

## 5 GENDER EQUALITY



## GOAL 5

## Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

## Context

The Human Development Report 2020, notes that Jamaica's Human Development Index (HDI) for 2019 was 0.734—which put the country in the high human development category—positioning it at 101 out of 189 countries and territories. The HDI for women was 0.730 and 0.735 for men. The Gender Development Index (GDI) is a measure of gender gaps in human development achievements; it accounts for disparities between women and men in health, knowledge and living standards. Jamaica's GDI score increased from 0.975 in 2015 to 0.994 in 2019, as shown in Figure 27. For the Gender Inequality Index (GII), which measures gender-based inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment, and economic activity, Jamaica ranks 88 of 162 countries, with a GII score of 0.396<sup>74</sup>.

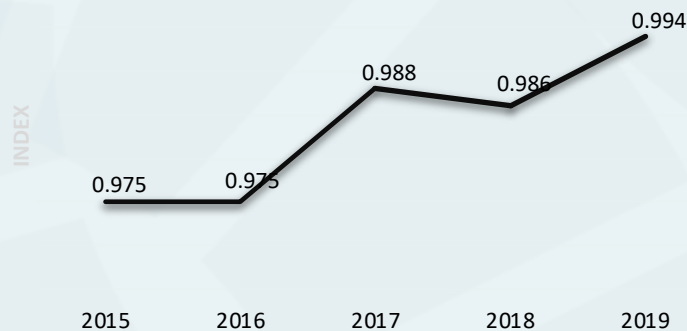


FIGURE 27: GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT INDEX (GDI) 2015–2019 JAMAICA  
Source: United Nations Development Programme

Jamaica has made credible gains in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment. Several of the government's institution-building initiatives and legislative measures have contributed to this. The National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE) seeks to safeguard the principle of equality between women and men. It sets out the framework for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to fully integrating gender in every area of national life. The NPGE emphasizes the importance of gender mainstreaming within Government of Jamaica (GOJ) Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). These initiatives are led by Gender Focal Points who are responsible for mainstreaming gender in all areas of work of the MDAs. The implementation of the NPGE has led to the development and implementation of the country's first National Strategic Action Plan to combat gender-based violence; partnerships and collaboration to collect and analyse sex-disaggregated data; increased advocacy for equity and equality in several legislation and policies; and

74 Human Development Report 2020. The Next Frontier - Human Development and the Anthropocene. United Nations Development Programme. 1 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017. USA <https://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2020.pdf>

the establishment of an accountability mechanism (the Gender Advisory Council). Recognizing that men and boys are critical in achieving Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the government has remained steadfast in its commitment to men and boys and, in keeping with this policy imperative, has been engaging more effectively with men and boys around issues about gender norms, power relations, and gender-based violence.

The review for the period 2018-2022 summarizes key achievements, issues and challenges concerning gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls



FIGURE 28: HIGHLIGHTS GENDER EQUALITY, 2018-2022

## Discussion

### Target 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

The Gender Sector Plan of the Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan 2009 and the National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE) 2011 provide the framework for non-discrimination and the protection of the rights of all citizens. Since 2018, the GOJ has worked to implement and strengthen the legal and regulatory framework to address discrimination against women and girls. A raft of legislation including the Sexual Offences Act, 2009, the Offences against the Person Act, 1865 (amended 2014), the Domestic Violence Act, 1996 and the Child Care and Protection Act, 2004 are being reviewed in line with the NPGE to ensure equality, non-discrimination under the law and access to justice. Of note was the approval and passage of the Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act of 2021, which should ensure the protection and redress against all forms of unwanted sexual advances. The past five years have seen progress in advancing gender equality, women and girls' empowerment and ending discrimination. These are recognized in the areas such as education and social security.

Over the years, education has focused on access and parity—closing the enrolment gap between girls and boys. There is greater attention on critically assessing retention, achievement and the quality and relevance of education, which leads to improved enrolment and retention and ensures that boys and girls can fully realize the benefits of education.

Although a purposeful effort was made to ensure equitable access for all students, after three months of virtual learning, approximately 7.0 per cent remained unreached.<sup>75</sup> Among this population are teenage mothers, who account for 16.0<sup>76</sup> percent of all births in Jamaica and come from predominantly low socioeconomic, rural, and inner-city communities. The Women's Centre of Jamaica Foundation provides educational services for school-aged girls during and after pregnancy and also supports these young mothers by providing day-care services. This support increased during the COVID-19 pandemic to include remote education, welfare, and psychological support.

Significant strides have been made in ensuring that social security initiatives are inclusive and that gender nuance is considered during implementation. However, challenges persist; these include:

- Gender inequality is often only seen as synonymous with targeting women as a vulnerable group or in their role as mothers or caregivers, without addressing other socio-economic issues such as income security;
- Programmes do not fully integrate criteria related to location, ethnicity, disability, and social biases, which compound gender differences and reinforce disparities.

Jamaica used a gender-transformative approach for national programmes and policy imperatives including the National Policy for Gender Equality and the Jamaica Social Protection Strategy. The GOJ provided economic empowerment and income security support for women, especially those in lower socio-economic sectors, including:

- increased support, which was provided to victims of gender-based violence through the opening of an additional shelter to temporarily house victims and their children;
- care packages were provided to household workers, victims and survivors of gender-based violence and other vulnerable clients, to maintain food security within these households;
- the GOJ provided an additional cash grant payment to beneficiaries of the PATH programme. This in effect increased by 50.0 per cent the aggregate amount that beneficiaries, including pregnant and lactating mothers, would have ordinarily received during the period.

The GOJ continued to pursue measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The government also embarked on initiatives to empower and address the needs of persons with disabilities including women and girls. These included the passage of the regulations for Disabilities Act 2014 in October 2021; public education and awareness-raising on the Act; completion of three Codes of Practice (Education and Training, Healthcare and Employment) to support the implementation of the Act (another on Public Transportation was initiated in 2021). In 2020, there were 1 495 new registrants added to the Jamaica Council for Persons with Disabilities (JCPD) Registry, almost triple the number of new registrants in 2019, 564 persons. This is indicative of the concerted efforts made by the GOJ to have persons with disabilities linked to services. The supportive legal and regulatory framework will influence the lives and social and economic prospects of women with

75 Support for school-aged moms in Jamaica during COVID-19. Dasmine Kennedy. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/06/18/support-for-school-aged-moms-in-jamaica-during-covid-19>. June 2020.

76 Baby boom shock Near 60,000 births in last decade among girls under 20.

[https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/front-page/baby-boom-shock-near-60-000-births-in-last-decade-among-girls-under-20\\_239204](https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/front-page/baby-boom-shock-near-60-000-births-in-last-decade-among-girls-under-20_239204). December 19, 2021.

disabilities, but these will have to be supported by other programmes, initiatives, political will and a continued enabling environment. Greater efforts will have to be made to have women and girls with disabilities access goods and services, especially for those living in rural Jamaica.

In relation to discrimination and HIV status, Figueroa et al. (2020)<sup>77</sup> show that heterosexual men, with a high-risk profile due to having multiple sex partners or having Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), accounted for 43.0 per cent of newly diagnosed HIV infections. Women who had no obvious risk but who acquired HIV because of the risk behaviour of their male sexual partners accounted for 32.0 per cent of all diagnosed HIV cases. This percentage is higher than that among women of high risk, who have multiple sex partners or have acquired STIs, which was reported to be 13.0 per cent of new HIV infections. Table 15 indicates the HIV prevalence in key populations in Jamaica.

Table 15 HIV PREVALENCE IN KEY POPULATIONS IN JAMAICA (1990,2000,2010,2017)

Subgroup	1990	2000	2010	2017
Men how have sex with Men (MSM)	9.6%	32.3%	31.4%	29.6%
Transgender women			52.9%	51.0%
Female sex workers	12.0%	9.0%	5.0%	1.0%
Inmates		3.3%	2.5%	6.9%
Homeless			8.8%	13.8%
STI clinic attendees	2.5%	7.1%	Male 4.6% Female 2.0%	Male 7.3% Female 2.0%
Antenatal clinic attendees	1.0%	2.0%	1.0%	0.9%

Source: Draft 2020-2025 National HIV Strategic Plan

### Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking, sexual, and other types of exploitation

As is the case globally, reported cases of violence against women and girls in Jamaica can be driven by an intersection of cultural, economic, social and political factors. The Women's Health Survey 2016 (a comprehensive examination of the nature and prevalence of violence against women and girls in Jamaica) indicates that 1 in every 4 females in Jamaica has experienced physical or sexual violence by a male partner during their lifetime.<sup>78</sup> Women are at risk for both physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner, with young women under 30 years old, women who are poorly educated, those who are economically vulnerable and those who cohabited as minors, shown to be more consistently at risk of abuse.

77 Figueroa JP, Duncan JP, Bailey A, Skyers N. The HIV epidemic in Jamaica: a need to strengthen the National HIV Program. *Rev Panam Salud Publica*. 2020; 44: e157. <https://doi.org/10.26633/RPSP.2020.157>

78 Women's Health Survey 2016. <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Women-health-survey-2016-Jamaica-Final-Report.pdf>.

### Partnerships to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls

Public-private partnerships have been strengthened to combat the issue of gender-based violence. Since 2019, the government has provided financial and technical support to several non-government and community-based organizations. The Community Outreach through Partnership for Empowerment (COPE) Initiative aims to raise awareness and promote good practices in response to the rising levels of GBV. It also promotes meaningful engagement with men and boys through a series of interventions to achieve behaviour change.

The Spotlight Initiative (SI) supported the implementation of the NSAP-GBV. The SI is a global, multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030. Benefits of the partnership included the operationalization of the national shelters and a 24/7 hotline for victims of GBV. This collaboration aims to advance women's empowerment, by ensuring that women and girls experiencing family violence have access to quality essential services. The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the need for access to these services.

#### BOX 4: PARTNERSHIPS TO ELIMINATE ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

To combat the issue of gender-based violence, the Jamaican government approved and has subsequently implemented the National Strategic Action Plan to Eliminate Gender-based Violence (NSAP-GBV) 2017-2027. The NSAP-GBV has five strategic areas: prevention, protection, intervention, legal procedures and protocols for data collection. This plan presents an integrated, systematic, coordinated multi-sectoral approach to address gender-based violence in Jamaica. In keeping with the five strategic priority areas of the NSAP-GBV, the government has since 2018 established shelters to provide protection and temporary living arrangements for female victims of domestic violence. The shelters provide counselling, psychosocial support and skills training opportunities to survivors and their children. A National Shelter Strategy has also been developed to serve as a critical framework to guide the design and implementation of shelters across Jamaica. To further support transition living arrangements for victims of abuse, technical assistance was provided to the only non-government agency that operates a shelter, for the renovation of the transition house for female victims and survivors of Gender-based Violence (GBV).

Structured public education and behaviour change initiatives were also implemented to address and eliminate the conditions that support violence against women and girls. The public education campaigns encourage community members to take collective responsibility to eliminate GBV by disseminating messages in communities across the country. Outputs of the programme included awareness-raising campaigns on GBV in schools and other public institutions. The government recognizes that men play an important role, largely as perpetrators as a result, initiatives for men were implemented within the context of understanding Jamaican masculinities and recognizing that there are particular challenges that males face, including violence and mental health issues.

To address the issue of trafficking in persons, the government has strengthened the framework for addressing human trafficking, with a specific focus on meeting international standards for the protection of citizens and penalizing offenders. Additionally, the Office of the National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking was established, the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) National Plan of Action was updated and the Trafficking in Persons Manual and Trafficking in Persons Standard Operating Procedures for health workers were developed.

### **Target 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation**

Practices such as early, child and forced marriage is harmful to the development of girls and are often linked to poverty and low labour force participation. The Jamaica Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey conducted in 2011 (this survey is the most recent conducted in Jamaica)<sup>79</sup>, showed that in 2011, 7.9 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 years were married or in a union before the age of 18 years and 1.4 per cent before the age of 15. The Women's Health Survey 2016 also noted that young girls who entered into relationships with much older men are more likely to be exposed to violence. However, there are numerous agencies, legislation and child-friendly policies that are in place to protect the rights of the child as well as to strengthen the family; of note are:

- The Child Protection and Family Services Agency (CPFSA), promotes child-friendly policies and ground-breaking programmes to strengthen families.
- The Office of the Children's Advocate, a Commission of Parliament mandated to enforce and protect the rights and best interests of children.
- The National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence, which was launched by the Ministry of Education and Youth in 2019. The plan signals Jamaica's commitment to the Global Partnership to end violence against children and will be implemented over five years. Its goal is to create and maintain a protective environment supportive of, and responsive to the issues of violence, child abuse and maltreatment of children in Jamaica. Central to the plan is the collaboration that is required amongst several MDAs, civil society groups and other stakeholders during implementation.

### **Target 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.**

A time-use survey was undertaken in the 2018 Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC), to determine the amount of time men and women spend doing various activities, such as paid work, childcare, volunteering, and socializing. The survey revealed that Jamaican women carry a greater burden of unpaid domestic and care work in the home. Women spend an estimated 294 minutes – or about five hours – carrying out these tasks daily, compared to men's 172 minutes, or just under three hours<sup>80</sup>. The survey results indicate the importance of placing care at the core of the social, economic and political agendas at the national level, to create awareness, consensus and alliances around its relevance.

In keeping with the International Labour Organization's (ILO's) Decent Work Agenda, social justice and equal opportunities remain priorities for the GOJ. Progress to date includes the adoption of several international labour standards to address inequalities and women's right to work, especially for domestic workers. Jamaica has since ratified the ILO Convention 189 (C 189) on Decent Work for Domestic Workers. Convention 189 has since indicated the significant contribution of domestic workers to the national economy and has allowed for advocacy for increased job opportunities for workers with family responsibilities, and greater scope for caring for ageing populations, children and persons with disabilities.

The impact of COVID-19 has further exacerbated the vulnerabilities of domestic workers, with job losses that were

79 Another round of the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) is to be undertaken in 2022.

80 Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2018

higher for domestic workers in informal employment. Notwithstanding this, the Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act 2021 speaks to the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace, including within a domestic setting. Sensitization and public awareness sessions have been ongoing to address ratifying Convention 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

The Employment (Flexibility Work Arrangements) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act was passed by the GOJ in 2014; this provides a framework for employers to establish flexible work hours to facilitate the needs of families and workers. The flexi-work arrangement also provides an avenue for increased employment opportunities and enhances productivity. Consequently, due to the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic in 2020, the government and the private sector have implemented some flexible work arrangements to accommodate employees.

The government actively worked to implement programmes and initiatives aimed at addressing issues affecting women. Over the period 2018 to 2021, priority was given to the implementation of the national social protection system expressed in the Jamaica Social Protection Strategy 2014. The gender perspective is integrated into all areas and levels of the social protection system, underpinned by the life-cycle concerns of all citizens. A key guiding principle of the social protection system is gender equity, which shows the recognition and commitment of the GOJ to vulnerable groups as per the National Policy for Gender Equality 2011. The Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) continues to be the major cash transfer programme to support the vulnerable in mitigating the effects of poverty. The beneficiaries include children (health and education), the elderly, persons with disabilities, the adult poor, and pregnant and lactating mothers. The majority of the household heads on the PATH programme are women.

#### **Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.**

The Medium-Term Socio-Economic Policy Framework 2018-2021 included strategies to ensure women's equal participation at all levels. The strategies are:

- Mainstream gender indicators in all sectors
- Develop a gender database as well as gender protocols
- Strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming through structured programmes, committees and councils, such as the Gender Advisory Council (GAC)<sup>81</sup>.

The plan highlights the key factors that underpin these strategies: strong and accountable institutions, political commitment to effective management of the State; transparency in government; a justice system that is accessible and fair; equity and tolerance; and respect for human rights and freedoms. The GOJ, in its commitment to public sector reform, good governance and gender equity, also developed policy guidelines for the nomination, selection and appointment of board members of public bodies in Jamaica through the Public Bodies Management and Accountability (Nomination, Selection and Appointment to Boards) Regulations 2021. The purpose of these policy guidelines is to articulate a comprehensive and transparent process, based on best practices and approaches for the appointment of board members. The guidelines also refer to the support mechanisms needed to give greater accountability to board members. Adherence to and reporting on this process is expected to lead to greater confidence in corporate governance for public bodies. The policy guidelines also highlight diversity as a selection requirement. Consideration of gender in



the appointment process is enshrined in the National Policy for Gender Equality (2011), which states that public sector boards must have a minimum of 30.0 per cent females as members. It further states that ministers should strive towards having no less than 30.0 per cent of either male or female representation on each Board<sup>82</sup>. Currently, there are many women at the highest levels of economic decision-making bodies in Jamaica. As of December 2021, women comprise 60.0 per cent of the heads of government ministries, departments and agencies.

The full and active participation of women in legislatures, equal to men, is not just a goal in itself, but central to building and sustaining democracies. The equal presence of women, their leadership and perspective in parliaments are essential to ensure greater responsiveness to citizens' needs. There are more women legislators in Jamaica's Parliament than ever before; notwithstanding this, women continue to be underrepresented in the areas of politics and public decision-making. The reasons for this are multifaceted and complex and include entrenched gender roles. Since the 2020 general election, however, women currently make up 29.0 per cent of the 63-member House of Representatives, this is up from 19.0 per cent in the House of Representatives in 2016. This is the largest percentage of females in the House of Representatives in the country's history.

**Target 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences**

The GOJ remains committed to ensuring universal and equitable access to sexual and reproductive health for all members of the society. There has been a no-user fees policy for all public medical facilities since 2008. Services include all antenatal and post-natal services for all pregnant and lactating mothers.

In keeping with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Beijing Platform for Action, the GOJ has ensured that all women have access to primary care services where they can receive sexual and reproductive health services as well as family planning, and HIV and STIs related services. There was an integration of sexual health services and HIV-related services, which is delivered through the National Family Planning Board (NFPB). This programme was integrated across all primary care (clinics) centres. Women and girls are able to receive information and services along with HIV-related information, testing, counselling, treatment and follow-up care.

To improve access to family planning and other reproductive health services in Jamaica, the government through the National Family Planning Board (NFPB) provides family planning information as well as family planning visits. Data revealed that 104 231 family planning visits were made to public health facilities in 2020 compared with 191 532 in the previous year, a decrease of 45.6 per cent<sup>83</sup>. Of the number of visitors for family planning services, 96.1 per cent was female. Between 2019 and 2020, female visits decreased by 49.9 per cent and male visits declined by 74.5 per cent. This decline in visits, between the two periods, for both males and females may be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the subsequent confinement measures implemented by the government. Notwithstanding this, the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) were strengthened to provide services and supplies to persons at the community level due to the pandemic<sup>84</sup>.

82 National Policy for Gender Equality 2011

83 Population and Health- Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2020. Planning Institute of Jamaica.

84 Population and Health- Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2020. Planning Institute of Jamaica.



TABLE 16: UTILIZATION AND COVERAGE OF PUBLIC SECTOR FAMILY PLANNING SERVICES, 2018–2020

Indicators	2018	2019 <sup>a</sup>	2020 <sup>p</sup>
Estimated population for family planning <sup>a</sup>	575 816	522 943	-
Attendance at family planning clinics	202 983	191 532	104 231
Number of family planning users (per annum)	56 292	55 056	30 573
Number of new acceptors	39 759	42 754	18 079
Number of new acceptors as a % of total users	70.6	77.7	59.1
New acceptors < 20 yrs. of age as a % of new acceptors	13.8	12.4	11.2
New acceptors as a percentage of the target population	6.9	8.2	-
Male attendance as a % of total attendance	5.3	5.0	3.9
<p>a – Target population = 69.0 per cent of the women in the reproductive age group 15 to 49 years (2006–2008), 72.5 per cent from 2009 to 2014, 76.0 per cent from 2014 through to 2019</p> <p>p – Provisional</p> <p>Source: National Family Planning Board (NFPB)</p>			

The Jamaica VNR Report 2018 noted the lack of up-to-date data about the country's reproductive health status. Work has since advanced for the implementation of the Reproductive Health Survey (RHS) in 2022. The RHS will be spearheaded by the NFPB, in partnership with the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN). The RHS will capture accurate and sound evidence-based sexual and reproductive health data on the status of total fertility; contraceptive use; maternal and childcare; infant and child mortality; HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections; and gender-based violence within the country.

The Programme for the Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality (PROMAC) is a national initiative implemented to provide critical care and neonatal services for mother and child. This effort seeks to build the capacity of health professionals in the areas of nutrition, critical care nursing and neonatology, as well as improve infrastructure and equipment to care for all critically ill mothers and babies. The programme is strategically designed to reduce maternal and child mortality.

#### **Target 5.A Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws**

The GOJ through the NDP and related sector plans as well as the outcomes of studies on labour market reform, seeks to address gender differentials in the labour market with particular provisions to improve the status of female workers in the labour force. Among the actions emanating from these processes were:

- A Gender-Disaggregated Study for Financial Inclusion designed as a component of the updated Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) and Entrepreneurship Policy 2018.

The policy allows for equality and equity of opportunities between women and men-owned businesses. The policy supports: facilitating training, by allocating 50.0 percent of the training budget to women entrepreneurs; developing business incubators to facilitate ICT innovation and the use of indigenous materials with at least 30.0 per cent of the women-owned business; and collaborating with the Women Business Owners (WBOs) Jamaica Limited in the development of business-related policies/strategies for women.

- Undertaking a feasibility study for the introduction of unemployment insurance for workers, as it is recognized that this will assist in building resilience and allowing for labour market stability and mobility for women and men.
- The implementation of the Women's Entrepreneurship Support (WES) Project which was launched in 2017. In 2021, under phase two of the project, 10 women in medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs) each received grants to assist with the sustainability and expansion of their businesses. The WES Project was developed to promote women's involvement in entrepreneurship in the micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) sector. Beneficiaries also received training in business and skills development, capacity building and institutional strengthening.

Promoting women's entrepreneurship is an important part of Jamaica's development agenda. The premise is that an increase in women's entrepreneurship and economic participation widens the platform for women to become innovators, job creators, and problem solvers, and the associated positive impact this ought to have on economic growth and poverty reduction.

Women's participation in the labour force is indicative of socio-cultural shifts in the perception of working women. The increase in the number of females that are pursuing higher education—which provides opportunities for better-paying jobs—has created a demand for greater participation in the labour market for both women and men.

TABLE 17: KEY INDICATORS, JAMAICAN LABOUR MARKET- 2018-2020

Key Indicators	2018		2019		2020	
	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
Employed in the labour force	547 000	672 200	567 100	684 400	514 900	643 300
Unemployed in the labour force	69 400	46 300	53 200	43 300	78 200	61 300
Unemployment rate	11.3	6.4	8.6	6.0	13.2	8.7
Labour force participation rate	57.9	70.4	58.5	71.0	56.7	69.5

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica Labour Force Survey

Over the years, female unemployment has consistently been higher than that of males. Although females generally have higher levels of educational attainment compared with males, females accounted for 59.9 and 55.1 per cent<sup>85</sup> of the unemployed labour force in 2018 and 2019. The characteristics of the Jamaican economy lend themselves to this disparity, with lower educational requirements needed for men to be absorbed into large industries such as Construction, Agriculture, and Wholesale & Retail, and Repair of Motor vehicles & Equipment. This is partly evidenced by the number of employed males without training (74.1 per cent) compared with females in 2020<sup>86</sup>. Notwithstanding, women's employment increased between 2018 and 2019.

The COVID-19 pandemic eroded some of the previous gains in female labour force participation and employment. The Labour Force Survey 2020 indicated an average decline of 5.3 per cent and 5.1 per cent for female and male employment respectively. While the pandemic affected employment generally, it had a considerable impact on the youth population, with female youth being affected the most. Female youth employment registered the highest percentage decline, at 9.8 per cent followed by an 8.4 per cent decline in male youth employment<sup>87</sup>. The decline of female employment has led to a fall-off in female economic activity. Coupled with the pandemic, female unemployment was driven by a range of reasons, for example, women may opt against, or be prevented from pursuing formal employment opportunities due to taking care of children or family members and engaging in other productive activities that are outside of the formal labour market.

There is a gender division of labour in Jamaica, with women overrepresented in the services sector; as of January 2020, there were 379 900 females and 274 600 males in the services sector<sup>88</sup>. These jobs are perceived to be more at risk in times of financial and environmental crises, as was experienced during the COVID 19 pandemic, especially within the hotels and restaurants industry. Men are overrepresented in agriculture and fishery (75.0 per cent), manufacturing (67.0 per cent) and construction (97.0 per cent) industries, indicating a gender gap.

### **Target 5.B Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women**

Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan, National Strategy 6-6: Sector Strategy, emphasizes the transformation of the prevailing gender ideologies regarding science, engineering and technology, by enhancing the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women. In alignment with this strategy, the Draft Science, Technology and Innovation Policy has included Gender and Equity as one of its policy development areas.

### **Target 5.C Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels**

Several key policy documents were implemented and legislation drafted to ensure equitable access to services for the vulnerable, as well as the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Gender considerations are explicit throughout these instruments and further advance the commitment to equal rights for males and females at all levels of society. These frameworks include but are not limited to:

85 Statistical Institute of Jamaica October Labour Force Survey 2018, 2019

86 Labour Market Chapter – Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2020. Planning Institute of Jamaica.

87 Labour Market Chapter – Economic and Social Survey Jamaica 2020. Planning Institute of Jamaica.

88 Employed Labour Force by Industry Group STATIN <https://statinja.gov.jm/LabourForce/NewLFS.aspx>

- The Disabilities Act 2014 and Regulations 2021
- Revised Population and Sustainable Development Policy (ongoing)
- National Policy on Poverty and National Poverty Reduction Programme 2018
- National Housing Policy 2019
- Revised National Policy for Senior Citizens (White Paper 2021)

In 2019, a Joint Select Committee of Parliament was established to review and strengthen the provisions of specific pieces of legislation intended to protect women, children and others vulnerable from violence and abuse. These legislative instruments are the Sexual Offences Act, 2009, the Offences against the Person Act, 1865 (amended 2014), the Domestic Violence Act, 1996 and the Child Care and Protection Act, 2004. Particular emphasis was placed on the offences and punishment under these legislative instruments including the assault of women, children and the elderly; sexual offences against women, children and older persons; and other violent crimes against women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Recommendations were made for these pieces of legislation to be amended to facilitate better administration of justice and effective protection of these special groups.

In October, the Parliament passed The Sexual Harassment (Protection and Prevention) Act, 2021. It contains provisions for dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace, schools, correctional institutions, and places of safety, nursing homes, medical and psychiatric facilities, among other places. The passage of this Act represents the government's commitment to protecting its citizens and marks a significant milestone in protecting victims of sexual harassment and sexual assault.

The GOJ facilitated several sensitization sessions with public and private entities on the issue of sexual harassment. Emphasis has been on emotional intelligence, labour laws, grievance handling, good industrial relations practices and preventing workplace bullying. Partnerships have been forged with academia to offer structured training programmes and research studies on sexual harassment. These interventions have contributed to an appreciation among public sector workers of the importance of promoting an environment free of sexual harassment in which all categories of workers are treated with respect and dignity.

Other relevant legislation to support greater transparency and efficiency in the hearing of cases and thereby reducing case backlog were passed, and capacity was strengthened for the drafting and promulgation of legislation including capacity building of relevant court personnel. The state and particularly local-level capacity for Alternative Dispute Resolution was strengthened by the establishment of some Justice Centres, and key policy and programmatic interventions were implemented to support victims in their interactions with the justice system.

## The COVID-19 Perspective

The pandemic significantly affected the livelihoods of more than 50.0 percent of households in Jamaica, including those where the mother's income was the only consistent financial resource available to the family (World Bank 2021)<sup>89</sup>. The most vulnerable individuals and families were affected the most as the pandemic exacerbated issues of low and uncertain

89 World Bank (2021) Caribbean Women Fight Through the Challenge of COVID 19 [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news\\_ext\\_content/ifc\\_external\\_corporate\\_site/news+and+events/news/caribbean-women-fight-through-covid-19](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/caribbean-women-fight-through-covid-19).

incomes, with the added risk of contracting the virus and falling ill. The closure of schools brought additional financial and other stresses to parents, especially women. Many children were not able to attend online schooling after school closures for varying reasons and more women and men lost jobs.

The introduction of COVID-19 containment measures which limited movement outside of the home, often within small, inadequate living quarters as well as the inability to resolve the immediate challenge of providing for the family led to an increase in reports of gender-based violence.<sup>90</sup>

In light of the negative impact of COVID-19 on the Jamaican society, the GOJ has implemented measures to ensure provision of basic services and resources and address issues facing the most vulnerable. Barriers exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic on security, education, livelihood and health remain in sharp focus.

## Lessons Learnt and Best Practice

International commitments, namely the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Belém do Pará Convention) have influenced how the Government of Jamaica promotes gender equality and ensure that women's autonomy and rights are protected. These key instruments provide the lens that the government uses to identify and address issues of inequality between men and women and to ensure that all women and girls are guaranteed the effective enjoyment of human rights without discrimination.

The GOJ has made significant strides toward eliminating violence against women by using a structured, coordinated and systematic approach that is guided by the relevant policy frameworks. The approach is also victim-centred and recognizes the importance of including males in the implementation strategies. Many steps have now been taken to raise awareness and create a more gender-responsive security and justice system.

Jamaica has had some success in mainstreaming gender in MDAs through an established network of Gender Focal Points. Focal points are identified and trained to spearhead the development and implementation of approved gender action plans within their respective MDAs and ensure that gender is integrated into all national policies, plans, programmes and operations using a gender equality framework. To date, more than 100 focal points have been trained, and have been implementing gender-sensitive programmes within their respective areas of work.

Jamaica has a robust legislative framework; since 2018, work has been ongoing to ensure that the laws to protect the rights of women and girls are relevant and contextual. Women's social, political and economic empowerment has been supported through many initiatives and programmes aimed to increase participation, agency and voice for women and girls in all situations.

Gender gaps persist in the areas of employment and income-earning levels. There is continued sexual division of labour related to women's participation in the labour market, particularly in new technology-driven areas of science, engineering, and entrepreneurship. Occupational choices for women relative to men are influenced by women's paid and unpaid care responsibilities, which were significantly increased under pandemic restrictions.

90 CAPRI (Jamaica) (2020) *Locked Down, Locked Out: Vulnerable Communities in the Pandemic*. Kingston, Jamaica.

Notwithstanding these gaps, the government through its national machinery and other implementation mechanisms has sought to ensure a more inclusive approach to combating gender-based violence, advancing gender equality, and promoting a gender-sensitive approach to achieving balanced economic growth and sustainable development. The Bureau of Gender Affairs and the Gender Advisory Council are critical mechanisms charged with the development and implementation of policies and programmes that support women's empowerment. There has been a significant shift in focus on situating initiatives within the broader gender and development paradigm, and policies and programming continue to remain guided by the Jamaica National Policy for Gender Equality (NPGE) 2011 and the Gender Sector Plan of the Vision 2030 Jamaica—National Development Plan.

Additionally, building resilience to the impacts of climate change is one of the key priorities of the government. Given the cross-cutting nature of climate change, there was a need to develop an integrated approach to effectively build resilience at all levels, especially for rural women and women exposed to varying levels of vulnerabilities due to climate change. As such, the Climate Change Division (CCD) through its sectoral climate change adaptation programmes acknowledges the importance of a gender-responsive approach to disaster risk reduction and resilience building. To this end, the GOJ collaborated with several international and regional development partners to ensure more effectiveness and sustainability of programmes by including gender-sensitive strategies in the planning and implementation phases. Climate Change Focal Points have also been established within the MDAs and are responsible for developing and managing their sectoral strategies and actions concerning climate change and for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on these strategies and actions.

## Way Forward

Jamaica ranks highly among the countries making significant progress towards achieving gender parity, sitting 42nd of 153 nations, as outlined in the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report. Notwithstanding, to achieve Goal 5, progress has to be maintained by ensuring that robust policy and legislative frameworks are sustained to facilitate a comprehensive and coordinated approach to fully integrating gender in every area of national life. It is also imperative that the process to review and revise relevant legislation is completed. Further work also needs to be done concerning women in decision-making. There is a need to create an enabling environment for and train more women in political and public leadership. There needs to be continued focus on eliminating gender-based violence. This is to ensure the protection of the human rights of women and girls; the loss of women's lives and the inter-generational impact on the welfare of their children and families; the demonstrable cost borne by the public health service; and loss of productivity related to high levels of male incarceration.

While much progress has been made, there is an ongoing need to continue all the relevant gender mainstreaming actions and structures, particularly to ensure that all new policies and revisions are gender transformative; indicators are identified, agreed on and regularly collected, and that temporary special measures are implemented where necessary. There is a need to examine the root causes of poverty and gender inequality and begin gender awareness-raising at a very early age with equitable focus on the issues based on gender to avoid marginalisation. Additionally, cultural barriers and norms that influence men's behaviours and subsequently the lives of women must be addressed.

Additionally, more work needs to be done to ensure the highest level of political commitment that is required for effectively addressing gender inequalities, particularly at the highest level of society. There is also a need for sufficient human and financial resources to achieve required institutional and social change over short, medium and long terms. Such resources are required for the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of gender equality in Jamaica.

## Resource Requirements

Budget allocation for gender initiatives indicates a government's commitment and understanding of the challenges involved. Currently, the GOJ supports the implementation of the gender mainstreaming across MDAs. Through monthly subventions, the government also provides financial support to non-government organizations that are working to transform gender relations. However, the allocations are not sufficient to adequately support the volume of work.

The National Policy for Gender Equality speaks to the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting within the public sector. Gender-responsive budgeting involves analysing government budgets for their effect on the sexes and the norms and roles associated with them. It also involves transforming national budgets to ensure that gender equality commitments are realized. Gender-responsive budgeting is essential for gender justice and fiscal justice. A gender-responsive budget is one that works for everyone (women and men, girls and boys). Allocation of government resources based on this principle will ensure the equitable distribution of financial resources for the implementation of gender policies, programmes and projects. Notwithstanding this, partnerships must continue to be leveraged with all stakeholders including our international development partners to ensure the continuity of the work in the area of gender and development.

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### **Gender -Responsive Budgeting**

**Essential for gender justice and  
fiscal justice.**

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