

- **Demographic Characteristics**
- **Household Consumption and Poverty**
- **Health**
- **Education**
- **Housing**
- **Social Protection**

Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions 2023



**A Joint Publication of
The Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) and
The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN)**

OVERVIEW »

INTRODUCTION

The Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) continues to be a vital tool in monitoring social well-being and tracking the impact of government interventions on the lived experiences of Jamaican households. In 2023, Jamaica's economy continued to grow, indicating that the economy had transitioned from the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic to a period of expansion.¹ In addition to economic indicators, an examination of well-being is also critical in identifying the shifts that may have been made as a result of that period of recovery after the pandemic.

The JSLC is a joint effort between the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) and the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ). STATIN is responsible for sample design and data collection, and the PIOJ analyses the data and disseminates the findings. The 2023 report represents the 32nd edition in the series of analyses on the findings of the survey.

Using the Report

The 2023 JSLC sample included 4 442 individuals from 1 719 households. The data were collected using Computer Assisted Personal Interviews (CAPI) over the

period July 2023 to March 2024.² The report presents analysis of the data in six chapters—Demographic Characteristics, Household Consumption and Poverty, Health, Education, Housing, and Social Protection. The data are analysed at the household and individual levels and where applicable, disaggregated by region,³ socioeconomic quintile, age group and sex.



1 In 2022, Jamaica recorded the first calendar year in which Real Value Added exceeded pre-COVID-19 levels, signalling that the country had achieved economic recovery from the pandemic. With the implementation of the 2008 System of National Accounts, the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) revised the base year for Gross Domestic Product estimates to 2015, replacing the base year of 2007.

2 Between July and December 2023, an estimated 89.0 per cent of the sample was surveyed.

3 There are three regions: Greater Kingston Metropolitan Area (GKMA), Other Urban Centres (OUC), and Rural Areas. STATIN defines the GKMA as including Kingston, urban St Andrew, Portmore and Spanish Town. OUC consists of major (urban) centres that have social amenities, such as piped water and electricity, and government institutions, such as a post office and police station. Rural Areas are other areas not covered by the GKMA and OUC, which are mostly agricultural areas that do not have government institutions, such as a post office and police station.

Each chapter examines the data for 2023 and compares it with the previous survey period, which in this case is 2021.⁴ Time series data are also included and cover different periods as deemed appropriate and where data are available. Of note, comparisons with previous years do not include 2020 and 2022, as no survey was fielded in those years due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the commencement of the Population and Housing Census in 2022. Therefore, five-year data series extend from 2017–2023 and 10-year data series, 2012–2023. With consideration given to the demands of the Census, the abridged questionnaire that was used in 2021 was also used in 2023, with a few exceptions. Questions that relate to school attendance, school feeding and mode of travel to school were brought back as schools had resumed face-to-face classes.

The report carries Standard Tables located to the rear of the report that correspond with each chapter—A, B, C, E, F and G—and offer data on the current survey findings. Detailed information on the methodology, survey design and other technical features of the survey—for example, estimating poverty and annualising the expenditure data—are included as appendices. Throughout the report, estimates in tables with coefficients of variation that exceed 20.0 per cent are italicised to encourage caution when analysing or reporting those estimates.

Researchers are encouraged to request the datasets for independent studies from the repository at the Derrick Gordon Data Bank located at the University of the West Indies, Mona. The complete series of JSLC data (1988–2023) carry a wealth of information that can guide further studies and inform policies that can positively impact the lives of Jamaicans.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Children (0–14 years) accounted for 22.1 per cent of the population, and the dependent elderly (65+ years), 9.5 per cent, relative to 68.4 per cent for those of working age (15–64 years). This means that there were 46.2 dependents for every 100 persons of working age. Higher rates of dependency were observed in Rural Areas (51.3 dependents per 100 persons of working age) and in female-headed households (52.7 dependents per 100 persons of working age) compared with other regions and male-headed households, respectively.

Changes in some demographic features, such as household size, are best seen when examined over a longer period. The average household size was 2.6 individuals compared with 3.0 individuals in 2017. This was influenced mainly by a decline in the average number of children in the household to 0.5 from 0.8. Consistent with the decline in average household size is an increase in the proportion of one-member households to 35.3 per cent from 29.0 per cent in 2017.

Regarding household consumption expenditure, on average, an individual consumed more in 2023 than in 2021. The mean nominal per capita consumption expenditure for the year was \$545 249.00, an increase of 5.3 per cent (in real dollars) compared with 2021. Increases were observed in all regions, quintiles and in both male- and female-headed households.

Overall, 8.2 per cent of the population was classified as poor, that is, on average they spent below the poverty line,⁵ compared with 16.7 per cent in 2021. By region, 3.0 per cent of the individuals in the GKMA were classified as poor, 9.0 per cent in OUC, and 11.5 per cent in Rural Areas. Positive changes were also observed in inequality, and the depth and severity of poverty. Inequality declined as shown by the Gini coefficient falling to 0.3560 from 0.3991 in 2021. On average, a poor person spent 2.2 per cent below the poverty line compared with 4.4 per cent below the line in 2021, and poverty was less severe as the poverty

4 The 2021 sample included 6 215 individuals from 2 187 households.

5 The poverty line was \$269 668.00 in 2023.

gap index declined to 0.010 from 0.018. The proportion of the population that was within 10.0 per cent above the poverty line, that is, the proportion vulnerable to poverty, increased from 2.3 per cent to 9.5 per cent.

Approximately one in every four individuals (23.6 per cent) reported having at least one non-communicable disease (NCD); 7.3 per cent of the population had two or more chronic diseases. The prevalence of NCDs among the elderly (60+ years) was 62.7 per cent and 31.5 per cent had two or more. Of persons who reported an episode of illness/injury during the four-week reference period immediately preceding the survey, 61.8 per cent sought medical care with approximately two-thirds going exclusively to a private health facility. Regarding assistance with the out-of-pocket spending for health care, only 20.1 per cent of the population had health insurance coverage, with less than 10.0 per cent of those in the poorest quintile having coverage.

With regard to education, gross enrolment for persons 3–16 years remained consistently high, at over 95.0 per cent, compared with 62.8 per cent of those 17–18 years and 17.3 per cent of those 19–24 years. Relative to 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic, enrolment for the school-aged population was similar, except for those 17–18 years where enrolment fell by 3.8 percentage points. In 2023, full attendance during the four-week reference period⁶ was 80.7 per cent, and for those who were not sent to school every day during the school year, the main reasons were illness (49.5 per cent), rain (18.9 per cent) and money problems (14.8 per cent). For the students enrolled at the early childhood to secondary levels, 79.8 per cent had the books recommended⁷ by the school; the comparative figure was 67.2 per cent in 2021 and 84.9 per cent in 2019. For individuals 14 years and older who were out

of school, there were improvements in the percentage that had certification, 47.8 per cent from 45.0 per cent in 2021 and 39.1 per cent in 2019. Generally, the improvements were observed by region, sex and socio-economic status.

The Housing Quality Index (HQI) was 80.5 per cent compared with 75.0 per cent in 2017, indicating an improvement in housing quality. This resulted from improvements in all six component indicators, the largest of which was the proportion of households that were not overcrowded, an increase of 11.5 percentage points to 74.2 per cent. Within the HQI, the proportion of households that used an indoor tap/pipe as their main drinking water source is usually ranked lowest; it was 53.6 per cent in 2023, an increase of 2.3 percentage points relative to 2017. The overall percentage of households that used a safe source for drinking water⁸ was 78.0 per cent, which included 53.6 per cent of households that relied mainly on an indoor tap/pipe, and others that used another safe source for drinking water. There was regional disparity for the proportion of households that used a safe drinking source: 98.4 per cent in the GKMA, 87.9 per cent in OUC, and 59.3 per cent in Rural Areas. Of the households that used piped water, 51.7 per cent reported at least one water lock-off during the 30-day reference period.

The proportion of households with a working computer declined to 45.0 per cent from 52.1 per cent in 2021, while the proportion with access to the internet increased to 86.5 per cent from 75.6 per cent. The proportion of households with neither computer nor internet declined to 13.2 per cent from 21.0 per cent in 2021.

For participation in social protection programmes, 29.8 per cent of the population was registered to the National Health Fund (NHF), 51.3 per cent of

6 The reference period for attendance in 2023 was April 17 to May 12.

7 Recommended text books refer to those approved by the Ministry of Education, Skills, Youth & Information and are specifically prescribed or required, as well as supplemental textbooks and workbooks recommended to complement the required textbooks and for students' enrichment.

8 A safe drinking water source is defined as one that, by the nature of its construction and when properly used, adequately protects against outside contamination, particularly faecal matter, and includes indoor or outdoor tap/pipe, public standpipe, bottled water, and trucked water from the National Water Commission.

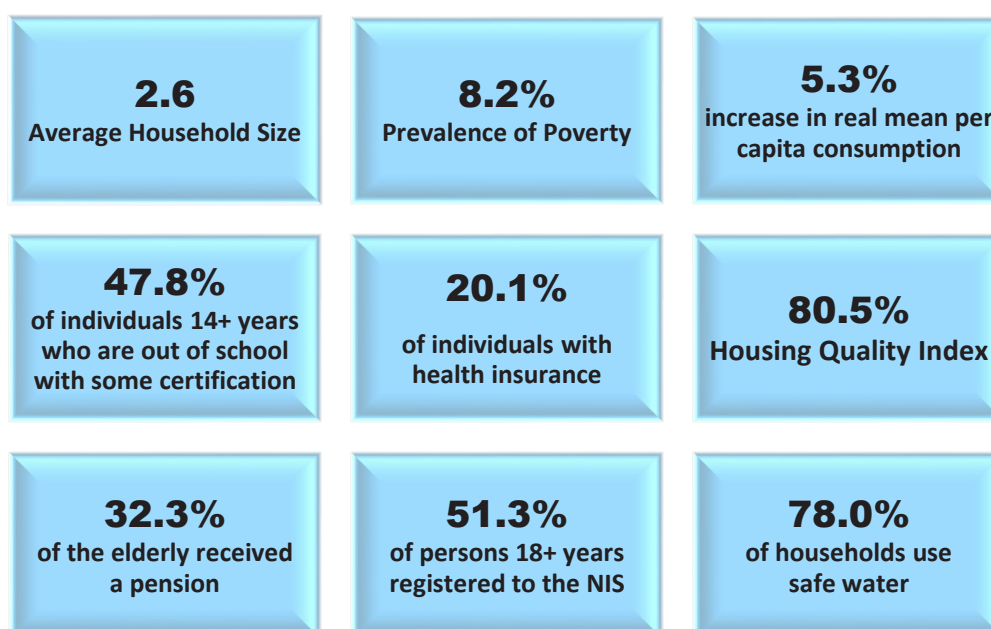
individuals 18+ years were registered to the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) and 13.2 per cent of individuals 60+ years were registered to the Jamaica Drug for the Elderly Programme (JADEP). Some 27.9 per cent of households had at some point applied to the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH), and of those that had applied, 59.2 per cent received a benefit. An estimated 32.3 per cent of the elderly population in the country had received a pension.

Just about one-half of all households (51.1 per cent) reported that they had enough food to eat on a daily basis, and were therefore food secure. This was statistically similar to 2021 (52.3 per cent) but lower than in 2019 (62.0 per cent). There was a reduction in the proportion of households that felt their main source of income was reliable. Approximately one-third (32.3 per cent) of households felt that their main source of livelihoods provided a reliable source of income, while one-half (50.8 per cent) felt it met only their basic needs. In 2021, the comparable figures were 35.7 per cent and 46.6 per cent, respectively, and in 2019, 38.5 per cent and 45.0 per cent, respectively. When asked how their financial situation compared with the previous 12 months, 52.0 per cent of all households said it remained the same, 32.5 per cent said it was worse off and 15.0 per cent said it was better off.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

Demographic Characteristics

The proportion of children (0–14 years) in the population was 22.1 per cent and the dependent elderly (65+ years) was 9.5 per cent. Persons of working age



(15–64 years) accounting for 68.4 per cent of the population, taking the age dependency ratio (ADR) to 46.2 dependents (children plus dependent elderly) for every 100 persons of working age compared with 47.2 dependents in 2021. Rural Areas recorded the highest ADR of 51.3 dependents per 100 persons of working age relative to the urban regions—the GKMA with 40.8 dependents per 100 persons of working age and OUC with 44.8 dependents per 100 persons of working age. Female-headed households had 13.1 more dependents per 100 persons of working age than male-headed households, 52.7 dependents and 39.6 dependents, respectively.

The average size of the Jamaican household has been declining. This was clear when examined over the five data points since 2017. The mean household size was 2.6 down from 3.0 in 2017. This was influenced mainly by a decline in the mean number of children in the household to 0.5 from 0.8, as the average number of adult males and adult females did not change over the period (1.0 adult males and 1.1 adult females, compared with 1.1 and 1.2, respectively, in 2017). In addition, of all households, the proportion with one member has increased to 35.3 per cent from 29.0 per cent in 2017, while the proportion with four or more members declined from 33.6 per cent to 24.4 per cent. The proportion of male-headed households that had one

member was 44.0 per cent, an increase of 5.1 percentage points relative to 2017; while the proportion of female-headed households that had one member was 25.5 per cent, an increase of 8.5 percentage points.

The household composition was examined for presence of a spouse and/ or children. Near one-half of both male- and female-headed households had no spouse or children present (Figure 1). For female-headed households, the next most common feature was the presence of at least one child and no spouse (36.7 per cent); while for male-headed households, it was the presence of a spouse and no children (26.0 per cent). Of all male-headed households, 44.2 per cent had a resident spouse, compared with 12.6 per cent of female-headed households with a resident spouse. A larger proportion of female-headed households, 41.9 per cent, had at least one child present compared with 20.8 per cent of male-headed households.

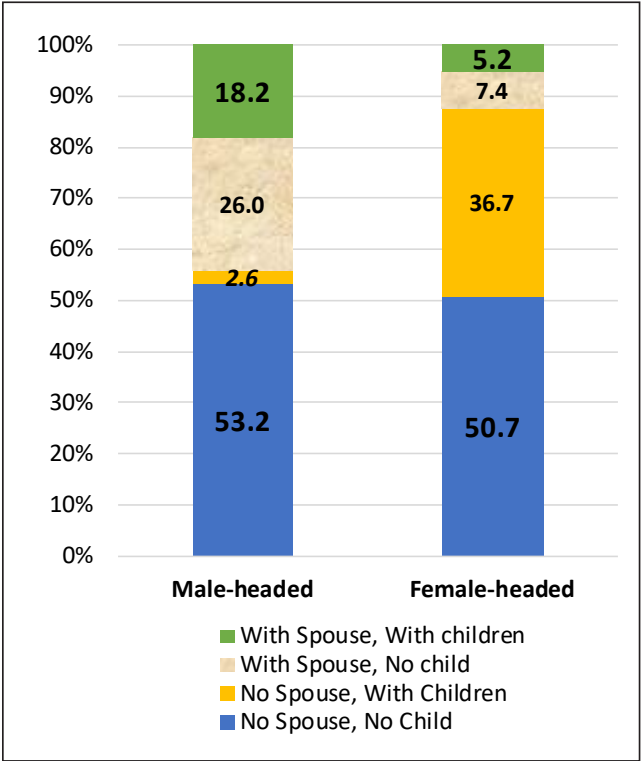


FIGURE 1: HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION BY SEX OF HEAD, 2023

Some household characteristics remained distinct by socioeconomic status. Households in the poorest quintile had the largest average size at 3.7; the largest mean number of children, 1.1; were mainly headed by females (52.9 per cent); and resided in Rural Areas (61.5 per cent). Quintile 5 households were the smallest in average size at 1.8; had the lowest average number of children, 0.2; were headed by males (58.2 per cent); and the largest share lived in the GKMA (50.7 per cent).

Household Consumption and Poverty

Nominal mean per capita consumption expenditure for the year was \$545 249.00 compared with \$430 516.00 in 2021. This represents an increase in real terms⁹ of 5.3 per cent. Increases were also observed in each region.¹⁰ The GKMA recorded a mean per capita consumption expenditure of \$708 148.00; OUC \$471 727.00 and Rural Areas \$461 973.00, up from \$554 623.00, \$410 407.00 and \$349 333.00, respectively, in 2021. The cost of living in the GKMA has consistently been higher relative to the other two regions. On average, for every \$100.00 spent for consumption by an individual who lived in the GKMA, in OUC and Rural Areas it was \$67.00 and \$65.00, respectively. In 2021, the ratio was \$74.00 in OUC and \$63.00 in Rural Areas to every \$100.00 spent in the GKMA.

The average consumption expenditure in male-headed households was \$608 008.00 compared with \$490 180.00 in female-headed households. Relative to 2021, both registered a real increase—5.4 per cent for male-headed households and 7.2 per cent for female-headed households. For every \$100.00 spent by an individual in a male-headed household on consumption items, \$81.00 was spent in a female-headed household. Over the period 2017–2023, the comparative figure in female-headed households ranged from \$84.00 in 2019 to \$79.00 in 2021, suggesting that the disparity between male- and female-headed households remained relatively unchanged over the period.

9 The base year used to convert nominal consumption expenditure to real dollars was 2019.

10 Real prices were not available by region.

Nationally, 77.0 per cent of consumption expenditure was used for items in four of the 12 commodity groups—Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages; Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas & Other Fuels; Restaurants & Accommodation Services; and Transportation. The estimate was similar across regions and comparable to 2021 (75.5 per cent). Male- and female-headed households allocated their consumption expenditure in a similar way across 10 commodity groups. The two exceptions were Food & Non-Alcoholic Beverages (34.6 per cent in female-headed households and 31.4 per cent in male-headed households) and Transportation (14.8 per cent in male-headed households and 11.5 per cent in female-headed households).

The proportion of the population that was in poverty—that is, could not afford to buy sufficient food and other basic goods and services—declined to 8.2 per cent from 16.7 per cent in 2021. Some 2.7 per cent of the population were in extreme (food) poverty compared with 5.8 per cent in 2021. All three regions also showed decline in poverty relative to 2021—the GKMA to 3.0 per cent (from 10.4 per cent), OUC to 9.0 per cent (from 15.5 per cent) and Rural Areas to 11.5 per cent (from

22.1 per cent). The prevalence of poverty fell for all age groups. While children and youth continued to have higher rates of poverty than older persons, the decline brought the difference within a range of approximately 4.0 percentage points compared with 10.0 percentage points in 2021, indicating a more notable decrease among the young.

Individuals whose consumption expenditure is within 10.0 per cent above the poverty line are considered vulnerable of entering into poverty in a subsequent period. The proportion that was vulnerable was 9.5 per cent, the largest observed since 2012 (Figure 2). Being at risk of entering into poverty in subsequent periods is not only limited to those above the poverty line, but includes those already in poverty. Therefore, those at risk were 17.7 per cent compared with 19.0 per cent in 2021.

The depth and severity of poverty showed improvements relative to 2021, with a decline to 2.2 per cent and 0.010, respectively, from 4.4 per cent and 0.018, respectively. Inequality also declined as measured by the consumption-based Gini coefficient at 0.3560 from 0.3991 in 2021.

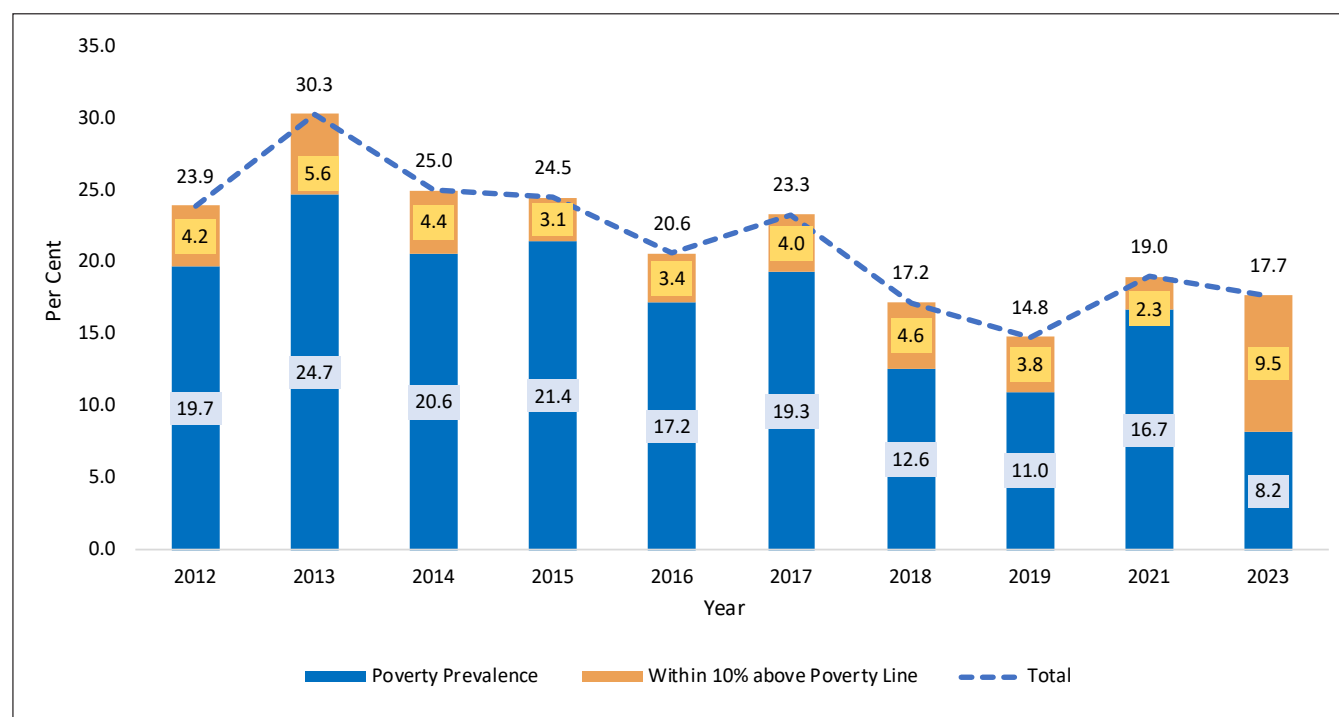


FIGURE 2: VULNERABILITY TO POVERTY, 2012–2023

Health

An estimated 23.6 per cent of the population reported having at least one non-communicable disease (NCD) compared with 26.8 per cent in 2021. The prevalence of NCDs was highest among the elderly (60+ years) at 62.7 per cent, and was higher among females, 27.9 per cent (19.3 per cent of males). The three most commonly reported chronic diseases were hypertension (12.4 per cent), asthma (6.1 per cent) and diabetes (5.1 per cent). Having multiple chronic diseases remains a public health concern, with 7.3 per cent of the population reporting two or more NCDs, 9.5 per cent of females and 5.1 per cent of males; 31.5 per cent of the elderly.

There was a general pattern of decline in the proportion of individuals who reported being ill or injured during the four-week reference period before the survey, which was 4.1 per cent compared with 9.0 per cent in 2017. Of those who reported illness/injury in 2023, they were ill/injured for approximately 8.2 days and experienced impairment for an average 4.4 days. These figures were similar to 2021.

A smaller proportion of those who were ill/injured sought healthcare (61.8 per cent) relative to 2021 (76.6

per cent). Of those who sought care, 31.7 per cent went exclusively to a public health facility and 68.3 per cent went only to a private facility. Irrespective of region, sex, or age group, the majority of the ill/injured sought care in a private facility.

National coverage for health insurance remains relatively low at 20.1 per cent, with distinctly higher rates in the GKMA (32.6 per cent) and Quintile 5 (40.1 per cent) relative to other regions and quintiles (Figure 3). By age group, the highest coverage was reported by individuals 50–59 years of age (25.7 per cent) and lowest by those 10–19 years (12.4 per cent).

Education

The gross enrolment rate for children age 3–16 years has remained consistently high at over 95.0 per cent. For those 17–18 years, gross enrolment was 62.8 per cent, which was similar to 2021 (62.3 per cent) and 3.8 percentage points lower than in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the gross enrolment rate was 70.4 per cent for females and 55.1 per cent for males, a difference of 15.3 percentage points. This represented a narrower gap than in 2021, when the rate

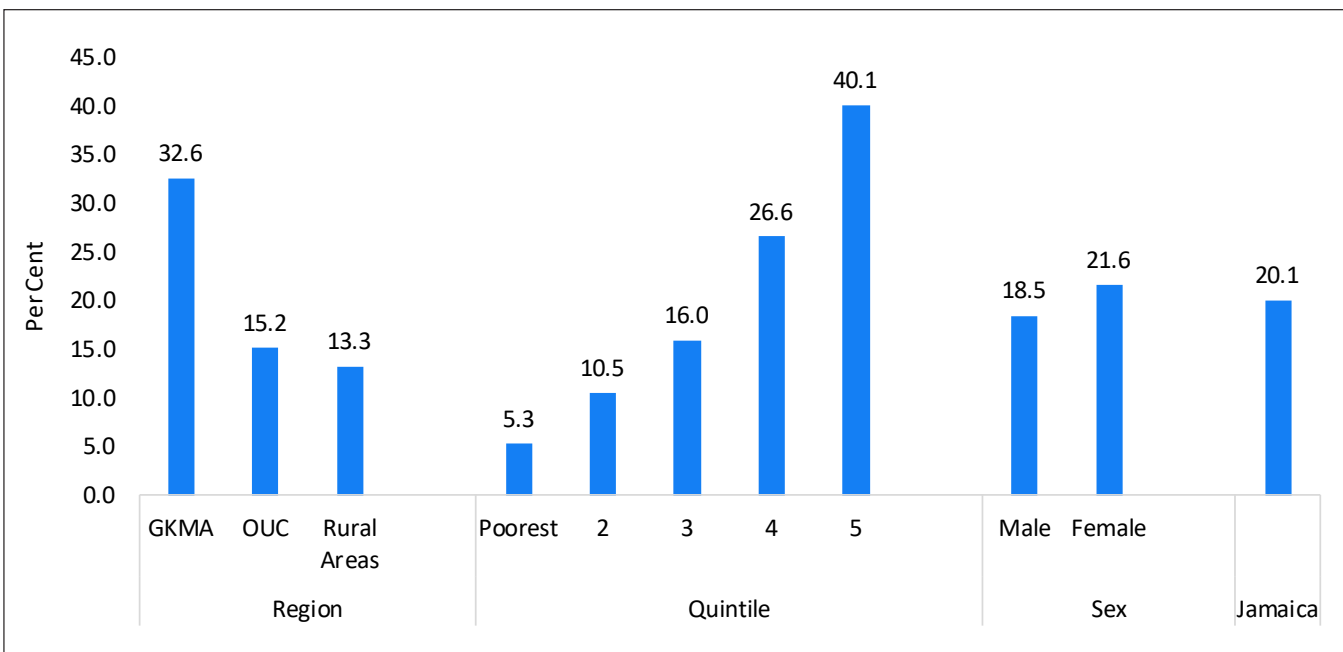


FIGURE 3: HEALTH INSURANCE COVERAGE BY REGION, QUINTILE AND SEX, 2023

for females was higher by 21.1 percentage points, but a wider gap than in 2019, when the rate for males was higher by 8.2 percentage points. Gross enrolment for the 19–24 years age group was 17.3 per cent compared with 20.1 per cent in 2021 and 16.3 per cent in 2019. Consistently, for those 19–24 years, a larger proportion of females (19.9 per cent) were enrolled than males (14.9 per cent), a gap of 5.1 percentage points, compared with 7.1 percentage points in 2021 and 5.6 percentage points in 2019.

For students at the early childhood to secondary levels, approximately four in every five students (80.7 per cent) were sent to school for all 20 days during the reference period. When asked the reason for not being sent to school during the academic year, individuals indicated the main reasons as illness (49.5 per cent), followed by rain (18.9 per cent), money problems (14.8 per cent) and school closure (8.8 per cent). For travel to school, the largest proportion of the students (60.2 per cent) took public transportation, more so in Rural Areas (67.3 per cent), than in OUC (61.9 per cent) and the GKMA (47.7 per cent).

There was an increase in the proportion of students that had the text books recommended by the school, which was 79.8 per cent compared with 67.2 per cent in 2021, but a decline relative to 84.9 per cent in 2019. In 2023, Rural Areas had the lowest proportion of students (74.7 per cent) with the recommended textbooks, compared with the GKMA (85.6 per cent) and OUC (83.1 per cent). By quintile, the proportion was 65.5 per cent in Quintile 1 relative to 90.7 per cent in Quintile 5 and, by sex, 83.2 per cent of females and 76.3 per cent of males.

Of those who reported that the school operated a school feeding programme, 68.4 per cent had the cooked meals provided through the government programme, 73.1 per cent took Nutribun, and 78.5 per cent had cooked meals offered under a private programme. Relative to 2019¹¹, while the proportion was similar for the government cooked-meal

programme, there was an increase of 11.5 percentage points in participation on the Nutribun programme and a decrease of 7.4 percentage points on the private programme.

For individuals 14+ years who were not enrolled in an educational institution, there was an increase in the proportion that had some form of certification (examination passes); 47.8 per cent up from 45.0 per cent in 2021 and 39.1 per cent in 2019 (Figure 4). In 2023, of males 14+ years and out of school, 42.1 per cent had some form of certification compared with 53.5 per cent of their female counterparts. The disparity was more by socioeconomic status, with 35.7 per cent of those in the poorest quintile having certification compared with 63.3 per cent in Quintile 5 (see Figure 4). With regard to skills training, 19.0 per cent of the 14+ years cohort had received or were currently enrolled in a skills training programme compared with 21.9 per cent in 2021 and 21.0 per cent in 2019.

For individuals in the prime working age group (25–54 years), approximately one-half (51.4 per cent) had some form of certification, which was similar to 2021 (50.7 per cent) but considerably higher than in 2019 when the estimate was roughly one-third (34.8 per cent). Some 43.3 per cent of males in this age cohort had some form of certification compared with 58.8 per cent of females. The proportion of the prime working age group in Quintile 5 with certification (68.8 per cent) more than doubled that for the poorest quintile (30.8 per cent).

Housing

The quality of the housing stock in Jamaica improved. This was supported by an increase in the Housing Quality Index (HQI) to 80.5 per cent from 75.0 per cent in 2017 (Figure 5). Compared with 2017, all six component indicators—Electricity for Lighting, Exclusive Use of Kitchen, Exclusive use of Water Closet, Indoor Tap/Pipe as Main Source of Drinking Water,

11 The questions on school feeding were not fielded in the 2021 survey due to remote/online teaching and learning being the main modality during that year as result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

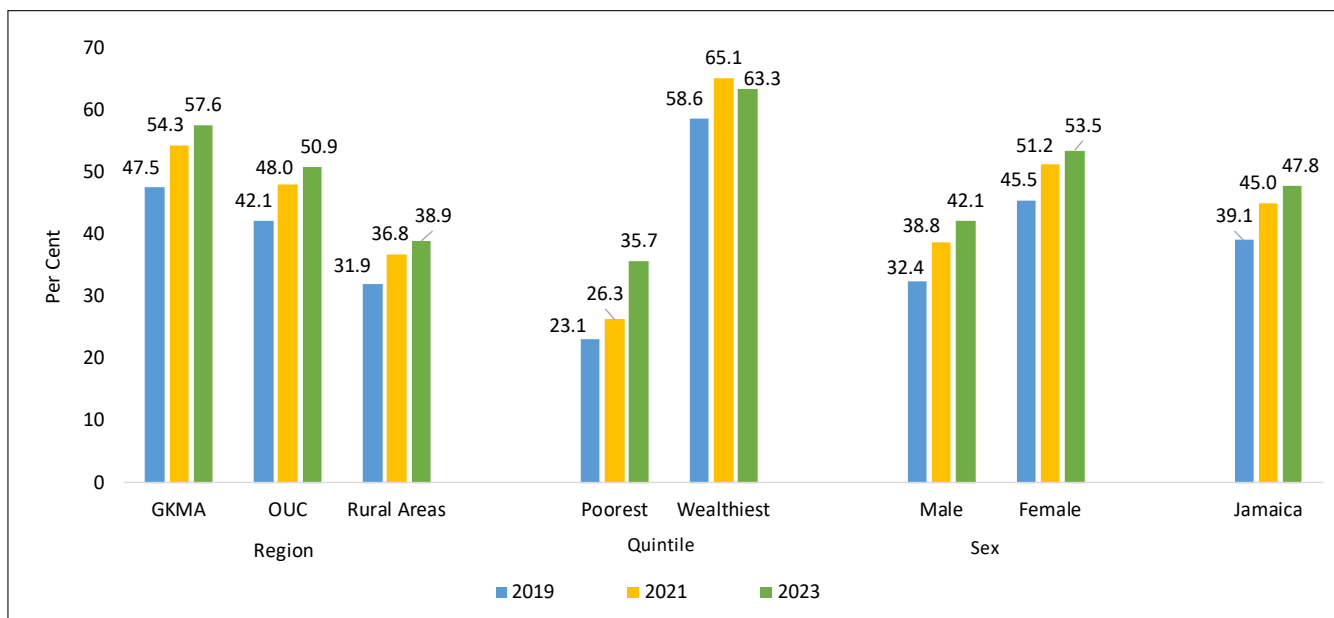


FIGURE 4: CERTIFICATION ATTAINED BY POPULATION 14+ YEARS AND NOT ENROLLED IN SCHOOL, BY REGION, QUINTILE AND SEX, 2023

and Number of Persons per Habitable Room—showed an increase. The largest increase was seen for the proportion of households that were not overcrowded, which improved 11.5 percentage points to 74.2 per cent. Exclusive use of Kitchen, which is consistently high, moved up marginally by 1.9 percentage points to 96.0 per cent. Rural Areas, with an HQI of 75.0 per cent, remained consistently behind the GKMA and OUC, 87.4 per cent and 81.7 per cent, respectively.

The proportion of households that had “registered full ownership” increased to 34.7 per cent by 4.0 percentage points relative to 2021. This means that there was an improvement in the proportion of households that owned both the dwelling and the land on which they lived, and had possession of a registered title for said property. By region, registered full ownership was highest in the GKMA (39.0 per cent) followed by 34.0 per cent in Rural Areas and 29.2 per cent in OUC.

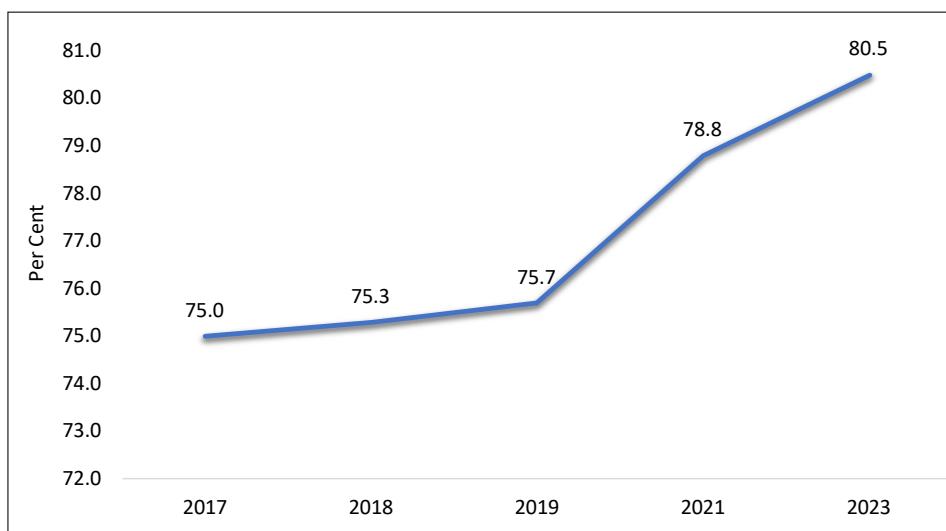


FIGURE 5: HOUSING QUALITY INDEX (HQI) 2017–2023 (PER CENT)

An estimated 78.0 per cent of all households used safe water as their main source of drinking water. The majority of households (53.6 per cent) relied on Indoor Tap/Pipe for drinking water, but by region, this was true in the GKMA and OUC. In the GKMA, 78.5 per cent of households used Indoor Tap/Pipe as their main source and for OUC, 59.9 per cent, while in Rural Areas, 32.5 per cent. Approximately one-third (32.7 per cent) of households in the poorest quintile used Indoor Tap/Pipe

as their main source compared with approximately two-thirds (67.0 per cent) in Quintile 5. Nationally, for households that used piped water, 51.7 per cent reported at least one water lock-off during the 30-day reference period preceding the survey; a decline by 8.3 percentage points compared with 2021. There was, on average, 8.2 lock-offs during the period compared with 7.7 in 2021. In 2023, for households that stored water, 43.7 per cent used plastic tanks, 37.3 per cent used drums and 12.3 per cent used buckets.

Regarding household expenditure on utilities, electricity accounted for an average of 6.0 per cent of total household consumption, telephone 3.1 per cent, and water 2.7 per cent. The nominal mean monthly payments for electricity was \$9 268.00, telephone \$7 871.00 and water \$4 881.00.

The proportion of households with a working computer was 45.3 per cent, a decline from 52.1 per cent in 2021. Of those with a working computer, 62.5 per cent had a laptop and 68.7 per cent had a Tablet; in 2021, this was 63.5 per cent and 73.5 per cent, respectively. Despite the decline in the proportion of households with a working computer, the proportion with access to the internet increased to 86.5 per cent from 75.6 per cent in 2021. This was attributable to the largest proportion of households that accessed the internet using a mobile handset (63.4 per cent). Over time,

the proportion of households with neither a working computer nor internet access has declined, 13.2 per cent from 39.8 per cent in 2017 (Figure 6).

Social Protection

An estimated 27.9 per cent of households had at some point applied to the Programme of Advancement through Health and Education (PATH) compared with 32.5 per cent in 2021. In 2023, of all households that had ever applied, 59.2 per cent had at some point received a benefit. Rural Areas had the largest proportion of applicant households that had received a benefit, 63.9 per cent, followed by the GKMA and OUC with 52.2 per cent each. By quintile, 69.1 per cent of applicant households in the poorest quintile had received a benefit compared with 46.8 per cent in Quintile 5. The proportion of applicant households headed by females that had received a benefit was 60.7 per cent relative to 56.6 per cent of those headed by males. Of all beneficiary households, 89.2 per cent were current recipients. This was evinced by the proportion that indicated that they had received a payment in the April preceding the survey.

Approximately one-third (32.3 per cent) of the elderly population (persons 60+ years) reported that they had received a pension.

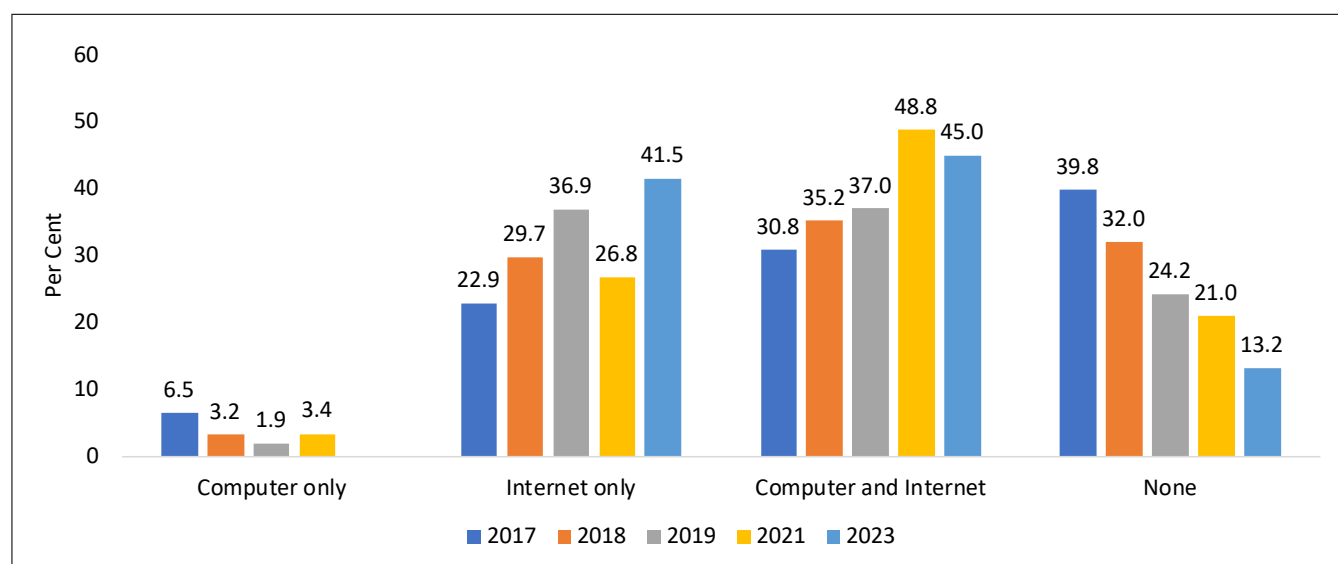


FIGURE 6: HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO COMPUTER AND INTERNET, 2017–2023

The distinction was most evident by quintile—approximately one in every five elderly individuals in the poorest quintile (18.3 per cent) had received a pension compared with one-half (49.1 per cent) of those in Quintile 5. For the elderly who had received a pension, 24.7 per cent had received a National Insurance Scheme (NIS) pension, 13.4 per cent an occupational pension, and 6.5 per cent from some other source. An examination of registration to other select social protection programmes showed that 29.8 per cent of the population were registered to the National Health Fund (NHF), 51.3 per cent of individuals 18+ years were registered to the NIS and 13.2 per cent of individuals 60+ years were registered to the Jamaica Drug for the Elderly (JADEP).

Some 51.1 per cent of households reported having enough food to eat on a daily basis during the four-week reference period before the fielding of the survey, while 33.3 per cent had enough food sometimes and 15.6 per cent reported not having sufficient food. These proportions were similar to 2021, but was different from the perception in 2019, when 62.0 per cent of households reported enough food to eat on a daily basis, 27.5 per cent had enough food sometimes and 10.5 per cent did not have sufficient food. In 2023, with focus on those that had enough food to eat daily, 59.6

per cent of those in the GKMA reported being food secure, compared with 48.0 per cent and 46.2 per cent, respectively, in OUC and Rural Areas. The proportion in the poorest quintile was 27.9 per cent relative to 69.0 per cent in Quintile 5.

For the largest proportion of households (46.5 per cent), the main source of livelihoods was being employed by someone else. This was followed by those that were self-employed (23.0 per cent); received remittances and/or pensions (17.2 per cent); and produced plants, animals or goods (11.0 per cent). About one-half (50.8 per cent) of all households felt that their main source of livelihoods provided only for their basic needs, while 32.3 per cent said it provided a reliable income stream. An additional 11.7 per cent reported that it was inadequate for basic needs and 5.2 per cent said it was unreliable or not consistent. When asked how their financial situation compared with the previous 12 months, 52.0 per cent of all households said it remained the same, while 32.5 per cent said it was worse off and 15.0 per cent said it was better off. Over the period 2018–2023, the proportion of households that felt that their financial situation was the same or worse off than the year before was relatively similar, except in 2021 when the country was coming out of the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 7).

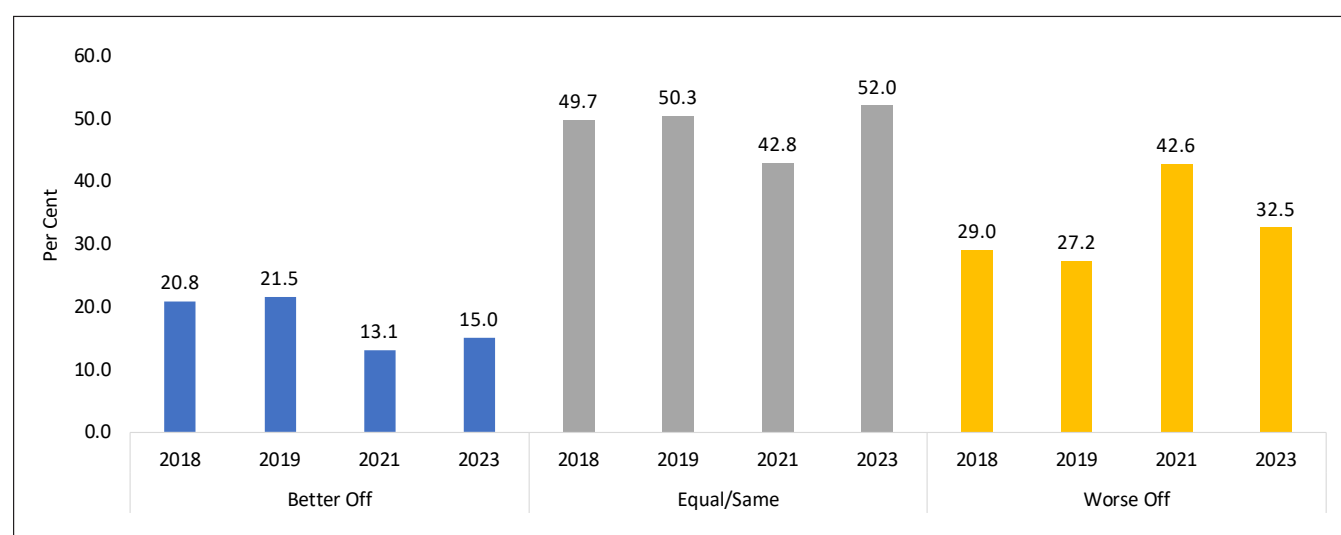


FIGURE 7: HOUSEHOLDS ECONOMIC (FINANCIAL) SITUATION COMPARED WITH ONE YEAR PRIOR, 2018, 2019, 2021 AND 2023

CONCLUSION

The post-COVID-19 period showed areas of recovery. This included increased consumption of goods and services, a significant reduction in the prevalence of poverty and extreme poverty, a decline in the depth and severity of poverty, and reduced consumption-based inequality. While all population subgroups showed levels of improvement, the disparity between areas of residence and sex of household head remained. Consumption patterns in the GKMA remained significantly higher than in OUC and Rural Areas, and the difference between male-headed and female-headed households was relatively unchanged. Additionally, the share of the population just above the poverty line suggests that policies and programmes should aim to further lift the standard of living of vulnerable households.

Consistent with the improvement in the household's ability to spend, was an increase in the proportion of households with the perception that their financial situation was better off or the same as the previous year. This perception was relatively consistent with the periods preceding the pandemic. With regard to the perception of food security, while household perception of having enough food to eat was consistent with how they felt in 2021, it represented a less desirable position than before the pandemic.

In the area of education, gross enrolment for those 3–16 years remained consistently high, while for those in the older age cohorts (17–24 years), there were fluctuations in enrolment observed between 2019 and 2023. Improvements were observed in the proportion of students that benefited from meals provided at school

and in the possession of text books. However, illness and money problems continued to be among the main reasons for non-attendance. For the out-of-school population, there were significant increases in the proportion with some form of certification irrespective of where they lived, sex or consumption quintile. The advantage remained evident, however, in the GKMA, among females and more so for those in Quintile 5 relative to their classification counterparts. Across all households, access to information and communication technologies showed marked improvements with those having no access reduced by approximately one-half relative to 2019 and by two-thirds relative to 2017.

Protection against loss of income due to illness, old age, and death were relatively low within the population. This was evident in the levels of health insurance coverage, receipt of pensions, and participation on the NIS, NHF and JADEP. While households may make provisions outside of these programmes, the low level of participation is indicative of the general posture toward social insurance.

Prominent features of the Jamaican household size and structure are the reduction in size, fewer children, and a larger segment of the population living by themselves. Simultaneously, female-headed households, households in Rural Areas and in the poorest socioeconomic group continue to be larger in size and have more members in the dependent age-groups, indicating segments for continued and greater support. In an environment where there are increased global and internal shocks, sustained efforts are essential to build resilience and reduce vulnerabilities within all households.