new demands on the health system, influencing how the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) plans and delivers its health services. At the same time, the country faces a double burden of disease, with a shift from Communicable to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) as the dominant causes of morbidity and mortality. Accordingly, NCDs such as diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers account for over 70.0 per cent of premature deaths, while communicable diseases, emerging infections, and vector-borne illnesses remain public health threats. Given that Jamaica has an ageing population and an evolving disease profile, and its impact on social protection and health financing, there is a need for prevention and health promotion, chronic disease management, long-term care, and rehabilitative services.

It is against this background, guided by Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that the MOHW's Vision for Health 2030 sets out a transformative agenda to build a resilient, equitable, and efficient health system capable of addressing the changing health needs of the population. These strategic objectives include strengthening universal health coverage, advancing digital transformation, investing in health infrastructure and workforce capacity, and reinforcing emergency preparedness and response systems. On this account, the Ministry published the findings of the third edition of the Jamaica Health & Lifestyle Survey (JHLS III) 2016/17 in 2024, which provides evidence-based insight into the current burden of NCDs, violence and injuries, and infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS and other sexually related conditions, and communicable diseases. The main findings from JHLS III 2016/17 indicate that a third of Jamaicans had hypertension, one-eighth had diabetes, half were overweight, one-third consumed sugar-sweetened beverages one or more per day, and 3 in every 20 currently smoked. These findings reiterate the Ministry's commitment to utilize evidence-based studies to inform its policies and programmes that will align with its strategic goals, and to optimally allocate its resources. To this end, NCDs are known to significantly increase healthcare expenditure. In 2022, the total health expenditure accounted for 8.3 per cent of Jamaica's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The

general government health expenditure made up two-thirds of total health spending, increasing the government expenditure as a percentage of GDP from 3.5 per cent to 5.1 per cent. In essence, these patterns, inter alia, highlight the nexus between the country’s disease burden and health financing. In addition, the Ministry has undertaken Health Technology Assessments and participated in Public Private Partnerships to enhance service delivery islandwide. Nonetheless, persistent challenges, including workforce shortages and financial constraints, continue to pose risks to achieving the Ministry’s strategic objectives.

The theme for this VNR is timely and relevant, as it highlights systemic responses and outlines policy measures to mitigate future risks. Moreover, it provides evidence-based insights to inform decision making and accelerate progress toward a healthier, more resilient Jamaica by 2030.

Target 3.1. By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100 000 live births.

Jamaica continues to advance a coordinated, multisectoral approach to reducing preventable maternal deaths through strengthened governance, evidence-based policy implementation, and improved service delivery. Guided by SDG target 3.1, the country has made notable strides in enhancing the quality and equity of maternal healthcare. While Jamaica’s maternal mortality ratio (MMR) remains above the global target, there has been encouraging progress over the review period. In 2015, Jamaica’s MMR was 87.9 per 100 000 live births. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ratio peaked at 211.3 per 100 000 live births in 2021. Preliminary data indicate a subsequent decline to 136.9 per 100 000 live births³⁵⁵ in 2023, followed by an increase to 150 per 100 000 live births³⁵⁶ in 2024. Overall, this downward trend reflects the Government’s sustained investment in maternal health systems, stronger coordination among key stakeholders, and improved access to skilled care.

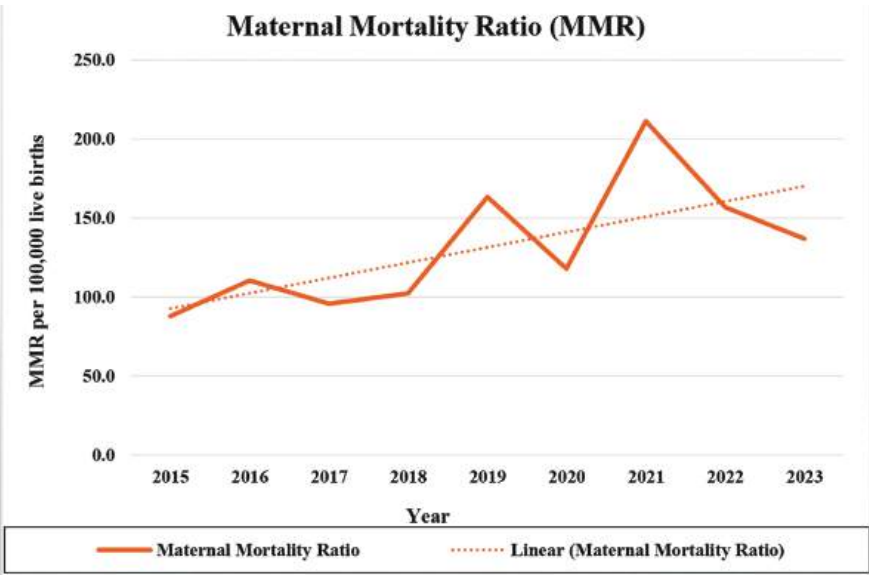


FIGURE 27 Maternal Mortality Ratio for Jamaica for 2015-2023

³⁵⁵ Ministry of Health and Wellness, National Surveillance Unit
³⁵⁶ Ministry of Health and Wellness, Family Health Unit

During the 2010–2023/2024 period, a range of programmes, policies, and initiatives were implemented to address the leading causes of maternal mortality and to ensure quality, respectful care for all women. Governance and coordination were strengthened through the convening of eight Maternal Health Technical Working Group meetings and four regional maternal health forums, which provided platforms for planning, data review, and strategic alignment. Clinical standards were improved through the development, printing, and dissemination of eight emergency obstetric guidelines for the management of high-priority conditions in pregnancy, such as hypertension, cardiac disease, sepsis, thromboembolism, and obesity. The revision of the national Maternal Record Book in March 2025 introduced important updates, including nutritional, dental, and mental health screening for all pregnant women. It also featured the updated “ACT NOW” initiative, designed to empower pregnant women and their families to recognize early signs and symptoms of complications and seek timely care. In addition, the Maternal Health Section of the Family Health Manual was updated to ensure standardized, research-based practices across all health regions, with national training scheduled to support consistent implementation.

Capacity building remained a central component of Jamaica’s maternal health response. Over 4 000 healthcare workers, comprising more than 80.0 per cent of doctors and nurses, participated in both online and in-person training sessions covering updated obstetric management protocols. Simulation based national training sessions on postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) management, the leading cause of maternal deaths in Jamaica, were conducted across all four health regions utilizing the CODE RED team approach. This initiative equipped 306 targeted healthcare professionals with advanced skills for rapid response in PPH emergencies. In addition, the Point-of-Care Ultrasound (POCUS) training programme that was implemented in partnership with the Jamaicans Abroad Helping Jamaicans at Home (JAHJAH) Foundation (2023) continued for a third consecutive year, aiming to enhance providers’ diagnostic capacity in both hospital and community settings for timely intervention.

Service delivery improvements were further supported by investments from the Programme for the Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality (PROMAC), which concluded in 2020. This programme was instrumental in expanding national capacity, training 36 doctors, 46 advanced midwives, and seven subspecialists, while equipping six high-dependency units to manage obstetric complications. Six ambulances and a suite of essential laboratory and biomedical equipment were also procured and deployed.

Recognizing the vulnerability of adolescents, Jamaica launched a dedicated teenage maternity clinic at the Victoria Jubilee Hospital, the largest maternity hospital in the country and the English-speaking Caribbean. The introduction of universal access to long-acting reversible contraceptive methods, including immediate postpartum insertion, also represented a major step forward in reproductive health and rights.

Public education and communication initiatives were intensified to improve health-seeking behaviours and community awareness. National antenatal care messages ran from November 2024 to present, featuring early antenatal care, attention to pregnancy complications and several radio advertisements were aired across eight national radio stations. Digital educational content was displayed in health facilities' waiting areas. These efforts aimed to promote early booking for antenatal care, adherence to pregnancy monitoring schedules, and recognition of danger signs.

Monitoring and evaluation systems were also strengthened to ensure data-driven decision-making and accountability. The Fourth National Perinatal Review was conducted in November 2024, providing a comprehensive assessment of maternal and neonatal outcomes. New monitoring tools, including a supervisory antenatal care assessment tool, two maternal record book requisition and reporting tools, a postpartum home visit monitoring checklist and a reporting template, and a Maternal Health Quality of Care Audit Tool, were developed to improve supervision and follow-up care. Quality assurance was prioritized through data validation exercises and supervisory assessments using standardized checklists at antenatal clinics and hospitals. The Ministry of Health and Wellness also emphasized research and innovation, as demonstrated by studies such as "Perinatal Outcomes of Mothers with Eclampsia and Preeclampsia in SERHA: A Five-Year Review," which was presented at the University of the West Indies' 30th Annual Research Conference and the 15th National Health Research Conference in 2024. Despite this progress, several challenges persist. The maternal mortality ratio, although declining, remains above the national and international targets. There continue to be human resource shortages, particularly obstetricians, midwives, and critical care nurses, compounded by high turnover rates in primary and secondary care. Variations in quality of care and limited intensive care capacity for managing complex cases contribute to ongoing risks. Delays in referral and transport for high-risk pregnancies, gaps in data completeness, and persistent social determinants of health, adolescent pregnancy and chronic disease among women of reproductive age also pose challenges to achieving further reductions in maternal deaths.

In response to these barriers, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with the Regional Health Authorities and key partners, implemented a range of strategic interventions. Human resource strengthening has been prioritized through targeted recruitment and deployment of skilled personnel in underserved areas through the Chief Medical Officer's office, as well as ongoing training in advanced midwifery, emergency obstetric care, and critical care nursing. Quality improvement initiatives using the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) approach have been integrated into hospital operations to identify and address service gaps. Strategic partnerships with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Latin American Centre for Perinatology (CLAP) and the National Health Fund (NHF) have facilitated procurement of essential supplies, training, and service delivery enhancements. Additionally, referral and transport systems have been strengthened through standardized protocols and expansion of the national ambulance fleet to ensure the timely transfer of high-risk mothers. Data systems have been improved through the integration of maternal death surveillance and response (MDSR) mechanisms,

with regular quarterly review meetings held to validate and address findings and gaps. Community engagement has been bolstered through collaboration with civil society and faith-based organizations to promote early antenatal registration, postpartum follow-up, and access to contraception.

Looking ahead, Jamaica's maternal health response (2025–2030) will focus on consolidating gains and accelerating progress toward the SDG target. The overarching goal is to reduce the MMR to below 100 per 100 000 live births by 2030 through sustained investment in high-impact, evidence based interventions. The Ministry will prioritize the strengthening of emergency obstetric and neonatal care networks, expansion of high-dependency and intensive care unit capacity, and annual nationwide rollout of emergency simulations. Moreover, the Ministry will also scale up community based postpartum care, enhance digital health systems for real-time maternal health notification, and implement targeted interventions in high-burden parishes. There will be continued emphasis placed on adolescent reproductive health, prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis (PMTCT), and of non-communicable diseases among women of childbearing age, and ongoing professional development through CME-accredited training.

Through these sustained and integrated actions, Jamaica reaffirms its unwavering commitment to ending preventable maternal deaths, strengthening the resilience of its health system, and ensuring that every woman has access to safe, respectful, and high-quality maternity care as part of its national development vision and the global SDG agenda.

Target 3.2. By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age

Jamaica, like many countries, continues to face preventable neonatal deaths and complications of prematurity. The Government remains committed to improving access to high-quality maternal and newborn care at birth and during the first 28 days of life, strengthening referral systems, building the capacity of the skilled workforce, and promoting family-centred practices. In alignment with Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.2, Jamaica has set a national target to reduce the Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) to fewer than 12 deaths per 1 000 live births. Achieving this requires coordinated action across the health system, policy reform, and targeted programme implementation.

Performance and Progress (2010–2023/2024)

The national Neonatal Mortality Rate showed a gradual decline from approximately 16.6 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2014 to about 15.2 per 1 000 live births in 2022, according to preliminary data from the Registrar General's Department (RGD). This improvement reflects efforts to strengthen maternal and newborn health services, improve access to emergency care, and enhance the quality of care across facilities.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Births													
Total Number of Live Births	39804	39673	39553	38480	36996	37900	36160	34426	34211	34862	33941	33126	32295
Deaths													
Number of Neonatal Deaths	490	520	552	559	615	605	458	485	472	530	467	483	491
Rates													
Neonatal Mortality Rate/ 1,000 live births	12.3	13.1	14.0	14.5	16.6	16.0	12.7	14.1	13.8	15.2	13.8	14.6	15.2

TABLE 14 National neonatal mortality rate for 2010 - 2022

In 2015, under-five mortality rate was 19.6 per 1 000 live births, this increased to 21.0 live births by 2022.³⁵⁷

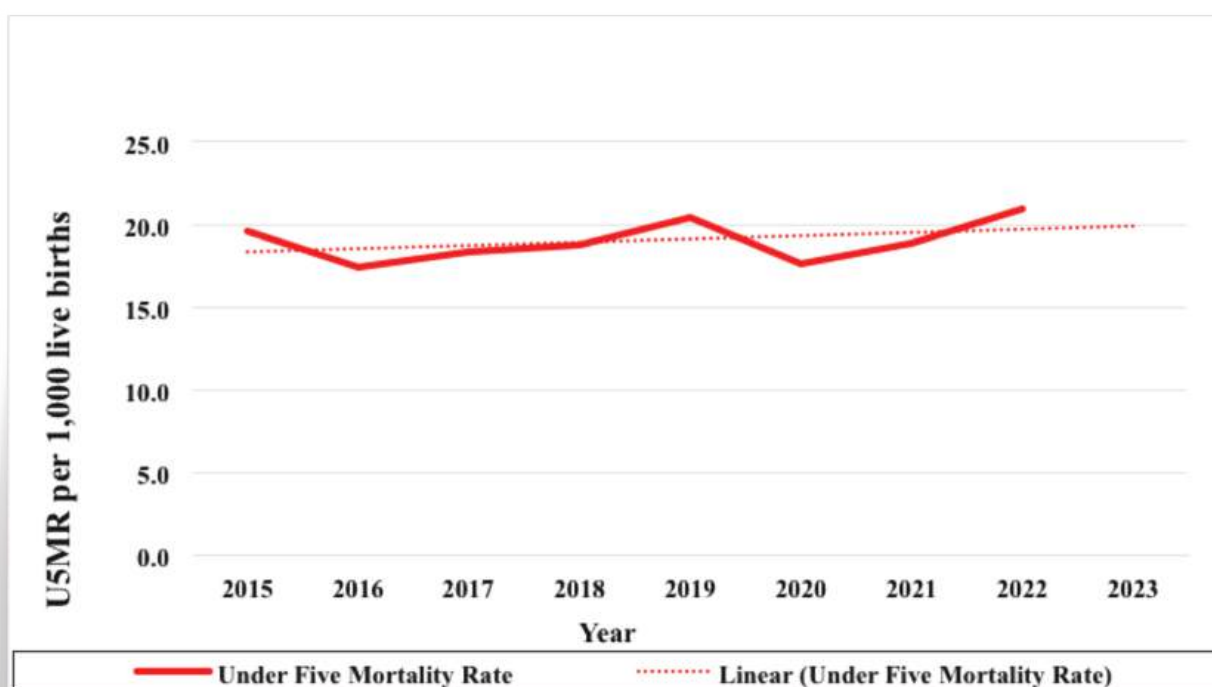


FIGURE 28 National under-five mortality rate for 2015-2023

Over the past decade, Jamaica has implemented several initiatives to strengthen neonatal health and reduce preventable deaths. The National Maternal and Newborn Strategic Draft Plan (2018–2024) was launched to provide an overarching framework for improving neonatal health outcomes. The Neonatal Manuals for Primary and Secondary Care were revised with updates to clinical protocols, and nationwide training was provided for healthcare providers. The Ministry adopted Every Newborn Action Plan (ENAP), a WHO/UNICEF standard for newborn care, to harmonize clinical practices nationally. The Born Too Soon Initiative was implemented with a focus on prematurity prevention and management of low-birth-weight infants. In addition, the Ministry launched Essential Newborn Care (ENC), which aimed to standardized protocols for drying, skin-to-skin contact, and cord care, and reinforced compliance through national workshops and hospital audits.

³⁵⁷ Calculated using data from Registrar generals' Department (Numerator) and Statistical Institute of Jamaica (Denominator)

Skilled Care at Birth and Immediate Newborn Care remains a priority area for advancing SDG 3.2. Therefore, the Ministry continues to promote skilled birth attendance, thermoregulation, delayed cord clamping, early breastfeeding, and basic resuscitation practices. Under the Emergency Newborn Care (EmNC), the Ministry has strengthened capacity for neonatal resuscitation and infection management and introduced Hepatitis B birth dose vaccination for all newborns. The Quality Care for Small and Sick Newborns programme has expanded access to improved NICU capacity, oxygen/CPAP use, and infection prevention through the PROMAC Initiative.

In addition, the Preterm Birth Prevention and Antenatal Care programme has enhanced screening and management of maternal risk factors, corticosteroid use, and referral pathways. Through the Equipment Upgrade Initiative, there have been regional procurement and distribution of CPAP machines, radiant warmers, and vital sign monitors to NICUs. To maintain quality and compliance, the Ministry established regional and facility-level QI teams for Quality Improvement and Clinical Audits. The Ministry of Health and Wellness has strengthened monitoring and surveillance through a series of convened regional neonatal forums across all health regions and integrated neonatal and perinatal mortality data into national health information systems. Additionally, the Ministry implemented health education campaigns on early antenatal care, breastfeeding, and newborn danger signs, and partnered with faith-based organizations and civil society to expand outreach.

Despite notable progress, several challenges continue to slow the decline in neonatal mortality. Persistent shortages of resources and equipment in NICUs, coupled with staffing constraints and high turnover among NICU-trained nurses and paediatricians, have hindered the Ministry's efforts. Delays in procuring biomedical equipment and essential supplies, along with incomplete or inconsistent data across facilities, further constrain progress. Additionally, ongoing transport and referral difficulties for high-risk mothers and newborns, as well as limited post-discharge follow-up systems for vulnerable neonates at the community level, remain a challenge.

To address these barriers, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, in collaboration with key partners, implemented several targeted strategies. These included the development of a standardized data management template for consistent reporting and a Postnatal Monitoring Tool to guide home visits by health teams at 48 hours, 6 days, 6 weeks, and 3 months postpartum. Partnerships and resource mobilization efforts were strengthened through collaboration with PAHO and UNICEF for equipment procurement and technical support. Referral management was enhanced with standardized neonatal transport protocols and strengthened ambulance networks. Additionally, community linkages were promoted through parish health teams conducting home visits, postnatal follow-ups, and caregiver education.

Summary and Way Forward (Post-2024)

Moving into the 2025–2030 period, Jamaica will accelerate implementation of evidence-based interventions to sustain progress toward SDG 3.2 and the ENAP targets.

The next phase will focus on:

- Strengthening primary and secondary care linkages for maternal and newborn services.
- Expanding neonatal transport networks and referral systems.
- Scaling up quality improvement and audit systems for neonatal outcomes.
- Quality Care for Small and Sick Newborns: Expanded access to Kangaroo Mother Care (KMC)
- Capacity Building: Ongoing ENC training for new and existing staff across hospitals.
- Human Resource Strengthening: Recruitment and targeted placement of neonatal nurses and paediatricians in high-burden hospitals.
- Establishment of maintenance schedules
- Institutionalized Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles and neonatal death reviews.
- Prioritizing high-burden parishes to address regional inequities in neonatal mortality.
- Implementing Helping Babies Breathe (HBB) training for doctors, nurses, and midwives to improve birth outcomes.
- Enhancing data use and analytics, with quarterly regional reviews of neonatal mortality trends.
- Promoting health education and family engagement for early antenatal care and early recognition of newborn danger signs.
- Establishing inter-regional notification systems for real-time reporting and response to neonatal deaths.

Through these actions, Jamaica remains steadfast in its commitment to ending preventable newborn deaths and ensuring that every child has the best possible start to life.

Target 3.3. By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness continues to be firmly committed to achieving the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets and ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. HIV incidence rate in 2023 was 0.4 per 1 000 uninfected population compared to 0.5 in 2015.³⁵⁸ At the end of 2024, adult HIV prevalence (ages 15 and older) was estimated at 1.1 per cent, with approximately 28 000 people living with HIV in Jamaica.

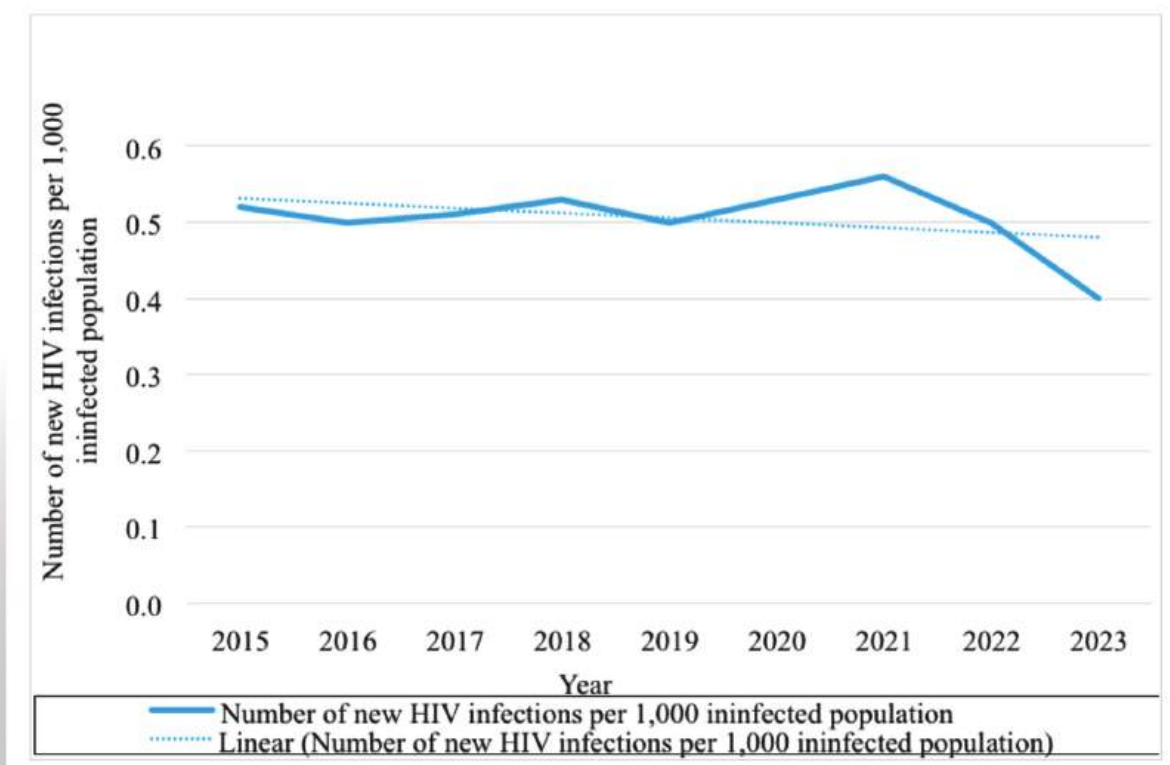


FIGURE 29 Number of new HIV infections per 1 000 in infected population 2015-2023

To advance towards our global targets, Jamaica continues to develop and implement several strategies, including reinforcing governance and multi-sectoral coordination through the process for the re-establishment of the National AIDS Committee (NAC). The reintegration of the HIV Prevention Programme into the National HIV Programme within the MOHW has been undertaken to ensure better alignment of prevention, treatment, monitoring, and rights-based responses.

Jamaica was certified in 2024 by the World Health Organization as having eliminated the vertical transmission of HIV and syphilis. To reduce new infections, Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) has been introduced at twenty-three facilities across the island, significantly broadening the range of available HIV prevention options. HIV services expansion continues with five additional health centres offering comprehensive HIV services in the primary health care setting.

Key youth initiatives included the successful completion of the Youth Ambassador Programme pilot to support adolescents living with HIV, and the introduction of the “Yute Chatz” chatbot, which provides sexual and reproductive health information. The two annual national health fairs for adolescents living with HIV marked an important milestone in addressing specific social needs of this group.

The National Strategic Plan (NSP) for 2024/25 sets clear targets to achieve epidemic control by aiming for 90.0 per cent awareness of HIV status, retention in care, and viral suppression by 2025, increasing to 95.0 per cent by 2030. The plan outlines a comprehensive strategy for treatment, care, and support, with the current national HIV treatment cascade reflecting 95.0 per cent diagnosed, 64.0 per cent retention on ARVs, and 79.0 per cent achieving viral suppression at the end of 2024.

Year	Percentage of PLHIV aware of their status	Percentage of PLHIV aware of their status and on ARVs	Percentage of PLHIV on ARVs and virally suppressed
2018	76	49	62
2019	82	54	65
2020	86	47	72
2021	86	49	76
2022	87	54	77
2023	91	54	79
2024	95	64	79

TABLE 15. Awareness and treatment status of persons living with HIV

Prevention efforts have made significant progress, with nearly 5 million condoms distributed. HIV testing in public facilities totalled 281 233 in 2024, resulting in a positivity rate of 1.1 per cent. Furthermore, 8 500 HIV self-test kits were directly provided to clients, enhancing access to testing services.

Although progress has been achieved, significant challenges remain in promptly linking all people living with HIV to care, ensuring viral suppression and stigma reduction. The difficulties experienced in reaching certain key populations highlight the urgent need for innovative, targeted strategies that address barriers to accessing and using services effectively.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) remain vital to the national HIV response by providing essential services, advocating for human rights, and reducing stigma. They support vulnerable populations with prevention and care, collaborate with government and communities, and drive evidence-based interventions and policy reforms, highlighting the importance of community-led efforts in epidemic control.

Ongoing priority strategies for implementation include:

- Strengthening the integration of HIV services within our primary healthcare system to improve accessibility and continuity of care.
- Expanding community-based and differentiated service delivery models to reach underserved populations and improve retention in care.
- Intensifying efforts to combat stigma and discrimination, recognising their impact on service uptake and health outcomes.
- Enhancing our strategic information systems to support data-driven decision-making and program management.

- Ensuring sustainable financing for the HIV response through efficient resource allocation and exploring innovative funding mechanisms.
- Continued scale-up of PrEP services island-wide.

In 2023, the number of people who had TB was 3.6 cases per 100 000 population. This is a decrease from 3.8 cases in 2015.³⁵⁹

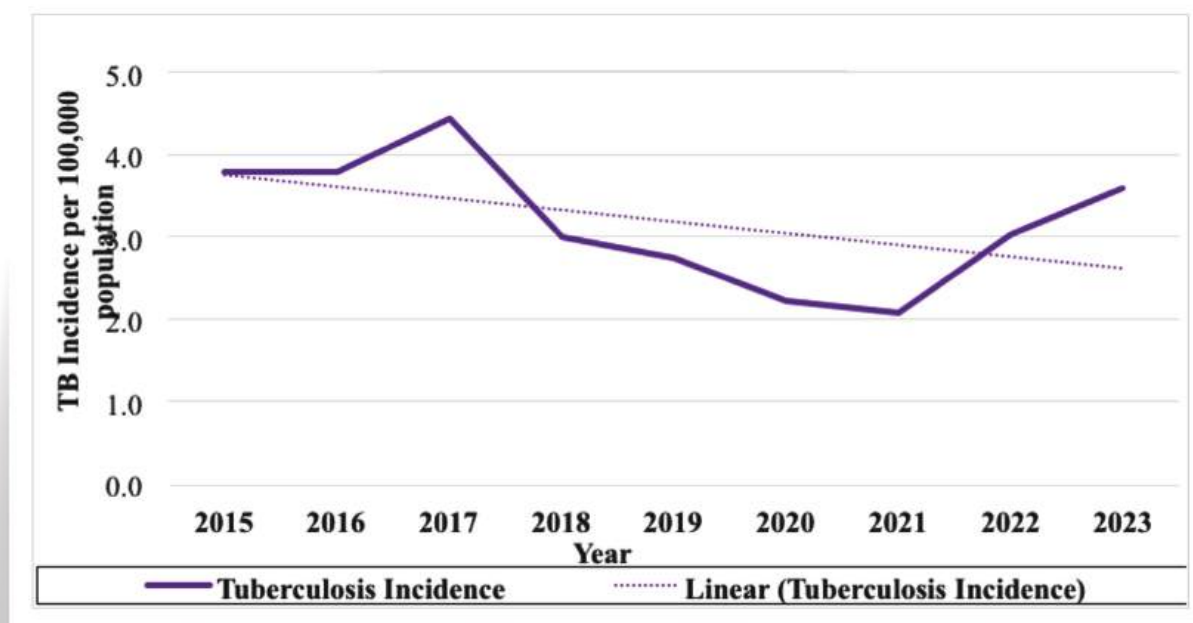


FIGURE 30. Tuberculosis incidence for 2015 - 2023

Target 3.4. By 2030, reduce by one-third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

Worldwide NCDs continue to be the leading cause of death, and account for 18 million or over half of the deaths, under 70 years old in 2021. This target tracks the premature mortality that is the unconditional probability of dying from any of the four main NCDs (cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease) between the ages of 30 and 70 years old. Globally, premature mortality due to priority NCDs declined between 2010 and 2019, from 22.5 per cent to 18.0 per cent. However, the overall progress towards meeting the target has slowed, and the World is not on track towards meeting this target (World Health Organization [WHO], 2025).

The Region of the Americas had the lowest risk of premature mortality globally. Five countries are on track to achieve the SDG target 3.4, and 11 can potentially reach this target by accelerating actions to tackle NCDs (Pan American Health Organization [PAHO], 2025). Jamaica is not on track to meet this target. In 2020, a 30-year-old had a 21.1 per cent chance of dying from one of the four main NCDs before the age of 70 years, which is a 24.0 per cent increase from 2010. The risk of dying prematurely is higher in males than in females (Ministry of Health and Wellness [MoHW], Jamaica, 2023).

The Potential Years of Life Lost (PYLL), another measure of premature mortality, showed the top six increases from 2010 to 2020: hypertensive disease (91.0 per cent), ischaemic heart disease (84.0 per cent), diabetes (64.0 per cent), prostate cancer (58.0 per cent), stroke (44.0 per cent) and breast cancer (38.0 per cent) from 2010 to 2020. However, the PYLL for chronic respiratory diseases has declined by 18.0 per cent. 'Premature mortality from NCDs accounted for approximately twice the PYLL relative to injuries, communicable diseases, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions combined.' These trends highlight the growing contribution of NCDs to premature mortality and underscore the need for more effective population-level prevention and clinical management strategies (MoHW, Jamaica, 2023).

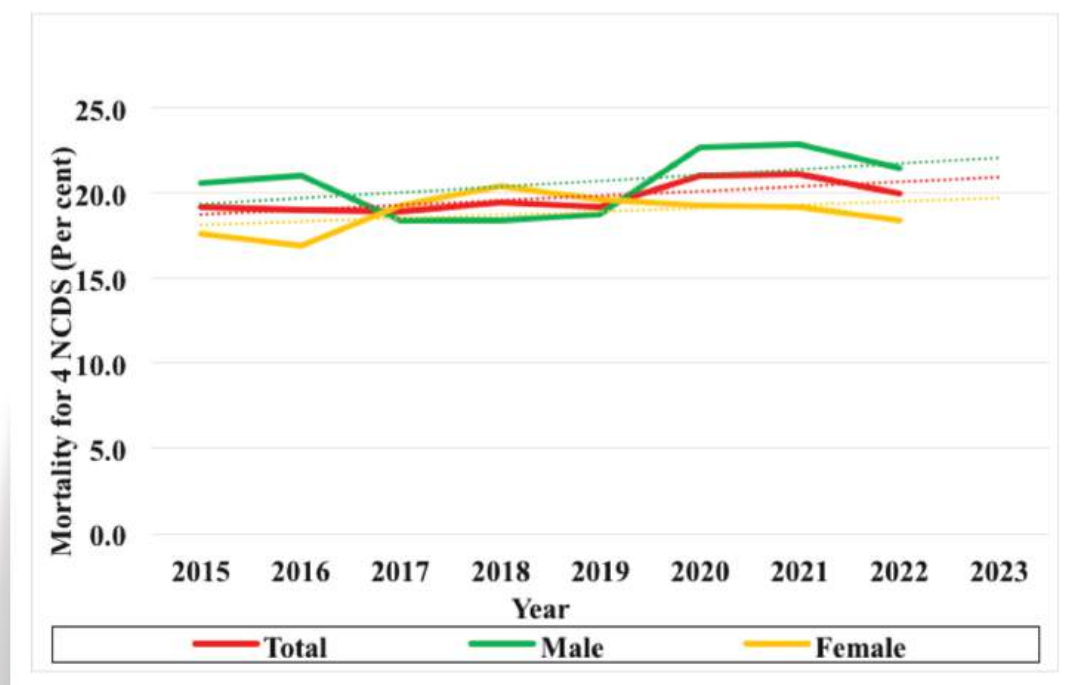


FIGURE 31. Mortality Rate attributed to Cardiovascular Disease, Cancer, Diabetes or Chronic Respiratory Disease

Trends in successive Jamaica Health and Lifestyle surveys 2000/1, 2007/8, 2016/17, show the prevalence of NCDs. The most significant trend is the increase in hypertension from 20.8 per cent in 2000-2001 to 33.8 per cent in the 2016-2017 survey among Jamaicans 15 years and older. Similarly, the prevalence of diabetes has increased and is one in eight people (11.9 per cent) in 2017. Both NCDs exhibit a gender disparity, with a higher prevalence in females than in males. Exacerbating the NCD burden is the high level of overweight or obesity, with one in two Jamaicans (53.8 per cent) classified as such. (MoHW, Jamaica, 2024)

The key modifiable risk factors present an enduring challenge to the population's health, heavily influenced by diet and lifestyle practices, such as physical inactivity, consumption of diets high in salt, fats and sugars, tobacco use, and harmful use of alcohol. Air pollution is also a contributing factor to the NCD burden, as levels are above WHO recommendations. Furthermore, these high-risk lifestyles have a gender dimension, with men smoking and abusing alcohol more than women, and more women are obese or physically inactive. Qualitative research from the Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Study suggests that financial constraints are a significant barrier to affordability, often leading to the purchase of processed and packaged alternatives high in starches and sugars. (MoHW, Jamaica, 2024)

There is generally a low awareness among Jamaicans that they have NCDs, as there is a significant difference in those who self-report and who have an NCD, which most usually have no symptoms in the early stages for several years, and so therefore can go undetected. (MoHW, Jamaica, 2024)

An economic study in 2017 reported that 'scaling up clinical interventions that target cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and mental health disorders, and policy measures that target tobacco and alcohol use, would save over 6 600 lives between 2017–2032, and avert JMD 81.3 billion (USD 640 million) in direct and indirect economic costs that result from mortality and morbidity linked to NCDs. "(Hutchinson et al., 2019)

To combat the NCD epidemic, Jamaica has used a three-pronged approach:

- Tracking the disease burden and utilising the data to guide policies and programmes.
- Reducing exposure of Jamaicans to the common risk factors for non-communicable diseases and injuries
- Strengthening health care systems for people with non-communicable diseases.

Tracking the disease burden and utilising the data to guide policies and programmes.

A robust surveillance system is essential for tracking disease trends and informing evidence-based interventions. Jamaica has significantly expanded its NCD monitoring mechanisms through:

- **Routine national surveys:** Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey, Global Youth Tobacco Survey, Global School Health Survey, Drug Prevalence Survey, and Survey of Living Conditions, providing critical data on NCD prevalence and risk factors.
- **Mortality monitoring:** Regular publication of vital statistics by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica and ongoing tracking by the Registrar General's Department and the Ministry of Health and Wellness.

- **Cancer surveillance:** Launch of the National Cancer Registry in 2018, with continued upgrades and expansion to capture comprehensive cancer incidence data.
- **Service delivery monitoring:** Use of Monthly Clinical Summary Reports (MCSR) in primary care and Hospital Monthly Summary Reports (HMSR) and discharge summaries in secondary care.
- **Digital health innovations:** Piloting of Electronic Health Records and NCD registries to strengthen care continuity and data quality.
- **Ongoing improvements:** Preparations for the Jamaica Health and Lifestyle Survey IV and external evaluation of the NCD surveillance system reflect a sustained commitment to data-driven policymaking.

These efforts contribute directly to SDG 3.4 by enabling earlier detection, improved tracking of risk factors, and informed planning of national interventions.

Reducing exposure of Jamaicans to the common risk factors for non-communicable diseases and injuries

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Reducing modifiable risk factors, such as tobacco use, harmful alcohol consumption, unhealthy diets, and physical inactivity, is a cornerstone of achieving SDG 3.4. Jamaica's actions include:

- **Tobacco control legislation:** Enforcement of the Public Health Tobacco Control Regulations 2013, with the Tobacco Control Bill (2020), poised to align national laws with the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
- **Food environment reforms:** Collaboration across ministries and civil society to advance policies on food reformulation, front-of-pack labelling, banning trans-fat and implementation of the School Nutrition Policy
- **Multisectoral governance:** Active National Committee on NCDs and finalisation of a new 10-year National NCD Multisectoral Plan.
- **Public education and behavioural change programmes:** Continuous campaigns promoting healthy diets and physical activity, "better-for-you" menus in restaurants, and increased certification of baby-friendly hospitals.
- **Community and workplace initiatives:** Expansion of the Jamaica Moves Programme in schools, communities, and workplaces, and launch of a Corporate Wellness Challenge to integrate health promotion into organisational culture.

These measures address escalating trends in obesity and physical inactivity and help reduce the population's long-term NCD burden.

Strengthening health care systems for people with non-communicable diseases.

The health system's capacity to manage NCDs has been strengthened through:

- Updated clinical guidelines for diabetes, hypertension, asthma and screening for priority NCDs in primary care.
- Improved Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination uptake has increased following a renewed national communication effort.
- Expansion of primary care services through the Primary Healthcare Reform, including more facilities offering integrated NCD services and the introduction of specialist NCD clinics.
- Enhanced access to specialist services in hospitals, including oncology, urology, and gastroenterology.
- Expansion of benefits under the National Health Fund to cover 24 chronic illnesses and co-payment for pap smears, mammograms and prostate-specific antigen tests for cancer screening.
- *The Know Your Numbers* initiative is a community-based screening for hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and dyslipidaemia. By extending screening to communities, workplaces, and public spaces, more individuals become aware of their health status and can be linked to care promptly.
- Auditing of NCD management practices at primary care sites is conducted to identify gaps in treatment quality, strengthen adherence to clinical guidelines, and support clinical decision-making.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness continues to implement the Health Systems Strengthening Programme for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the European Union, to enhance health infrastructure and introduce Electronic Health Records at pilot sites across a network of hospitals and health centres.

The expansion of community screening, reinforcement of clinical quality standards, and growth in specialist services reflect a cohesive national strategy aligned with SDG 3.4. Ongoing challenges, especially rising obesity, physical inactivity, and treatment adherence, remain priorities for mitigation.

Continued investment in prevention, digital tools, and primary healthcare reform will be critical to achieving the 2030 target.

Mental Health

The WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2013-2030) continues to guide the development of the mental health services in Jamaica within a regional and global context. The Ministry's mental health services are geared towards promoting mental health and well-being, prevention of mental illness, early detection of mental health disorders through integrated community-based services and treatment and rehabilitation of mental health disorders using a life stage approach, and to facilitate access to universal coverage for mental health services. Mental health services are provided through over 147 adult clinics and over 23 child and adolescent clinic sites island wide, with inpatient mental health services in general hospital wards in each parish. Bellevue Hospital, the only mental hospital in Jamaica, is currently being restructured to be a specialist hospital to manage complex cases.

The National Mental Health Strategic Plan (2020-2025) provides a framework to identify the determinants of good mental health and implement strategies that include a partnership approach to addressing mental illness at various levels of health care delivery and at the community level. Expanding on this, the Ministry of Health and Wellness plans to develop a National Mental Health Policy that will lead to the subsequent amendment to Jamaica's Mental Health Act (1996) and alignment of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, 2007) to which Jamaica is a signatory. To boost and promote capacity building, mental health care practitioners have completed the online WHO Quality Rights course, which is based on the CRPD, and participated in the WHO Quality Rights training workshops in 2024 and 2025.

There has been an ongoing global and local shift from psychiatric hospital-based mental health services to community-based mental health services, where this change can be integrated into both primary and secondary health care systems. Several initiatives have been launched to facilitate this shift, including the ongoing training of non-psychiatric primary and secondary healthcare providers using the Mental Health Gap Action Programme-Intervention Guide (mhGAP-IG). In essence, the training aims to increase their capacity to diagnose and treat mental health disorders. This effort is supplemented by the inclusion of depression screening in the overall screening programme for non-communicable diseases in the primary care setting. This approach provides opportunities for early detection and treatment of mental health disorders, especially anxiety and depressive disorders, with associated expected improvement in patient outcomes.

Jamaica has been developing the WHO Problem Management Plus (PM+) programme as a community based initiative to provide emotional support to persons experiencing mental distress due to adverse challenges. In this approach, PM+ providers are trained to be at the lower tier in the provision of mental health services, with referral to mental health practitioners where necessary. Since 2022, two

hundred and fifteen (215) lay people from Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) were trained as Problem Management Plus Providers across the island. Forty of these volunteers have been actively reporting on their activities. To date, 265 people/clients have benefitted from the intervention.

Period	No. of clients
2023 - 2024	46
2024 - 2025	147
April 2025 to Sept 2025	72
Total	265

TABLE 16. Beneficiaries of the Problem Management Plus Programme

The School Mental Health Literacy (SMHL) programme, introduced in 2020, was implemented in secondary schools and is geared towards increasing mental health awareness, identifying signs of mental health problems, improving mental health-seeking behaviours and reducing mental health stigma in society. Between September 2023 and April 2024, 95 of 177 secondary schools delivered the SMHL curriculum, reaching 32 634 students.

The Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Technical Working Group leads a multisectoral effort to strengthen local stakeholders to prepare for disasters or humanitarian crises and to provide coordinated response during and after such events. Jamaica is participating in the regional efforts to render assistance by providing continuity of care for non-communicable disease, nutrition and mental health during and after. A Standard Operating Procedure for MHPSS is being developed and will be included in the Disaster Manual of the Ministry of Health and Wellness upon completion.

Data on Suicidal Behaviours

Over the past four years, the number of attempted suicides has fluctuated; however, the overall trend shows an increase compared to the preceding four-year period.

Year	NERHA		WRHA		SERHA		SRHA		Total
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
2021	17	16	39	21	69	26	46	15	249
2022	36	14	49	22	95	45	34	14	309
2023	50	8	59	25	86	25	39	23	315
2024	26	9	53	22	64	28	61	27	290

TABLE 17. Number of attempted suicides by sex and regional health authority

SOURCE: Table obtained from Hospital Monthly Statistical Report (HMSR), SERHA does not include Kingston Public Hospital

In addition to the aforementioned initiatives, helplines remain available and continue to show steady utilization. This includes the Ministry of Health and Wellness’ free 24-hour Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Helpline, which has received 9 741 calls over the past four years.

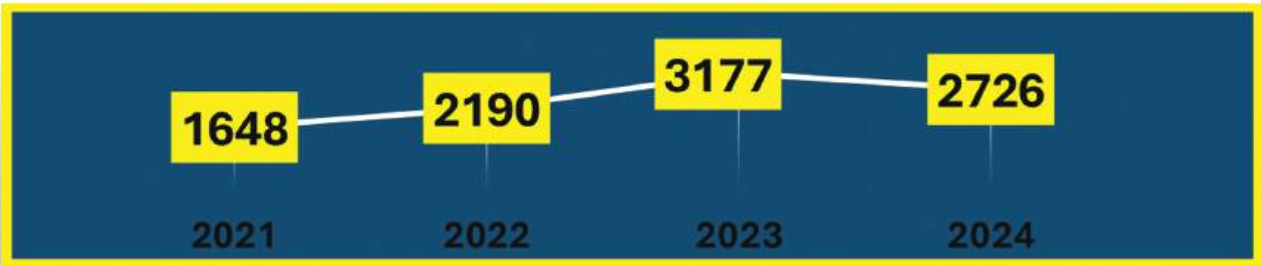


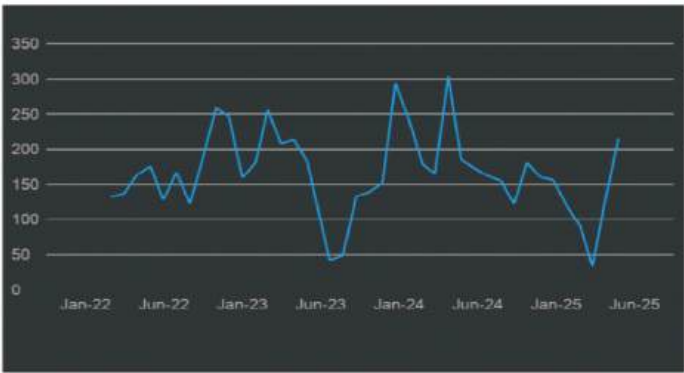
FIGURE 32. Annual call trend for the period 2021-2024

The ministry is collaborating with UNICEF to establish a U-Matter Chat line that will provide emotional support for youths who may prefer to text rather than make voice calls. This service has been handed over to the National Council on Drug Abuse, a department of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Over the years, calls have fluctuated between 50 and 300 per month. Since January 2025, there has been a sharp increase in the use of this chatline from under 50 to over 200 in June 2025.

U-Matter **Achievements – Support**

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Total no. of sessions opened since launch is 6,497



Average Texter’s Age from chatline’s inception to present: **23.74 years**

On average, **73%** of chatline users were **female**.

Female	Male	Non-Binary
73.41	24.60	1.95

FIGURE 33. Text trend to U Matter Chatline

Mental health education and promotion remain a priority for the Ministry. There are ongoing activities across regional health authorities, with targeted monthly sessions being exceeded. In 2019, the Ministry launched the SpeakUpSpeakNow campaign to promote mental health and reduce the incidence of mental illnesses. The National Mental Health Mass Media Campaign is ongoing and utilizes a range of platforms to reach its audiences. The goal of this campaign has been further emphasized in the PAHO #DoYourShare campaign, as it aims to reduce the stigma against mental illness and promote mental health-seeking behaviors among the population.

Target 3.5. Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.

Overview of National Substance-Use Surveys

Building on the foundation of the 2016 National Drug Use Prevalence Survey, the National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA), with support from the Organization of American States' Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), conducted a follow-up study in 2023 to assess evolving trends in substance use across Jamaica. The 2016 survey had established baseline data on the use of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs, as well as the social and contextual factors influencing consumption. Recognizing the impact of legislative, economic, and social changes over time, the 2023 survey aimed to provide updated insights to inform more responsive and evidence-based policies.

Targeting individuals aged 12 to 65, the study sought to measure the prevalence and patterns of psychoactive substance use, analyze usage across socio-demographic groups, and explore related factors such as access, risk perception, and exposure to prevention efforts. It also examined public attitudes toward marijuana legislation and its societal effects. The findings are intended to guide strategic planning and enhance prevention, treatment, and policy interventions in Jamaica's ongoing response to substance misuse.

Comparative Trends: 2016 vs 2023

In comparison to 2016, the 2023 data show that Jamaica experienced notable shifts in substance use trends. Lifetime alcohol use rose from 74.8 per cent to 77.1 per cent, with a larger increase among females (67.2 per cent to 71.0 per cent) than males (82.5 per cent to 83.3 per cent). Annual alcohol use also increased from 56.8 per cent to 60.3 per cent, with female use rising from 43.6 per cent to 48.0 per cent. Harmful alcohol use declined slightly, especially among females (9.9 per cent to 8.3 per cent). Tobacco use saw modest growth in lifetime use and a sharper rise in daily use among males (19.8 per cent). Cannabis use remained stable overall, but high-risk annual use surged among females—from 35.7 per cent to 50.5 per cent. These trends highlight evolving gender dynamics and the need for targeted public health strategies.

Age of Initiation by Substance and Gender

The age of initiation in Jamaica varies by drug type and gender, with males generally initiating use earlier than females. Alcohol and tobacco show relatively stable onset ages, with males starting alcohol at 15.6 years and females at 17.8 years, and similar trends for tobacco. Marijuana use remains steady and follows the same trend as alcohol and tobacco, with males using earlier (16.2 years) than females (18.7 years). Newer substances like ketamine and lean show emerging use patterns with onset ages around 17.5 years. Other drugs, such as beady and tranquilisers, have experienced sharp declines in onset age,

particularly tranquilisers, which now show a gendered pattern—males at 17.4 years and females at 23.5 years. Synthetic marijuana presents a striking gender gap, with males starting at 31.1 years and females at just 15.8 years. While some substances like amphetamines and hashish show no gender disparity, others, including cocaine and analgesics, reflect later onset ages, especially among females.

Risk Perception Across Age and Gender

Similarly, risk perception around cannabis and alcohol use among Jamaicans aged 12–65 reveals clear age and gender differences. Younger individuals, especially males, tend to perceive lower risk in cannabis use, while older adults view regular use, particularly in edibles or drinks, as more harmful. Alcohol is widely seen as high-risk, especially with frequent use, and this perception is stronger among females and older age groups. Across all substances, frequent use is generally viewed as high-risk, with females consistently perceiving greater risk than males. Notably, individuals who have used substances tend to perceive them as less risky, and a significant number of respondents expressed uncertainty, pointing to gaps in public health education.

Emerging Issues: Vaping in Schools

In 2023, the NCDA conducted a qualitative pilot study across six schools in Westmoreland, St. Ann, and Trelawny to assess vaping-related attitudes and behaviors among students and staff. The findings revealed that while students were generally aware of vaping, their understanding of its risks was limited and often shaped by misinformation. Vaping was normalized through peer influence, family habits, and media exposure, and despite legal restrictions, students reported easy access to vape products. Emotional distress, including anxiety and trauma, was a key driver of use, compounded by a lack of supportive resources.

Participants emphasized the need for relatable, youth-driven prevention strategies, such as peer-led education and community engagement. The study also highlighted that vaping is part of a broader pattern of risky behaviors linked to violence, substance use, and socio-economic challenges, underscoring the need for systemic, holistic interventions.

Programmes, Policies or Initiatives Implemented for the Target

Regarding initiatives implemented towards improving capacity to address harmful substance use, the National Council on Drug Abuse is still conducting Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) Training as well as Universal, Selective, and Indicated Programmes.

They are as follows:

- Universal: these programmes target the entire population with drug prevention education, indiscriminately.

- **Selective Programmes:** target members of the population who are at high risk for use because of certain risk factors affecting the individual or that are present in their environment.
- **Indicated Programmes:** target those individuals who have started drug use and have deemed it problematic but are not yet addicted. Clients who need indicated programmes are deemed most at risk.

Similarly, the NCDA is working to develop a national research network and drug research agenda. This drug research agenda aims to define the priorities and objectives for the scientific and technological research in the field of substance use by determining priorities and the resources needed to carry them out. This in turn improves quality, quantity and relevance while also expanding evidence base for treatment and prevention. This initiative is within the framework of the Cooperation Programme between Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union on Drugs Policies (COPOLAD III), which includes 22 countries with the aim of strengthening national drug observatories.

Challenges Encountered and Strategies Implemented to Achieve the Target

In 2024, the National Council on Drug Abuse became a department of the Ministry of Health & Wellness. This transition has included an expansion of the NCDA, which has broadened the department's reach and capacity. This includes expanding mental wellness access, increasing screening, increasing access to substance use counselling, and increasing the quantity of evidence-based school programmes.

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Target 3.7. By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services.

The 2021 Reproductive Health Survey (RHS) for Jamaica, conducted by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) for the National Family Planning Board (NFPB), revealed a total fertility rate (TFR) of 1.9 births per woman, a significant decrease from previous years. The survey, which took place from July 2021 to April 2022, also covered family planning, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections, gender based violence, maternal and child health, and related lifestyle factors. A key finding was that the TFR of 1.9 is below the replacement level of 2.1, indicating a declining population. In 2021, the adolescent (15 -19 years) birth rate in Jamaica was 34 births per 1 000 girls.³⁶⁰ Given this finding, attention must now shift to the development of a comprehensive suite of sexual and reproductive health services to fulfil the SDG target. Progress surrounding this SDG target is primarily related to strategic changes surrounding governance and policy development for sexual and reproductive health.

³⁶⁰ Reproductive Health Survey

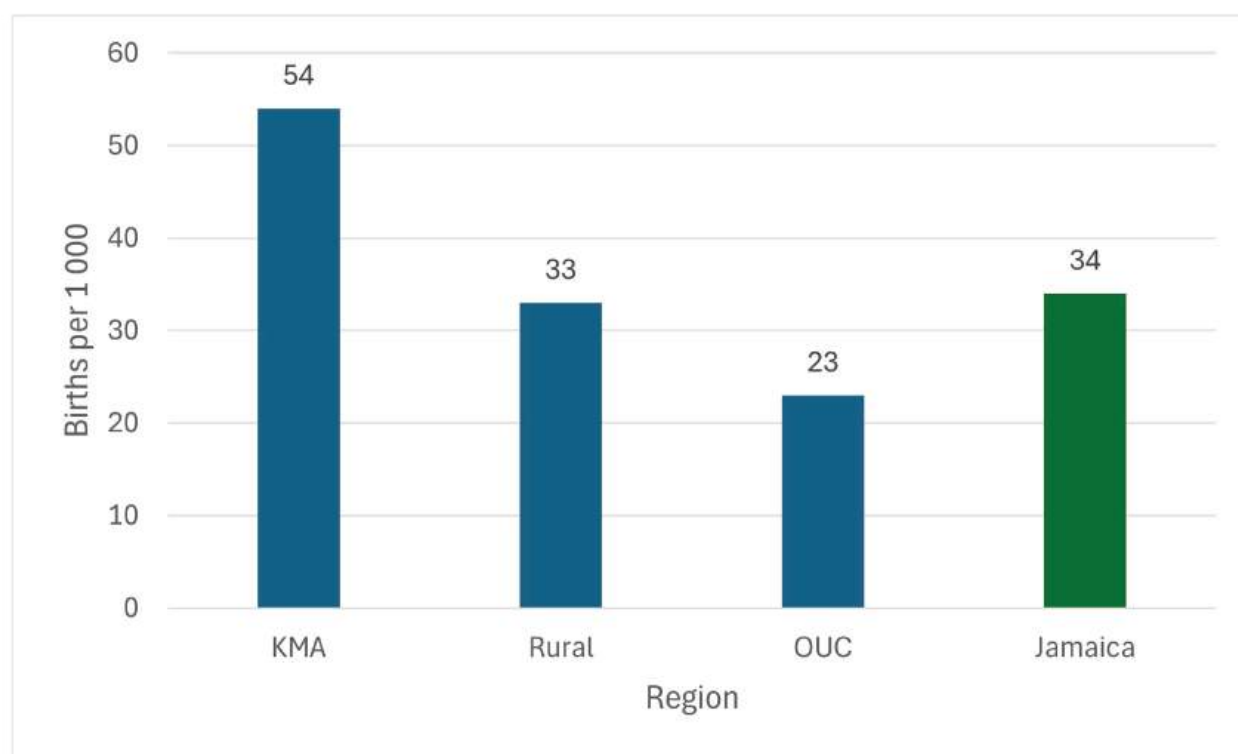


FIGURE 34. Adolescent birth rate for 2015 - 2023

The National Family Planning Act was repealed in 2023, effectively transferring the functions to the National Family Planning Board (NFPB) / Sexual Health Authority, to the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) as of August 2024. Planning and coordination for sexual and reproductive health programmes and services has been delegated to the Family Health Unit, Health Services Planning & Integration Branch, Technical Services Division, which collaborates with internal and external stakeholders for this area. Strengthening of the Unit's capacity to effectively carry out this mandate is ongoing. Selected functions of the NFPB were assigned to other entities.

- The procurement and distribution of family planning commodities to the Regional Health Authorities was transferred to the National Health Fund.
- Promotion of sexual health and prevention and treatment of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) remain with the HIV/STI/TB Unit under the Health Promotion and Protection Branch, Technical Services Division of the MOHW.
- Monitoring injuries related to gender-based violence falls under the stewardship of the Non-communicable Disease and Injury Prevention Unit, also under the Health Promotion and Protection Branch.
- Family planning clinic service delivery at the NFPB was discontinued, with clients referred to the South-East Regional Health Authority.

The Enabling Environment in Health and Client Service Division (EEHCSD) was established shortly after the dissolution of the NFPB. This entity primarily functions to champion a new era of quality care and equitable access to health services by prioritizing client services; integrating human rights principles; tackling social determinants of health; providing strategic leadership, policy direction, and oversight; and empowering individuals and communities to achieve improved health outcomes. This is particularly timely to address the human rights-related matters surrounding sexual and reproductive health.

The National Sexual and Reproductive Health Policy was developed in 2024 to address several critical issues surrounding this sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to provide the framework for programme implementation and service delivery. A draft Cabinet Submission was prepared for approval.

Target 3.8. Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection and access to essential health care services.

Jamaica has undertaken a comprehensive and evolving reform agenda to advance Universal Health Coverage (UHC), aligning closely with SDG 3.8, which emphasizes access to essential health services, equity and financial protection. The country's strategic policy direction is anchored in the Vision for Health 2030, supported by initiatives such as Health Technology Assessments (HTAs), a dedicated Health Programme for Older Persons, and a restructured service delivery model for primary and secondary care. These reforms reflect a shift toward integrated, patient-centered care. The establishment of a Council of Experts for AI in healthcare also signals Jamaica's intent to leverage innovation for improved service delivery. Legislative and regulatory reforms—including the Tobacco Control Bill, expanded prescriptive rights for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses, and the development of a National Health Insurance for the Elderly—are laying the groundwork for more inclusive and responsive health governance.

Procurement and supply chain reforms have been strengthened through partnerships with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the expansion of digital platforms like Government of Jamaica Electronic Procurement (GOJEP), which have improved forecasting, transparency, and engagement with micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Public-private partnerships (PPPs) are playing a growing role in expanding access to diagnostics and chronic care, with initiatives such as retail pharmacy collaborations and a pending lease agreement for 49 imaging devices. Workforce development is another pillar of Jamaica's UHC strategy, with the creation of 2 000 permanent posts, a J\$2.5 billion scholarship fund, and pilot programmes offering housing and financial incentives to attract professionals to underserved areas. Bilateral training agreements with countries such as India, Nigeria, and the Philippines are also being explored to address specialist shortages.

Major infrastructure investments are underway through the US\$100M Health Systems Strengthening Programme (funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and European Union (EU)) and the Primary Health Care Reform (2021–2030), which aim to modernize facilities, expand digital health, and improve continuity of care, particularly for non-communicable diseases (NCDs). These efforts will add over 450 hospital beds, specifically at the Western Child & Adolescent Hospital and Spanish Town Hospital. Quality of care is being enhanced through electronic health records (EHRs), telemedicine, and feedback loops between treatment and prevention. Financing strategies are evolving, with the 2019 Health Insurance Green Paper and a 2023 discussion paper exploring sustainable options such as risk pooling and public financial management reforms. The National Health Fund (NHF) has expanded its benefits, adding new conditions and increasing subsidies.

Despite these achievements, Jamaica faces persistent challenges that temper the pace of progress. Infrastructure remains strained by aging facilities and outdated equipment, while legislative reform has been slow. Procurement inefficiencies, such as inexperienced personnel and noncompliance, have been flagged by the Auditor General. Workforce shortages, particularly among specialist nurses, and internal migration to urban centers continue to leave rural areas underserved. Service delivery remains fragmented, with interoperability issues in health information systems limiting continuity of care. Financial constraints are also significant: health spending remains below WHO's recommended 6.0 per cent of GDP, and fiscal space for a national insurance scheme is limited.

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In terms of SDG 3.8 indicators, Jamaica has made progress but still faces gaps. Financial protection (SDG 3.8.2) has improved with the abolition of user fees, yet out-of-pocket costs remain burdensome for some households. Equity in access is being addressed through PPPs and rural outreach, but geographic disparities persist. The Service Coverage Index (SDG 3.8.1) is steadily improving due to infrastructure upgrades, digital health expansion, and workforce development. Overall, Jamaica's approach to UHC is ambitious and multidimensional, reflecting a strong policy commitment and tangible reforms. Continued investment, governance strengthening, and targeted interventions will be essential to fully realize the promise of UHC and meet the goals of SDG 3.8.

Human Resources for Health

Human Resources for Health (HRH) remains a cornerstone of Jamaica's health system, with the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) recognising that achieving universal health coverage and building resilience require not only adequate numbers of health personnel but also equitable distribution and competencies aligned with the evolving model of care, as outlined in Vision for Health 2030.

Between 2014 and 2023/24, however, progress toward HRH targets was hindered by persistent challenges, including the migration of skilled professionals, particularly nurses and diagnostic staff, data fragmentation and weak private-sector reporting, outdated regulatory and scope-of-practice

frameworks that limit task-sharing, and poor workplace conditions contributing to burnout and retention issues. These factors, coupled with limited information on geographical distribution and ongoing maldistribution of staff in rural areas, underscore the urgent need for strengthened HRH planning, improved data systems, and sustainable strategies to ensure a well-trained, equitably deployed, and future-ready health workforce.

Despite these challenges, the MOHW has actively taken steps to strengthen HRH planning and capacity since 2014.

These include:

- National policy & reform frameworks- Vision for Health 2030, national 10-year plan (2019) guiding HRH priorities (access, stewardship, financing, HRH); Primary Health Care Reform 2021–2030, pushed integrated primary care, new service packages, and HRH realignment.
- Workforce expansion & role creation - Expansion of allied health and community roles, e.g., community health aides, patient care workers and other CHW-type cadres to strengthen primary/community care (document refers to standardised CHW cadre proposals and recent recruitment).
- Migration / bilateral support - Bilateral Agreements with countries such as Cuba and the Philippines, re-engagement of Nigeria, and negotiation with India.
- Education, training, and CPD - The curriculum updates/workforce training are moving toward competency-based, interprofessional education; the expansion of nursing and allied training capacity is being promoted; and digital health competencies and e-learning are being promoted (the report recommends integrating AI/digital competencies).
- Investment in training through the Barry Wint Memorial Scholarship allows individuals to study in any health-related field.
- Twinned with the project development and initiation of a health labour market analysis, these two initiatives will provide a platform/foundation to inform planning for HRH.
- Jamaica has designated a national focal point on HRH to the World Health Organization and has completed and submitted the national reporting instrument in accordance with the WHO Code of Practice for the International Recruitment of Healthcare Workers.
- Jamaica reports health workforce data to the WHO/PAHO National Health Workforce Accounts.
- Through a technical cooperation with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) - an HRH Policy and Action Plan, including cost evaluation and monitoring framework, was

developed through a PAHO-led consultancy with the Dalhousie University Collaborating Centre on Health Workforce Planning and Research. The finalised documents were submitted to the Ministry in August 2025.

In conclusion, while Jamaica's Human Resources for Health (HRH) landscape continues to grapple with migration, maldistribution, financing gaps, and regulatory limitations, the Ministry of Health and Wellness has demonstrated a strong commitment to addressing these systemic challenges through policy reform, workforce expansion, education and training, bilateral partnerships, and enhanced data reporting. The strategic actions taken, anchored in Vision for Health 2030 and supported by initiatives such as the Primary Health Care Reform, the Health Labour Market Analysis, and the HRH Policy and Action Plan, lay a critical foundation for strengthening workforce planning, improving equity in distribution, and ensuring sustainability. Continued investment in data systems, retention strategies, and capacity building will be essential for Jamaica to achieve universal health coverage and to build a resilient, well-distributed, and future-ready health workforce.

Target 3.9. By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination.

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The Ministry of Health and Wellness, through its Environmental Health Unit (EHU), is responsible for ensuring public health protection in accordance with SDG 3.9. This is achieved through targeted programmes that address air, water, and soil quality; occupational safety; and the management of environmental risks associated with development activities.

The main environmental health programmes contributing to this target are:

- I. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Programme, which promotes safe and healthy working environments and minimises exposure to hazardous substances.
- II. Subdivision and Development Programme, which ensures that all land development and construction activities adhere to public health standards, environmental protection, and engineering best practices through the Development Applications Review Process (DARP). The key objectives of the programme are to achieve:
 - 80.0 per cent of applications are processed within 30 days.
 - 80.0 per cent of approved applications requiring technical construction evaluation receive site assessments.
 - 100.0 per cent of wastewater projects are monitored at 50.0 per cent and 90.0 per cent completion stages.
- III. Water and Wastewater Management Programme - This programme is dedicated to comprehensive monitoring and management of wastewater and recreational water sources. Its

primary goal is to ensure water safety, prevent contamination, and reduce the risk of waterborne diseases. By implementing rigorous testing, treatment, and regulatory compliance measures, the programme plays a critical role in protecting public health and maintaining community well-being. Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) conduct monthly island-wide surveillance of wastewater treatment plants, beaches, swimming pools, rivers, and other public bathing sites.

Status and Key Initiatives (2014–2024)

Over the past decade, Jamaica has implemented several strategic actions and partnerships to advance SDG 3.9 and strengthen national pollution control systems:

Regulatory Strengthening

- The Public Health (Nuisance) Regulations under the Public Health Act establish the legal framework governing pollution control as it relates to public health. A revision of these Regulations is currently in progress to expand their scope and strengthen enforcement mechanisms for improved pollution management and community health protection.

Air Quality Management

- A National Ambient Air Quality Framework to integrate health-based indicators into pollution monitoring has been developed.
- An Integrated Air Quality, Short-Lived Climate Pollutants, and Health Roadmap for Jamaica has been established in collaboration with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).
- Over 50 national stakeholders trained in the use of the WHO AirQ+ Tool to estimate the health burden from poor air quality.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) Developed

- Indoor Air Quality in Healthcare Facilities.
- Health Impact Assessments for Mining and Industrial Operations.
- Guidelines for Monitoring Recreational Water Sources.

The SOPs will undergo periodic review as necessary to ensure continued relevance, accuracy, and effectiveness in guiding operations

Capacity Building and Technical Support

- Between 2022 and 2024, three capacity-building sessions were held for 165 participants, including PHIs, Municipal Corporation Directors of Planning, developers, and engineers, to enhance technical competence and regulatory compliance.

- Since 2020, the MOHW has reviewed approximately 15 960 subdivision and development applications, with an approval rate exceeding 95.0 per cent.

Surveillance and Monitoring Data

- Routine monitoring of recreational water sources and wastewater treatment sites indicates progressive compliance with public health standards, although occasional exceedances linked to informal bathing and unregulated discharge sites persist.
- Continuous collaboration with the National Environment and Planning Agency (NEPA) supports enforcement against environmental breaches.

Despite the Ministry's efforts to achieve Goal 3.9, several challenges remain, including the absence of a comprehensive legislative framework for pollution control and public health, which weakens enforcement capacity and limits effective action. Outdated waste management infrastructure and high cost of modern pollution control technologies. Limited risk communication and community engagement on the health impacts of pollution and poor waste management practices (e.g. open burning, battery smelting). Cultural resistance to waste reduction, recycling, and environmental sustainability.

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In response to these challenges, the Ministry has employed several strategies, such as enhanced audit and inspection processes to strengthen regulatory oversight and ensure compliance with environmental health standards. Implement the Environmental Health Management Information System (EHMIS) to digitise reporting, improve data accuracy, and support evidence-based decision making. Continue capacity building for key stakeholders to improve technical competence and operational efficiency. Strengthen intersectoral collaboration with local and international partners to promote coordinated action and resource sharing.

To accelerate progress toward SDG 3.9, the MOHW is:

- Working with PAHO, NEPA, and the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology to harmonise environmental health and pollution control legislation.
- Expanding environmental health surveillance systems, including digital monitoring of air and water quality data.
- Strengthening intersectoral risk communication and public education initiatives on pollution and health.
- Exploring the adoption of Green Public Health strategies to integrate environmental sustainability across the health sector.
- Sustain and expand capacity-building initiatives for stakeholders to promote greater responsiveness, adaptability, and institutional effectiveness

In addition, mortality data from the Registrar General Department show that in 2015, 0.0 (n = 1) Jamaicans in every 100 000 people died of unintentional poisoning compared to 0.1 (n = 5) in 2022.²

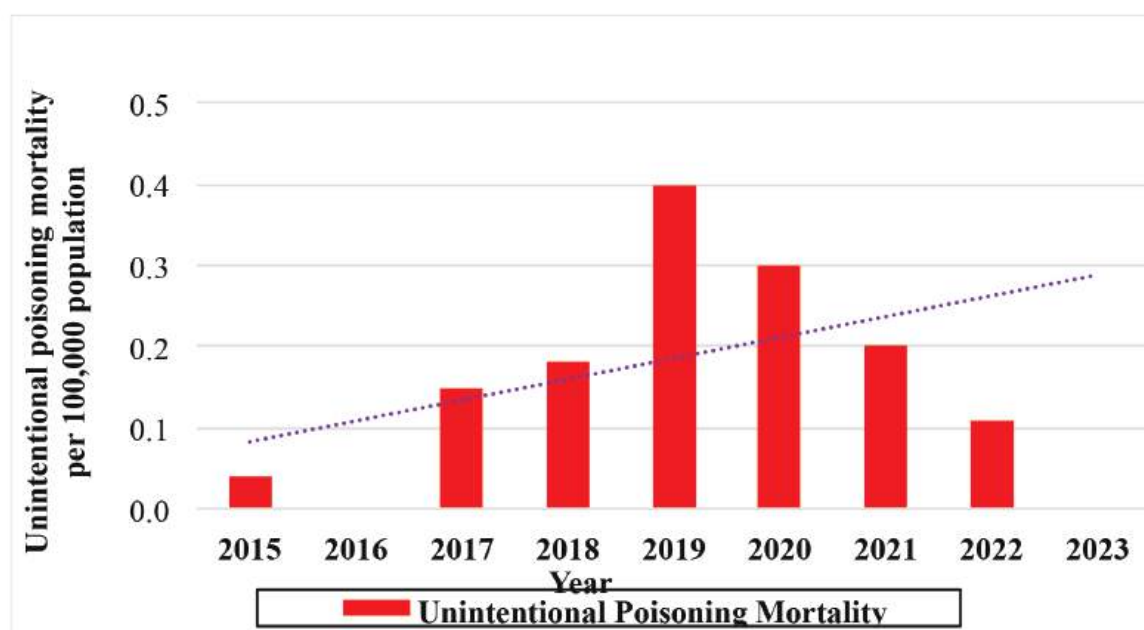


FIGURE 35. Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning

Jamaica continues to make meaningful progress toward achieving SDG 3.9, with strong institutional frameworks, national partnerships, and targeted interventions that address environmental pollution and its health effects. However, harmonisation of policies and technological investment, and behavioural change, remain critical to achieving sustainable and equitable environmental health outcomes.

Target 3.B. Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries.

To reduce morbidity and mortality from priority communicable and non-communicable diseases by one-third by 2030, the Ministry's Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) aims to achieve 95.0 per cent immunization coverage per antigen. Between 2015 and 2023, the immunization coverage rate generally increased for each vaccine under the national vaccination schedule. The coverage for measles, mumps and rubella (MMR1) increased from 83.0 per cent in 2015 to 93.0 per cent in 2023. The BCG coverage declined by 1.0 per cent to 99.0 per cent in 2023 from 100.0 per cent in 2015 - 100.0 per cent, DPT-3 and polio-3 increased to 100.0 per cent in 2023 from 91.0 per cent in 2015³⁶¹.

³⁶¹ Ministry of Health & Wellness, Family Health Unit

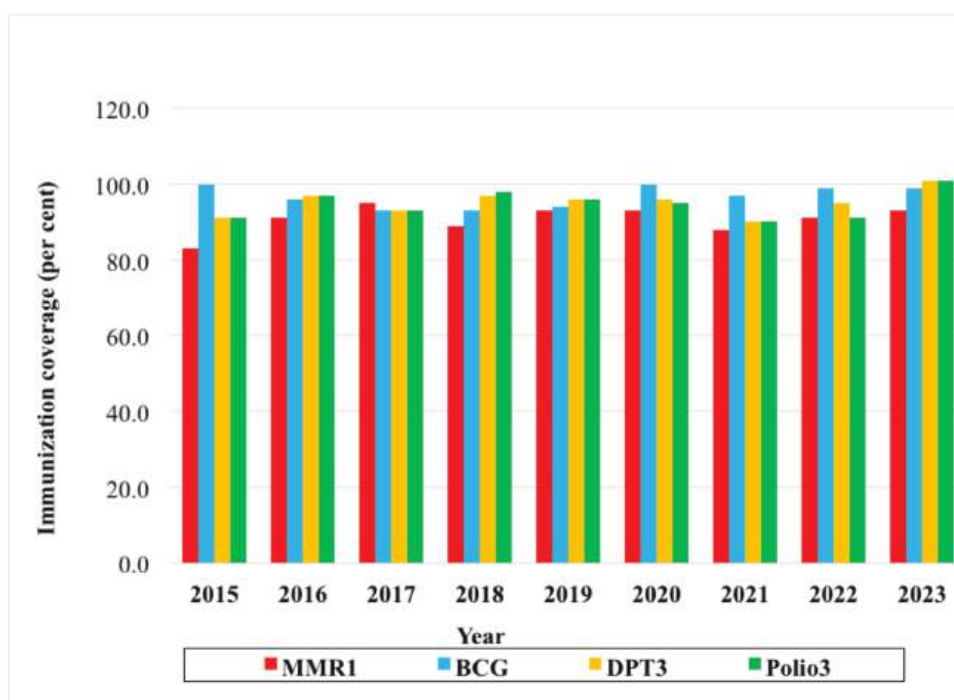


FIGURE 36. Immunization coverage of under 1 year old for 2015-2023

Target 3.D. Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks.

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The health targets outlined in the Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan (NDP), along with the Sustainable Development Goals, provide a strategic course of action to improve Jamaica's public health systems and to ensure compliance with the obligations under the World Health Organization International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness is the designated lead entity responsible for developing the capacities defined in the IHR. The Emergency and Disaster Management (EDM) Programme is among the programmes of activities of the MOHW and is overseen by a Senior Medical Officer who is responsible for operating the Health Emergency Operations Centre (HEOC). The programme is integrated into the Ministry's budgetary structure and receives annual funding from the Government of Jamaica (GOJ) Consolidated Fund, under budget activity "Emergency Medical Services - #920". There is an annual programme of activities that is specifically aimed at Target 3.D. Among these activities is compliance with the mandatory reporting of the annual State Party Annual Report (SPAR) to the WHO, and to conduct of the annual exercise of the EDM organization of the health system. The EDM Programme of the MOHW aims for health security through and integration of three groups of activities, all of which require multisectoral engagements:

1. Disaster Risk Reduction – which includes a programme for enhancing resilience of the health service delivery system

2. Emergency Medical Services that ensure the requisite standards are in place and are complied with for effective emergency care; and
3. Building core capacities in keeping with the IHR.

Over the period 2014 - 2023/2024, actions geared toward achieving this target included laying the groundwork towards the development of a structured plan based on thematic areas from the following action plans that align with the Vision 2030 Jamaica plan for Health: Health Chapter of the National Adaptation Plan (H-NAP), Emergency and Critical Care System Action Plan (ECSA) and National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS).

Hazard Risk Reduction

The MOHW provided input into the development of Jamaica's Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management Policy & Strategy (2020-2040), led by the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD) and the Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM). This policy and strategic approach are practical means of achieving Risk Identification, Risk Reduction, Preparedness, and Resilience. The WHO Criteria for resilience of the public health system is the effectiveness of existing mechanisms to manage health emergencies, while delivering normal healthcare services. The policy identifies hazards that are of greatest significance to Jamaica as: hurricanes and storms; rain; drought, and earthquakes (natural hazards); road, aviation, and nautical accidents – including oil spills; fire; and cybercrime (man-made hazards); and human epidemics and plant disease outbreaks (biological hazards).

Some early warning systems (EWS) already exist, but further development is needed. In 2018, the Jamaica Social Investment Fund (JSIF) – in collaboration with ODPEM and other MDAs – began the development of a National Risk Information Platform (NRIP), aimed at allowing all risk data Comprehensive Disaster Risk Management (JCDRM) Policy, to be located and updated in a centralized platform that is available to government agencies and the public. Biological hazards fall within the remit of MOHW. With the promulgation of the Policy, biological hazards including pandemics, are recognized to be included. This will be based on the country's already defined list of Class 1 diseases in accordance with The Public Health Act: The Public Health (Class 1 Diseases) Order, 2003. A Gazette is completed for each additional disease/condition, with the most recent being for Mpox. The list of priority conditions (Class 1 notifiable diseases and health events) has also been updated, sometimes in response to disease threats or outbreaks. Jamaica's National Surveillance system has been effective at functioning as EWS for biological hazards, detecting outbreaks and triggering outbreak investigation and management coordinated through the Health Emergency Operations Centre.

The programme for Disaster Risk Reduction within the health sector was guided by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) Plan of Action for Disaster Risk

Reduction 2016 – 2021. Progress at the end of the period was reviewed at the 170th Session of the Executive Committee, 20-24 June 2022. Under Strategic Line of Action 1: Recognizing disaster risk in the health sector, through the Emergency and Disaster Management Programme, Jamaica adapted the PAHO Preparedness Index in 2023 and has been using it to gauge the level of preparedness of the health system as part of the pre-hurricane season activities. Strategic Action Line 3 is Safe, smart hospitals. Following the successful implementation of the PAHO Smart Health Care Facilities in the Caribbean Project over the period 2016-2023, an operational Smart Policy for health infrastructure resilience has been developed for Jamaica and is now being implemented, and a final validation workshop to develop the Health Chapter of the National Adaptation Plan (H-NAP) for climate change (that incorporates the Smart concepts) was completed in July 2025 and now undergoing review. A Roadmap for Air Quality and Health. Strategic Line of Action 4 is Health sector capacity for disaster preparedness, response, and recovery and the indicator was “tested plans and procedures for emergency and disaster response and early recovery”. The MOHW, following a series of capacity building activities for HEOC and Mass Casualty Management, in collaboration with the Jamaica Defence Force Maritime Air and Cyber Command, coordinated and executed the programme of activities leading up to a major national simulation exercise for Mass Casualty Incident in January 2025.

Emergency Care System

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EMERGENCY AND CRITICAL CARE SYSTEM ASSESSMENT IN JAMAICA: CONSENSUS-BASED ACTION PRIORITIES



A comprehensive evaluation of Jamaica's Emergency Care System was conducted during 2023 with the technical cooperation of PAHO/WHO Regional Office for Americas, from which an action plan for improvements was developed. The main objective was to identify areas of opportunity to strengthen emergency care and contribute to the reduction of mortality from road traffic injuries and other emergencies that require quality and timely medical care. The MOHW is advancing the health system through strengthening the emergency medical care system in Jamaica and the implementation of the Emergency and Critical Care System (ECSA) Action Plan, thereby enhancing the health sector's capacity to provide high quality emergency medical care. With the implementation

of the ECSA in Jamaica, the MOHW is focused on strengthening Pre-Hospital Emergency Medical Services (PHEMS) and emergency medical care in the nineteen A&E departments within the public

health system over the next three to five years, to include activities for improved efficiency realised in the reduction in waiting time project. Jamaica featured in the UN 2023 Road Safety Report for the execution of the ECSA.

Ihr Core Capacities

Having been a State Party to the IHR since its entry into force in 2007, Jamaica established an IHR Stakeholders Advisory Group (IHR SAG), which is a multisectoral and multidisciplinary committee. With the IHR SAG, Jamaica has been consistent in undertaking the annual State Party Annual Report (SPAR), the mandatory component of the IHR MEF, through a collaborative process involving representatives from line ministries and entities required for implementation of the IHR. Since 2010, Jamaica's self-assessment for the capacities have varied, with performance scores by capacity ranging between 40 to over 80.0 per cent. The overall average had been increasing progressively from 49.0 per cent to 73.0 per cent, up until the COVID 19 pandemic, when the average stagnated at about 65.0 per cent. This is illustrated in the chart below where the highest scores are core capacities for Surveillance, Points of Entry and Risk Communication and the lowest are in capacities for Chemical and Radiation Emergencies, Policy provisions, Financing and Infection Prevention and control.

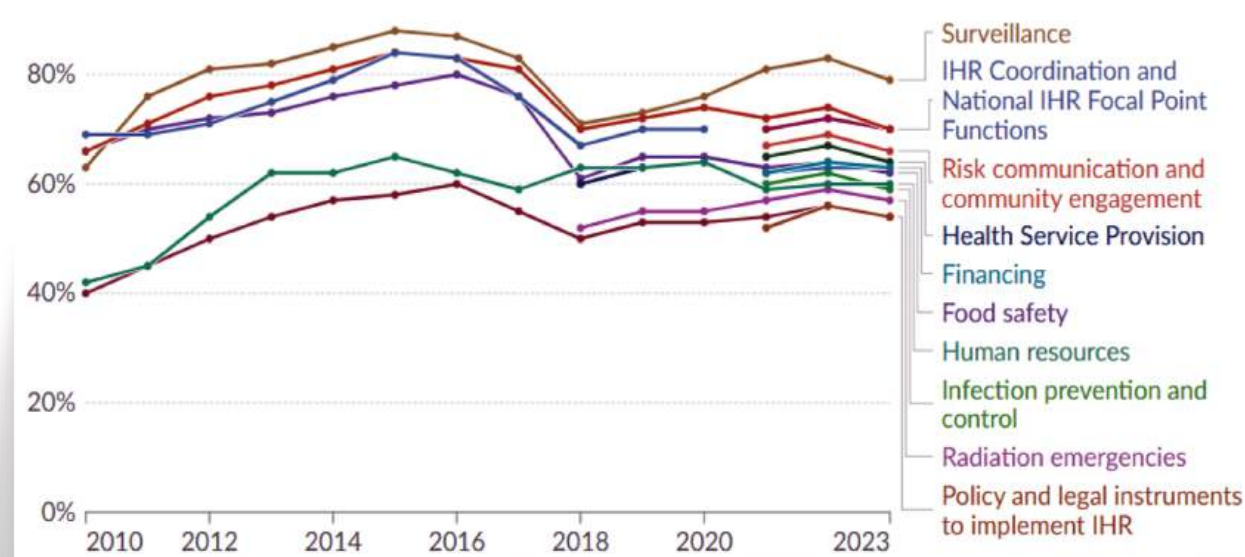


FIGURE 37. IHR Score per capacity for Jamaica 2010-2023

Jamaica has developed a robust and operational health emergency management system aligned with international standards under the IHR (2005). The country maintains a comprehensive, risk-informed All-Hazard Health Emergency Plan that is actively implemented and regularly exercised across all levels of the health system. Coordination is led by established bodies such as the HEOC and the Emergency Health Planning Committee (EHPC), working closely with national partners including ODPEM and the Jamaica Defence Force. The Emergency and Disaster Management Programme is formally established

at the National Level but is implemented as additional duties at sub-national levels. There is strong collaboration between EDM Programme and the National Surveillance Programme to allow for early warning mechanisms for communicable diseases. There is also a close working relationship with the Meteorological Services of Jamaica and the National Earthquake Unit, that among other things allows for early warning mechanisms in weather and seismic events. Climate Action is coordinated through the Emergency and Disaster Management Programme. The IHR National Focal Point Secretariat functions as management within the Emergency and Disaster Management Programme.

Additionally, among the strategies to achieve this is full implementation of the WHO IHR (2005), which is also SDG 3.d.1. It is primarily intended to secure health through the realization of domestic capacity that mitigate and respond to health events that may be of international concern, such as the emergence of COVID-19 and its outbreak in 2020. Whilst Jamaica has made progress towards strengthening its public health system, this progress was adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The intra-action review for COVID-19 in 2021 as well as the review by the Auditor General identified areas for action and provided recommendations. The COVID-19 IAR was undertaken in 2022 and covered the period March 2020 to December 2021.

In a bid to formalize a plan of action to respond to these findings, the GoJ, through the MOHW, has advanced a process to develop a structured plan to address gaps and challenges, using a Voluntary External Evaluation (VEE) of the IHR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The external mission is now scheduled for November 2025 with the support of PAHO and will eventually yield a costed National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS).

The process leading up to the VEE External Mission served to highlight some key strengths. Jamaica has an established legislative structure for public health within which the sector plan for health and the ten-year strategic plan presents the policy framework to strengthen the health care system. The Disaster Risk Management Act and the National Hazard Risk Reduction Policy provide the legislative backbone for emergency planning and response. IHR provisions are implemented through Jamaica's national legal and policy framework which governs all matters relating to public health and the response and management of health emergencies which require a national response. The legislative framework is supported by policies approved by relevant Ministries such as the Ministry with responsibility for Health and the Ministry of Local Government which has responsibility for disaster preparedness, and their respective departments and agencies. These are supported by a range of emergency operational plans, policies, protocols and manuals are in place to respond to various diseases.

The Quarantine Act, 1951 and Public Health Act 1985 being the principal legal framework. Primarily, these two legal frameworks govern the response to the spread of disease: The Quarantine Act provides a national and international response to disease prevention and control; and the Public Health Act provides a local level and parish response. Several sectors and/or departments participate in the system of emergency response.

The EDM Programme is administered by the Emergency, Disaster Management & Special Services (EDMSS) Branch within the Technical Services Division. This Branch has an annual budgetary allocation to perform activities approved within the annual operational plan. The Operational Plan includes a programme of in-service training for Emergency and Disaster Management related activities, such as:

- HEOC Coordination
- Incident Command System
- Mass Casualty Management
- Emergency Medical Services
- Climate Change and Health

Overall strengths include strong legal frameworks, well-functioning multi-sectoral coordination, continuous training, and adaptive response capacities demonstrated during events such as COVID-19 and Hurricane Beryl. Emergency logistics and supply chain management are managed centrally by the National Health Fund, which has effectively navigated global procurement challenges. Key areas for improvement include formalising the Emergency and Disaster Management Programme at the local level, expanding full Incident Command System (ICS) implementation to subnational levels, formalizing Emergency Medical Team (EMT) registration and surge capacity, enhancing real-time data and reporting systems, and securing dedicated contingency funding for emergencies. Addressing these gaps will strengthen Jamaica's health emergency resilience and ensure effective preparedness, response, and recovery for future public health threats. Some recommendations to enhance existing systems:

- Finalizing the national EMT registration and fully operationalizing surge deployment mechanisms, initially with a focus for local events that allow for sustainable surge capacity including for protracted events
- Expanding ICS and emergency preparedness training to all healthcare facilities
- Strengthening supply chain readiness, including pre-positioning of supplies and continuity of annual reporting
- Institutionalizing funding and coordination mechanisms for rapid resource mobilization during crises
- Ensuring harmonization and digitization of emergency plans across sectors and regions
- Jamaica's sustained investment in health emergency management positions it as a regional leader in emergency preparedness and response. Continued focus on subnational implementation, surge capacity, and system resilience will be essential to maintaining and advancing these capabilities in the face of evolving threats.

APPENDIX 2 - POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR (SDG 4) - QUALITY EDUCATION

The policy recommendations for SDG-4 have been extracted from the 2021 Report of the Jamaica Education Transformation Commission, entitled The Reform of Education in Jamaica, 2021. This report is relatively recent, comprehensively considers the most critical issues affecting education in the country, was well-researched and benefited from widespread stakeholder consultation. The recommendations have been accepted by the GOJ, which has established the Education Transformation Oversight Committee (ETOC) to oversee progress on implementation of the recommendations. Extracted below are the recommendations that are most relevant to the binding constraints identified in the midterm evaluation of SDG performance report. That the authors of the JETC Report emphasized the danger of treating the recommendations as silos and thus neglecting the principle of organizational coherence. The recommendations highlighted below should thus be considered in the context of the entire system of reforms that has been recommended.

APPENDIX 2

Binding Constraints	Pol Chan	Extant Policies/Plans or Recently made Recommendations	Gaps Identified	Ind. Time.	Resp Ent'y
Inconsistent quality of early childhood education received	HC YTH	Conduct a thorough review of the Early Childhood Commission in order to: - Identify and improve the human resources it needs to operate more efficiently - Improve staff remuneration to prevent rapid turnover, a major source of inefficiency - Increase data utilisation to inform its own practice, and to inform the public - Conduct research to evaluate the impact of ECI Standards, and the performance of the different kinds of ECIs.	None, the recommendations made in the JETC Report are well researched and conceptualized. The Report, however, acknowledged that there is a serious implementation deficit in Jamaica. This must be addressed if tangible results are to be realized. The work of the ETOC is thus critical.	ST	MOEY ETOC
	INST YTH	Undertake a review of laws guiding the EC sector, especially in regard to frequency of inspections of ECIs and required teacher qualifications			
	ACC YTH	Rationalise the provision of centre-based ECD services - Conduct geographic analysis to determine optimum number and location of ECIs relevant to population needs - Accelerate the programme of creating infant departments within primary schools - Identify ECIs within areas of poverty and prioritise these ECIs to meet ECI Standards - Increase service for children 0-2 years, by establishing more Brain Builder Centres			
	HC YTH	Increase the quality of teaching and learning through provision of trained teachers and resources to ECIs. - Rationalise training and qualification for the early childhood sector - Provide at least one trained teacher for each ECI with urgency - Improve quality of pre-service and in-service training at all training levels. - Improve teaching and learning resources available at ECIs.			
	ACC YTH	Improve the services available to children with disabilities and their families. Conduct research to accurately identify the prevalence and types of developmental disabilities at the EC level.			
	ACC YTH	Develop a co-ordinated strategy to engage and support parents of young children: Child development and stimulation programme offered at ECIs should be associated with certification that allow training for parents in basic literacy and			

TABLE 18 Recommendations for Education Acceleration. See key.

POLICY CHANNELS (POL CHAN)	
Improvements to human capacity	HC
Improved access to resources and/or opportunities	ACC
Improved or better maintained infrastructure	INFR
Strengthening of the institutional framework in key areas	INST
Efforts to enhance sustainability of household practices	HP
Efforts to enhance sustainability of business practices	BP
Efforts to address the specific issues affecting the youth	YTH
INDICATIVE TIMEFRAME (IND. TIME.)	
Short-term	ST
Medium-term	MT

Binding Constraints	Pol Chan	Extant Policies/Plans or Recently made Recommendations	Gaps Identified	Ind. Time.	Resp Ent'y
		b. Increase capacity of teachers to modernise teaching and learning and meet children's current cognitive and learning needs. c. As part of overall review and revision of children's curricula give equal weight to cognitive and non-cognitive skills. Include such concepts as self-awareness, moral and prosocial behaviour, decision making, promotion of mental health, emotional intelligence and emotional regulation, negotiation and conflict resolution skills, refusal and resistance skills, resilience, coping in disasters, and adaptation to changes in norms (for example driven by climate emergencies and pandemics) d. Revise children's curricula to meet current cognitive and learning needs. Curricula should include concepts such as critical thinking, reflective thinking, visioning, creativity and innovative thinking. e. Increase student access to peer and adult mentors at primary and secondary levels.			
Low tertiary enrolment rates	INST ACC YTH	Re-examine the functioning of the Student Loan Bureau, as follows: a. Complete an assessment to quantify and demonstrate the net financial returns from investment in tertiary education, by profession and by tertiary institution. This tool would be applied both to enhance students' acceptance of the student loan product and, importantly, as an underwriting tool to determine the payback potential of specific fields of study. b. Improve the availability of Student Loans by relaxing certain requirements based on need. c. Student loans that cover tuition only do not allow for sufficient resources to cover the full requirement of transport, accommodation and school supplies. Needs based lending for these funding requirements can possibly improve school performance and repayment potential. d. Improve the enforcement of collections. This should include emphasizing credit reporting, both locally and internationally, and the engagement of private financial services to handle origination and data management. e. Establish a 'brokerage' or 'referral' function within SLB in which referrals are made to private institutions that are able to offer credit on comparable or competitive terms. f. Improve the systems necessary to increase the disbursement rate, including by supporting private financial services firms in loan disbursement based on pre-agreed criteria and agreed rates of interest.	As above	ST-MT	SLB MOEY ETOC
Binding Constraints	Pol Chan	Extant Policies/Plans or Recently made Recommendations	Gaps Identified	Ind. Time.	Resp Ent'y
		g. Realise loan assets by mobilising private sector resources to acquire performing loans from the SLB on commercial terms to allow for increased capacity for further loans. A voluntary saving scheme should be established through a public-private partnership wherein parents (up to a prescribed income level) are allowed tax free saving toward their children's tertiary education Development of a framework for micro-credentialing aligned with the National Qualifications Framework Steps should be taken to improve the provision of critical information to prospective students on labour market trends, strategic priority areas, and tertiary options available to them Eliminate sources of inefficiencies such as under-enrolment and duplication of programmes across tertiary institutions Tracer studies should be done by the Higher Education Authority to determine not just the employment status of graduates, but also to ascertain the alignment of employment to achieved qualifications and the levels of underemployment seen			
Poor state of education infrastructure at all levels	INFR YTH	Increase government expenditure on school maintenance and capital projects. Given the age and high use of school buildings and equipment, resources must be updated and maintained, and processes must be streamlined for efficiency. Ensure access to quality broadband for education for all schools to enhance the learning experience and ensure that all students and teachers have access to useful online resources. Invest in green building strategy to conserve energy and water resources, given the exorbitant utility costs borne by schools, specifically those in disadvantaged communities.	As above	ST-MT ST MT	MOEY ETOC

Binding Constraints	Pol Chan	Extant Policies/Plans or Recently made Recommendations	Gaps Identified	Ind. Time.	Resp Ent'y
		Investment in new software and technology infrastructure to be filtered across all levels of the sector, including software to facilitate back-end processes such as payments and human resources.		ST-MT	
		Continued strengthening of school security through construction of fences around school plants. Students and teachers rely on having a safe and secure teaching and learning environment for optimal performance.		ST	
		Improve and expand school transportation programmes. Transportation represents one of the highest household-borne costs related to education. The school bus programme piloted in some rural areas was found to increase student attendance and should be studied to be rolled out in other areas.		MT	
		The Ministry should increase investment in other infrastructure for co-curricular activities, for social development including athletic fields, theatre, arts and musical development to cater to the "whole" student.		MT	
		It is proposed that a detailed review of the utilisation of educational assets be undertaken with a view to repurposing or divesting under-utilised assets to fund capital investment. In line with increased prioritisation of capital expenditure, traditional multilateral and donor sources should also be tapped.		ST	

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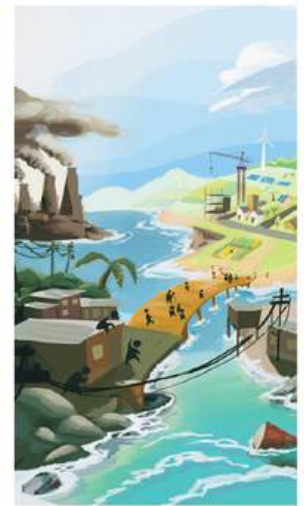
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