The pandemic severely impacted the Jamaican economy by disrupting the tourism and service sectors. Jamaica's GDP recorded negative growth of -10.0 percent in 2020, with adverse effects being felt along many different welfare dimensions and likely increased poverty and inequality among Jamaicans.
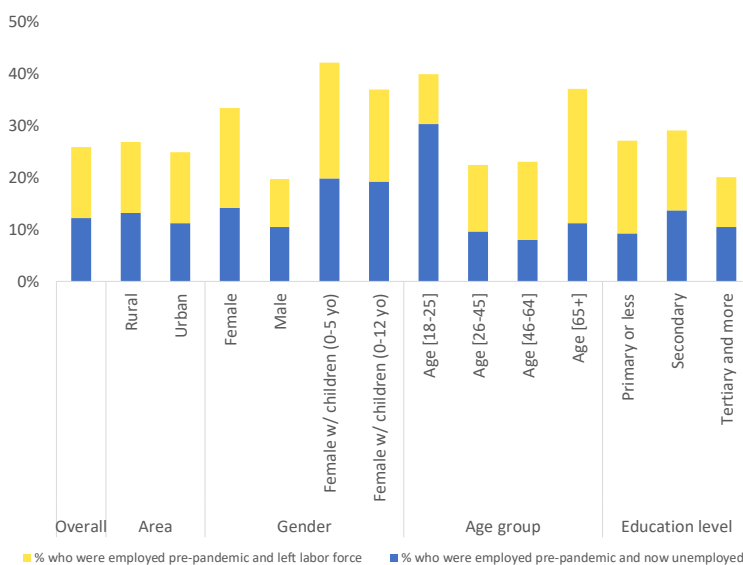
According to the High-Frequency Phone Survey (HFPS), the labor market faced massive disruptions during the pandemic. One-fourth of pre-pandemic workers lost their jobs, with more than half of these leaving the labor force altogether. Women and young adults were particularly affected by job loss: 33.3 and 39.8 percent, respectively. Among the new inactive population, 63.6 percent were women, mainly with secondary education (60.0 percent of women) and without children (58.9 percent of women). At the same time, half of the previously inactive population entered the labor force during the pandemic (50.9 percent), likely pressed by the need to compensate for lost household income. They represented 11.8 percent of the employed workers and 27.5 percent of the unemployed in mid-2021. Half of the new entrants into the labor force were low-skilled women (50.1 percent), most of them with no children under 18. The pandemic also deteriorated job quality. 11.5 percent of the pre-pandemic formal workers transited into informality, and while most of the previously inactive and unemployed workers had found jobs, most new jobs were informal (73.6 percent).

The government responded to the crisis by providing emergency relief to vulnerable households to help them mitigate the impact: 27.0 percent of households received transfers during the pandemic. But emergency transfers were insufficient to compensate for income loss. One in every two households (53.1 percent) reported a reduction in total income compared to pre-pandemic levels. More worrisome, food insecurity significantly increased, with 45.6 percent of households running out of food 30 days before the survey compared to 20.3 percent before the pandemic. Food insecurity was even more frequent among families with primary-educated heads (54.3 percent).
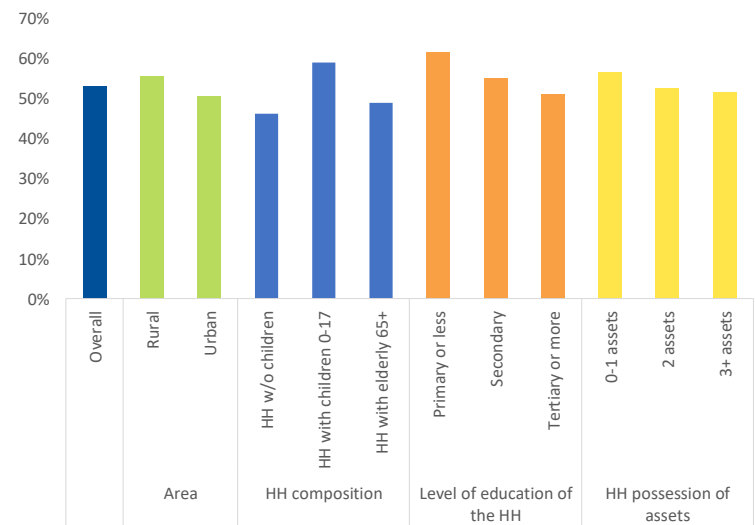
Only 79.1 percent of school-age children attended school in person or virtually in mid-2021, and 73.1 percent were interacting with a teacher. However, only 25.3 percent of enrolled children were attending classes in person. Limited connectivity posed a severe challenge to remote learning in Jamaica. Only 59.3 percent of households in the country had an internet connection, and almost two-thirds of them report having problems with service quality. School closures led to women and men experiencing a higher burden of childcare responsibilities. In the survey, 64.3 percent of women and 53.1 percent of men reported an increase in the time spent accompanying their children's education during the pandemic. Access to digital financial services is still elusive to households in Jamaica and a significant challenge looking forward, as only 1.6 percent of individuals reported using mobile wallets in mid-2021.

The vaccination rate in Jamaica remained one of the lowest in the region (25.0 percent as of January 2022). According to the HFPS, the country also had the second highest vaccination hesitancy in the region: 49.1 percent of the population did not plan on getting the vaccine or was unsure about it.

JOB LOSS (% OF PRE-PANDEMIC WORKERS)

% who were employed pre-pandemic and left labor force
% who were employed pre-pandemic and now unemployed

HOUSEHOLDS (%) WITH REDUCED INCOME

Source: World Bank and UNDP LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 1.

KEY INDICATORS: INDIVIDUALS (18+ years old)

Distribution among groups	Labor			Childcare responsibilities	Health	Finance
	% of employed population (pre-pandemic) who lost their pre-pandemic job	% of inactive population (pre-pandemic) who became active (employed or unemployed)	% of formal workers (pre-pandemic) who became informal	% of population who spent more time accompanying children's education	% of population who is not planning to get vaccinated or unsure (vaccination hesitancy)	% of population using mobile wallets
Overall	25.8%	50.9%	11.5%	59.4%	49.1%	1.6%
Rural	26.8%	51.4%	10.2%	59.9%	51.2%	1.1%
Urban	24.8%	50.4%	12.5%	58.8%	47.1%	2.1%
Females	33.3%	46.5%	5.0%	64.3%	51.5%	1.5%
Males	19.6%	61.3%	17.8%	53.1%	46.7%	1.7%
18 to 25 years old	39.8%	76.8%	20.4%	55.5%	57.8%	4.9%
26 to 45 years old	22.3%	62.6%	7.7%	64.8%	51.1%	1.1%
46 to 64 years old	22.9%	50.6%	13.5%	49.0%	46.6%	0.7%
65 and older	37.0%	21.0%	12.5%	70.0%	34.1%	0.0%
Primary or less	27.0%	42.7%	16.8%	41.6%	47.0%	0.0%
Secondary	29.0%	59.4%	13.1%	56.3%	52.6%	1.6%
Tertiary and more	20.0%	39.2%	9.2%	72.5%	43.3%	2.2%

Source: World Bank and UNDP LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 1.

KEY INDICATORS: HOUSEHOLDS AND CHILDREN

Distribution among groups	Income		Food Insecurity	Education (6-17 yo)		Connectivity
	% HH that report a reduction in total income (current v. pre-pandemic)	% HH that received Emergency Government Transfers during the pandemic	% HHs that ran out of food (last 30 days)	% of children in school age who attended school (in person or virtually)	% of children in school age who interacted with teacher (in-person or online classes)	% HHs that had problems with internet service due to poor access quality / speed
Overall	53.1%	27.0%	45.6%	79.1%	73.2%	65.9%
Rural	55.6%	28.4%	45.3%	78.0%	71.2%	71.3%
Urban	50.7%	25.5%	45.9%	80.3%	75.6%	61.4%
HH w/o children (0-17)	46.3%	21.3%	39.1%	-	-	64.8%
HH with children (0-17)	59.0%	31.8%	51.0%	79.1%	73.2%	66.6%
HH with elderly (65+)	48.9%	30.6%	40.4%	86.4%	76.7%	67.2%
0-1 assets	56.5%	24.2%	66.2%	70.3%	62.3%	71.7%
2 assets	52.6%	27.1%	46.4%	76.7%	70.5%	65.0%
3+ assets	51.6%	28.5%	32.9%	84.3%	79.5%	65.3%
HH education - Primary or less	61.6%	24.4%	54.3%	69.8%	52.1%	77.0%
HH education - Secondary	54.9%	30.4%	49.2%	79.5%	76.6%	67.2%
HH education - Tertiary or more	51.0%	22.1%	27.3%	87.8%	84.0%	60.7%

Source: World Bank and UNDP LAC High Frequency Phone Surveys, Phase II, Wave 1.

HIGH FREQUENCY PHONE SURVEY

The World Bank and UNDP conducted a multi-wave High-Frequency Phone Survey (HFPS) in 2021 to assess the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the welfare of Latin American and Caribbean households. The first wave was collected between May and July 2021, and the data is nationally representative for 24 countries: Antigua & Barbuda, Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia and Uruguay. The data for Brazil was collected between July 26 and October 1. The HFPS provides information on the welfare impacts that households experienced with respect to food insecurity, changes in employment, income changes, access to health and education services, and coping mechanisms. Key indicators on socioeconomic effects are available at the COVID-19 monitoring global dashboard, which provides 96 harmonized indicators across 50 countries in Latin America and the world. For further information, see World Bank and UNDP (2021).