

expensive connectivity skewed to urban centres, with the vast majority of the rural population remaining unserved and underserved; as well as low digital technology adoption across the society converged, negatively affecting the provision of key social services such as education and the delivery of social welfare. Within this context, the crisis also resulted in an increase in public debt to 109 percent of GDP at the end of FY2020/21. The economy started to recover from the COVID-19 impact. Despite the strong decline in remittances at the onset of the Pandemic, for FY2020/21 remittance inflows of US\$2917 million increased by 35.5 percent or USD 764.3 million compared to the previous fiscal year. The latest rating from Moody's Investors Service dated 23 November 2021, affirmed Jamaica's rating at 'B2' with the outlook remaining stable. This rating confirms Jamaica's strong commitment to macroeconomic stability and fiscal consolidation.

Digital infrastructure connectivity

According to the World Bank, in June 2020, 95 percent of Jamaica's population was covered by 3G networks and 90 percent by 4G, compared with the Latin America and the Caribbean averages of 94 percent and 86 percent, respectively. Despite this nearly universal coverage, unique mobile penetration in the country was 67 percent (the lowest level in the English-speaking Caribbean), and unique mobile internet penetration was 48 percent—compared with the regional averages of 70 percent and 53 percent, respectively. Similarly, adoption of fixed broadband services is just 36 percent, compared with 75–85 percent in Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago. Moreover, adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) in production remains low, limiting economic transformation through closer integration with global technological value chains. Within this context, Jamaica ranks 81st of 120 countries on the 2021 Inclusive Internet Index, thirteen places behind Trinidad and Tobago. However, in the readiness category, which examines the capacity to access the internet, including skills, cultural acceptance and supporting policy, Jamaica ranks 63rd, nine places ahead of Trinidad and Tobago. The country ranks in the bottom quartile on the affordability and relevance categories, owing mostly to a non-competitive broadband and wireless market, and a lack of local content³. On the 2020 E-Government Development Index, Jamaica ranks 114 of 193 countries, significantly behind regional leader Barbados, which ranks 62. Within this context, the high political priority placed by the Government of Jamaica on its Digital Agenda even before the Pandemic, has since heightened significantly. In this regard, achieving island-wide broadband coverage is positioned as pivotal to Jamaica's economic recovery from the Pandemic, and a key facilitator of inclusive and sustainable growth. Islandwide broadband coverage is expected to facilitate the scaling up of e-government infrastructure across the country while strengthening Jamaica's readiness to operate in the global digital economy.

Human capacities

By 2025, Jamaica's working age population will be the largest share of the total population, and proportions are expected to remain steady until 2050. Currently, Jamaica's working population is 1.28 million, making the country the largest labor force among English-speaking Caribbean countries. Moreover, the share of the working-age population (ages 15–64) is 68 percent and has been rising⁴. According to Jamaica's Minister of Finance, the country's level of public education spending of approximately 5.2 percent of GDP and 19 percent of total Government expenditure is relatively high compared to regional peers as well as top-performing education systems globally. He noted however, that while the level of spending is adequate, there are challenges with efficient targeting and quality education outcomes⁵. As Jamaica accelerates activities to achieve a knowledge-based society, its education system faces two major challenges: the need to train students to function in a technologically based economy; and the need to help solve the problem of crime. Globally, the COVID-19 crisis threatens gains in human capital that countries have achieved through decades of effort. In 20 years, roughly 46 percent of the typical economy's workforce (people aged 20 to 65 years) will be composed of individuals who were either in school or under the age of 5 during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is projected that human capital losses of today's children will translate into a drop of a full HCI point (0.01) for this future workforce⁶. Within this context, Jamaica's 2020

³ <https://theinclusiveinternet.eiu.com/explore/countries/JM/?category=overall>

⁴ <https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/8a4f6312-2423-4514-ae78-a5109a7a0012/CPSD-Jamaica-Summary.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CVID=o2kCLHE>

⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/jamaica/press-releases/government-jamaica-launches-public-expenditure-review-education-sector-jamaica>

⁶ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/456901600111156873/pdf/The-Human-Capital-Index-2020-Update-Human-Capital-in-the-Time-of-COVID-19.pdf>