

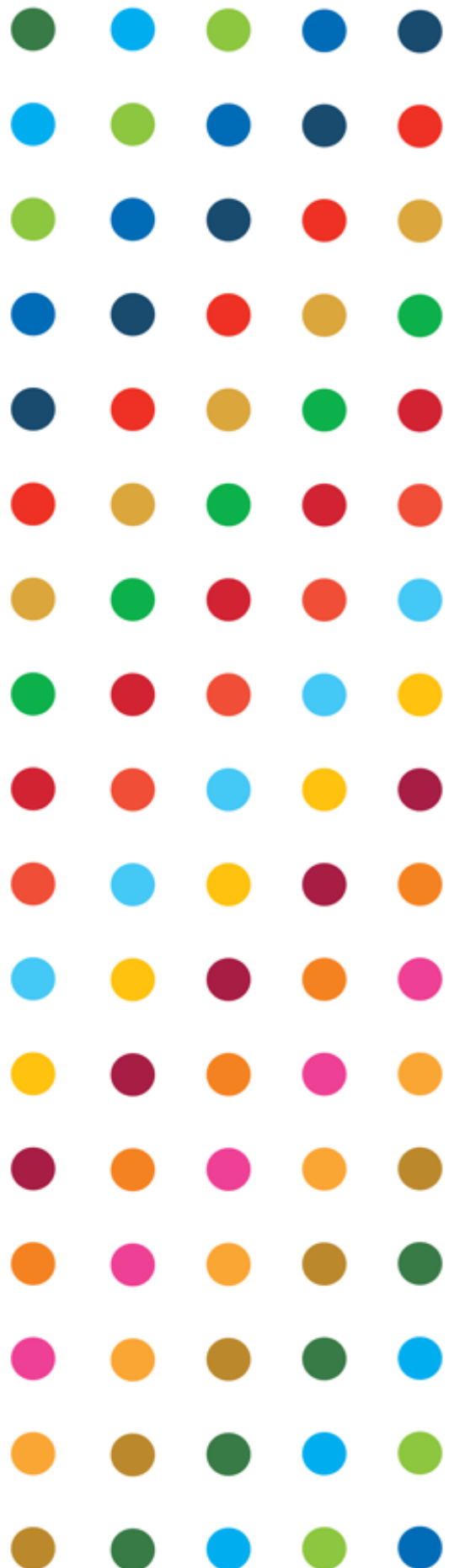
# Common Country Analysis

Update 2021

## Jamaica



**UNITED NATIONS**  
JAMAICA, BAHAMAS, BERMUDA  
TURKS AND CAICOS & CAYMAN ISLANDS



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This document was not subject to official editing. Any errors are the responsibility of the authors. Comments or suggestions concerning the contents of this document should be addressed to Olaf J. de Groot ([olaf.degroot@un.org](mailto:olaf.degroot@un.org)).

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## Abbreviations

BAU	=	Business As Usual
CCA	=	Common Country Analysis
CSO	=	Civil Society Organization
DCO	=	Development Coordination Office
FY	=	Fiscal Year
GCF	=	Green Climate Fund
GDP	=	Gross Domestic Product
HLPF	=	High-Level Political Forum
ICT	=	Information and Communication Technology
LGBTQI+	=	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transexual, Queer and Intersex
LSCI	=	Liner Shipping Connectivity Index
MSDCF	=	Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
MVI	=	Multidimensional Vulnerability Index
NDC	=	Nationally Determined Contribution
NDP	=	National Development Plan
PCI	=	Productive Capacities Index
PHSM	=	Public Health and Social Measures
PIOJ	=	Planning Institute of Jamaica
SDG	=	Sustainable Development Goal
SDR	=	Sustainable Development Report
SERZ	=	Special Economic Recovery Zone
SIDS	=	Small Island Developing State
UNCT	=	United Nations Country Team
VNR	=	Voluntary National Review
WASH	=	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## I. Executive Summary

During 2021, the socioeconomic analysis of Jamaica did not change dramatically. Nevertheless, this Update of the Common Country Analysis (CCA) discusses some broad areas in which there are relevant changes compared to the situation in December 2020. Each of these is related to the fact that the CCA was prepared under extraordinary circumstances and with an exceptional level of uncertainty, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A year later, this source of uncertainty has not yet abated, but in several key areas, there is more clarity as to the long-term impact of the pandemic.



With respect to **COVID-19**, the greatest difference with a year ago at a global level is the presence of a vaccine that helps to protect from the virus and especially from hospitalization. This is an important development worldwide, but in the case of Jamaica, the rollout of the vaccine has been disappointing. This is not only due to the initial global inequity in vaccine distribution, but also due to a high level of vaccine hesitancy. If the vaccine rollout continues to be hampered, the country will continue to see flare-ups of the virus and the associated socioeconomic impacts.



Directly related to the pandemic, **slowing SDG progress** has also become more obvious in the past year. Generally, SDG progress is only observed with a lag, and more data has become available that is indicative of major reversions in poverty reduction, access to education and health. These regressions are not surprising, but it is a

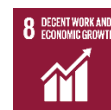
## II. Introduction



The CCA is a key instrument designed to reflect the United Nations **integrated, forward-looking and evidence-based joint analysis** of the context for sustainable development, in view of achieving the 2030 Agenda and the

call to make sure that during the Decade of Action, greater effort is made to achieve the 2030 Agenda and to make sure that inclusive socioeconomic development is achieved.

Finally, the area where the greatest changes have taken place is the **economy**. At the end of 2020, it was clear that GDP was shrinking at an unprecedented rate, but it was not clear how fast the recovery would occur. A year later, it appears that a somewhat faster than expected recovery is underway, even if it is slower than in economies less dependent on tourism. However, there are also several positive trends: unemployment, while still higher than before the pandemic, has decreased substantially (albeit more so for men than for women) and the Government of Jamaica continues to be fiscally prudent. Finally, a major inflow of remittances has helped to maintain financial stability and provided a cushion for many people in need.



These are the three broad areas that have seen the greatest changes between late 2020 and late 2021, though several other important changes have also taken place: there has been legislative progress on the protection of **human rights** and an increased commitment to reducing **greenhouse gas emissions**. Unfortunately, the previously identified challenges with respect to (gender-based) violence and the overall levels of violence and intentional homicide have not abated during 2021.



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It forms the basis of UN programmatic support through the Multi-Country Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (MSDCF). However, the CCA is not an insular document that, once completed, is set in

stone. Rather, an annual update is prepared that adds to the growing evidence base over time. The update identifies actual and anticipated shifts in the national development landscape.

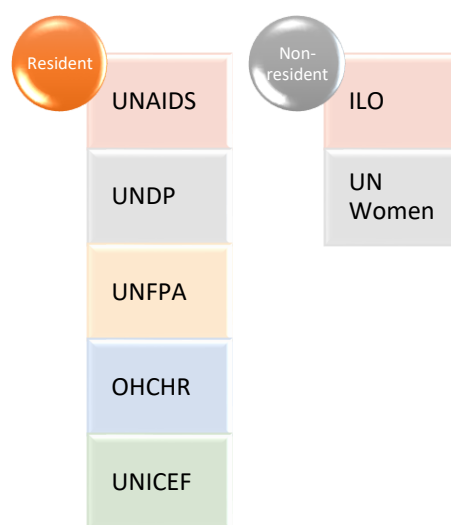
This document is the **first CCA Update** of the latest cycle, with the original CCA for Jamaica completed at the end of 2020. This document thus provides an overview of major changes that have taken place in 2021 and highlights the data that has become available since then.

Naturally, the most pressing issue in Jamaica continues to be the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Chapter IV of the update provides further detail on the late 2021 status of the pandemic in Jamaica, and chapter V will highlight the economic impacts the pandemic is having. While the pandemic was clearly present in late 2020, it was not yet apparent in much of the data presented in the CCA. In fact, as pointed out in chapter III on the progress towards the SDGs, even now, much information continues to be incomplete. This means that it is still partially unknown what the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic is like in Jamaica.

Chapter VI provides a deep dive into the different upcoming threats and opportunities

as identified by the Agencies, Funds and Programmes that are active in Jamaica. For this report, the inputs of the different UN entities in the country have been pivotal, as shown in figure 1. Inputs were also solicited and incorporated from the whole UN Country Team (UNCT), the regional Development Cooperation Office (DCO) based in Panama, national government and select Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Figure 1. Agencies involved in CCA Update



Source: Prepared by authors.

### III. Progress towards the SDGs



The CCA painted a positive picture concerning the **alignment** of the National Development Plan (NDP) Vision 2030 with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. Recent analysis by the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) showed that alignment between Vision 2030 and the 2030 Agenda is even higher than previously reported, with an estimated 95 per cent alignment. Unfortunately, progress towards achieving either Vision 2030 or the 2030 Agenda is not as positive, even before the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is fully reflected in the data.

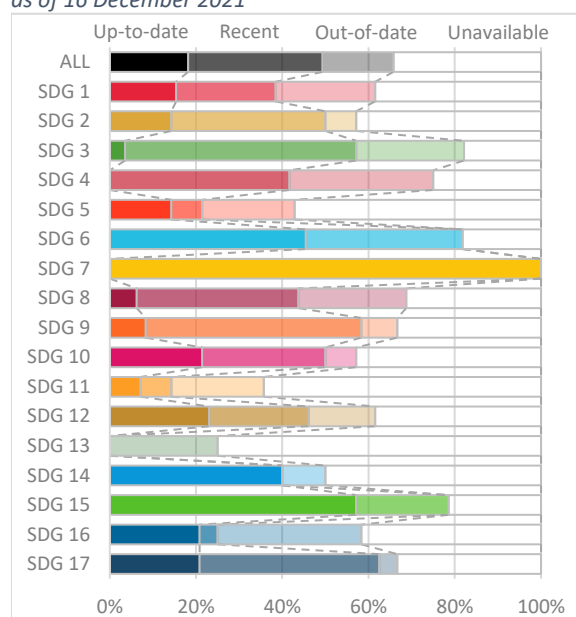
While in 2021 some information has become available, the picture is still very incomplete.

As stated in the CCA, while progress towards each individual indicator that is part of the 2030 Agenda is being tracked by the United Nations, it can be difficult to assess the overall progress towards the SDGs. Looking at the United Nations SDG data portal<sup>1</sup>, we can assess the **availability and the recentness of SDG data** for Jamaica. Figure 2 shows the most recent observation of 49 per cent of indicators is from 2018 or later, with another 16 per cent of indicators available



<sup>1</sup> United Nations, 2021.

Figure 2. Jamaica: SDG indicator availability and recentness as of 16 December 2021



Source: United Nations, 2021.

Note: Availability and recentness is calculated per SDG. If the most recent data is from 2020 or 2021, an indicator is considered “up-to-date”, if the most recent data is from 2018 or 2019, it is considered “recent”, and if it is from 2010-2017, it is considered “out-of-date”. Older observations are included in the group of unavailable indicators. Reported data may not be complete and may not be available at the highest levels of disaggregation.

between 2010 and 2017. However, as the figure shows, there is great variation between Goals. The most recent data available for SDG 13 is from 2012, for example (and covers only two out of eight indicators). Best data availability is found for SDG 7 (100 per cent of the data is recent), SDG 6 (82 per cent is at least recent) and SDG 15 (79 per cent is at least recent).



As mentioned above, it is not straightforward to convert the information contained in the SDG data portal into an overall progress indicator. For this, we turn to the Sustainable Development Report (SDR)<sup>2</sup>, published annually by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network. This report uses a limited number of indicators, which do not exactly overlap with the SDG indicators themselves yet

<sup>2</sup> Sachs et al., 2021.

give a good overview of the progress made in each broad area. Unfortunately, the 2021 SDR suffers from some of the same data gaps as the CCA did: much of the 2020 information has not yet become available and so the full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet reflected.

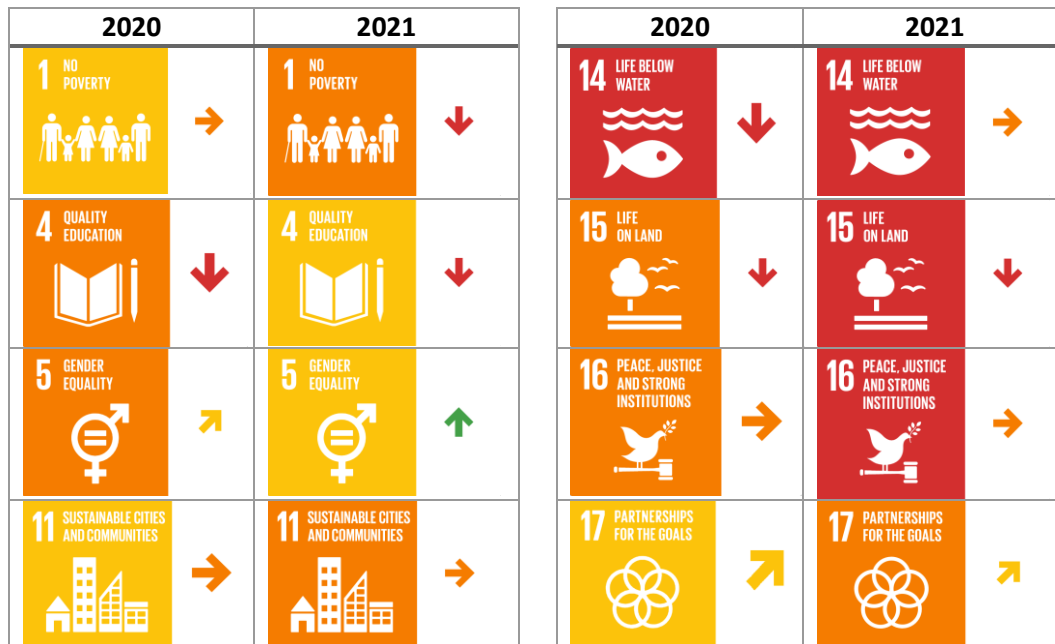
Figure 3 shows the how SDR scores for both levels (represented by the SDG symbols) and trends (represented by the arrows) have changed in the 2021 report compared to 2020. SDG 1 has incorporated relevant 2020 data, thus already showing the impact of the pandemic. In some other cases, the assessment of progress towards the SDGs has in fact improved, especially for SDG 4 and SDG 5. In the case of SDG 4, this is primarily due to **worse data availability**, while SDG 5 truly shows an improvement in the country’s scores. In many cases, worsening levels have not been accompanied by worsening trends. SDG 17, for example, may have moved from “challenges remain” to “substantial challenges remain”, but is still considered to have a moderately improving trend. According to the SDR estimates, Jamaica is only on track to achieve SDG 5 and SDG 8 (green arrow), while it considers that the achievement of SDG 3, SDG 6, SDG 7 and SDG 17 are within reach (yellow arrow).



It should be noted that, **at the national level, there is further data available** that addresses progress on the SDGs. For example, PIOJ reports that, in 2018, 68.0 per cent of the population had access to the internet<sup>3</sup>, while the United Nations only has data up to 2017 (SDG indicator 17.8.1), when it reports access for 55.1 per cent of the population. In other cases (for example, SDG indicator 3.a.1 on smoking prevalence) reports vastly different results. It is important to keep in mind that for any missing value in the SDG database, local sources may be available. At the same time, it may be true that such local sources may not always be comparable to the internationally

<sup>3</sup> PIOJ and Statin, 2021.

Figure 3. Jamaica: Updated SDG progress scores, 2020 and 2021



Source: Sachs et al., 2021.

Note: The SDG symbol represents the level, while the arrow represents the trend per SDG. Red represents major challenges/decreasing trend, orange represents significant challenges/stagnating trend, yellow represents challenges/moderately improving trend and green represents an achieved SDG/trend on track for achievement. Only SDGs where level or trend have changed between 2020 and 2021 are included.

recognized data. During 2022, the Government of Jamaica will submit a Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the progress made on the SDGs to the High-Level Political Forum in New York. This will be an excellent opportunity to

see how internationally available data can be complemented by national data sources.

#### IV. Impact and response to COVID-19



As of 30 December 2021, **93,591 cases of COVID-19** have been diagnosed and 2,470 deaths have been attributed to the pandemic. Like elsewhere, the pandemic has waxed and waned, but three major waves have been identified. The first took place in September-October 2020, when the seven-day average of identified cases peaked at around 180. The second wave took place from February to April 2021, with the seven-day average of cases peaking around 650. The third wave, in September-October 2021 peaked at around 700 cases a day. The last peak was also the

deadliest, with daily deaths regularly exceeding 20. Approximately one-third of attributed deaths occurred during the third wave<sup>4</sup>. In late December 2021, a new wave appears to be starting, possibly attributable to the Omicron variant.

While vaccination is the most effective way of combatting the pandemic, the **rollout of vaccines** has been relatively spotty, compared to elsewhere in the Caribbean. In part, this was related to the well-documented vaccine inequity that saw high-income countries hoarding vaccines while low- and middle-income countries



<sup>4</sup> Worldometers, 2021.

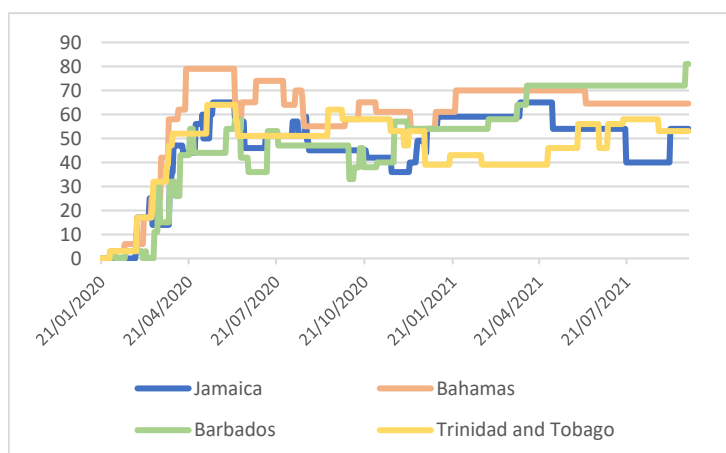


were not able to access any. However, with time, the supply of vaccines has improved, but the rollout of vaccines is hampered by organizational challenges and a strong degree of vaccine hesitancy in the population. Figure 4 shows that Jamaica ranks lowest in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean with respect to its vaccine roll-out. By 30 December 2021, only an estimate 18.9 per cent of the population was fully vaccinated and another 5.0 per cent was partly vaccinated. While vaccine hesitancy is playing an important role, the rollout of the vaccines has also faced challenges, with certain doses having been dumped upon reaching their expiry date<sup>5</sup>. However, it should be noted that many of the doses arrive in Jamaica with limited expiry dates, after having been declared superfluous in donor countries.



Earlier on, the Government of Jamaica responded quickly to the original arrival of the virus on the island with a **strict lockdown**. The lockdown was later relieved, but a nightly curfew has

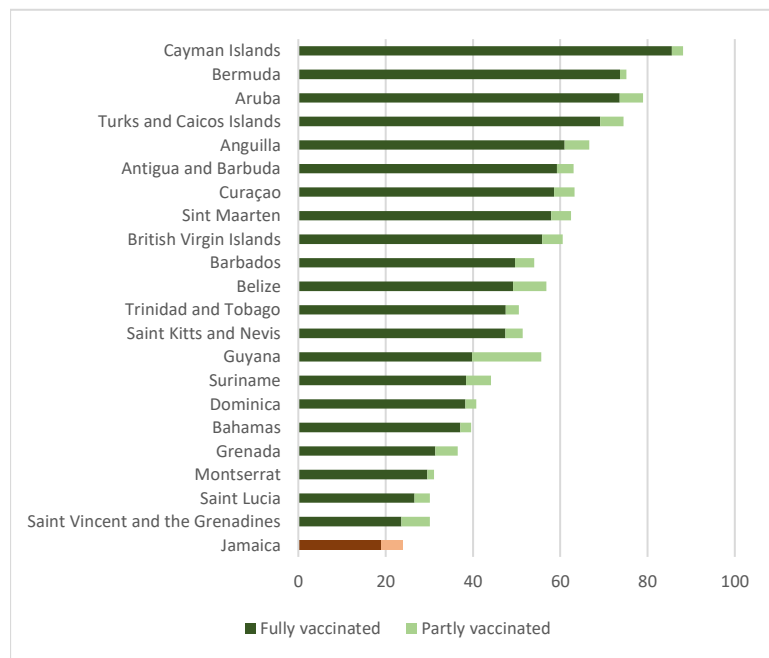
Figure 5. Selected countries: PHSM Index, January 2020–October 2021



Source: World Health Organization, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> The Gleaner, 2021a.

Figure 4. English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean: vaccination rates, 30 December 2021 (in percentages)



Source: Mathieu et al., 2021.

stayed in place since March 2020. Other temporary measures have included “no movement days” and mask mandates. Compared to other Caribbean economies, Government restrictions have been relatively volatile in response to the stage of the pandemic<sup>6</sup>. Figure 5 shows the Public Health and Social Measures (PHSM) Index developed by the World Health Organization. Jamaica implemented its first restrictions in March 2020 and was at a level that is on the low side for Caribbean economies by late 2021.

Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic has had some worrying spillover effects



on **other health issues**. For example, the pandemic has posed substantial challenges to the response capacity of the human resources working on HIV in both government and civil society organizations. Some HIV services have faced mild interruptions due to COVID-19,

<sup>6</sup> WHO, 2020.

including, but not limited to, the implementation of the policy for multi-month dispensing of HIV treatment, movement restrictions of technical partners to convene, implement, and monitor HIV-related programmes, and the limitations to implement the HIV, family and life education curriculum given the shift to online schooling to reduce the risk of COVID-19 infections.



With respect to education, a **national drive to vaccinate students aged 12-15** started in August 2021, having put in place a requirement that 65 per cent of children in high schools (ages 12-18) should be vaccinated against COVID-19 before face-to-face classes can resume in the school. By 1 December 2021, only nine secondary schools had reopened after achieving the required vaccination rate. Starting 8 November, primary and basic education has also started opening, reaching a total of 383 schools<sup>7</sup>.

The slow reopening of schools perpetuates inequities in access to quality education and slows progress towards SDG 4. The negative impacts on education are ameliorated through ongoing teacher and school leader training at all levels in hybrid pedagogical practices and ongoing support to upgrade WASH facilities in the schools with greatest need to become COVID-protocol compliant through government and public/private partnerships.



There is also an ongoing agreement between Government and private companies that certain websites to be freely accessible as well as partnership with public television and radio to broadcast content daily and to enable the provision of printed and distribution of printed learning packets including a partnership with the main national newspaper. Finally, it should be noted that children with disabilities have access to a programme focused on the distribution of internet-enabled devices.



## V. Economic Update



In economic terms, the impact of COVID-19 was undeniably large in Jamaica. **Real GDP declined by around 10 per cent in 2020**, a much greater fall than in most other countries. Global GDP fell by 3.2 per cent, buoyed by a relatively limited

decline in China. Latin America and the Caribbean was the most affected region in the world and experienced a drop by 6.8 per cent in 2020<sup>8</sup>, which still pales in comparison to the economic decline experienced in Jamaica. This can largely be attributed to the large tourism

Table 1. Jamaica: forecasts of real GDP growth, by forecaster, 2019-2025 (in percentages)

Forecaster	Date	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
BOJ <sup>a</sup>	November	1.0	-10.0	5.0-6.0	2.0-4.0	1.0-2.0	1.0-2.0	1.0-2.0
PIOJ <sup>a</sup>	November	1.0	-9.9	5.0	...	...	...	...
ECLAC	October	0.9	-9.9	4.0	5.7	...	...	...
EIU	September	0.9	-10.2	3.3	5.5	2.4	1.5	1.7
IMF	October	1.0	-10.0	4.6	2.7	2.4	2.1	1.8

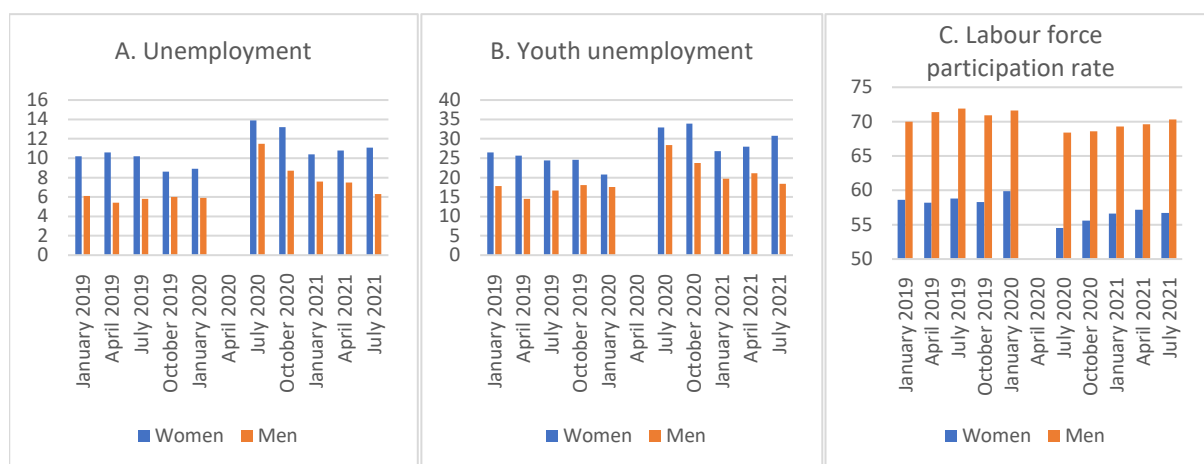
Source: Bank of Jamaica, 2021a; PIOJ, 2021; ECLAC, 2021a; EIU, 2021; IMF, 2021.

<sup>a</sup> BOJ and PIOJ estimates are either quarterly or based on fiscal years. The estimates for 2021 reflect the annualized rate of expected growth. BOJ estimates for 2022 onwards reflect the fiscal year.

<sup>7</sup> The Gleaner, 2021b.

<sup>8</sup> ECLAC, 2021a.

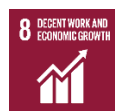
Figure 6. Jamaica: labour force statistics, January 2019-July 2021 (In percentages)



Source: Statin, 2021.

sector and, indeed, Caribbean economies with even greater dependence on this sector experienced even greater declines.

Tourism and travel are also amongst the sectors that are making a slower return than others, which results in a relatively limited recovery for Jamaica in 2021. As table 1 show, the economic growth forecasts for 2021 are mostly in the 4-6 per cent range, which is generally in line with the rest of the Caribbean. Tourism dependent economies generally see their rebounds leak into 2022 to a greater degree than others<sup>9</sup>. In Jamaica, growth expectations after 2022 are more subdued, and more likely to approach the pre-pandemic long-term average of 0.6 per cent annually.



Naturally, the economic unrest also greatly impacted on employment. Figure 6 shows some of the **key labour force statistics**. Panel A of this figure shows that the unemployment rate for both men and women increased substantially, jumping by 5.6 and 5.0 percentage points respectively between January and July of 2020<sup>10</sup>. The immediate impact for young employees was even greater, with youth

unemployment increasing by 10.8 and 12.1 percentage points during that same period for men and women respectively (see panel B). The recovery pattern is similar for young adults and the entire population: male unemployment has decreased rapidly and, by July 2021, has returned to the pre-pandemic state. For women, this is not the case, with the unemployment rate still 2.2 percentage points above the pre-pandemic rate, and female youth unemployment rate 10.0 percentage points above it.



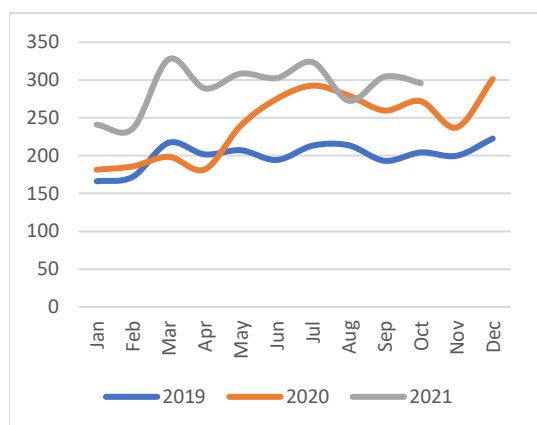
Several sectors which were dominated by women were severely impacted by the pandemic, including the tourism and tourism-related industries, service and trade sectors, the arts, entertainment, recreation sectors and a range of customer-facing industries which includes occupations in service and sales, personal care and personal services. Data has shown that that women's employment is less diversified than men's which diminishes **women's resilience to economic shocks**. With COVID-19 restrictions impacting the labour market, women who were predominantly working in the most affected industries were

<sup>9</sup> In Latin America, GDP growth increases to 5.7 per cent in 2021, but falls back to 2.9 per cent in 2022, whereas in the Caribbean, GDP growth is estimated at 4.1 per cent in 2021 and 7.8 per cent in 2022, though in both cases the resource-driven rapid

expansion in Guyana is partly responsible for this (ECLAC, 2021a).

<sup>10</sup> No labour force data was collected during April 2020 (Statin, 2021).

Figure 7. Jamaica: Inflows of remittances, 2019-2021 (in millions of dollars per month)



Source: Bank of Jamaica, 2021b.

more likely to experience employment loss or wage reduction.<sup>11</sup>

These patterns of employment and unemployment can also be found in the labour force participation rate (panel C of figure 6). While both women and men left the labour force when the pandemic hit the country, the drop was greater for women (-5.4 percentage points) than for men (-3.2 percentage points). In both cases, there has been a recovery in labour force participation, but women’s labour force participation, at 56.7 per cent, continues to be very low compared to men (70.3 per cent).

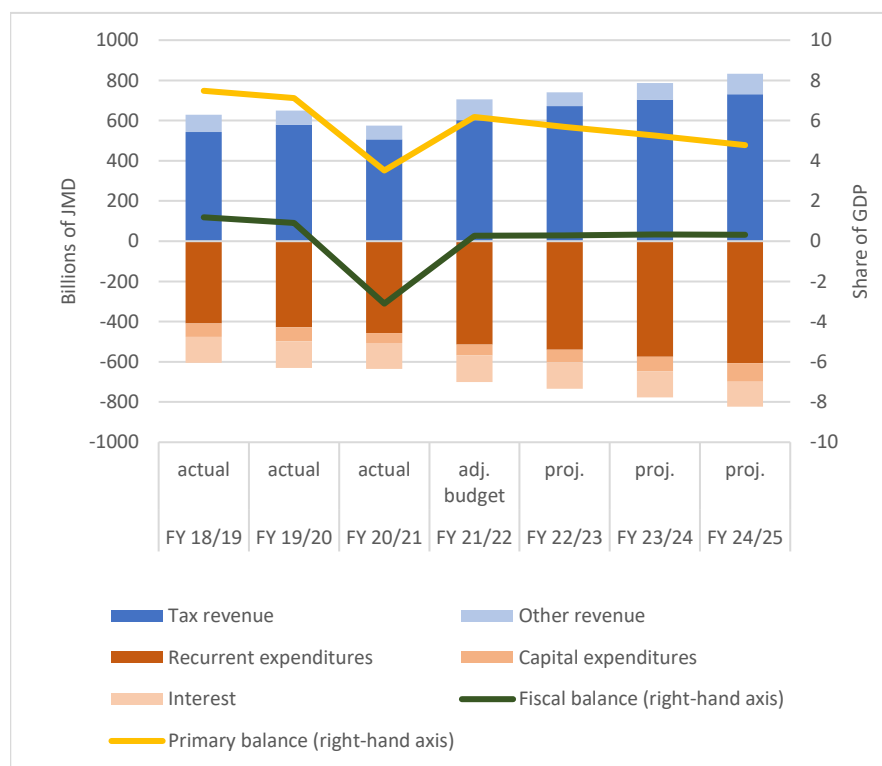
A considerable number of women have left the workforce during the pandemic to devote their time to unpaid

care work within the home, specifically managing schooling and childcare needs which resulted from the closure of schools, to care for elderly or sick relatives and to undertake domestic work. In Jamaica, twice as many women than men spent time home-schooling children as a result of the pandemic, and almost twice as many women than men experienced increases in entertaining children, cooking and cleaning<sup>12</sup>.

The social impact of these employment losses was somewhat ameliorated by the strong presence of the **Jamaican diaspora**. Against expectations, remittances did not only hold up well during the pandemic, but substantially increased, providing a cushion for those who were most vulnerable. Figure 7 shows the noticeable increase that took place during the first months of the pandemic and how these remittances have held relatively steady at a



Figure 8. Jamaica: revenues and expenditures and balance, FY 2018/19 to FY 2024/25 (in billions of Jamaican dollars and share of GDP)



Source: Government of Jamaica, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Padmore, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> IDB, 2020.

substantially higher rate. This has not only provided an important additional social safety net for many people at risk of poverty, but it has also been of great support to the country's current account, which would otherwise have suffered more from the absence of inflows resulting from tourism, even if imports also declined during the pandemic.

With respect to **fiscal policy**, the government response to the pandemic has been relatively muted, compared to other countries. ECLAC<sup>13</sup> reports that, during 2020, expenditures increased by 3.2 per cent, compared to the year before, whereas the increase was 4.8 per cent for the Caribbean on average (unweighted)<sup>14</sup>. Relatively speaking, the spending increase in Jamaica was geared towards increased transfers, which had an immediate impact on people's wellbeing.



Figure 8 displays the fiscal situation of the country in some detail. The Minister of Finance presented these results when a budget adjustment took place on 28 September due to higher revenues and lower expenditures during the start of the 2021/22 fiscal year<sup>15</sup>. As could have been expected, the realized budget for FY 2020/21 was very different from what had been budgeted, but it is worth noting that, even under the very challenging circumstances, the Government of Jamaica succeeded in running a substantial primary surplus, equal to 3.5 per cent of GDP, in line with the overarching objective of responsible debt management. As mentioned, for FY 2021/22, expenditures and revenues are now estimated higher than before the start of the year, resulting in a 5.9 per cent primary surplus. With interest payments expected to decline over the next years, the primary surplus is expected to

<sup>13</sup> ECLAC, 2021b.

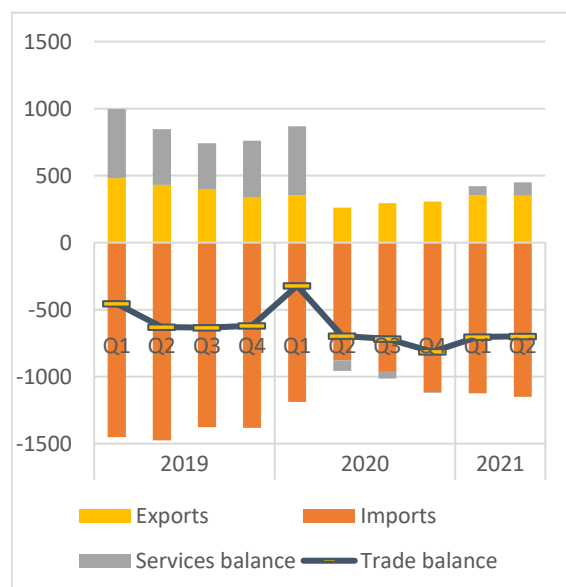
<sup>14</sup> This average excludes Suriname, where spending collapsed by 5.1 per cent resulting from a financial and political crisis that was unrelated to the pandemic. Including Suriname, the Caribbean average showed a 4.0 per cent increase in spending.

decline, while the overall fiscal balance continues to be positive.

An important issue for the Government of Jamaica is the **national debt**, which has been declining for years under successive IMF programmes and a sense of fiscal responsibility shared by both leading parties. The debt peaked at 143.9 per cent of GDP in 2012 and after a rapid decline, it saw another increase in 2020, from 94.3 per cent of GDP to 107.4 per cent of GDP<sup>16</sup>, though it must be noted that this is primarily due to the sudden (and temporary) decline in GDP due to the pandemic, rather than a sudden increase in debt. The government aim to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio to 60 per cent was moved to the end of FY 2027/28 in response to the pandemic and IMF estimates indicate that on current policy, this objective may be achieved earlier. By 2026, IMF projects the debt-to-GDP ratio to reach 62.9 per cent.



Figure 9. Jamaica: trade balance, 2019Q1 to 2021Q2 (in millions of dollars)



Source: Bank of Jamaica, 2021c.

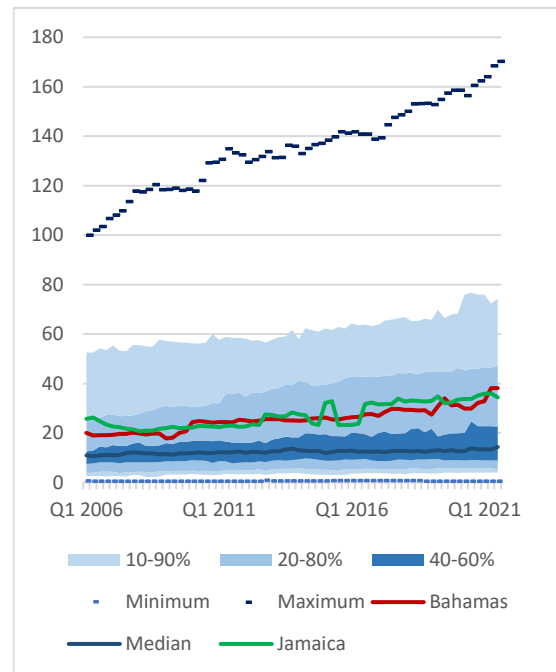
<sup>15</sup> Government of Jamaica, 2021. Please note that the fiscal year runs from 1 April until 31 March in Jamaica.

<sup>16</sup> IMF, 2021.

The overall **trade balance** remained relatively stable during the pandemic. As shown in figure 9, the overall trade balance only worsened slightly, though of course it is somewhat worse when expressed as a share of GDP. However, there was a notable shift in the composition of the overall trade balance. The services balance, which was in a great surplus until the first quarter of 2020, turned negative and only became positive again as of the first quarter of 2021. At the same time, both exports and imports declined, but as the decline in imports was much greater and long-lasting than the decline in exports, the goods balance improved enough to compensate for the change in the service balance.

An issue core to the trade situation in Jamaica is the island's **connectivity**. UNCTAD recently updated its Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI), which helps to show the degree to which Jamaica is connected with the rest of the world and able to trade with it. Figure 10 shows where Jamaica places in an international context<sup>17</sup>. According to the LSCI, Jamaica is on a variable, but generally upward trajectory.

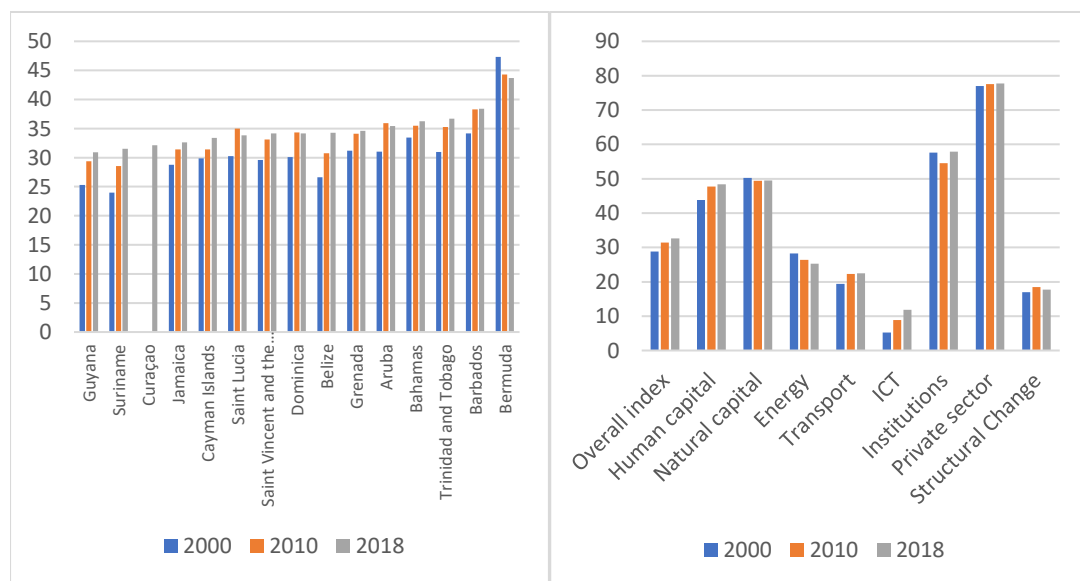
Figure 10. Jamaica and the world: Liner Shipping Connectivity Index, Q1 2016 to Q3 2021 (Index)



Source: UNCTAD, 2021a.

However, it should be noted that the rest of the world is too. While Jamaica was ranked the 37<sup>th</sup> best connected in 2006, it has fallen to 58<sup>th</sup> by the third quarter of 2021. Nevertheless, it is pointed out that Small Island Developing

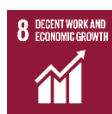
Figure 11a. Productive Capacities Index for different Caribbean economies. 7b. Jamaica: PCI subindices, 2000, 2010 and 2018 (in indices)



Source: UNCTAD, 2021b.

<sup>17</sup> UNCTAD, 2021a.

States (SIDS) generally tend to perform worse in this ranking and Jamaica is considered a positive exception to that rule.



Looking at the more structural state of the economy, a new analysis from UNCTAD suggests that the Jamaican economy is **lagging behind in sophistication** compared to its Caribbean counterparts<sup>18</sup>.



This report develops a Productive Capacities Index (PCI), which summarizes the state of productive capacities on a 0-100 scale, considering eight separate input categories<sup>19</sup>.

Panel A in Figure 11 shows that the productive capacities in Jamaica are estimated as the fourth lowest in the Caribbean, although it should be noted that progress has been made over the 2000 to 2018 period. Panel B shows that Jamaica has seen progress when it comes to human capital, transport and ICT. Unfortunately, some regression is observed with respect to energy, which could be a point of attention for government action. Other indicators have been relatively stable over time, with the high score for the strength of the Jamaican private sector being particularly notable.

## VI. Emerging opportunities and challenges



There were several notable legislative advances during 2021 that have improved the human rights situation for people at risk of being left behind in Jamaica. First, the Senate has passed the **Sexual Harassment Bill**<sup>20</sup>, containing provisions for dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace, schools, correctional institutions, places of safety, nursing homes, medical and psychiatric facilities, among other settings. Related to this, The Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport has expressed a plan to table a series of amendments to the **Domestic Violence Act**,



stemming from the Joint Select Committee hearings and subsequent Recommendations which were made in 2018.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Parliament approved increased fees for legal aid counsel attorneys<sup>22</sup>, which will improve the access to justice. Finally, after a long review, the Disabilities Regulation 2021 finally passed and it is slated to take effect February 14, 2022<sup>23</sup>.

In the area of security, it is notable that the High Court Division of the Gun Court has

reduced the number of **active backlogged cases** to under 10 per cent and net backlogs to less than



five per cent, while the Revenue Court's list is up to date<sup>24</sup>. The CCA had reported that court backlogs are reducing the effectiveness of justice, though it focused especially on district courts. Furthermore, both the Anti-Gang bill<sup>25</sup> and National Identification and Registration Act<sup>26</sup> were passed, both of which will contribute to improving safety. Finally, during 2021, a **national child and teen helpline** called SafeSpot was launched. However, unless digital access is expanded and children's online skills, abilities and protection are strengthened, digital technology may also create new divides that prevent children from fulfilling their potential and put them at increased risk of harm.



On the other hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has also had considerable impact on the prevalence of **violence against women**. Women's vulnerability and susceptibility to violence



<sup>18</sup> UNCTAD, 2021b.

<sup>19</sup> Human capital, natural capital, energy, transport, information and communication technology (ICT), institutions, the private sector and structural change.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> MCGES, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Jamaica Observer, 2021a.

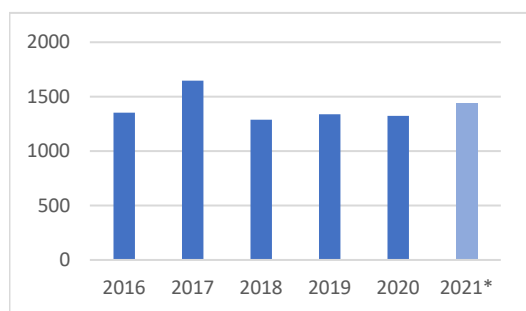
<sup>23</sup> The Gleaner, 2021c.

<sup>24</sup> Jamaica Observer, 2021b.

<sup>25</sup> Linton, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Patterson, 2021.

Figure 12. Jamaica: Murders per year, 2016-2021 (number)



Source: JCF, 2021.

Note: The data for 2021 are complete up to 25 December.

during the pandemic have increased due to fear around the pandemic, job losses, reduction in income and a disruption of livelihoods which has increased stress on families resulting in conflicts and even violence. A reduction in income for women puts them at a greater risk of experiencing financial abuse, with partners withholding necessary resources as a means of punishing or controlling them. Additionally, limitations in movement disrupt women's access to protective networks and reduce their access to support services.



The surge in **violent crime** continues to be a challenge to the government of Jamaica. The island currently averages more than 100 murders and shootings per month or just under four per day. This is in the context of nightly curfews and increase police presence on the roads. As noted in the CCA, the intentional homicide rate is already one of the highest in the world, and the 2021 figure is on track to be the highest since 2017, as shown in figure 12<sup>27</sup>.

## VII. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted greatly on the Jamaican economy and the livelihoods of the people in Jamaica, but during 2021, there has been somewhat of a turnaround. On the

<sup>27</sup> JCF, 2021.

<sup>28</sup> Net-Zero Knowledge Hub, 2021.

The country has made progress in ensuring high-level political commitment against **stigma and discrimination** – for example, through the chairmanship of the State Minister of Health, Mrs. Juliet Cuthbert-Flynn, of the Jamaican partnership to eliminate all forms of HIV-related stigma and discrimination. However, Jamaica needs to do more and better to substantially reduce new HIV infections and retain people living with HIV in treatment and care.



The Government of Jamaica increased its commitment to the reduction of **Greenhouse Gas emissions** in the run-up to COP26 that took place in November 2021. The previous pledge amounted to a reduction of 7.8 per cent (unconditional) to 10 per cent (conditional) by 2030, compared to a Business-as-Usual (BAU) scenario, but the new commitment aims for a reduction of 25 per cent (unconditional) to 29 per cent (unconditional), compared to the BAU scenario<sup>28</sup>.



As of the start of COP26, this meant that Jamaica was the only country from the Caribbean that made a “significant improvement” to its commitment to reduce emissions. Using a USD 1.1 million grant from the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Government has started on its first National Adaptation Plan<sup>29</sup>. During COP26, it was announced that Jamaica will be one of five pilot counties for the **Taskforce on Access to Climate Finance**<sup>30</sup>, which will prove to be an important opportunity for the country.

back of a somewhat faster than expected recovery in tourism, economic growth has been decent as of the second quarter, which has helped to bring back down some of the

<sup>29</sup> Dawkins, 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Jamaica Observer, 2021c.



higher unemployment and other economic challenges.

Nevertheless, the country continues to be at risk due to the recurrent nature of the pandemic and the very low rate of vaccination, which is lower than anywhere else in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. For a long time, the low rate of vaccination was related to the well-documented international inequalities in vaccine distribution, but those challenges have been largely resolved and the primary culprit now is a large degree of vaccine hesitancy.

Beyond the pandemic and its economic fallout, other development challenges continue to be present. Violence continues to be a major issue, with intentional homicide up by more than ten per cent compared to 2020 and possibly the highest in the world. At the same time, progress has been made on the legislative front, as well as on with the backlog of some of the relevant court systems.

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In 2021 the Government of Jamaica proposed a new set of NDCs which substantially increases the country's ambition to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There are also important steps forward with respect to the development of new climate change adaptation plans and the country's selection as a climate finance pilot country may provide additional support for such plans.

With respect to the groups most likely to be left behind, no substantial changes are observed compared to the CCA. Women, young men in marginalized communities, children and adolescents, people living in rural areas, people with disabilities, the LGBTQI+ community, people living with HIV and involuntarily returned migrants continue to be at greatest risk. It will be important to develop policies specifically addressing these groups' challenges, but also to make sure that data is collected in which the specific challenges of such groups can be identified.

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