LABOUR MARKET DIFFERENTIALS IN THE CARIBBEAN: GENDER, AGE, INDIGENEITY

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BMC	Borrowing Member Country
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
CCLCS	Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies

CLIENT COUNTRIES ABBREVIATIONS

ANG	Anguilla
AB	Antigua and Barbuda
BAH	The Bahamas
BAR	Barbados
BZE	Belize
DOM	Dominica
GND	Grenada
GUY	Guyana
JAM	Jamaica
MON	Montserrat
SKN	St. Kitts and Nevis
SLU	Saint Lucia
SVG	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
SUR	Suriname
TTO	Trinidad and Tobago

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
CWF	Caribbean Workers' Forum
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EDGI	E-Government Development Index
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HEGDI	High E-Government Development Index
ICTU	International Confederation of Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence

KAMPOS	Kwinti, Aluku, Matawai, Paamaka, Okanisi and Saamaka (African-descended tribal people organisation in Suriname)
LFP	Labour Force Participation
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
LSS	Lower Secondary School
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
NEET	Neither in Employment, Education or Training
NFTs	Non-Financial Cooperatives
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSAs	Non-State Actors
NSE	Non-Standard Employment
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSE	Social and Solidarity Economy
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN WOMEN	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VIDS	Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname
WB	World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organisation

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01

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

01 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The dynamics of the contemporary labour market are heavily influenced by the complexities of globalisation, patterns of growth, poverty, structural transformation, technology, demography (including migration and ageing), non-economic risks, and the low participation rate of women and youth, among other factors. The Caribbean Development Bank's (CDB/the Bank) client countries are all small developing countries operating within this global ecosystem.

Globalisation has further driven shifts in production patterns across various sectors, leading to the emergence of more flexible and globalised processes. Enterprises are increasingly designed for flexibility and agility to meet the demands of a dynamic marketplace. The workplace has also evolved beyond formal versus informal parameters, driven by advancements in digital technology. Online gig employment, for instance, blurs traditional work boundaries, necessitating attention to these shifts.

Additionally, the evolving discourse on gender inequality has expanded to an intersectional approach, recognising the compounded nature of multiple discrimination on the grounds of age, location/geography, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, migrant status, and disability. This enriched perspective adds necessary depth to gender inequality discussions. Traditional binary definitions of gender have expanded to include gender identity, defined as a person's self-identified gender, and gender expression, which encompasses behaviour, mannerisms, and appearance. This broader understanding facilitates more inclusive equity conversations.

Access to education and training is crucial for gender equality, enabling economic independence and empowerment.

Access to education and training is crucial for gender equality, enabling economic independence and empowerment. The rise of digital technologies presents both risks and opportunities within the gender construct. While these technologies can create new jobs and offer flexible work arrangements, which may be beneficial to women's employment (in the context of disproportionate care responsibilities), they also exacerbate inequalities for those within the digital divide. The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted these dynamics, showcasing digital technologies' potential while exposing vulnerabilities for those lacking access.

Examining gender differentials in secondary and tertiary education completion rates across 15 client countries[1] reveals patterns of inequality.

1 The countries included in the study are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

Labour force participation rates, representing the active workforce, provide insights into gender equality within the labour market. Despite progress, only eight client countries have legislation addressing equality of opportunity and treatment: Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bahamas, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

However, the existence of such laws does not guarantee equality. This study further reveals that in Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, legislation does not mandate equal pay for equal work, perpetuating gender wage gaps. Further, in Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, laws restrict women's ability to work industrial jobs, highlighting persistent gender discrimination.

The youth cohort remains significantly disadvantaged in the client countries. High unemployment rates highlight their precarious situation, with youth employment proving less resilient compared with the general labour force during socio-economic shocks. Youth unemployment rates increase more rapidly, and recovery is slower compared with the overall labour market, indicating greater vulnerability and the need for targeted interventions to support this demographic. It is important to note that there is an important demand-side challenge for youth employment; there are also not enough jobs in the market, so even young workers with higher educational attainment have a high unemployment rate.

In the four client countries with indigenous tribes (Guyana, Suriname, Dominica, and Belize), there is a trade-off between maintaining community identity and pursuing economic and social progress. Indigenous and tribal areas, particularly in Guyana and Suriname's hinterlands, offer limited formal employment opportunities, necessitating relocation to coastal population centres for work. In Dominica, daily commutes are more feasible due to the country's small size. In Belize, the southern tourism centre provides vibrant economic activity, supporting community coherence. Indigenous and tribal representatives in Suriname and Guyana expressed concerns about the impact of migration on their cultural sustainability. Education and training are critical for formal economy participation, but indigenous people face educational disadvantages affecting their employability. In Suriname, indigenous students are further challenged by language barriers, inadequate teaching staff, and poor infrastructure. Generally, limited village opportunities and the prevalence of informal sector work, including dangerous mining and logging, underscore the need for improved economic and educational support for indigenous and tribal peoples.

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The narrative of equality of opportunity and treatment for gender identities in the Caribbean region remains a work in progress. Across the client countries, despite gains in education, training, and work opportunities, and efforts to reduce workplace discrimination and bias, other issues persist and were exacerbated during periods of disruption. These include the prevalence of informal work, gender-based violence (GBV) and ongoing discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI) individuals and persons with disabilities (PWDs). There is a need to re-evaluate the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms associated with legislative frameworks for equality, making them more transparent and inclusive. Enhanced advocacy efforts, involving collaborations between government, the private sector, trade unions, and civil society, as well as improved social dialogue among stakeholders, are crucial. These steps are vital to building resilience in the client countries as they navigate the complexities of the modern world of work amidst systemic disruptions.

02
INTRODUCTION

02 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background to the Study

This research project was prompted (inspired) by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic not only focused attention on the vulnerability of the Caribbean, but also laid bare differing intensity of impact on women and specific population groups, such as young people, and indigenous and tribal populations. Even within these groups it was possible to discern further strata of differential impact, e.g. female-headed households with one breadwinner.

Understanding the specific impact of the pandemic on workers in the Caribbean proved difficult. Information was available about the health and general economic impact. Information was also available about the impact on workers, however, information related to Caribbean workers tended to be aggregated with and subsumed under data on Latin America. In this regard, the Cipriani College of Labour and Cooperative Studies (CCLCS) facilitated a series of engagements with stakeholders in the world of work during 2020 and 2021.[2] These engagements provided an indication of the issues that were of concern to stakeholders.

2.2 Methodological considerations and limitations to the research

Methodologically, this study involves the collection of quantitative data, in the form of country surveys, as well as qualitative data from interviews and focus groups with critical stakeholders in all the target countries. The scope of the research allows for utilising both purposive sampling, as well as stratified random sampling. In this way there is the ability to solicit information from the target populations, allowing the researcher to make accurate inferences from the statistical data gathered. The survey instrument captures responses from individuals disaggregated by age, gender, ethnicity and other demographic markers (see Appendix). The major limitation of the study was that it was not able to interrogate a representative sample of the target populations.

2 There were more than 30 such engagements, which included one major international conference on the world of work (the Second Caribbean Workers' Forum), with the theme "Understanding the New Normal" and which had more than 400 participants, and one on the social and solidary economy with more than 300 participants. The engagements also included a series of webinars and virtual workshops. Participants included, workers, national and regional workers' organisations, national and regional employers' organisations, human resource management specialists, representatives of civil society, representatives of government (including two prime ministers and at least two ministers). The full list of engagements which informed the research design is included in the methodology in the Appendix to this report.

03

THE WORLD OF WORK

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03 THE WORLD OF WORK

3.1 Complexity in the World of Work

The world of work, like other social and economic spheres contained within globalisation, is marked by complexity.[3] Globalisation has been characterised by increased liberalisation of markets, freer flows of capital, rapid changes in customer preferences, and it is facilitated by global communications.

The Caribbean labour market is a subsystem of this complex global ecosystem. Within this ecosystem, the megatrends which impact the world of work include:

Rapid advances in technology: This trend has leapfrogged other megatrends and is likely to become the single most important factor affecting the world of work, and the pace of adoption and integration is expected to increase, impacting regional opportunities for economic development and resilience. For example, it took 75 years for the telephone to reach 100 million users, 16 years for mobile phones to reach 100 million users, and two months for ChatGPT to reach 100 million users.[4] Technological access will likely become more of a determinant than ever before. This immediately highlights the implications for communities that do not have access to technology.

The rapid advances in technology, produced by the intensification of globalisation, referred to as the **Fourth Industrial Revolution**, has three "big areas of concern" for the world of work. These involve its effect on inequality, security, and identity, voice, and community (Davis, 2016). In relation to **inequality**, Wilkinson and Pickett (2011) have found that "unequal societies tend to be more violent, have higher numbers of people in prison, experience greater levels of mental illness and have lower life expectancies and lower levels of trust". A sense of being unfairly treated or a sense of inequality is a major source of dissatisfaction in all social processes.

New Forms of Work Organisation: Technological advancements and other occurrences, such as COVID-19, continue to spur changes in the way work is organised, giving rise to non-standard forms of employment such as temporary employment, part-time work, on-call or gig work, temporary agency work, multiparty employment relationships, disguised employment, and dependent self-employment.

3 (Dunlop, 2020; Kvilvanga et al, 2020; Jessop, 2020; Dunlop, Radaelli and Trein, 2018; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2015; Levin et al., 2012; Christensen and Lægreid, 2010; Teisman, van Buren and Gerrits, 2009)

4 Source: World of Statistics: https://x.com/stats_feed/status/1631953784820625408

The issue of voice is an important part of identity(ies) and the community(ies).

COVID-19 also increased the use of remote work. Globalisation has also prompted changes in production patterns across all sectors and given rise to more flexible and globalised manufacturing. To meet the needs of this system, new forms of enterprises are emerging, designed for flexibility and agility, and driven by the demands of the marketplace.

Flexible structures and forms of employment impact Davis' (2016) issues of security, and identity, voice, and community. There are two aspects to **security**. The first is employment security.[5] In a rapidly changing workplace, there is increasing anxiety about this kind of security (this will be explored further below). There is also concern about the physical and emotional security of workers within the workplace, especially to ensure protection from issues such as discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, national origin, race, ethnicity, or religion, as well as sexual harassment, GBV, and bullying.

Identity, voice and community are treated as a package. As early as 1992, in his *Jihad vs. McWorld*, Benjamin Barber (1992) noted that as the process of globalisation first started to unfold, it pointed to the challenges that individuals and groups in society would experience as they attempt to reconcile the homogenisation of globalisation with their need for **identity** and **community**. More recently, others (Stiglitz, 2002 and 2017; Hermans and Dimaggio, 2007; Kinvall, 2004; Arnett, 2002) have developed on this theme. In the Caribbean, access to technology has implications, especially for indigenous and tribal peoples, as *well* as communities that construct an identity based on geography, economic circumstances, or other markers.

The issue of **voice** is an important part of identity(ies) and the community(ies). Workers' organisations traditionally give voice in the world of work, and trade unions have been recognised as the main voice of workers. However, the decline of trade union penetration across the world and in the Caribbean is significant (Mitrefinch, 2021; Kollmeyer, 2018; and Visser, 2007). This decline appears to be a product of the changing world of work, particularly the increasing occurrence of non-standard employment, which makes it increasingly difficult for unions to organise and mobilise. Some will argue that the organising principles of neo-liberalism place workers' organisations and collective bargaining at a disadvantage. Moreover, governments appear to have bought into the orthodoxy at the expense of workers. This is characterised by some as a race to the bottom (Henry, 2023; Olney 2013; Gutner and Christensen 2009; and Ozay and Akbar 2003).

5 It is noteworthy that in the changing world of work, workers are less interested in job security and more interested in employment security. They are less inclined to stay with one employer and are concerned about reducing their "job gaps," those periods between jobs.

3.2 Globalisation and Its Impact on Society

At the same time, globalisation is causing rapid changes in the world of work.

Growing Inequality

In launching the 2023 *Jobs Report*, the World Economic Forum (WEF) noted that while technology continues to drive change in the job market, the transformations are being compounded by "economic and geopolitical disruptions and growing social and environmental pressures which are imposing additional layers of complexity", making it necessary to "consider and address the labour-market impact of a multitude of concurrent trends, including the green and energy transitions, macroeconomic factors, and geo-economic and supply-chain shifts" (WEF, 2023).

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) World Employment and Social Outlook report echoed those concerns, noting that labour market imbalances are growing and that, in the context of multiple and interacting global crises, this is eroding progress towards greater social justice (ILO, 2024a).

Concern for Social Issues

In Section 3.6 below, investigations conducted by the International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU) concerning sustainable development illustrate the expansion of workers' and their representatives' concerns. Increasing education of workers coupled with growing levels of interconnectedness of societies has likely resulted in workers in both developing and developed countries making particular calculations about social issues. Such concerns add another layer of complexity for understanding and managing the emerging challenges to the labour market.

The ILO's report highlighted growing labor market imbalances, noting that global crises are hindering progress towards social justice.

Marginalisation

With specific reference to the labour market, Marion Young (1990) defines marginals as "people the system of labour cannot or will not use."[6] Jane Jenson (2000) notes that "as a result, they are excluded from one of society's major integrating activities, thereby missing out on one of the basic factors leading to full inclusion".

One of the causes of some groups or communities being marginalised[7] in the labour market is the changing demands of skills and the ability and speed with which a labour market can meet that changing demand.

6 The National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (2021) states that marginalised communities, peoples or populations are groups and communities that experience discrimination and exclusion (social, political and economic) because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social and cultural dimensions.

7 Among international agencies, a preference has emerged for using the phrase "left behind groups" over the term marginalised. The United Nations (UN) identifies groups that tend to be left behind as including people living in poverty and other vulnerable situations, including children, youth, PWDs, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants. https://www.un.org/en/desa/leaving-no-one-behind

According to the 2023 Future of Jobs Report (WEF, 2023), in 2016, surveyed companies predicted that 35% of workers' skills would be disrupted in the following five years. In 2023, that share had risen to 44%. The implications for these changes are significant for the Caribbean and should inform skills development policies. It is particularly significant, given some of the rigidities of the labour market in the region.

3.3 Overview of the Caribbean Labour Market

3.3.1 Sense Making

In an effort to secure social justice, equity, and fairness, it is important for Caribbean stakeholders to make sense of the labour market complexity and how the interpenetration of social, individual, institutional, market, and ecological forces create and sustain the regional labour market.

Therefore, the stability and sustainable evolution of the Caribbean labour market to promote equity, fairness, and social justice require a systems approach to impact the structural factors influencing the state of the system at any point in time and over time (Bryne and Callaghan, 2022).

Critical for sense-making is relevant, accurate and accessible information. There is a dearth of such information in the Caribbean. A review of available literature and research into Caribbean labour markets shows a paucity of disaggregated data and information for these countries. The need for good data and information on the labour market is essential for robust planning, national and regional productivity, and competitiveness and, ultimately, social, and economic development. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the ILO executed a programme for the development of labour market information systems (LMIS) in the independent countries of the Caribbean. The project anticipated that beneficiary countries would have the methodology, infrastructure, and human capacity to ensure its sustainability by the expiration of donor funding. By 2023, however, while all countries have some form of LMIS, their functionality has faced significant hurdles. These challenges include insufficient regular data production/collection, limited coordination between data producers and users, and capacity limitations. The ILO is continuing to work with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and several countries, and identifies this as a priority investment.

Labour market analyses are vital in the rapidly changing global economy. They are essential in understanding the prospects, perceptions, and vulnerabilities of working people. The disruptions wrought by natural and manmade causes present severe challenges for workers and their representatives, the private sector, governments, and civil society organisations adjacent to the world of work.

3.3.2 The Caribbean Labour Market Complexity

As a small, open region, the Caribbean world of work and labour market are impacted by all the economic and geopolitical factors prevailing globally with little ability to influence them. Public policy in the world of work is further complicated and constrained by challenges peculiar to the region in either their nature or manifestation. These include the following:

Vulnerability to Natural Disruptions

All of the client countries of CDB are classified as Small Island Developing States (SIDS).[8] Since the turn of the century, various client countries have been adversely affected by devasting hurricanes (Dominica, Grenada, Saint Lucia), volcanic eruptions (Montserrat and St. Vincent and the Grenadines), and major flooding events (Dominica, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago). Climate change data suggests that adverse weather patterns will increase in frequency and intensity. Sea level rise will affect all the countries in the Caribbean and will be particularly disruptive to coastal communities and related economic sectors.

If inadequately managed, workers face specific threats as a result of climate change, including:

- Loss of livelihood, employment, working hours and income.
- Increased risks to health, safety, and wellness.
- Compromise of rights and standards at work.
- Family and community harm.

Vulnerability to Economic and Social Disruptions

As small, open economies, client countries are susceptible to disruptions over which they have no control. This also includes disruptions to the economic system occasioned by market instability (the financial crisis of 2008), and geo-politics (e.g., the war in Ukraine). COVID-19 highlighted the almost total interconnection of the world and the speed with which disruptions can spread. The pandemic also demonstrated the challenges of preserving social justice and protecting the most vulnerable when disruptions do occur.

Concentration of Economic Activities

In many client countries, one or two sectors dominate the economy. For island countries, except for Trinidad and Tobago, tourism is the single largest contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and to employment. For example, tourism accounts for approximately 70% of GDP and more than 50% of employment in the Bahamas. The sector accounts for more than 50% of GDP in many Caribbean countries. In Trinidad and Tobago, and more recently in Guyana, the energy sector dominates the economy.

8 This includes Belize, Guyana, and Suriname even though they are not islands but by virtue of their being low lying coastal states.

Such concentration, especially in sectors that are driven by international forces and spillover benefits to the region, creates rigidities in the respective labour markets.

Skills Mismatch

Downes (2009) identified the imperative for the Caribbean "to make major adjustments to their economic structure and processes in order to benefit from the global economic changes and hence avoid economic marginalisation". One of the main challenges facing the region was listed as "the mismatch between the educational system and the needs of the labour market". In the discussion of marginalisation above, the implication of skills mismatch for social justice was noted.

The Significance of the Informal Sector

Peters (2017) estimated the size of the informal sector in six client countries as an average 20%–30% in the Bahamas, 30%–40% in Barbados, 29%–33% in Guyana, 35%–44% in Jamaica, 35%–45% in Suriname, and 26%–33% in Trinidad and Tobago.[9] While the informal economy is recognised as an engine for job creation, informality can multiply decent work deficits. Among other things, there is the potential for informality to (ILO, 2024):

- Deny access to social protection.
- Negatively impact access to fundamental rights at work.
- Undermine social justice.
- Restrict opportunities to express interests through social dialogue.
- Contribute to inequality and the working poor, particularly women.
- Hamper opportunities for economic transformation and better jobs.
- Disproportionately disadvantage youths.

The 2023 ILO World Employment and Social Outlook notes that informality and working poverty rose further with the COVID-19 crisis. The ILO described the situation in 2023 as "highly complex and uncertain". One of the major concerns was that one out of every two employed persons in the Caribbean was engaged in informal employment. The ILO notes that there is "a conjunction of multiple crises that impact labour markets and it is necessary to implement policies to create formal employment" and that "in this economic scenario, the most pressing labour issue for the region is the quality of employment and the insufficient labour income generated by workers and their families". One of the challenges with informality in the region is that it is usually accompanied by job instability, low income, and limited social protection.

9 It is noted that the size of the informal economy can vary significantly. For example, Theodore (2017) put the size of the Trinidad and Tobago informal sector in a range between 28% and 43% for the years 2015 and 2016.

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Unemployment and Underemployment

The labour market in the Caribbean is inelastic, with high rates of unemployment and underemployment in many countries. Youth unemployment is particularly worrisome. According to CDB, "Youth unemployment rates in the Caribbean are among the highest in the world. Nearly 1 in every 4 young people in the Caribbean is unemployed, compared with 2 in every 25 adults. Unemployment among young women is more than 30%, compared with 20% for young men" (Lashley et al., 2015).

Migration

There has always been intra-regional migration. Another established phenomenon is the rate at which extra-regional migration is occurring. The political unrest in Venezuela has led to an influx of migrants to many client countries, most notably Trinidad and Tobago. The estimates vary significantly, but the most recent estimates range between 30,000 and 50,000 immigrants. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates 33,000, while ACAPS[10] estimates the number in November 2023 was 44,800. Given the porous nature of the southern coastline, its proximity to Venezuela, and the long-standing informal contacts, it is suggested that the number may be significantly higher.

Migrants themselves take many risks in search of better economic activities. There have been reports of loss of life because of overloaded, unsafe boats[11], and/or criminal activities. In October 2023, two bodies were found in an area known as a location for human trafficking and arms smuggling between Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago. Migrants do not only come from nearby countries. In May 2021, a small boat was found adrift off the coast of Tobago with more than one dozen bodies aboard. These were assumed to be the remains of migrants who had set out from the west coast of Africa.

Irregular migration impacts the labour market of the receiving country in many ways, especially countries with high unemployment and underemployment rates, and a large informal economy. These include:

- Competition with locals for jobs, especially unskilled jobs and jobs in the informal economy.
- Opportunities for denial of rights, including workplace violence, unpaid labour, and forced labour.
- Increase in the challenges faced by under-resourced labour administration systems.
- Additional stress on social protection programmes and other service delivery.

10 ACAPS, identifies itself as "an independent analytical voice helping humanitarian workers, influencers, fundraisers, and donors make better-informed decisions and respond more effectively to disasters". The letters in the name do not represent an acronym.
11 See, for example, https://respuestavenezolanos.iom.int/en/news/unhcr-iom-ohchr-and-unicef-deeply-saddened-venezuelan-babys-death-during-interception-sea-trinidad-tobago.

While uncontrolled migration creates another level of complexity in the short run, migration can enhance the human capital stock and boost economic and social development.

The Caribbean Single Market and Economy

One of the implications of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, especially the right of free movement of persons, will be additional stress on labour administration and industrial relations systems. While there are procedures for the movement of persons within the framework of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, the situation can be exploited for the denial of rights and protections as in other forms of migration. Additionally, there will be a need for better harmonisation and coordination of labour market policies if the system is to function as seamlessly as possible.

3.4 Readiness for the digital workplace

Hötte et al. (2023) have concluded that technology's labour-displacing effects are more than offset by its labour-creating effects. The ability of a labour force to take advantage of the labour-creating effects, however, is a function of other policies in the system.

A useful proxy for the readiness of a country for the technological challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is the UN E-Government Development Index.[12] Table 1 shows the relative ranking (out of 193 countries) of independent client countries on the index between 2016 and 2022. Performance has been uneven and at the lower half of international rankings, albeit improving and trending positively, with 3 of the 13 client countries tending downwards, 2 remaining stable, and 8 ascending.

3.5 Disquiet and discontent and their impact on the labour force

In 2002, Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz described the discontents of globalisation. In a revisit of the theme in 2017, he not only confirmed the initial analysis but noted that, in many ways, the discontents had worsened among working people. The disquiet among workers has also been highlighted by ICTU in its biennial global polls[13] (International Trade Union Confederation [ITCU] 2017, 2020, 2023).

12 "The E-Government Development Index (EGDI) presents the state of E-Government Development of the UN Member States. Along with an assessment of the website development patterns in a country, EDGI incorporates the access characteristics, such as the infrastructure and educational levels, to reflect how a country is using information technologies to promote access and inclusion of its people. The EGDI is a composite measure of three important dimensions of e-government, namely: provision of online services, telecommunication connectivity and human capacity". https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/About/Overview/-E-Government-Development-Index.

13 The ITCU conducts its global poll on average every other year. The poll is conducted in some 15 countries. No Caribbean country has ever been included.

Table 1: *E-Government Index - Independent BMC Ranking*

COUNTRY	2016		2022			MOVEMENT 2026 TO 2022
	GROUP	RANK	GROUP	RATING CLASS	RANK	
Bahamas	HEGDI	93	HEGDI	HV	66	+23
Grenada	HEGDI	88	HEGDI	HV	66	+22
Barbados	HEGDI	54	HEGDI	H3	79	-25
St. Kitts and Nevis	HEGDI	94	HEGDI	H3	87	+7
Trinidad and Tobago	HEGDI	70	HEGDI	H3	93	-23
Antigua and Barbuda	MEGDI	100	HEGDI	H2	99	+1
Jamaica	MEGDI	112	HEGDI	H2	102	+10
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	MEGDI	115	HEGDI	H2	107	+8
Suriname	MEGDI	110	HEGDI	H2	108	+2
Dominica	MEGDI	109	HEGDI	H2	109	0
Saint Lucia	MEGDI	114	HEGDI	H2	114	0
Guyana	MEGDI	126	HEGDI	H1	123	+3
Belize	MEGDI	122	HEGDI	Hi	133	-11

Source: UN EGDI.

The progression of the Global Poll shows a deepening and widening of worker anxiety (See Table 2). In 2017, the concerns were primarily about bread-and-butter issues—wages, jobs, and standard of living. The 2020 poll was taken in February/March 2020, just before the effects of COVID-19 started to be felt. Already, workers' concerns were expanding beyond bread-and-butter issues, and topline findings detected growing alienation. In 2022, as the pandemic stage of COVID-19 was waning, the topline findings included words such as despair, anxiety and crisis.

The rise of anxiety and other emotional distress on the effectiveness of the world of work should not be underestimated. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that some 12 billion working days are lost every year to depression and anxiety at a cost of USD1 trillion in lost productivity (WHO, 2022). WHO identifies the risk to mental health at work to include:

Table 2: *Topline findings of the ICTU Global Polls*

YEAR	RANK
2017	• Family incomes are in crisis • There is wage despair – minimum wage is not enough to live a decent life • Working people are struggling • There are not enough jobs
2020	• Workers are worried about climate change • Workers are worried about rising inequality • Workers feel powerless • It is likely that the next generation will find a decent job • The minimum wage is not sufficient • Workers are losing control over their work
2022	• The social contract is broken • Working people are struggling worldwide • Family incomes are in crisis • There are not enough for the present and for the next generation • There is wage despair • There is global anxiety about the world and work • Governments must act in the interests of working people • There is a failure of corporate social responsibility

Source: https://www.ituc-csi.org/.

- Under-use of skills or being under-skilled for work.
- Excessive workloads or work pace, understaffing.
- Long, unsocial or inflexible hours.
- Lack of control over job design or workload.
- Unsafe or poor physical working conditions.
- Organisational culture that enables negative behaviours.
- Limited support from colleagues or authoritarian supervision.
- Violence, harassment or bullying.
- Discrimination and exclusion.
- Unclear job role.
- Under or over-promotion.
- Job insecurity, inadequate pay, or poor investment in career development.
- Conflicting home/work demands.

3.6 Reducing decent work deficits

3.6.1 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Sustainable Development Goals represent an aspiration and universal standard for social justice, fairness and equity. SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth - is at the heart of the SDGs related to the world of work.

As the agency of the UN that is charged with leading on SDG 8, the ILO has identified decent work deficits, which are expressed in the following:

- **The Employment Gap:** The inability of persons seeking employment to find productive, fairly-compensated and rewarding work.

- **The Rights Gap:** The denial of the fundamental principles and rights at work – freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, equality of opportunity and treatment, absence of child labour, freedom from forced labour, and a safe and healthy workplace.
- **The Social Protection Gap:** The absence of reasonable protection for old age and invalidity, health care, and sickness.
- **The Social Dialogue Gap:** The denial of or absence of opportunities for voice.

SDG 8 creates the linkage between a workplace where workers' aspirations are met and the national outcome of economic growth. However, SDG 8 does not exist in a vacuum. In particular: SDG 1: No poverty; SDG 4: Inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities; SDG 5: Gender equality; and SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, must be seen in tandem with SDG 8, either as process and/or outcome. Process in that achievement of the targets in one or more area impacts the achievement of others.

SDG 1, no poverty, is principally an outcome that could result, inter alia, from payment of a living wage, provision of social protection floors, and protection from the negative effects of economic, social, and environmental disasters. One of the recurrent concerns is the issue of the working poor because of informality and inadequate social protection coverage.

SDG 4 directly addresses the need for adequate and equitable preparation and continuing development of workers, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or other considerations, to ensure they have an equal chance in the changing world of work. This is particularly important for communities that are already disadvantaged. Regarding SDG 5: Gender equality, according to the UN, at the present rate, it will take 140 years to achieve equal representation in leadership between women and men in the world of work. According to the ILO, the phrase "decent work" sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives – aspirations for opportunity and income; rights, voice, and recognition; family stability and personal development; fairness and equality. Ultimately, these various dimensions of decent work underpin social peace in communities and society at large.

Ultimately, these various dimensions of decent work underpin social peace in communities and society at large.

The ILO shares the concerns of workers raised in successive ITUC Global Polls. The Centenary Declaration on the Future of Work notes that notwithstanding advances in the world of work, "persistent poverty, inequalities and injustices, conflict, disasters and other humanitarian emergencies in many parts of the world constitute a threat to those advances and to securing shared prosperity and decent work for all" (ILO, 2019).

Consistent with SDG 8, "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all", the Centenary Declaration emphasised that "it is imperative to act with urgency to seize the opportunities and address the challenges to shape a ***fair***, ***inclusive***, and secure future of work with ***full***, ***productive***, ***and freely chosen employment and decent work for all.***" And that "such a future of work is fundamental for sustainable development that puts an end to poverty and leaves no one behind".

Relatedly, the World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation points to the aspirational dimensions of fairness in the world of work: "A path of development that provides opportunities for all, expands sustainable livelihoods and employment, promotes gender equality and reduces disparities between countries and people" (World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation, 2004).

3.7 Closing the Gaps

3.7.1 International Labour Standards

As noted, the ILO is the focal point for SDG 8. The ILO sets international labour standards and monitors countries' compliance with them. International labour standards provide an objective frame of reference for assessing fairness, equity, and social justice in the world of work.

A useful point of departure is the ***Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work***.[14] The Declaration (as amended) identifies five categories of principles and universal rights:

i. The freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.
ii. The elimination of forced or compulsory labour.
iii. The abolition of child labour.
iv. The elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
v. A safe and healthy working environment.

The Declaration calls to mind the eleven fundamental or core conventions of the ILO, namely:

i. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining
- **a. CO87** – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87).
- **b. CO98** – Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98).

14 The Declaration was first made in 1998 and was amended in 2022.

ii. Elimination of Forced Labour

a. **CO29** – Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).
b. **PO29** – Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930.
c. **C105** – Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105).

iii. Abolition of Child Labour

a. **C138** – Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138).
b. **C182** – Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182).

iv. Elimination of Discrimination

a. **C100** – Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100).
b. **C111** – Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111).

v. Occupational Safety and Health

a. **C155** - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155).
b. **C187** - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187).

For the purposes of understanding and eliminating differentials in the labour force, the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work should be read in conjunction with the ***Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalisation***.

International labour standards are given effect when they are ratified by national governments, and the status of ratification is an indication of the strength of the labour administration of a country and its commitment to rights at work. The status of the ratification of the core conventions by the Bank's client countries is shown in Table 3.

It is noteworthy that all the client countries have ratified the discrimination conventions (C100 and C111), and only one country has not ratified the Right to Organise Convention (C087). Of concern is the low incidence of ratification of the occupational safety and health instruments (C155 and C187). Considering the rapidly changing workplace and the growing threats to workers' health, safety, and wellness, including the increased recognition of mental wellness as a matter of concern to an effective workplace, this is a serious gap and will be examined below.

The ILO has also designated four conventions as Governance (priority) Conventions. These are seen as critical for the functioning of the international labour system. They are:

International labour standards provide an objective frame of reference for assessing fairness, equity, and social justice in the world of work.

iii. **C081** – Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (N0. 81).
iv. **C122** – Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (N0. 122).
v. **C129** – Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1968 (N0. 129).
vi. **C144** – Tripartite Consultations (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144).

Most client countries have ratified the Labour Inspection (C081) and Tripartite Consultations (C144) conventions. However, a significant number of countries have not ratified the Employment Policy Convention (C122), which is of concern (See Table 4).

Table 3: *Ratification of fundamental conventions by BMCs*

CLIENT COUNTRY	FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION		FORCED LABOUR			CHILD LABOUR		DISCRIMINATION		OSH	
	C087	C098	C029	P029	C105	C138	C182	C100	C111	C155	C187
AB	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
BAH	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		
BDS	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		
BZE		●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	
DOM	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		
GND	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	
GUY	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	
JAM	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
SKN	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		
SLU	●	●	●		●		●	●	●	●	
SVG	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		
SUR	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		
TTO	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		

Source: ILO.

3.7.2 Institutional Capacity

The primary institution for managing the labour force in each client country is the Ministry of Labour, which is recognised for this purpose by the ILO.

In many client countries, workers and their representatives have expressed dissatisfaction with their respective Ministry of Labour's resourcing, and technical competence. Participants in focus groups observed that Ministers of Labour are often viewed as low-status positions in national cabinets, reflecting a lack of understanding of the centrality of Labour administration for national development. Workers and their representatives also point to the chronic understaffing of labour ministries. They believe that as a result, policy in the area is insufficiently robust and that government's failure to effectively staff labour ministries reflects an inadequate appreciation of the importance of managing the labour market.

Table 4: *Ratification of governance (priority) conventions by BMCs*

Country	C081	C122	C129	C144
AB	•	•		•
BAH	•	•		•
BDS	•	•		•
BZE	•			•
DOM	•	•		•
GND	•			•
GUY	•		•	•
JAM	•	•		•
SKN				•
SLU				•
SVG	•	•		•
SUR	•	•		•
TTO	•	•		•

Source: ILO.

3.7.3 Policy

It was noted above that many client countries have not ratified C122 (Employment Policy Convention).

Even for those countries that have ratified the Convention, comprehensive employment policies are absent. In national development plans, the aspirational goals of employment are listed as a priority; however, the practical nuts and bolts of an employment policy are missing. Mainstreaming employment objectives in economic and sectoral policies could be viewed as the missing link in countries not realising their labour market goals.

The Republic of Korea is a useful example of a robust, proactive approach to employment promotion. Joonmo Cho and Sangbok Lee (2017) trace the development of Korea's employment strategy, including the institutional arrangement with the redesignation of the Ministry of Labour as the Ministry of Employment and Labour. A key part of the policy was to move to national level employment policy instead of ministry-specific employment programmes.

3.7.4 The role of workers' organisations

Downes (2009) notes that the success of policies and programmes to address the challenges of the Caribbean labour market depends on the cooperation and will of the key stakeholders.

Accordingly, it is important that these policies and programmes are designed and implemented in such a way as to make the operation of the labour market responsive to the collective needs of the stakeholders. These policies and programmes would therefore cover the demand and supply sides of the labour market along with the institutional and regulatory frameworks governing its operation.

As noted above in Section 3.1, one of the concerns arising from globalisation was the loss of voice. Moreover, one of the decent work deficits is inadequate provision for social dialogue. In the Caribbean, business support organisations representing the private sector are well-organised and well-funded, and are well prepared to intervene at the national and regional levels. Governments have at their disposal the resources of the state to prepare and participate in the processes related to the management of the labour market. In the social dialogue process, workers and their organisations are the most disadvantaged.

With declining membership, under-resourced organisations, including very limited education and research capacity in most cases, the regional labour movement is constrained in providing voice for reducing decent work deficits.

Photo: Drazen Zigic

04

GENDER DIFFERENTIALS

04 GENDER DIFFERENTIALS

4.1 Introduction

Caribbean scholarship on gender and the world of work has a long and rich history. The research generated by scholars and regional units, such as the Institute for Gender and Development Studies in addition to collaboration with international organisations such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), World Bank (WB), and ILO, has produced a diverse collection of important academic and technical knowledge products.

The body of work includes historical precedents for the gendered division of labour (Osirim, 1997), gendered educational achievement (Figueora, 2000), female employment work patterns (Seguino, 2004), gender justice (Barriteau, 2007), gender leadership patterns in CARICOM (Iyahen, 2019) and, more recently, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Padmore, 2021), in addition to the impact of neo-liberal adjustment programmes on Caribbean employment patterns (Reddock, 2021).

As the body of work has grown, certain trends embodied within deserve attention. For instance, the transition to intersectional analyses in understanding gender inequality, recognises the exacerbation of vulnerabilities when gender discrimination traverses discrimination based on age, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, migrant status, and even disability. In post-colonial societies such discussions add depth and complexity to the experience of gender inequality. In addition, the ways in which gender is understood have also been transformed. Analyses based on the traditional gender binary are now augmented by discussions around gender identity and expression, which includes behaviour, mannerisms, and appearance. This creates an enlarged scope and space for equity conversations for those, outside the binary, who identify differently. Furthermore, analysis of the world of work has also transcended its traditional formal versus informal parameters; as new sectors and non-standard forms of work emerge, such as online gig employment, which blur traditional work norms. These changes are recognised and given appropriate attention within this project.

With these transformations and given that this section is concerned with gender differentials related to the equality of opportunity and treatment in the 15 client countries, it is useful to provide an overview of the relevant gender research findings to provide context for the project's own work.

This is followed by the discussion of the project's findings and data in relation to identified metrics for equality of opportunity and treatment in the world of work, along with relevant recommendations where required.

4.2 Relevant Research Findings

4.2.1 Legislative Frameworks

Only eight of the client countries studied have legislation pertaining to the equality of opportunity and treatment. These territories are Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Bahamas, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

However, the existence of such laws does not always translate into equality of opportunity for all citizens within that society. For example, in five, namely Antigua and Barbuda, Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago, existing legislation does not mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value, signalling the persistence of gender wage gaps in these territories. In addition, in Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the equal opportunity legislation does not allow women to work in an industrial job in the same way as men, which can result in the disadvantaging of women in this sector; in the latter country, this potential is exacerbated as the law overall does not prohibit discrimination in employment based on gender.

In Barbados, gender data remains scarce, hampering efforts to inform and update policy and legislation to narrow gaps between men and women, boys, and girls. However, the Bahamas presents a glimmer of hope as, in 2021, it was ranked 2nd in the WEF Global Gender Gap for economic participation and opportunity between men and women (85.7%), after Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic. Altogether, these observations point to the need for rigorous review, monitoring and strengthening of the legislative frameworks to continue the trajectory towards equality of opportunity. There is also the need for advocacy and social dialogue with governments where such legislation is absent, namely Belize, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia.

4.2.2 Access to Education and Training

Access to education and training opportunities is a significant stage in the provision of gender equality of opportunity.

Such access is the key to participation in the world of work and, by extension, economic independence and empowerment. It can be measured through completion rates at different levels.

Table 5: *School completion rates*

CLIENT COUNTRIES	FEMALE (%) (LSS)	MALE (%) (LSS)	FEMALE (%) (TE)	MALE (%) (TE)	ADOLESCENT FERTILITY RATE (BIRTHS PER 1,000) 2021
Antigua and Barbuda (2019)	112	115	34.1	15.5	33.1
Barbados (2022)	87.5	87.1	-	-	42.3
Belize (2022)	67.2	56.4	-	-	57.1
Dominica (2015)	86.3	88.3	-	-	38.5
Grenada (2020)	94	91	109	85.6	32.7
Guyana (2012)	-	-	15.5	7.75	66.6
Jamaica (2020)	84.5	84.4			32.8
St. Kitts-Nevis (2016)	125	116	121	62.7	38.2
Saint Lucia (2022)	93	83	22.5	10.2	36.9
St. Vincent and the Grenadines (2018)	117	105	29.9	17.6	47.9
Trinidad and Tobago	-	-	-	-	38.1
Suriname (2021)	51.9	31	-	-	56.1

Source: WB Gender Portal and WB Open Data Portal.

Across the client countries, the gender differentials for secondary school and tertiary level completion were examined and certain patterns emerged (See Table 5).

While at the lower secondary school (LSS) level the gender differences were not stark, at the tertiary level there is a considerable difference in completion between males and females, with significantly higher completion rates for female students. This raises concerns about male underachievement in academics and preparedness for participation in the labour market.

Accompanying these concerns about academic performance were the neither in employment, education or training (NEET) rates for the regional youth (See Table 6). Despite the limited data, where available, there was an observed post-pandemic increase in NEET rates for young men (up to 4% in some cases), while rates remained roughly consistent for young women.

Additionally, the high overall rate of young women in NEET post-COVID-19 warrants examination (18%–41%). One issue that influences the higher NEET rate for females is teenage pregnancies.

Table 6: *Gender differentials for NEET: pre- and post-COVID*

CLIENT COUNTRIES	FEMALE (%) PRE-COVID-19	MALE (%) PRE-COVID-19	FEMALE (%) POST-COVID-19	MALE (%) POST-COVID-19
Barbados (2016)	112	115	34.1	15.5
Belize (2019)	87.5	87.1	-	-
Guyana (2019)	67.2	56.4	-	-
Jamaica (2018, 2021)	86.3	88.3	-	-
Saint Lucia (2018, 2022)	94	91	109	85.6
Trinidad and Tobago (2019, 2022)	-	-	15.5	7.75
Suriname (2016)	84.5	84.4		

Source: WB Gender Portal and WB Open Data Portal.

Table 5 shows the relatively high adolescent birth rate for some client countries (the global average is 42.5 per 1,000). At the same time, while young women in NEET may outnumber young men, women increasingly outperform men in higher education.

Such patterns raise many questions about the creation of employment, patterns of unpaid care work, the readiness of the upcoming generation for limited formal employment opportunities and the increased susceptibility to vulnerable employment or work in the informal sector. This can place women on a trajectory of lower earnings, missed opportunities and forfeited potential (De Hoyos, et al. 2016). In addition, Szekely and Karver (2015) demonstrate the pernicious effects of generations that have higher numbers of NEETs on productivity levels and overall economic growth. In a general way, the phenomenon may also contribute to crime, addiction, disruptive behaviour, and social disintegration (Chioda, 2015, Bussolo et al., 2014, and Hoyos et al., 2016).

4.2.3 Regional Labour Force Participation and Unemployment Rates

An examination of the gender differentials and concomitant trends of the labour force participation rate across the client countries provides insight into equality of opportunity within the labour market itself.

Labour force participation (LFP) rates represent the available workforce that contributes to a country's economy, providing wage labour for goods and services over a given period. This includes persons who are 15 years and older who are currently employed and/or who are actively seeking employment (See Table 7).

Table 7: *Gender differentials in labour force participation - pre- and post-COVID*

CLIENT COUNTRIES	FEMALE (%) PRE-COVID-19 (2018)	MALE (%) PRE-COVID-19 (2018)	FEMALE (%) POST-COVID-19 (2022-23)	MALE (%) POST-COVID-19 (2022-23)
Bahamas	66.9	80.9	65.3	79.5
Barbados	59.5	68.1	58.5	66
Belize	48.9	78.6	50.7	77.1
Guyana	42.4	66.6	39.6	62.5
Jamaica	58.5	73.1	61.4	75.8
Saint Lucia	64.7	76.6	62.6	73.6
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	54.5	75.1	55.1	75.3
Suriname	45.9	66.9	44.7	64.1
Trinidad and Tobago	48.6	67.2	45.9	63.8

Across client countries, LFP rates are higher for men than for women. Additionally, even though it was noted earlier that the completion rates at the tertiary level are better for women, it appears that it does not translate into better access to economic and employment opportunities. The percentage difference between women and men in these LFP rates is quite high and indicates the extent of the gender inequality in the respective societies. A further comparison between the periods prior to and after the pandemic shows a further uptick that speaks to the continued struggle of women to secure formal employment in the region. When this was examined together with unemployment rates for different genders during and post COVID-19 pandemic, the concerns with the female struggle to enter the formal economy were even more alarming and deserve further attention (See Table 8).

The International Labour Conference approved a Resolution on Decent Work and the Care Economy at its 112th Session. The resolution highlights the essential links between the care economy, gender equality, decent work, sustainable development, and social justice. Women are the predominant suppliers of care services and perform an estimated 76.2% of the total amount of unpaid care services. Detailed data on the value of care work and unpaid care services for the Caribbean is not available. The ILO's estimates for the whole of the Americas are that men provide 155 minutes of unpaid care work per day as compared with women, who provide 268 minutes.[15]

15 ILO Care Work and Care Jobs For the Future of Decent Work, G& Employment Task Force Meeting, Vancouver, October 2-3, 2018.

Across client countries, LFP rates are higher for men than for women.

During the pandemic, this situation worsened for many women (Padmore, 2021). Throughout the region, the lack of quality and sufficient provisions in the care sector were the main complaints among female workers as they revealed their disproportionate responsibilities, exacerbated during the pandemic. Many had to make the choice to leave their jobs to serve as full-time caregivers to young and elderly dependants. Others found their mental health compromised as they juggled both domestic and professional duties while working remotely. For some women, flexible work arrangements were impossible, due to the nature of their employment. During lockdown protocols, women with low incomes often did not have the support systems available to those in higher income contexts.[16] Such issues had negative impacts on worker productivity and overall well-being.

The care economy, while in its present state, reinforces conditions that boost disadvantages of women in the labour market and has the potential to be a source of decent work.[17],[18]

Seguino (2004, 27) has highlighted the gender difference within employment sectors (such as the predominance of women in service sectors), as well as employer preference for male workers during periods of economic growth, even in those sectors, such as the service sector, where female workers are in the majority. Reddock (2021, 70-94) has reviewed the impact of the public sector on this gender disparity. She claims that neo-liberalist policies in the 1990s were detrimental to the female labour market as they led to a reduction of the public sector (where many women found employment) and to a transition to contract employment. As a result, the traditional job security associated with the public sector declined; overall, a reduced public sector translated into fewer employment and career advancement opportunities in the region and elsewhere.

Reddock (Ibid) also notes other gender-related patterns; for instance, despite the high female academic achievement in the region, male earnings continue to surpass those of female earnings, seen particularly in countries such as Barbados and Jamaica.

Gender wage gaps have serious implications for women in employment in that it results in financial disadvantage (especially harmful for female-headed households), it contributes to career demotivation and, most significantly, reduces their bargaining power in the workplace, undermining the key principles of decent work.

16 ILO 2022. Care at work Investing in care leave and services for a more gender equal world of work. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_838653.pdf.
17 ILO 2023. Moving towards equality: The role of care work in the Latin American labour market. https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/moving-towards-equality-role-care-work-latin-american-labour-market.
18 ILO 2022. Los cuidados en el trabajo: Invertir en licencias y servicios de cuidados para una mayor igualdad en el mundo del trabajo. Informe regional complementario para América Latina y el Caribe.

Table 8: *Gender differentials in employment rates pre- and post-COVID*

CLIENT COUNTRIES	YEAR	UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (FEMALE %)	UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (MALE %)
Barbados	2019	7.3	9.5
	2023	7.9	8.5
Belize	2019	13.6	5.9
	2021	15.1	6.8
Grenada	2020	16.5	11
Guyana	2020	17.2	14.7
	2021	16.5	13.9
	2022	13.8	11.3
	2023	12	9.2
Jamaica	2020	7.4	5.7
	2021	6.3	4.2
	2022	5.1	3.2
Saint Lucia	2020	27.7	10.3
	2021	22.8	18.3
	2022	17.8	14.3
Montserrat	2020	6.2	10.3
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2020	18.1	22.5
	2021	18.1	21.5
	2022	17.4	21.1
	2023	16.5	20
Trinidad and Tobago	2020	18.1	22.5
	2021	18.1	21.5
	2022	17.4	21.1
	2023	16.5	20
Suriname	2020	12.1	6.4
	2021	11.7	6.3
	2022	11.7	5.9
	2023	11.3	5.7
Bahamas	2020	12.2	12.9
	2021	11.4	11.7
	2021	10.1	10.1
	2023	9.5	9.5

Source: These figures were drawn primarily from national statistical offices.

Reddock (ibid) is sensitive to such implications. She contends that as the female employment struggle grows, other needs, such as the essentials of food and shelter, along with consumer goods have also continued to increase. Women who experience problems with employment security and who are in low-income contexts find other ways to fulfil these needs: low-wage employment, migration, leaving their children in the care of extended family, illegal activities, and having dependent economic relationships with men. In other words, gender wage gaps reinforce gender inequalities in the region and perpetuate women's vulnerability.

The absence of legislation to ensure equality of opportunity in employment may contribute significantly to the gender disparity that exists within certain labour markets. These include territories such as Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, and Suriname. Even though the existence of such legislation is not a guarantor of equality (see Trinidad and Tobago and St. Vincent and the Grenadines), it still provides a measure of protection and a channel to greater gender parity within the labour market.

4.2.4 Vulnerable Employment

Workers in vulnerable employment, own-account workers and contributing family workers are less likely to have formal work arrangements and are therefore more likely to lack decent working conditions, adequate social security, and 'voice' through effective representation by trade unions and similar organisations.

Vulnerable employment is often characterised by inadequate earnings, low productivity, and difficult work conditions that undermine workers' fundamental rights (ILO). Accordingly, its presence within a country makes it a useful metric in the conversation about equal opportunities to accessing employment.

In the client countries where this data was available, except for Belize, Jamaica, and Guyana, the dominant trend was that men outranked women for vulnerable employment (See Table 9).

Correlations with dropout rates among boys at the lower secondary school level have been made, and strategies have been developed to address this phenomenon.

These include, but are not limited to, awareness campaigns on wage returns to secondary education completion to raise interest in staying in school; the offering of financial incentives or vouchers conditional to school attendance and academic progress; and professional development for teachers to identify at-risk students and offer remedial learning to them.

Table 9: *Vulnerable employment - pre- and post-COVID*

CLIENT COUNTRIES	FEMALE (%) PRE COVID-19 (2018)	MALE (%) PRE-COVID-19 (2018)	FEMALE (%) POST COVID-19 (2022)	Male (%) POST-COVID-19 (2022)
Bahamas	8	22	9	22
Barbados	12	25	14	26
Belize	33	27	27	24
Guyana	30	28	30	28
Jamaica	40	37	40	37
Saint Lucia	19	27	17	28
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	17	23	17	24
Trinidad and Tobago	13	25	14	26

Source: WB Gender Portal.

4.2.5 Female Participation in Ownership and Management of Firms

There is a significant connection between the metrics of female participation in middle and senior management and female ownership in firms in relation to the equality of opportunity.

First, low numbers in these areas can be an indicator of the level of gender inequality within that society. It alludes to the under-representation of women and the possible lack of access to key decision-making and leadership positions. It suggests the existence of systemic barriers that prevent women from achieving professional advancement. These can include biases embedded within promotional criteria, gender pay gaps, and inflexible work arrangements that make caregiving and domestic responsibilities difficult.

On the other hand, an increase in these figures can inspire other women and, more importantly, younger women, to pursue similar goals to improve their economic security and independence while also contributing to the economy. Moreover, women who occupy these senior leadership positions can serve as mentors for others by sharing their experiences and expertise with their mentees for greater success in navigating this professional domain.

In addition to fostering gender inclusivity, greater representation at these levels has other long-term implications. For instance, it can be important in supporting a paradigm shift with respect to gender and leadership stereotypes within the workplace and, by extension, the larger society.

A related effect may be that such representation now can empower women to advocate for workplace reforms such as addressing gender wage gaps, period leave, accommodations for breastfeeding and pregnant employees, as well as flexible work arrangements for workers who are parents and caregivers. A similar situation can arise in cases where firms are run by female leaders. It is also noteworthy to add that such benefits are also gender inclusive, to the benefit of all employees, and point to the overall advantages associated with female leadership and, by extension, advancements for gender equality in society. More importantly, such issues and related activities assist regions in meeting four key SDGs: 4, 5, 8, and 10.

Based on the limited data available across the client countries for this metric, there are indications that women are making some progress at representation in decision-making in organisations (See Table 10); however, more needs to be done to increase the numbers if gender equality is to be achieved within this domain.

Table 10: *Women in management in BMCs*

TERRITORY	% FEMALE MANAGERS	% OF ALL FEMALE EMPLOYEES IN MANAGERIAL POSITIONS
Barbados	49	55
Grenada	35	45
Guyana	36	41
Saint Lucia	54	59
Trinidad and Tobago	45	52
Jamaica	-	60

Source: UN Women: Women and Men in CARICOM by Isiuwa Iyahen, 2019.

4.2.6 The Future of Work

The rapidly changing world of work engendered by the increasing adoption of digital technologies entails new risks and new opportunities.

Its gender impact in the workplace adds a critical dimension to the conversations surrounding equality of employment opportunity. Digital technologies have the potential to create new jobs for women in the labour market and increase women's employment through flexible work arrangements while reducing job hazards (such as in the agriculture sector). The COVID-19 pandemic provided numerous opportunities for showcasing the efficacy of such technologies, such as in the education sector through online learning, remote work, the use of mobile applications for work and information procurement, and even enhanced measures for collective mobilisation of workers through high-impact social media platforms.

Digital technologies have the potential to create new jobs for women in the labour market and increase women's employment through flexible work arrangements.

At the same time, the pandemic exposed the vulnerability of those who were lodged within the digital divide (through age, gender, and location) and, to that end, increased the opportunity gap for such persons.

Data from developed economies suggests that technological change, such as digitalisation and the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI), will transform the world of work, creating new opportunities. However, it also brings risks of job displacement, lower labour and social protections and the exacerbation of discrimination. Women who are overrepresented in certain sectors, such as administrative and service jobs that entail routine tasks, are at particular risk of potential displacement; the estimated figures stand at 52% (OP ILO). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) paints a more modest outlook, suggesting that women face an 11% job risk loss as opposed to 9% for men. However, it notes that women who are 40 years and older face a higher risk of job displacement through automation.

The 2022 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report on the impact of AI technologies on the working lives of women warns that due to the underrepresentation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics fields and, in particular, AI related jobs and lower digital literacy levels, they stand to be disproportionately at risk for job displacement.

A related study on individual level employment effects of digitalisation in Germany revealed that the introduction of digital technology in the workplace affects women more than men (Genz and Schnabel, 2023). The 2023 UN Women's report on gender equality advanced the concept of a gender transformative approach to ensuring women's empowerment in the digital age to prevent such technologies from erecting new barriers to gender inequality. All of the above observations appear to suggest that digitalisation is not gender neutral, to paraphrase the study title, but rather it is a movement that requires careful social regulation. There is, therefore, a need for cautious exploration and discussions in the Caribbean region around equality of opportunity.

4.2.7 Equality of Treatment on the Workplace: Key Findings

Equality of treatment is measured using two major metrics: the **right to representation** (in work and political spheres) and the **right to be safe** (within the workplace and in the larger society), with reference to GBV in its multiple forms. The research findings indicate the need for urgent reforms in both domains if gender equality is to be achieved in the region.

4.2.7.1 The Right to Representation (Within the Workplace)

The right to representation within the workplace by a union is aligned to two of the core ILO conventions which sanction the freedom of association (C87) and right to collective bargaining (C98) and thus, is central to the conversation on gender equality. One major way it contributes to the discourse occurs when unions operate as advocates for equality in the workplace. For instance, in the collective bargaining process, unions can negotiate for equal pay, benefits, and working conditions for all members as a condition of good industrial relations practice. It is an avenue in which gender wage gaps and other gender inequalities can be addressed in the workplace. Additionally, unions handle grievance procedures for workers, which can include sexual harassment, discrimination, and unfair work practices. On a larger level, unions can provide a voice by lobbying for workers in relation to legislative and policy changes that may support workers' rights.

The second major role of the unions in relation to gender equality is their contribution to female empowerment internally and externally in the workplace. At their most basic level, unions engender support from female workers, supporting their participation in executive and leadership positions, thereby ensuring greater representation of the women within the Union. Additionally, some unions have female arms or bodies that cater specifically to gender issues in the workplace; for example, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Public Services Union and in Trinidad, the Joint Trade Union Movement have their respective women's committees that champion exclusively women's issues in the workplace. While data for trade union membership is difficult to procure, 13 client countries have ratified C87 and C98, which demonstrate a noteworthy regional commitment to upholding international labour standards for the betterment of workers' lives.

4.2.7.2 The right to representation (within the wider society)

The right to representation in the larger political sphere has a direct connection with the issues pertaining to equality of treatment in the larger society. On one hand, increased representation in this domain provides groups, especially women, with a voice in the decision-making process at the legislative and policy levels while enhancing advocacy efforts that can translate into real and effective change. Furthermore, having a female voice in the political arena often signals greater chances of gender diversity and inclusiveness for other vulnerable communities as evidenced in the earlier section.

The inclusion of women at the political level has shown some progress. Guyana leads the way with 35.4%; in Dominica, there was an increase from 21.9% (2014) to 34.4% (2022); in Grenada, there is a continued climb with a figure of 31.3% (2022). In Barbados, 26.7% of its seats are held by women.

On the other hand, some client countries continue to struggle to improve their numbers: in Saint Lucia it is 11.1% (2022), and in Belize, female political representation stands at 12.5% (WB Gender Portal).

Yet a note of caution is advised when it comes to such numbers as it may not always be an accurate indicator of gender conditions for a country. For instance, despite the low numbers for Saint Lucia, that country leads the way for female leadership within the world of work, which is a laudable achievement in its own. Political representation numbers may also disguise more important intersectional issues that are better guarantors of gender inclusivity and diversity since women from different racial, social, and economic backgrounds will have different needs and demands from their representatives. In other words, such advances need to work together with other reforms for gender equality to make a concrete difference.

4.2.7.3 Right to a safe workplace

The right to a safe workplace is directly connected to the ILO Convention C190, which is concerned with the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work and is part of the larger conversation about equality of treatment. Violence and harassment create a toxic work environment for workers, which directly violates the notion of equality of treatment for its victims and prevents the latter from maximising their contribution, productivity and potential. Within the workplace, women are disproportionately affected by violence and harassment, a trend recognised by C190 and thus, it makes a concerted effort to reduce this to ensure that women receive fair and equal treatment on the job. More importantly, C190 recognises the intersectionality between workplace violence and harassment and specific vulnerabilities such as gender, disability, and other protected characteristics.

In this context, discussions about a safe workplace and C190 become crucial to the larger conversation about equality of treatment.

Only two countries have thus far ratified C190. Antigua and Barbuda was the first country to do so in May 2022, followed by Barbados in September 2022. The rest of the client countries are yet to follow, but preparatory work is being undertaken in some territories. This will be discussed in the section involving the project's key findings.

4.2.7.4 Right to personal safety within the wider society

GBV in the workplace is part of the larger narrative of GBV in society that includes Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), as well as violence against those who identify differently. GBV in society is deeply connected to the issue of equality of treatment and efforts to address it will result in a fairer, safer society.

At the outset, GBV and its permutations of IPV and VAWG reflect the power imbalance between genders. Violence in all its forms (physical, psychological, and sexual) is used to control and stymie the agency and voice of social groups, often women. It is often used to reinforce patriarchal gender roles that limit women's autonomy and independence, keeping them trapped in an unequal power dynamic that informs all levels of society. Apart from forcing women and other victims into submission, GBV also perpetuates a culture of silence, preventing targets from sharing their experiences. This behaviour exposes the oppressive power dynamics within a social unit, such as a relationship or a family, as the victims are literally threatened into silence by the prospect of further violence. The persistence of gender abuse and inequality is enabled, often in plain sight. Altogether, GBV dynamics serve to normalise violence as the tool through which power can be obtained and maintained, leading to the dehumanising of victims, in particular women, increasing vulnerability and further disenfranchisement.

Overall, men have been found to be the greater perpetrators of violence. In Barbados, despite their picture of progress, one in three women are victims of IPV whereas in Jamaica, one in four women have experienced IPV. The figures for other client countries reflect a similar picture; in Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and Grenada, GBV is 28%, higher than the global average of 27%; Belize follows with 24%. Guyana stands out with a 36% GBV rate, a 9-percentage point increase over the global average (WB Gender Portal). In other countries, lack of availability of data and under-reporting due to lack of confidence in the reporting apparatus, as well as fear of recrimination from the protective services by other gender communities, have hindered efforts to assess the extent of this problem.

4.3 LGBTQI Community and the World of Work

The LGBTQI communities face grave challenges to gender equality within the workplace and other social sectors.

It has been argued that within many countries, legislation provides the basis for LGBTQI discrimination, and it perpetuates sexually-based prejudices towards such persons who identify differently from mainstream gender identities.[19]

Data for such communities is limited but several international organisations such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development are attempting to fill that research gap through collaborations with key civil society and other organisations.

19 "I Have to Leave to Be Me" Human Rights Watch Report, 2018.

In that regard, the available data warrants concern as it points to the need for urgent legislative, social and cultural reform to address the current disenfranchisement faced by members of this community. For example, in surveys held in certain client countries, respondents reported experiences of employment discrimination, the need to hide their gender identities to secure and maintain employment, as well as verbal harassment and other forms of exclusion in the workplace. This discrimination extended to critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and housing. Overall, respondents reported living with an overwhelming sense of fear and intimidation. (UNDP surveys in Jamaica and Barbados).

Even though there has been some progress made through legislative reform and other advocacy efforts, there is need for more concerted efforts to address the deep-seated prejudices that exist against the members of these communities.

4.4 Persons with Disabilities and the World of Work

The WB has acknowledged that in every part of Latin America and the Caribbean, PWDs face discrimination when they have the ability but the right and empowerment are denied and that limits their contribution to their communities on a local and national level.

When compared with the rest of the population, it was observed that members of the PWDs community belong to socio-economic contexts and face heightened social exclusion in education and training, the labour market, and within the larger society.[20] This is significant as it leads to lower educational and employment outcomes for this group, limiting their contributors to national and regional development. Within the Caribbean, only 10% of the 1 million PWDs are employed, pointing to the urgent need for reforms that will create a more inclusive workplace.[21] The limited data in this area is also an area of concern, and it is hoped that the findings from this project will provide a useful supplementation.

4.5 Key Findings and Discussion

The surveys demonstrate the intersection of gender, employment sector, and age differentials that allows for a more complex discernment on equality of opportunity and treatment issues.

In addition to procuring responses from male and female employees from the public and private sectors, these responses were further disaggregated according to three age categories:

20 UNDP (2023). "LGBTQI Survey: Barbados".
21 WB (2021). "Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Latin America and the Caribbean."

18-35 years (to represent new and transitioned employees); 36-55 years, (to represent employees who were established in these sectors, in the prime of their working lives); and 56-65 years, (to represent senior employees in these sectors).

The observations made through these intersections allow for more specific and targeted recommendations regarding the quest for gender equality in the world of work in this region.

4.5.1 Access to Education and Training

In focus groups and key informant interviews, common causes for concern were the lack of male engagement in both educational and employment opportunities, the implications for the future labour market, and gender segregation within that domain.

Such concerns relate to earlier research findings about declining rates of young men's academic performance, in particular at the higher levels. These concerns belong to an ongoing debate about education in the region and its connection to male educational performance, male underachievement, and perceptions of male marginalisation in Caribbean society.

Crichlow et al. (2014: 2-3) on Caribbean masculinities provide a useful context for understanding the pervasive unease about young men in the region. He observes that the region requires a dynamic understanding of Caribbean masculinities, which are in a state of flux and respond to different cultural and political contexts and constructs. There is, however, a persistent tendency to align masculine identities to a "hegemonic masculinity", patterns of power and privilege. This constitutes idealised and institutionalised economic, cultural and political expressions of manhood demonstrated in normative behaviours assigned by ritual, convention, or custom for men. Examples of such behaviours would include men as economic providers and the dominant, powerful, aggressive partner in sexual relations and within the family unit. Hegemonic masculinity may be unattainable for most men, but they are certainly encouraged to achieve such forms.

Such expectations persist within the familial, socio-cultural, corporate and other social contexts even as the economic environment to foster and encourage such ideals have been undermined, Crichlow argues, by neo-liberal restructuring and adjustment initiatives within the region. Young men are expected to meet these gendered expectations even as they battle with unemployment and precarious working conditions, which can take a considerable toll on their sense of self. Within this context, the perceived apathy and lack of motivation by young men becomes understandable even as it appears their female counterparts are outstripping them in academics and employment.

In focus groups and key informant interviews, common causes for concern were the lack of male engagement in educational and employment opportunities.

At the same time, even as the conversations identify this uptick in female student ambition in academics and employment, such trends can be complicated in circumstances where high adolescent births occur. It was observed that there are client countries where high school completion for young women resides alongside equally high teenage pregnancy or adolescent birth rates (See Table 5). Such correlations suggest the need to consider the roles played by geographical location and socio-economic contexts in conversations about female achievement and performance.

A final consideration to this discussion is the extent to which regular disruptions would have exacerbated the pressure points in the regional educational systems and by extension, further undermined learning opportunities for young people in the region. Whether hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, health scares, and finally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, vulnerable students are the first to face the brunt of such crises. In client countries where lockdown occurred and emergency remote teaching and learning protocols were rolled out, many of these students lost access to any support systems offered by the State through the school system that go beyond instruction, such as counselling services, meal programmes, and co-curricular activities. Students in lower socio-economic contexts were more systematically disadvantaged than those who belonged to high-income families and, by extension, more likely to fall behind in academic achievement.

Available data in client countries suggest an increased post-pandemic dropout rate in secondary schools for both boys and girls, signaling cause for alarm in terms of the increased vulnerability, the potential loss of talent and skillsets for the formal employment sector, the increased risk of entry into illegal activities and the growing social welfare burden for regional governments. These matched the concerns that arose in conversations with teacher union representatives who were on the frontline dealing with educational vulnerability issues during and after periods of disruption. Data on such vulnerabilities was difficult to procure from the relevant sources.[22]

In addition, students facing adolescent births within and during the post-pandemic periods, with the respective healthcare sectors under pressure, experienced interruptions in the normal support systems (where existent) with resources redirected to the priority of halting or at least controlling the pandemic in the general population. Young girls were operating under exacerbated conditions of vulnerability, without the support needed to ensure favourable outcomes for themselves and their new dependents, further hampering their efforts to re-enter the education system and increasing their employment vulnerability.

22 WB has provided an analysis that aggregates the Caribbean with Latin America that projects that when the young people affected by the pandemic reach their prime working life (30-45) almost five million people will fall into poverty unless remediation measures are taken. (https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/latinamerica/lasting-scars-education-losses-latin-america-and-caribbean).

Overall, these are the kinds of patterns and trends that future employment policymakers in the client countries must consider when planning for the world of work in the region.

Recommendations for improving the educational and training outcomes in this context of heightened or layered disruption begin with legislative interventions in client countries. A review and restructuring of educational and training programmes that focus on entrepreneurship, lifelong learning, and comprehensive sex education for young persons has been suggested by many regional stakeholders as the way forward. Increase in human and financial resource allocations in the education system to assist those whose learning gaps are widened during disruptions, and to assist young people manage their trauma recovery induced and exacerbated by these disruptions, are also crucial. An increase in mentorship programmes would also be useful in redirecting these young people to a better future. In territories like Guyana, where NEET rates for females are particularly high, stakeholders have acknowledged challenges in addressing this matter, citing the impact of geographical location, the racial tensions, lack of an appropriate policy instrument, and the high prevalence of unsupervised adolescents in certain areas.

Other challenges with interventions for youth have been recognised at regional levels. For example, even in territories where national youth policies exist, structural and administrative improvements are needed. For instance, there is a lack of familiarity in many youth institutional frameworks with the 2030 SDG agenda, and as a result, a lack of connection and line of sight between their activities and the relevant SDG goals. Related to this is the need for appropriate follow-up, M&E mechanisms and the need to leverage the existing skillsets in the region to promote economic development. The Caricom Youth Development Action Plan (2017-2022) provided a reasonable template with its extensive and targeted approach to redressing the NEET problems in the region and one that can provide a holistic, targeted framework for existing regional youth initiatives. It deserves reconsideration by relevant stakeholders, especially given that it represents the input of the regional youth on the way to save their generation (Browne, 2024).

4.5.2 Equality of Opportunity in the Workplace

Focus groups and key informant interviews with workers and trade union representatives pertaining to equality of access to opportunity in the workplace examined issues of overall equality of opportunity, organisational mobility, fair treatment, and whether there were issues of gender discrimination in relation to work opportunities.

A common anxiety among male stakeholders was the perception that men were being outnumbered in the workplace, particularly the public sector.

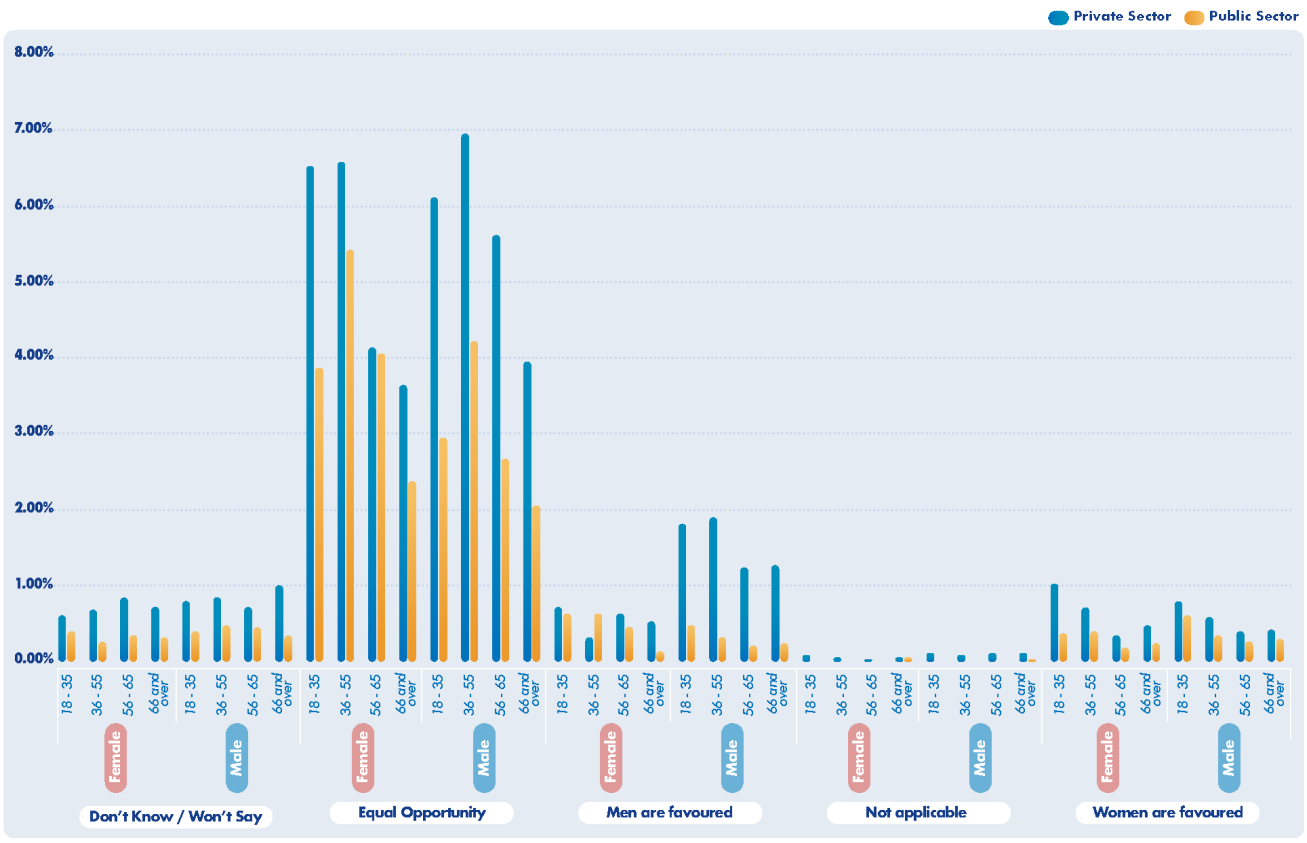
A common anxiety in these discussions among male stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, was the perception that men were being outnumbered in the workplace, particularly the public sector. Labour force surveys support the concern as demonstrated by the predominance of women in the public sector at the lower and higher administrative levels, especially within government ministries, and the apparent increase in opportunities for training and professional development for women. All professional opportunities were perceived to be geared towards women. At the same time, it must be noted that while women outnumber men in administrative jobs, men continue to outnumber women in technical jobs in both the private and public sectors.[23] This issue connects to the perceptions of male marginalisation discussed previously.

There was little overall resonance with such concerns among private and public sector worker survey respondents in the 35-55 age group. Roughly 44% and 28% of those workers in the respective sectors believed that their workplace demonstrated overall equal opportunity, a possible reflection of stability and confidence in this group. Conversely, fears of women being favoured in the workplace were observed from men within the 18-35 age group in both private and public sectors, echoing the intimidations alluded to in earlier conversations. Such fears deserve deeper probing; left unattended, they stand a good chance of being magnified and transformed by young men who already are being held to unrealistic expectations of masculinity by the larger society (see Figure 1).

The confidence exhibited by the established workers, or the 35-55 age group, extends to other matters. Male private and public sector workers and female public sector workers in this demographic believed that their workplace offered equal opportunities for organisational mobility, indicating the perception of career planning abilities and prospects amongst this group. This stands in contrast to the male private and public sector workers and female public sector workers within the 55-65 age group who constituted most of the responses for "Don't Know/Won't Say", that is, persons who are en route to possible retirement and exit from the workforce (See Figure 2). This makes further analysis of the difference in the perception of opportunity and resiliency between age cohorts necessary.

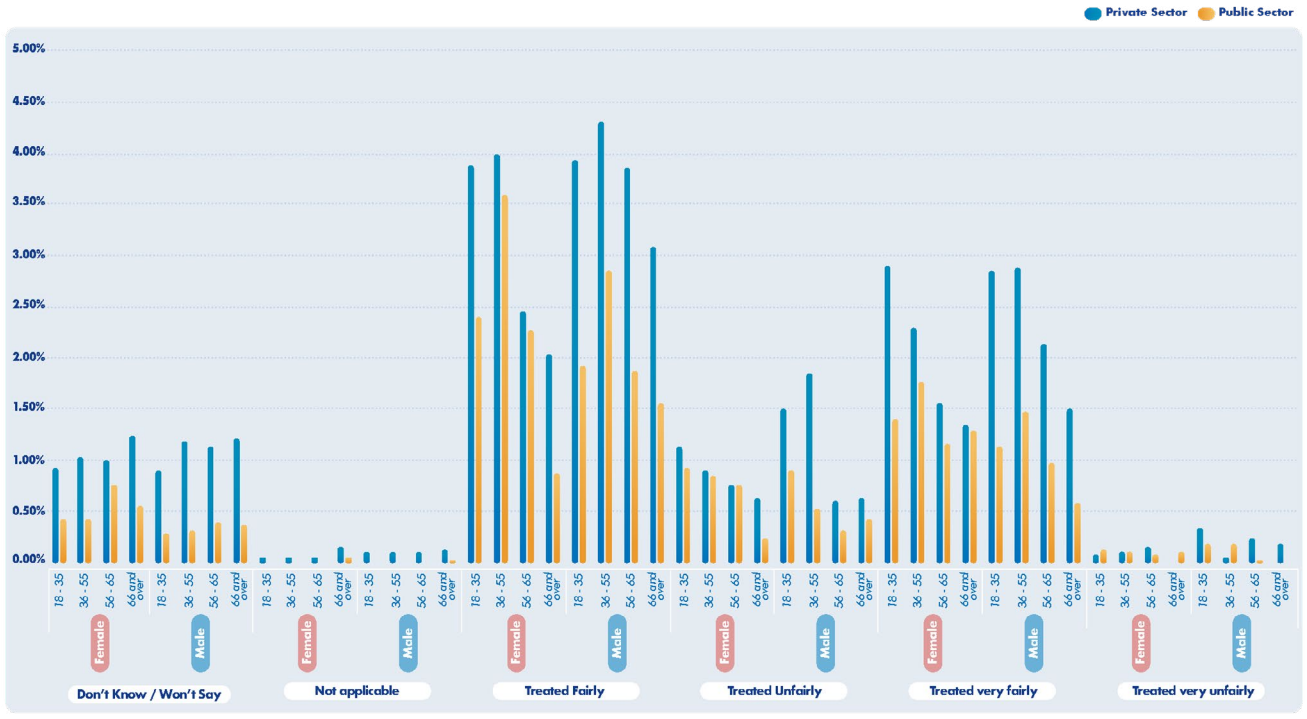
23 The most recent labour force surveys from most client countries show that men continue to dominate technical jobs and certain sectors, such as construction, which continue to be perceived as "male" jobs.

Figure 1: *Equality of Opportunity to be Hired*



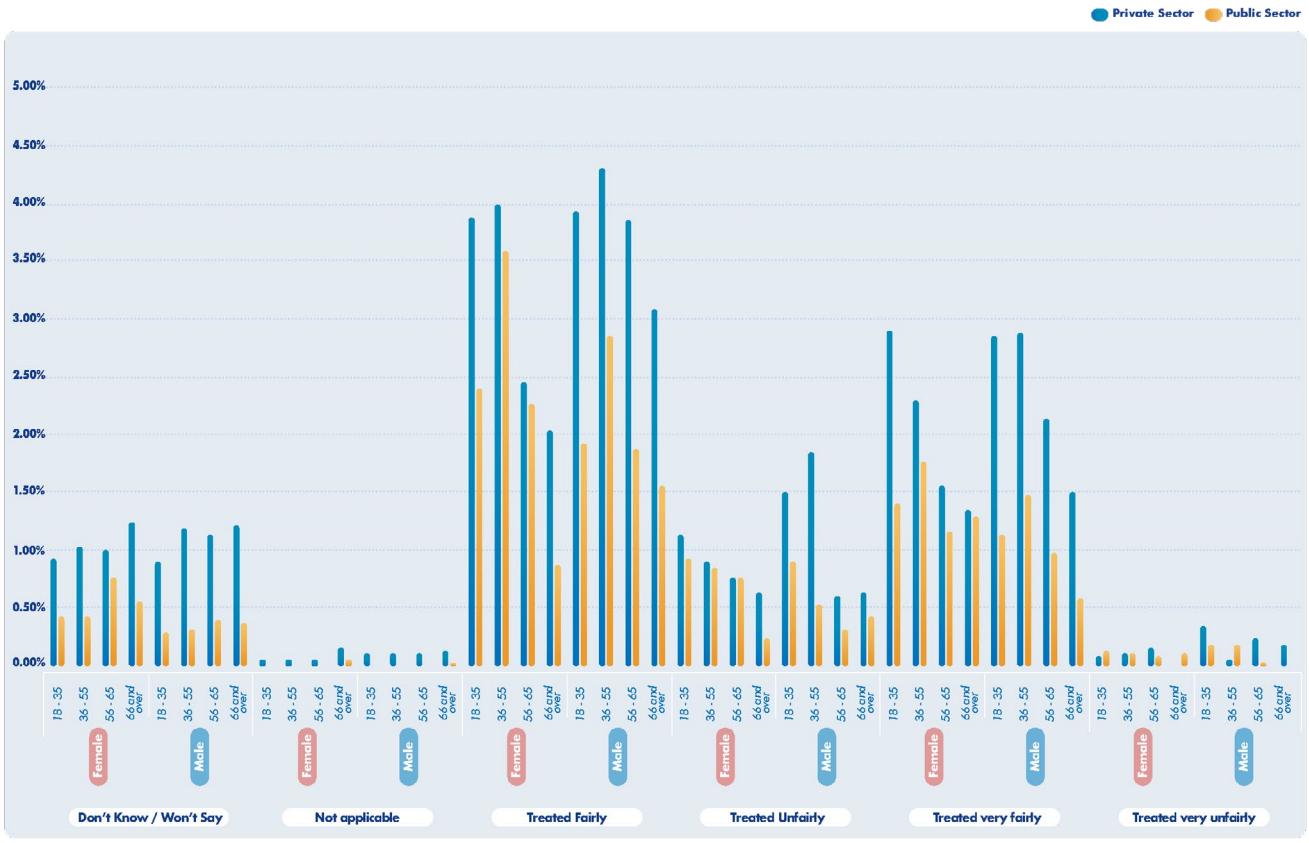
Source: Household Survey.

Figure 2: *Equality of Opportunity to be Promoted*



Source: Household Survey.

Figure 3: *Equality of Treatment in the Workplace*



Source: Household Survey.

This 35-55 age cohort is also the same demographic, across sector and gender identities, who suggested that their workplaces were associated with fair treatment. (See Figure 3). Their positive outlook about the workplace differs from the dissenting opinions on this issue by the 18-35 age group of female private and public sector workers and male public sector workers. The apprehensions of these new and transitioned workers merit further consideration as it can indicate possible differences in generational interpretation of "fair treatment" for the world of work and concomitant job expectations. Given that this is the group that is the core of the future labour force, their views on the world of work deserve priority and consideration.

When it comes to issues such as gender wage gaps, divisions become apparent. Within the private sector, it is the males and females in the 18-35 age group (41%) who believe that there are no gender disparities in wages, a sentiment shared by both sets of public sector workers in the 36-55 age group (27%) (see Figure 4). On the other hand, 10% of male private sector workers in the 36-55 age group and female private sector workers in the 55-65 age group believe that men are paid better. Four per cent of both sets of public sector workers in the 36-55 age group feel the same way. Together, this serves as a modest acknowledgement of the gender wage gap that exists within the Caribbean labour market alluded to earlier in the report.

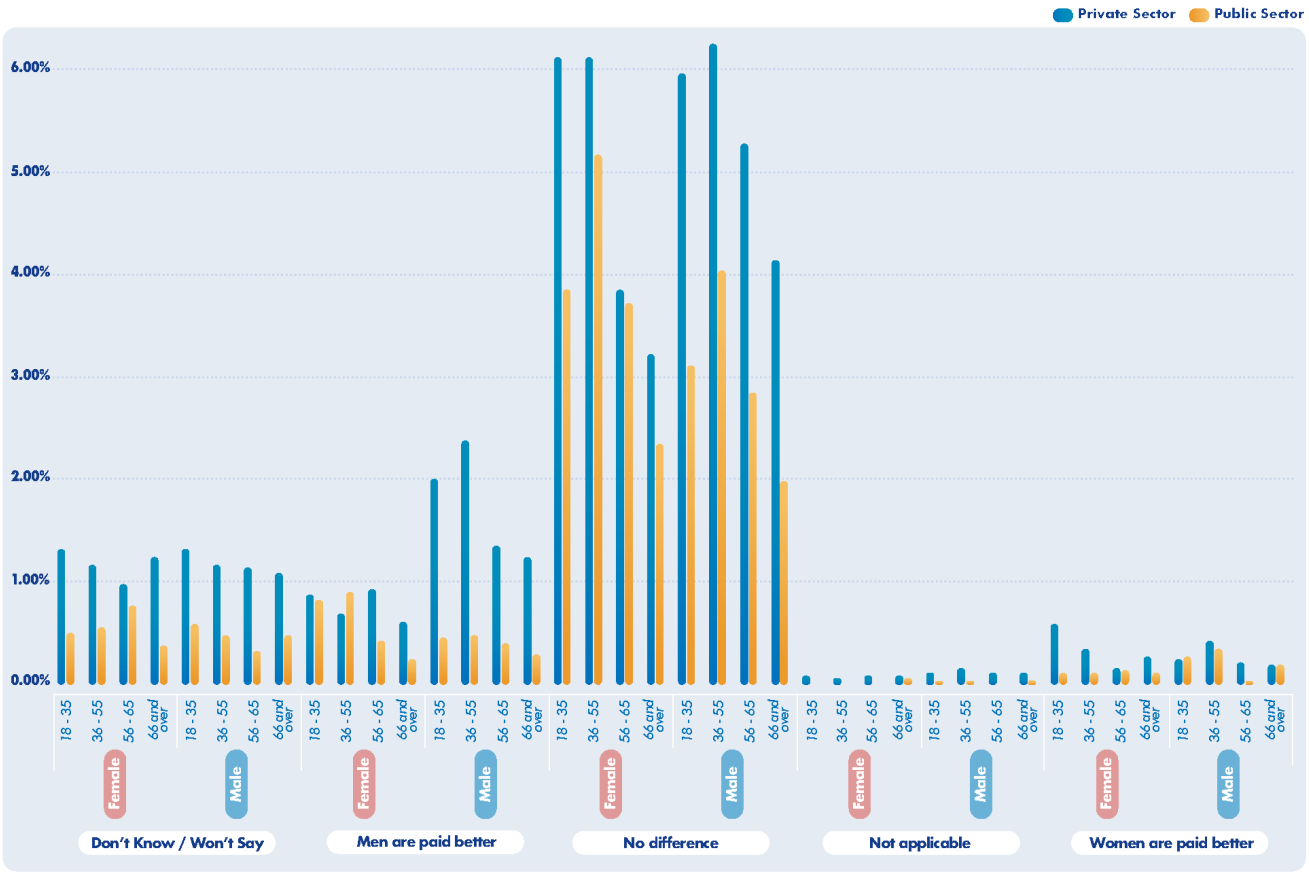
This 35-55 age cohort suggested that their workplaces were associated with fair treatment.

Similar sentiments are expressed by two groups of female workers: established female public sector workers and senior female private sector workers, persons who are best positioned in the organisation to experience such discrimination. On the other hand, the belief in wage equality by new workers can speak to the need for their increased awareness with respect to the concept of equal pay for equal work and its implications for discrimination.

Lack of awareness among workers in the 18-35 age group can also provide a possible explanation for the non-disclosure on matters of gender discrimination in relation to workplace opportunities. Whether it was men or women being denied opportunities, it was this group that constituted most of the responses for "Don't Know/Won't Say" (see Figure 5).

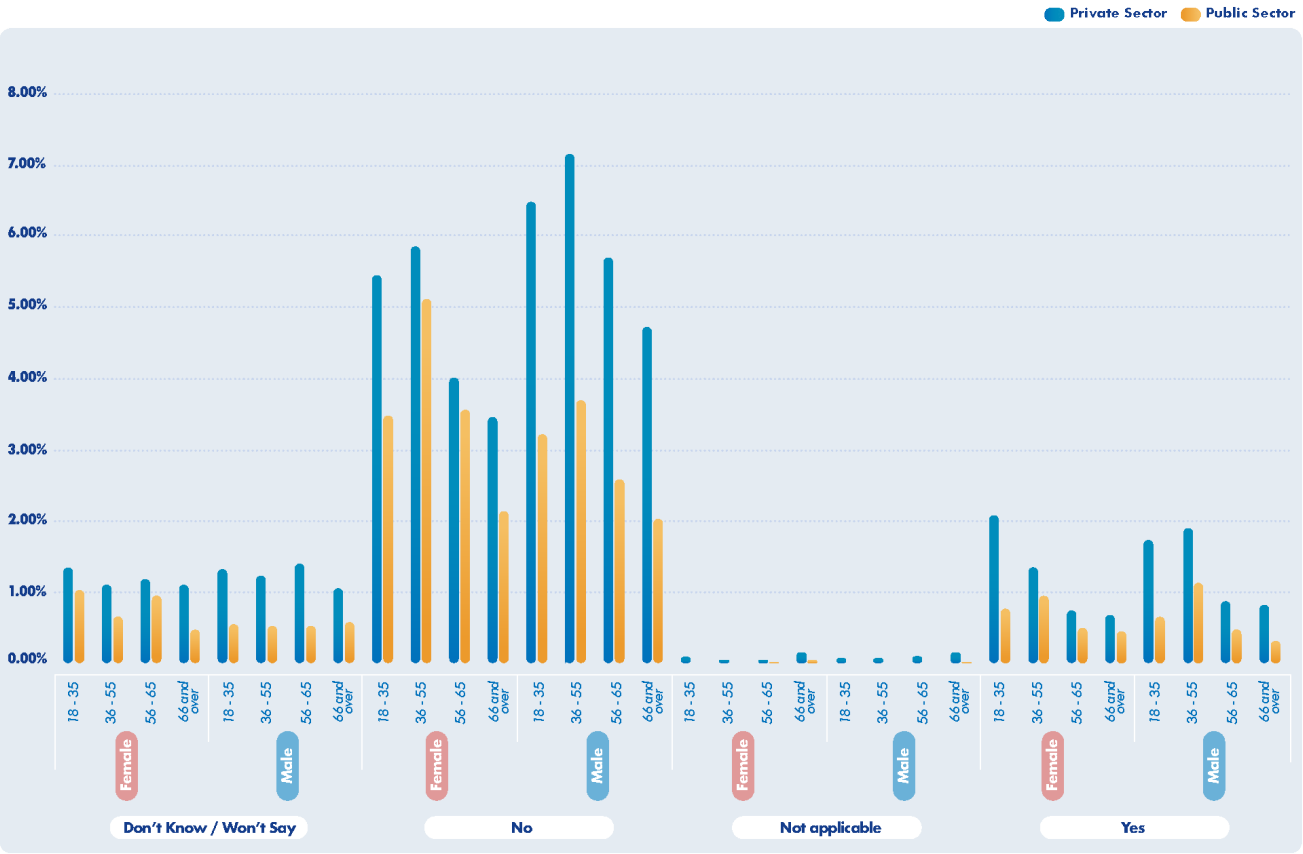
Even as the survey responses reiterate the need to increase awareness on gender disparities with respect to opportunities in the workplace and closure of the widening fissures exacerbated by disruptions, the initiatives implemented by respective governments were the highlight of many interviews with state officials across the various client countries.

Figure 4: *Equal Pay*



Source: Household Survey.

Figure 5: *Equality of Job Opportunities*



Source: Household Survey.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the state response to the exacerbation ofthese opportunity gaps by the pandemic, is reflected in its Roadmap to Recovery initiative. Standout measures included salary relief grants and moratoriums for loans within the financial sector. In Saint Lucia, attempts are also being made to address gender inequality in the workforce. There have been efforts to improve the National Public Assistance Programme to better support women, and the government acknowledges the need to close the gender gap in workforce participation, especially for the younger population and those with higher education. Additionally, Saint Lucia is collaborating with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) to improve its ability to address gender equality across various programmes. This collaboration includes training for civil servants on incorporating gender considerations into their work. The details on the specific programmes were limited; however, this demonstrates a commitment on behalf of the Saint Lucian government to tackling gender-related issues and inequality. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, collaborations with international stakeholders produced benefits for women; one noteworthy example is the partnership with the Taiwan Embassy to create the Women's Empowerment Project that seeks to provide training and jobs for over 300 women in various sectors.

In Grenada, state representatives acknowledged that more gender-responsive policies such as flexible work hours and affordable childcare have greatly assisted private sector female employees during these periods of disruption and have indicated the need to have such interventions cemented for the future. Civil society representatives also spoke about the need to have unconscious bias training for employees, as well as increased advocacy for transparent pay structures and equal pay for equal work, to mitigate gender wage gaps.

4.5.3 Vulnerable Employment

As the earlier research findings indicated, vulnerable employment is a persistent issue, especially for a region embedded in cycles of natural and man-made disruption.

In that context, efforts to transition persons from vulnerable to formal employment continue and require the provision of financial and social infrastructure, frameworks and mechanisms that would afford social protections and benefits to persons in the informal sector that are ordinarily denied to them. In this regard, the cooperative movement with its extensive reach and flexible, democratic structure can potentially provide solutions to the precarious and vulnerable nature of informal employment. The sector is uniquely positioned in the region to deliver financial products and services to such persons who, by virtue of their employment position, are deprived of the usual safety nets and services normally accorded to those in formal employment.

4.5.4 Equality of Treatment in the Workplace

4.5.4.1 Trade Union Membership

Overall, survey data revealed low membership figures among both male and female respondents (*See Table 11*).

In trade union focus groups, especially in certain client countries, the perceived political partisanship associated with the some of the trade unions had affected trust among the workers. Brand management of the unions can provide invaluable assistance in repairing this mistrust and enhancing confidence in the movement; for example, recruitment drives using high impact social media platforms to woo younger members is one possible strategy that can be employed. The political tradition of the labour movement throughout the region does mean that partisanship will remain a persistent issue.

Additionally, the lower female membership speaks to the untapped potential for female empowerment within the movement.

Low female membership highlights the patriarchal nature of trade unions.

In conversations with the female arms of these movements, these opportunities took the form of activities that they championed, such as advocacy for women's workplace issues such as breastfeeding policies, GBV awareness and even period leave.

Low female membership also speaks to the largely patriarchal trade union tradition of being a male province of power and responsibility. Such gender stereotypes were also often perpetuated by other stakeholders with whom the unions interacted within the industrial relations sector.

Yet the COVID-19 pandemic may have provided an opportunity for the movement. The trade unions underwent a major expansion in terms of their operations and functions during the pandemic. First, unions had to urgently defend their members when state protocols pressed heavily against their human rights in terms of employment security, safe working conditions, vaccine mandates, and revised working conditions and job specifications. Next, they were transformed into public health information providers (providing data for their members for the pandemic, often in the absence of trusted or timely state updates), safety nets (providing financial assistance, capacity building, food assistance), and source providers for mental health and counselling of their members. Many of these services continued after the pandemic, a laudable move by the unions as advocates of decent work.

Table 11: *Trade Union Membership*

CLIENT COUNTRIES (NO. OF RESPONDENTS)	FEMALE (%) (YES)	MALE (%) YES	FEMALE (%) NO	MALE (%) NO	TOTAL %) YES	TOTAL (%) NO
Anguilla (40)	15	10	30	40	25	70
Antigua and Barbuda (192)	14.6	17.71	26.0	28.7	32.3	54.7
Bahamas (392)	10.7	6.4	36.7	40.1	17.1	76.8
Barbados (187)	6	12.5	42.4	35.9	18.5	78.3
Belize (400)	5	8.8	47.3	39	13.8	86.3
Dominica (200)					17	73
Grenada (176)	33	27	58	69	60	127
Guyana (500)					21	74
Jamaica (656)	20.7	19.8	78.3	77.7	40.5	156
St. Kitts-Nevis (96)	2.1	4.2	43.8	42.7	6.3	86.5
Saint Lucia (184)	15.8	13.6	32.6	34.2	29.4	66.8
Montserrat (48)	12.5	8.3	22.9	37.5	20.8	60.4
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (200)	10.5	14.5	33	32	25	65
Trinidad and Tobago (427)	27	29	68	68	56	136

Source: Household Survey.

This transformation is pressuring unions to increase their levels of digital literacy and embrace the role of technology in industrial relations practice, organisation and mobilisation, especially given that the very nature of negotiation and collective bargaining was irrevocably altered in this period.

It is instructive that survey data showed that these changes were received, for the most part, with a low response from members (See Table 12). While low membership figures may have contributed to this state of affairs, it speaks to a crucial disconnect between the executive and membership of the trade unions, and ultimately the general public. This became increasingly apparent where some of the key informant interviews and focus group sessions with trade union leadership produced substantially more enthusiastic responses applauding the efforts of their unions during the pandemic when compared with the views of regular members. Such patterns indicate the need for improving formative feedback and strengthening of other internal communication mechanisms. Available strategies are still prescribed by the context of structurally weak economies, labour market rigidities, and the impact of a global pandemic on regional labour representation.

Table 12: *Satisfaction with Trade Union Representation*

CLIENT COUNTRIES (NO. OF RESPONDENTS)	FEMALE (%) (YES)	MALE (%) YES	FEMALE (%) NO	MALE (%) NO	TOTAL %) YES	TOTAL (%) NO
Anguilla (40)	7.5	5.0	5.0	2.5	12.5	7.5
Antigua and Barbuda (192)	6	7	5	3	13	8
Bahamas (392)	6.4	2.8	1.0	1.3	9.2	2.3
Barbados (187)	2.7	6.0	2.2	4.3	8.7	6.5
Belize (400)	1.5	4.5	0.8	0.8	6	1.6
Dominica (200)					40	4
Grenada (176)	59	30	19	39	89	58
Guyana (500)					48	12
Jamaica (656)	10.3	10.6	3	2	20.9	5
St. Kitts-Nevis (96)	0	3.1	1	0	3.1	1
Saint Lucia (184)	9.2	8.7	2.7	3.8	17.9	6.5
Montserrat (48)	4.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	6.3	4.2
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (200)	6	6	3	3.5	12	6.5
Trinidad and Tobago (427)	36	38	29	27	74	56

Source: Household Survey.

4.5.4.2 The Right to a Safe Workplace

In focus groups held with male and female workers, it is evident that workplace harassment and GBV incidents are still rampant.

Workplace harassment and GBV incidents are still rampant.

For example, respondents in Guyana reported that sexual harassment remains a sensitive issue that suffers from the problem of under-reporting. The fieldwork suggested that there had not been explicit training or campaigns addressing sexual harassment awareness within the organisational framework in Guyana.

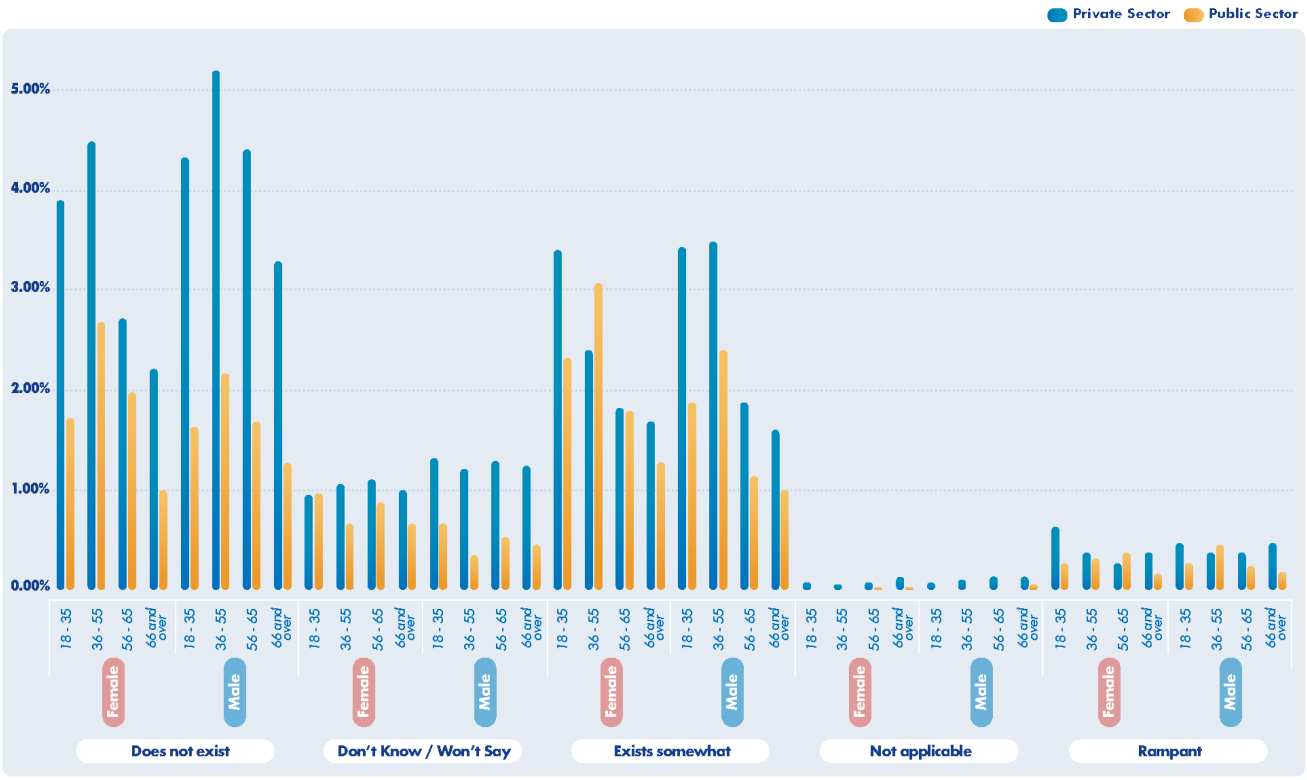
It exists in the workplace and often goes unaddressed due to power structures and cultural acceptance, coupled with the lack of strict policies or cultural initiatives to combat this issue effectively. There is also insufficient appropriate legal recourse for victims, particularly in rural areas where there is limited police presence and systemic issues in handling rape cases. Therefore, there is an urgent need for better legal support and advocacy for victims in Guyana. Overall, it speaks to the need to strengthen enforcement and implementation of these laws at community and state levels.

In other client countries, there were reports that male sexual harassment matters did not receive the same attention as those from their female counterparts or were not even considered harassment by their colleagues. (No data was available on the extent of sexual harassment experienced by males). This reportedly has often led to male victims being intimidated and shamed into silence. Another major issue reported was the problem of alleged perpetrators' abuse of power and professional status to harass their subordinates and interfere with grievance procedures that may have stemmed from such incidents.

Such concerns were moderately reflected within the surveys. It was noted that 20% of private sector workers in the 18-35 age group (female) and 36-55 age group (male) recognised workplace harassment as a problem; 15% of male and female public sector workers in the 36-55 age group agreed this was the case (See Figure 6). It is instructive that only the young/new group of female private sector workers displayed awareness of workplace harassment, suggesting the need for enhanced internal training campaigns to raise awareness and, by extension, foster greater recognition of such abuse.

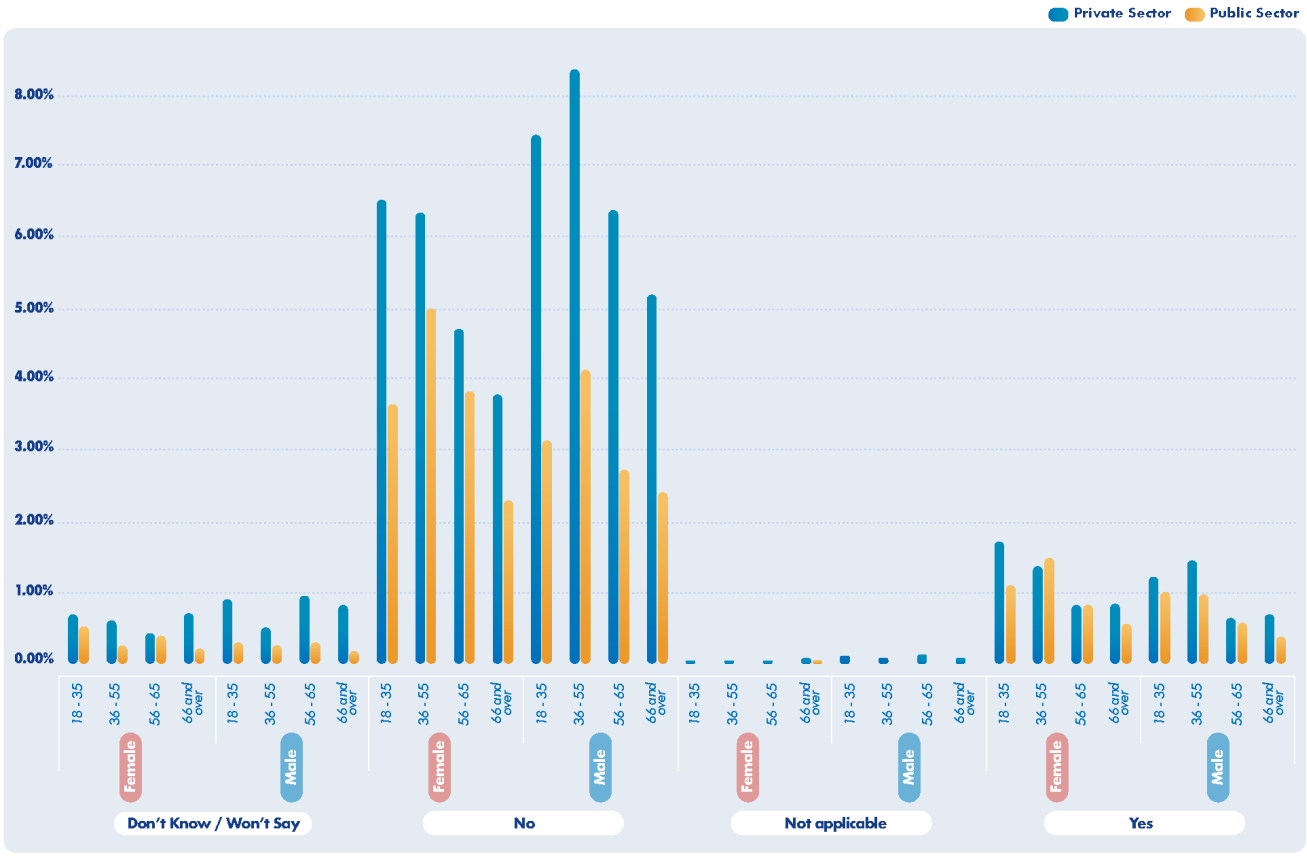
In addition, open and frank conversations on workplace harassment is a work in progress. When asked about personal experiences of workplace harassment, 49% of private sector workers (largely female workers in the 18-35 age group and male workers in the 36-55 age group) and 27% of public sector workers (both male and female workers in the 36-55 age group) denied being victims of such abuse, indicating a possible lack of awareness, cultural acceptance of such abuse and/or being shamed into disavowal about such matters (See Figure 7). A similar pattern of disavowal was also noted in both sectors for male and female worker responses relating to queries about being victims of discrimination (See Figure 8).

Figure 6: *Extent of Workplace Harassment*



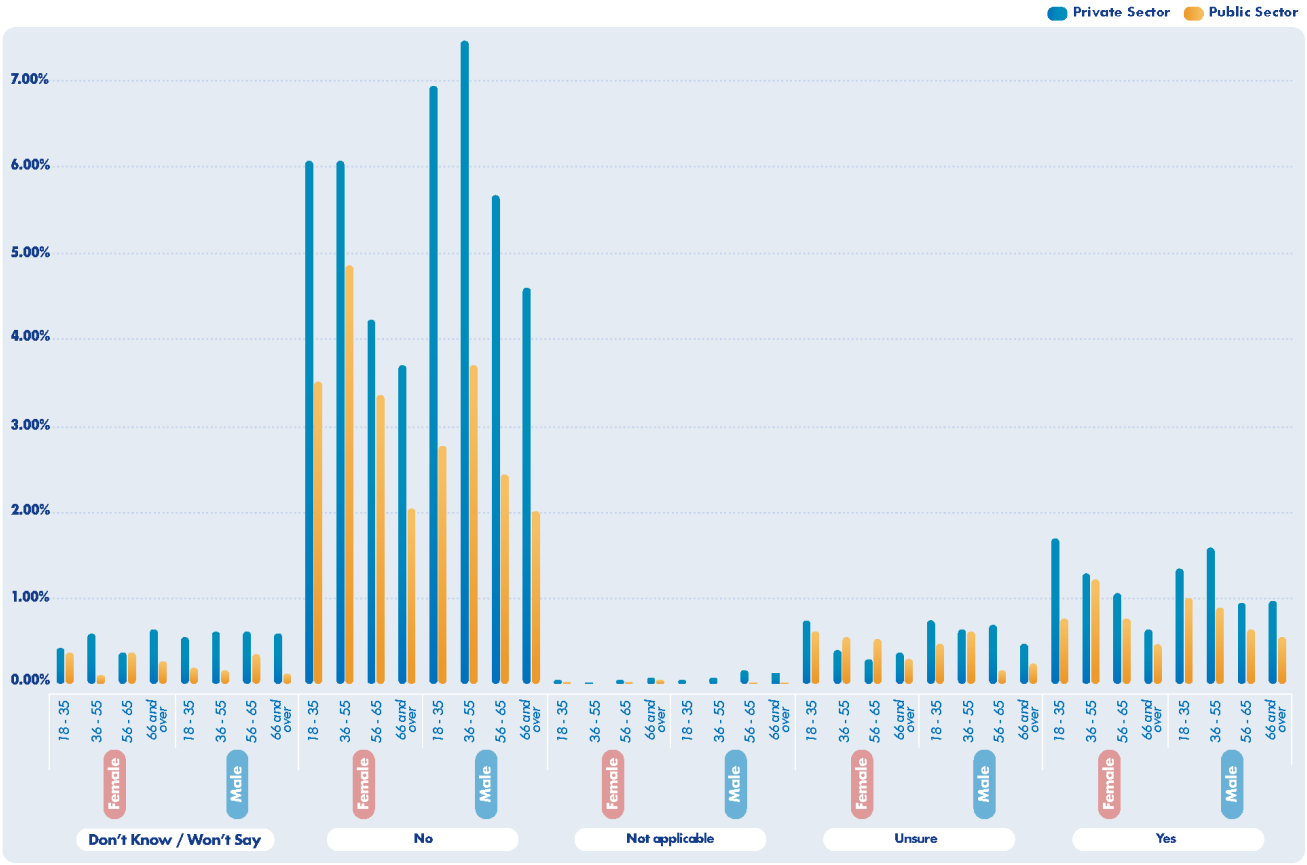
Source: Household Survey.

Figure 7: *Personal Experience of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace*



Source: Household Survey.

Figure 8: *Personal Experience of Discrimination in the Workplace*



Source: Household Survey.

Even with such feelings about workplace harassment and discrimination, survey results show mixed emotions about workplace safety, as reflected in the responses: 29% of private sector workers and 11% of public sector workers agree that their workplace is safe. This suggests a possible culture of non-reporting and speaks to the need for increased efforts to create procedures relating to workplace harassment and discrimination that guarantee safety and confidentiality for victims, along with more awareness campaigns to promote enhanced self-monitoring and vigilance among all workers.

Advocacy efforts to that end deserve attention. In June 2022, more than 47 companies and 50 labour unions from 18 Caribbean countries agreed to a baseline policy to eliminate all forms of VAWG in the world of work, at a workshop coordinated by CCLCS. This baseline policy was the result of a joint initiative between the Caribbean Employers' Confederation and the Caribbean Confederation of Labour, which is supported by the United Nations Population Fund and ILO under the Spotlight Initiative. This important regional milestone was followed up with a training and capacity development initiative in October 2022 and the creation of an online training unit or Massive Open On-line Course for the members.

Other client countries have made efforts to improve their legislative architecture by passing laws that punish sexual harassment in the workplace and in wider society. These include client countries such as Anguilla, Bahamas, Belize, Guyana, Saint Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago.

4.5.4.3 The Right to Personal Safety in the Wider Society

Within the climate of systemic disruption, the rampant and often undisclosed gender-based abuse that occurs during these periods of crisis deserves greater recognition and attention.

The COVID-19 pandemic was instrumental in producing greater awareness about this problem (see Padmore, 2021), but more needs to be done given the extent of this problem. In focus groups and interviews with various stakeholders, in particular civil society organisations, the dire nature of what may be termed "disruption-based gender abuse" became evident. During periods of climate disruption, such as Hurricane Irma for client countries like Dominica and Anguilla, logistical challenges in the shelters ensued as safe spaces could not be provided for gender-different individuals who often suffered abuse at the hands of other displaced individuals. In client countries such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where private citizens' homes supplemented the shelters for persons displaced by the eruption of La Soufriere in 2021, cases of displaced gender-different individuals and children suffering abuse at the hands of these "Good Samaritans" were reported, further dehumanising and disempowering them. The threat of violence also served to reinforce discrimination against gender-different communities when it came to accessing healthcare and other support services during disruptions. In Trinidad and Tobago, members of the gay and transgender communities complained about emotional abuse from those working in psycho-social support systems; such experiences indicate the deeper systemic discrimination within the healthcare sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic raised awareness of the issue, but more action is needed.

The national responses to GBV across the client countries provide a starting point for efforts directed at improving the situation of fair and safe treatment of persons regardless of gender. Twelve client countries have legislation that seeks to protect their citizens from domestic and sexual violence. Certain developments within specific national gender machineries since 2016 merit discussion. For instance, Anguilla has created a Gender Unit within the Ministry of Social Development and Education, and its first head, Dr. Foy Connor, was instrumental in collaborating with the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) and the line ministry to create the 4C Initiative: Comfort Through Crisis, Conflict and COVID-19. This strategy was meant to provide services for dealing with child abuse, incest, and GBV incidents.

This was accompanied by the launch of the domestic violence hotline around the same time, and which, according to the Unit, ended up serving as an ad-hoc psycho-social support tool for young Anguillan men and women. In addition, St. Kitts-Nevis is now equipped with shelters to protect abuse victims, improving the situation since 2015. In the case of the LGBTQI community, in April 2024, Dominica recorded a decisive victory for equality with the positive ruling in the case challenging buggery laws.

Yet more work needs to be done in the area of policy frameworks to address gender inequalities and discrimination. Of the seven client countries (Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts-Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) that had no gender policies in 2016, Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda have ratified Convention C190. In the other client countries, gender policies have remained stagnant or have undergone revisions but without official state endorsement (such as in Trinidad and Tobago). That stasis could represent continued policy invisibility for LGBTQI communities for years, as in the example of Jamaica, whose Gender Sectoral Plan reaches up until 2030. A related issue on the complacency surrounding legislative change in these client countries is the link to their signatory status to regional and international treaties that address gender inequality and GBV. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention of Belem do Para, and the lapse in the reporting mechanisms associated with these treaties. Overall, while there have been incremental changes to GBV response, the shortcomings identified above require urgent attention if the conversation on fair and equal treatment across genders is to move forward.

4.6 The LGBTQI Community

4.6.1 Equality of Opportunity and Treatment

From the outset, it must be noted that contacting representatives from this community was sometimes difficult in some client countries due to security concerns.

In other cases, some epresentatives preferred the convenience of virtual or audio interviews to preserve their safety. Such apprehensions are strong indicators of the prevailing circumstances of hostility and intimidation in which many LGBTQI members function (and highlighted in the research findings); it is also a factor that contributed to the limited data for this report.

In addition, it was found in client countries such as Trinidad and Tobago that LGBTQI society and activism circles have developed a degree of internal conflict.

Younger activists complain about gatekeeping by older members of the community. Some argue that there is a financial resource benefit to leadership in the community. This often acts as a barrier for younger LGBTQI members accessing opportunities in society and in the workplace, especially within the private sector. In Guyana, where employment discrimination is reportedly prevalent, the LGBTQI community has a substantial presence in the informal sector. This may be a pattern in other countries.

Other major complaints focused on discrimination within the healthcare sector, as well as rampant emotional and verbal abuse from cyberbullying; to that end, many advocates (such as in St. Vincent and the Grenadines) have weaponised high-impact social media platforms to increase advocacy efforts and provide psycho-social support systems for victims, with moderate success.

A common anxiety voiced across the LGBTQI communities was the need to foster greater awareness of how language perpetuates the discrimination and prejudice experienced by its members. Representatives spoke at length about the use of pejorative terms and phrases within music, literature, television, radio, film and cyberspace, and their influence on shaping the xenophobic realities experienced by their members. Furthermore, concerns were raised about "gaywashing", the superficial corporate advocacy that only serves to impede the progress of this community and its members for the sake of profit.

4.6.2 The Right to Representation

For the LGBTQI communities, support and representation have come largely from civil society organisations, as opposed to the trade union movement.

For instance, in Trinidad and Tobago, during the pandemic, the women's group FEMINITT played a significant role in representing the needs of gender-different individuals, serving as a social safety net, offering financial and psycho-social support to those who were separated from their partners due to lockdown protocols. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica, such individuals sought aid from chapter organisations associated with HIV Advocacy. As admirable as this may be, it means that the trade unions have yet to engage in greater attempts at dialogue with this community to be inclusive of all workers.

With respect to the larger society, advocates across the client countries agreed that change within the legislative architecture is central to the dismantling of the discrimination and exclusion faced by the members of this community alongside focused awareness campaigns that foster social dialogue among various socio-cultural stakeholders to address the concomitant widespread prejudice and violence.

4.7 The PWD Community

4.7.1 Equality of Opportunity and Treatment

In conversations held with advocates across the client countries, it was observed that PWDs faced challenges of discrimination and marginalisation, and sometimes denial of voice.

For example, even in societies with protective policies and legislative frameworks, PWDs are largely dependent on family units and charitable organisations for their welfare and survival. In times of disruption, the members of this community suffer great exclusion and often struggle during periods of crisis. The sense of isolation and exclusion mentioned earlier in the research findings is exacerbated during periods of disruption and increases existing mental health challenges for these members.

In relation to employment prospects, it was found in several client countries that employers were slow to or rarely considered PWDs as active members of the national workforce. There was a prevailing tendency to assume that such persons would remain in the permanent lifelong care of their families or other caregivers. In other cases, employers cited what was seen as the extra burden of accommodating such persons in the workplace, as well as the need for enhanced supervision during work hours.

4.8 Conclusion

It remains apparent that equality of opportunity and treatment for different gender communities in the Caribbean is a work in progress. Despite certain gains within various sectors with respect to accessing education, opportunities for training and work, and reducing discrimination and bias in the workplace, other negative trends persist and are exacerbated during periods of disruption. These trends include GBV and continued discrimination against members of the LGBTQI and PWDs communities. There also needs to be a re-evaluation of M&E mechanisms for legislative frameworks that protect equality of opportunity and treatment in a more transparent and inclusive way. Further, greater advocacy efforts in the form of collaborations between the government, the private sector, the trade union movement and civil society, as well as enhanced social dialogue between relevant stakeholders, are crucial to the resiliency of the client countries as they negotiate the world of work within this context of systemic disruption.

05

YOUTH DIFFERENTIALS

05 YOUTH DIFFERENTIALS

5.1 Introduction

This section covers issues related to age differentials in the labour market.[24] It addresses differentials between young workers (between 15 and 24) and older age cohorts and examines differentials between males and females in the 15 to 24 age cohort.

Child labour, per se, is not the focus of this research. However, it is discussed because the phenomenon can have a significant impact on life chances, and children who are engaged in the labour force often find their mental and physical health and development compromised. This is especially so in developing and agrarian societies. The discussion on child labour is focused on the involvement of any person under the age of 18 in work that deprives them "of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to their physical and/or mental development. It refers to work that is mentally or morally dangerous and harmful to children".[25]

The report focuses on youth engagement with the world of work and the mechanisms to protect them. The youth cohort has consistently been a significantly disadvantaged group within the region. The state of youth matriculation and general employment conditions are considered to be precarious, as observed in youth unemployment rates. Further, youth employment's resilience is lower compared with that of the general labour force, particularly during disruptions. Youth employment also typically recovers at slower rates.

5.2 Child Labour

Among client countries, the minimum age at which persons can be legally employed is 16. National statistics tend not to capture children who are below the minimum age and engaged in work. Child labour, however, is an important consideration for the present state of the labour market and its future resilience.

There appear to be limited official national mechanisms for monitoring the practice of child labour. According to the ILO:

"Children work because their survival and that of their families depend on it, and in some cases because unscrupulous adults take advantage of their vulnerability. Child labour is also due to weaknesses in education

24 For the purposes of this study, youth is defined as between the ages of 15 and 24, consistent with the delimitation used by CDB and the ILO. Some BMCs for the purposes of their youth development policy and programmes extend the upper limit to as high as 35 years old.

25 https://www.ilo.org/international-programme-elimination-child-labour-ipec/what-child-labour.

systems and is deeply rooted in cultural and social attitudes and traditions. The problem is further compounded by the fact that child labour remains hidden from public view, making the problem seem less of a priority". (Emphasis added) (ILO, 2014).

Most evidence of the practice comes from major international organisations, foreign governments and non-governmental organisations. In its report on child labour, the United States of America's (US) State Department found that in nearly half of the client countries covered in this research, children were subjected to the worst forms of child labour. Children from as young as 10 were engaged in sectors which are identified as hazardous and dangerous to their physical and mental health of children and their moral well-being. The sectors include agriculture, fishing, mining, and construction. In addition, children were found to be exploited in illicit activities such as prostitution and the production, transportation, and sale of drugs.

5.2.1 Instances of Child Labour

Disparities occur across socio-economic groups and are compounded by different factors, particularly poverty, exposure to criminal elements, and geographic setting.

Families are found to play roles in children engaging in pernicious forms of child labour. In at least two client countries, poor families send their children to more affluent ones, where the children are often victims of unpaid domestic work and different forms of abuse. Families are also found to be perpetrators of child labour and even trafficking and exploitation for commercial sex.

In some rural areas, where there is limited government oversight, children are more likely than their urban counterparts to work. In Suriname for example, the average attendance rate for primary school is 95% and 53% for secondary school. Secondary school attendance in the interior is as low as 21%. A comparable pattern can be observed in Belize, where, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Safety and Justice for Children Programme, child labour predominately affects rural communities, with over 70% of rural children being involved in work. One-third of these children are working in agriculture. The Child Activity Survey for Belize (2015) indicates that child labour is highest in Corozal, Toledo and Orange Walk, districts with significant indigenous communities.

Also disproportionately exposed are young members of the LGBTQI community who experience ostracisation by their families and communities, and are vulnerable to engaging in commercial sex.

Elements outside of the family are also drawing children into child labour. In nearly half of client countries, criminal gangs recruit children for sexual exploitation and forced engagement in criminal activity. In Jamaica, the Office of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons reported that traffickers use social media to entrap children and youth into trafficking and prostitution. It can be inferred that this practice exists in other client countries without institutional mechanisms for systematic reporting. The US State Department report also found that migrant children have been found to be particularly vulnerable to outside elements.

5.2.2 Legal Framework Concerning Child Labour

Nearly all client countries have ratified all ILO conventions concerning child labour and have laws governing child labour that meet international standards.

However, deficiencies were found in the operation of the labour market, evidenced by inadequate labour inspection, lenient penalties, and poor provision for law enforcement.

According to the US Department of Labor, six client countries have legislation that does not meet international standards for minimum age for hazardous work, with at least two member countries allowing underage children to work in dangerous activities. Eleven of the countries examined do not meet standards for the identification of hazardous occupations or activities for children. While some hazardous activities and occupations have been identified, the lists in most client countries are found to be non-comprehensive when compared with their situational contexts. Light work is also poorly defined and constitutes activities identified by at least one-third of client countries.

Nearly all client countries have ratified ILO conventions on child labour and have laws meeting international standards.

Most member countries' laws on forced labour and child trafficking meet international standards, with limited but likely consequential exceptions. Two countries place qualifiers and limit the scope of trafficking, which supposedly provides opportunities for criminal entities. The US Department of Labor, in its child labour and forced labour assessments, asserts that the laws in 8 out of the 15 client countries in this study do not meet international standards on prohibiting commercial sexual exploitation of children. Seven of the 15 client countries do not meet international standards concerning the use of children in illicit activities. There is a lack of specific coverage for the using, procuring, and offering of children for the production and trafficking of drugs. There are also opportunities for stronger penalties for children's involvement.

There is also limited coherence between education and labour laws, which otherwise expands opportunities for forms of child labour. For example, Suriname's mandatory education age law vis-à-vis its minimum age for work law creates a potential gap for children to fall into the informal economy due to a lack of government protection mechanisms for a given age range.

5.2.3 Enforcement of Laws

Most client countries have mechanisms to address identification and prevention of child labour. However, even in those client countries which had such mechanisms to address child labour explicitly, their labour inspectorates suffer from capacity challenges.

These challenges were related to issues such as financing, numbers and capacity of personnel, infrastructure to effectively engage the environment and processes. Some client countries have noted decreases in resources and operational activities since 2022.

For some client countries, there are areas over which the government has little oversight and control, particularly regarding gang-controlled areas and remote rural communities. Instances of institutional corruption and alleged lack of political will were found to hinder efforts. Also, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in one client country noted a lack of strategic adjustment to the enforcement mechanisms.

Further, many mechanisms are inter-agency, spanning ministries, law enforcement agencies, and the judiciary. Bureaucratic deficiencies across some of the types of institutions in several client countries likely compound challenges of resolving instances of child labour. The degree to which this occurs across client countries is not clear.

Access, awareness, understanding, and sustained will by victims have been noted barriers for their initiation and involvement in enforcement processes. The extent of this across client countries and stratified across victim and sector cohorts has not been determined. Some countries which had limited evidence of child labour did not institute enforcement mechanisms to specifically identify and handle these cases. While Suriname had limited evidence of child labour, the country has created systems specifically for prevention.

5.2.4 Policies and Coordinating Mechanisms

All client countries with significant incidents of child labour have instituted policies and coordinating mechanisms in response. However, with a few exceptions, there are challenges. While policies have led to the creation of national plans by some client countries, implementation has been found lacking, and in some instances, there is evidence of inactivity.

Some plans were found not to address all forms of child labour, including the worst forms, neglecting certain sectors such as agriculture or activities such as commercial sexual exploitation.

5.3 Youth Employment

5.3.1 Comparisons with General Working Population

Downes (2007 and 2009), among others, has noted that youth unemployment is a major challenge in the region, with differentials of at least double the national average and three times the national average in some countries.

According to WB (2023), all Caribbean states, except Trinidad and Tobago, had unemployment rates for youth above the world average, with five (Barbados, Suriname, Saint Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) being 10 to more than 20 percentage points above the world average.

Gaining insight into the extent of the differentials can be limited if there is only a focus on the unemployment rate without the context of differences in population sizes between cohorts. The region has a general limitation in publishing population sizes of 15-19, 20-24, and higher age groups in terms of unemployment and labour force together. Unemployment rates are typically given without the population sizes, thus not allowing for a comparison of unemployment rates of age cohorts relative to their population differentials.

At least four client countries published data which allowed for the building on unemployment rates to make clearer the disparities faced by working youth compared with their older counterparts to Barbados, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Jamaica, and Belize. In Saint Lucia, in 2019, the 14-24 age group made up 14% of the labour force yet accounted for 24% of the unemployed population. In 2023 in Jamaica, youth comprised 15% of the labour force yet accounted for 45% of the unemployed population. In 2021, Belize youth comprised 23% of the labour force and 46% of the unemployed population. Grenada youth made up 13% of the labour force population and 27% of the unemployed population. Barbados youth comprised 11% of the national labour force, yet 30% of the unemployed population.

Youth unemployment in the Caribbean is significantly higher than the national average.

Differentials also appear within countries; for example, in Suriname in 2019, Paramaribo and Wanica males aged 15-24 made up 14% of the employed male population and 33% of the unemployed male population, while making up 13% of the entire male working population. Females, on the other hand, made up 9% of the female working population and accounted for 32% of the female unemployed population.

It is notable that Belize is the only country for which there is a measure of underemployment among youth (24%).

ILO (2018 and 2020) conducted mapping exercises of interventions to support youth employment and suggested that some causes for the high youth unemployment rates include lack or mismatch of qualifications and experience, poor brokering mechanisms, and lack of confidence in youth as employees. The 2015 CDB youth study leveraged in-country studies for specific client countries to indicate reasons for unemployment. One such instance was the participatory poverty assessment element of the country poverty assessment for the Turks and Caicos which was instructive although not included in this study. It pointed to structural rigidities that could resist policy interventions. That study noted "no blame was apportioned domestically as the country's 'low' economy and lack of trade were thought of as the cause".

Contexts are distinct across Caribbean states and far more between individual states and extra-regional nations. These limit comparisons of certain indicators to indicate issues, especially in environments consisting of social security mechanisms, cultural and environmental characteristics. However, significant levels of difference can warrant investigations to determine disparities in handling labour markets.

5.3.2 Gender Differentials

Gender differentials in youth unemployment vary across client countries.

In five countries, the unemployment rate among females in the 15-24 age cohort was substantially higher than that of males in their respective populations in 2023. Barbados and Saint Lucia were different, with male unemployment higher than for females (+8% and +14.6%, respectively). In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, male unemployment was marginally higher.

Grenada provides the size of the unemployed populations by age groups further stratified by gender. Despite male and female youths having comparative population sizes, unemployed female youths made up 73% of the unemployed youths in the third quarter of 2023. This may be due in part to the reverse in labour force female/male population ratios between the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups.

Except for Belize and Trinidad and Tobago, male youth unemployment for Caribbean states was above the world average, with four (Barbados, Haiti, St. Vincent, and Saint Lucia) being 10 to 25 points above the world average. In fact, the differential of male youth unemployment since 2012 between the Caribbean and World has increased by nearly two percentage points. Male youth unemployment has increased since 2011 by 1%, whereas the world fluctuated for that period back to the same level as in 2011.

With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago, female youth unemployment in Caribbean states was above the world average, with seven (Barbados, Haiti, St. Vincent, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Guyana, Bahamas, and Belize) being 10 to 25 points above the world average. Female youth unemployment has decreased for the Caribbean on average, as has the differential between the region and the rest of the world.

In Belize, in 2022, there were 1.54 times more male youth in the labour force than female youth, yet the male/female unemployed population ratio was 0.68, showing that participating female youths struggled to have lower unemployment numbers despite having a lower participating population.

5.3.3 Comparative Resilience of Youth Employment

Over the past 16 years, the resilience of the regional youth labour force has proven substantially weaker than that of the labour force as a whole.

Despite a historical trend of the average unemployment rate decreasing in the 1990s and 2000s, the population experienced substantially greater stimulation during global shocks.

ILO estimates show the region had a steady decrease in the youth unemployment rate from 1991 to 2008 (24.5% to 17.1%). However, it is unclear what the equity implications are to determine whether there has been an increase or a decrease in decent work. The Great Recession of 2008 and the fallout of the pandemic led to increased youth unemployment rates. As of 2023, they were still higher than 2008. This is in comparison with the Caribbean adult labour force, for which the unemployment rate also steadily decreased between 1991 and 2008 (11.8% to 7.4%). The Great Recession and the pandemic each apparently led to increases of the adult unemployment rates. However, the adult unemployment rate fell below that of 2008 in 2018 (7.2%) and again in 2023 (6.6%).

The world's youth unemployment has been on the rise since 1991. However, in contrast, the region's youth unemployment was decreasing between 1991 and 2008, reducing the difference with world average youth unemployment from 14.4% to 3.8%. Since 2008, Caribbean youth unemployment has risen faster than the world average youth unemployment through 2023. The minimum difference in that period was 3.5% in 2019 but the maximum was 8.2%, with 2023 having a difference of 5%.

The regional youth labour force has been more resilient than the overall labour force.

During the height of the pandemic, in 2020 and 2021, unemployment in the client countries increased from 1% to 5.1%, while among the youth population, the increase ranged between 2.2% and 8.3%.

In the case of Guyana, there was a 5% decrease in unemployment for its youth population, while all other client countries had youth unemployment change between +2% and -0.9% from 2019 to 2023. All unemployment rates decreased between 2020 and 2023; however, some are still above 2019 levels.

As of 2023, five of the 10 client countries for which data was found had lower unemployment rates among youth in 2023 than in 2019. These five countries had lower national unemployment rates in 2023 than in 2019, and the decline in youth unemployment was marginally better than national rates for that period. However, the extent to which this covers precarious employment is unclear. Five of the nine client countries were found to have higher youth unemployment rates in 2023 than in 2019, with only one having a national rate lower in 2023 than in 2019.

5.3.4 Occupation

Identifying occupations in which youth are employed in conjunction with other data may lead to understanding their capacities to penetrate job markets *vis-à-vis* their qualifications, potential vulnerabilities,[26] and inter-occupational mobility.

In the 2015 Youth Study, CDB was able to show what percentages of the youth populations in Barbados and Saint Lucia were self-employed or employed in the private or public sector. This is substantial considering the investments made across various entrepreneurship and vocational training programmes, and tertiary education. Further disaggregation by gender reveals gender-based disparities across occupations. These are found mainly for the general working population, not at the youth level. The 2015 Youth Study also showed that in Barbados, "refuse", "other elementary occupations", and "construction" dominated male youth employment, while sales, customer and service occupations dominated female youth employment. In response, the Bank posited the need for cross-gender training and expertise to avoid gender-segregated employment, a clear policy suggestion addressing a clear trend.

Suriname's Bureau of Statistics is one of the few examples of countries with published data on occupations held by youth. However, this data was not disaggregated by gender. In Suriname, 73% of youth were employed as service workers, crafts and related trade workers, and in elementary occupations; this is in contrast with 56% of the rest of the adult population working in these occupations in 2019.

26 Barbados has surveys of unemployed populations by last occupations held. This is disaggregated by sex, however, not age groups.

5.3.5 Education

Saint Lucia has a distributive classification of its adult working population and adult poor working population by education level.

According to the Central Statistics Office, in 2016, Saint Lucians with tertiary education were 7.28% and accounted for 0.39% of the poor. Upper secondary comprised 25.91% of the population and 25.71% of the poor. Pre-primary education and primary made up 39.6% of the population and 46.96% of the poor.[27] The unemployment populations for those with only secondary and primary education in Belize were each more than 2.5 times than the unemployment population for those with tertiary education. Also, those with tertiary education earned 58% more than those with up to secondary and 89% more than those with up to primary school education in September 2021. Females educated at tertiary level made up 18.8% of the female labour force in 2021 and 7.9% of the unemployed female population. Tertiary educated males in contrast made up 14.6% of the labour force and 3.6% of the unemployed male population.

5.4 Conclusion

The region's economic downturns showed fragilities in the resilience of the youth labour force. The compounding of the financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic shocks have prevented youth unemployment levels from returning to levels equal to or under those prior to the 2008 global financial crisis. This is unlike the general labour force which reached lower than the 2008 rate before the start of the pandemic, and after as of 2023.

27 https://stats.gov.lc/subjects/society/population/poverty-by-education-level-2006-and-2016/.

06

INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES

06 INDIGENOUS AND TRIBAL PEOPLES

6.1 Coverage

6.1.1 Limits on The Research

This section covers indigenous[28] and tribal peoples[29] in Belize, Dominica, Guyana, and Suriname. Small pockets of people claim to be descended from Kalinago in Trinidad and Tobago and St. Vincent and the Grenadines; however, it is difficult to identify them as a cohesive social and ethnic group, and they are integrated into the national community.

Accessing the indigenous population of Dominica was the easiest, followed by Belize. The indigenous population of Dominica is concentrated in the Kalinago territory, which is easily accessible from the capital. In Belize, most of the indigenous and tribal people are concentrated in communities in the south of the country close to the coast (there are communities of Yucatec Maya in the north in Orange Walk).

Accessing indigenous communities in Guyana and Suriname is more difficult given the size of those countries and the challenges of internal transportation to the hinterland. Accordingly, within the resource constraints of this research, in collaboration with stakeholders, including recognised representatives of the indigenous communities[30], we were able to identify communities that could provide a legitimate perspective. The limitation is that these communities were still within relatively easy contact with the formal labour market in the respective countries with access to utilities and access to technology, although to a lesser extent than the more urban areas.

6.1.2 Belize

There are three indigenous communities in Belize: the Kekchi, the Mopan, and the Yucatec Maya.

28 Indigenous or first peoples refer to the inhabitants of the BMCs before settlement by Europeans and the labour they imported from Africa, India, China, and Indonesia. Many first peoples' groups find the term "Amerindian" to be objectionable and discourage its usage.

29 In this report the designation "tribal people" or "tribal people of African descent" is used to refer to the communities descended from runaway African slaves in Suriname and the Garifuna people in Belize. We were counselled that the terms "maroon" is deemed by many in the community as derogatory.

30 In Suriname, the main collaborators were KAMPOS (African-descended tribal people), the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname or De Vereniging van Inheemse Dorpshoofden in Suriname (VIDS) (indigenous communities).

The tribal people are the Garifuna. The indigenous and tribal peoples are located mainly in the south of the country in the Toledo District. There are also Mayan communities in the north. The Ministry of Indigenous People's Affairs estimates that the indigenous and tribal people account for 18% of the population of Belize.

6.1.3 Dominica

The indigenous people of Dominica are Kalinago. The Kalinago in Dominica have an allocation of 1500 hectares (15 square kilometres) located in the northeast of the island.

Dominica is the only one of the four countries in which land ownership by an indigenous or tribal group is recognised in law. However, the Kalinago reserve is on some of the poorest quality land in Dominica.

The Kalinago population is approximately 3,000 and they are the largest indigenous group in the islands of the Caribbean. The population has grown from an estimated 400, when the reserve was first established in 1903 and has increased from 1.6% to 3.5% of the population of the country.

6.1.4 Guyana

The indigenous people of Guyana may be divided into the coastal dwellers and those in the interior. The costal dwellers are the Kalihna (Carib-Galibi), Lokono (Arawak-Taino), and Warau.

The groups in the interior are the Akawaio, Arekuna, Patamona, Waiwai, Makushi, and Wapishana. This dichotomy is useful to some extent since access to employment, education, health, transportation, other social services and amenities is easier in the coastal areas. Restrictions on access are, by definition, one of the root causes of vulnerabilities and disadvantages in the world of work. According to the 2012 census, there were about 78,500 indigenous people in the country, accounting for some 10.5% of the total population of the country. This is almost twice the number from the 1980 census. It is notable that as many as 90% of them live in the interior.

The Amerindian Act was passed in 1978. Among other things, it made provision for collective title. Although, it was pointed out that many communities in the interior remain unaware of the benefits of the Act. A Select Committee of Parliament was appointed in 2003 to consider revisions to the law. In 2004, the government accepted 46 of the 74 recommendations made by the Committee.

Members of the Committee and the parliamentary opposition opposed the bill, with some groups advocating its complete withdrawal.[31]

While provision has been made for collective ownership of land, the Minority Rights Group has noted that the lands are marginal for agriculture and that mineral rights under the land remain the preserve of the government.

6.1.5 Suriname

Suriname has both indigenous communities and African-descended tribal communities.[32] The indigenous groups, according to the 2000 census, were 14,600 or 2% of the population, while the tribal communities were 40,000 or 8% of the population. Representatives of both communities believe that the populations have been undercounted.

There are five indigenous communities: Taino (Arawak), Kali'nago (Carib), Warrau, Wayana, and Akurio. The main collective advocacy group for the indigenous community is the VIDS.

There are six tribal groups in Suriname: Kwinti, Aluku, Matawai, Paamaka, Okanisi, and Saamaka. The main collective advocacy group for the tribal community is KAMPOS (the name derives from the first letter of each of the constituent groups). The two communities share a long history of collaboration. The indigenous people provided the runaway slaves with aid and comfort and taught them to connect with the land.

The communities share many of the same challenges related to social development, access to services, and land tenure. The indigenous communities' main activities are farming, fishing, and logging. While the tribal communities also depend on agriculture, and they have large numbers in the formal and informal mining sector.

Data on the participation of the indigenous and tribal communities is not readily available. The three main metadata sources[33] of labour statistics do not disaggregate according to ethnicity. Moreover, the main one, the Labour Force Survey, only covers the districts of Paramaribo and Wanica, which account for less than 70% of the country.

31 The Act was passed over the objection of many in the indigenous community, who believed that it did not go far enough to protect the community. Notably, some objected to the "Amerindian" designation in the law.
32 These communities are also collectively referred to as Maroons, Djukas and Bakabusi Nengre (Back of Bush Blacks).
33 This is the Labour Force Survey carried out by the General Bureau of Statistics Suriname; two administrative records such as the record of Border Management System held by the Military Police of the Ministry of Defence, and Continuous Population Register carried out by the Central Registry Office of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

6.2 Labour Force Participation

6.2.1 Geographic Location

In the four countries, there is somewhat of a trade-off between maintenance of community identity and the need and urge for economic and social progress and security.

Opportunities for employment in the formal economy are limited in many indigenous and tribal areas, especially in Guyana and Suriname in those communities that are in the vast hinterland.

In both Guyana and Suriname, the main activities are in primary extractor sectors (mining and forestry) and agriculture. Given the size of the countries, with other constraints in labour administration which have been alluded to above, there are implications for vulnerable employment, social protection, health and safety, child labour and other decent work deficits that are associated with the informal economy. This is amply demonstrated by the fact that according to 2018 official statistics, 2,500 workers were officially registered as employed in the mining sector (primarily in gold extraction) while it was estimated to be as high as 70,000; meaning that the vast majority operate in the informal economy.[34]

Accordingly, it is necessary for most indigenous and tribal people who wish to work in the formal sector to relocate to the population centres on the coastlands, at least during the work week and return home on weekends. For many, however, the relocation to the coastlands is permanent. There is a similar dynamic in Dominica, although given the small size of the country, daily commutes are more feasible.

As noted, the indigenous and tribal communities in Belize are concentrated in the south of the country, which is also the main tourism centre. Accordingly, for many in these communities, there is vibrant economic activity in their geographic location.[35] This has contributed significantly to community cohesion. Similarly, the ease of commute between the Kalinago Territory in Dominica and the other population centres has contributed to greater community coherence. Representatives of the indigenous and tribal peoples in Suriname and Guyana have lamented the impact that this has had on the sustainability of their identity and culture.

34 The heightened potential for harm was illustrated in the November 2023 accident in which 15 illegal miners were killed.
35 It is noteworthy that because of the convergence of economic opportunity in the location of the community, the Garifuna people have been able to concentrate some of their efforts on issues related to the preservation of the Garifuna culture, which itself could foster greater community resilience.

6.2.2 Education

Education and training are critical for participating in the labour force, especially in the formal economy in which there would be more specific requirements for positions. Indigenous people find themselves disadvantaged with respect to education opportunities, which in turn impacts their employability.

The most challenged country in this regard is Suriname. The six tribal communities and the five indigenous tribes all have their own distinct language. In most cases, in the homelands of these communities, the language commonly spoken is the tribal one. The language of instruction in the Suriname school system is Dutch. Accordingly, students are being educated in a second language, for which the first exposure is when they start school.

The Suriname indigenous and tribal student is further challenged by the quality of the teaching staff. Very often, teaching staff are assigned from outside the community, with limited knowledge of the community culture (including language). Further, it is difficult to secure adequate numbers of well-qualified teachers who will accept assignments in the hinterland. Accordingly, Suriname has compromised on the qualification required for teachers when they are assigned to the schools in the interior. Further, these teachers tend to accept only shorter assignments (two years). As a result, there tend to be inexperienced teachers in interior schools.

These difficulties are in addition to the rudimentary state of the physical infrastructure in many areas, including access to stable supplies of electricity and access to the internet. Further, in many communities the only school is at the primary level with many of them housed in a single room with little differentiation between levels of education.

Indigenous people in Suriname face education barriers, including language issues, unqualified teachers, and poor infrastructure, limiting employability.

In response to these challenges, indigenous and tribal children are sent to the urban centres for an opportunity to receive a better education. Sometimes they are accompanied by their mothers, but very often they board with a family (if they are fortunate, they may board with a family from the same or another indigenous or tribal community). Representatives of indigenous and tribal people in both Guyana and Suriname have shared that their children are severely disadvantaged in these circumstances and cannot optimise the benefits of the education.

A further complication is the incidence of teenage pregnancy among children from the interior who go to the coastlands for school. These teenage mothers have their studies interrupted and return to their village with only prospects as homemakers and involvement in the informal sector.[36]

36 This was emphasised by the representatives of KAMPOS and the leadership of Nieuw Ganzee and Matta Company Creek (tribal communities in Suriname).

6.3 Equality of Opportunity and Treatment

6.3.1 Community Differentials

For the reasons outlined above, indigenous and tribal peoples start with a disadvantage in the formal economy.

In the first place, there are only limited opportunities in villages. The one exception is Belize, where the location of the indigenous and tribal peoples in the Toledo District in the south of the country, has relatively more economic opportunities than the scattered homelands in Suriname and Guyana, and the inhospitable landscape of the Kalinago Country in Dominica.

For the indigenous and tribal peoples who do not wish to be internal migrants, the options are limited. In some settlement areas in Suriname, like the Brokopondo administrative area, residents can find some employment opportunities in government offices set up to provide services in the locations. These options are mainly for lower-level, casual positions.

Most inhabitants in these homelands therefore fall back on the informal sector – fishing, agriculture, logging, and mining; and these occupations are bereft of protection. The most dangerous are the mining and logging industries. While parts of the activities are regulated many of them are not. Even large concessionaires have been found to violate health, safety, and the environment regulations. In more than one village the effects of mercury polluting the ground water have been highlighted. This impacts not only the environment but also negatively affects subsistence farming and the health of the affected communities.

6.3.2 Gender Differentials

The survey data from the four countries does not indicate any significant gender differences in perception of treatment from the general population.

For example, when asked about equality of opportunity in hiring, equality of opportunity in treatment on the job, and the prevalence of sexual harassment, there were no significant differences in the responses of indigenous women and women in the general population. In all cases, however, a greater percentage of women felt that women were disadvantaged than men did. More men in both the general population and the indigenous population believed that there was equality of treatment than women did.

This perception, however, needs to be understood in the context of the predominance of informal employment in the indigenous population.

6.4 Vulnerabilities and Resilience

6.4.1 COVID-19

In the four countries (but least in Dominica) it was felt that the indigenous and tribal communities were disadvantaged during COVID-19.

In interviews with representatives of the communities in Guyana and Suriname especially, there was the firm view that national governments were slow in servicing the needs of their communities, especially those living in the hinterlands.

There were criticisms about the inadequacies in government responses to indigenous communities. Issues included political interference, insufficient assistance, and a lack of essential information during the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in disparities in access to resources and support. The indigenous population was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in various aspects such as health, education, economy, and mental health. Information about the pandemic was slow to reach these communities due to language barriers and remote locations, and healthcare systems faced challenges due to vast distances between communities, making access difficult.

In Suriname and Guyana, vaccines eventually became available, but accessibility was an issue due to remote locations and storage challenges. Disinformation and religious beliefs posed hurdles to vaccine acceptance with some communities labelled as "hot zones" based on infection rates, but testing facilities were limited, impacting accurate data collection. As a result, communities relied on natural remedies such as lemongrass, ginger, and turmeric. Religious beliefs and disinformation led to vaccine refusal in some areas, highlighting the importance of indigenous knowledge and customs.

In education, schools relied on physical materials for teaching, hindering the shift to virtual classrooms due to poor internet connectivity and limited access to technology. Education setbacks were significant, with children missing classes and facing significant challenges. The lack of inclusion of indigenous leaders in decision-making worsened the centralised approach, impacting educational outcomes and examinations, leading to increased teenage pregnancies and other challenges. There was an increase in teenage pregnancies even during the pandemic when children were at home, raising concerns about supervision and possible substance abuse due to gaps in understanding and limited studies on the matter. While efforts are made to advocate for indigenous rights and interests, there are ongoing challenges in ensuring these voices are respected in policymaking. Despite their deep involvement and expertise, they face dismissiveness, scepticism, and limited engagement from government bodies.

Indigenous communities in Suriname and Guyana faced slow government responses, limited healthcare access, and education setbacks during COVID-19.

6.4.2 Climate Change Adaptation

There is heightened vulnerability of indigenous communities during the rainy season due to flooding.

This adverse impact disrupts traditional planting seasons, damages crops such as cassava, and creates economic stress within these communities. Whilst this has been the case, there have been inadequacies in governmental responses. Instances of political interference, lack of reliable assistance, and inadequate provision of crucial information during the COVID-19 pandemic led to disparities in access to support and resources among indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities are resorting to traditional knowledge to mitigate climate change impacts on agriculture. However, the lack of modern resources like irrigation systems, poses challenges to long-term food security. Communities are resorting to traditional knowledge to mitigate climate change's effects, such as planting on higher ground and increasing home gardens. However, challenges persist due to the lack of modern resources in irrigation systems, affecting long-term food security.

6.5 Conclusion

As noted, this research into indigenous and tribal communities was constrained especially by the issue of physical access to communities in the hinterlands of Guyana and Suriname.

In these two countries, based on information received from representatives of communities (indigenous people in Guyana, and indigenous and tribal people in Suriname) there is dependence on the informal sector, mainly extractive activities and agriculture. The further inland that the communities occupy, the fewer regulations from the national authorities and, consequently, the greater exposure to exploitation.

There is an urgent need for more in-depth investigation into the practices in the informal economy in the hinterlands of Guyana and Suriname. It is noted, however, that representatives of communities have voiced concerns about safety and security in this regard.

In Section 3.0 of this report, the importance of community and voice were highlighted; for indigenous and tribal peoples these assets are even more critical. In focus groups and key informant interviews in the four countries it was forcefully conveyed that the sense of community enabled them to face and overcome the disruptions of COVID-19.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BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH SOLIDARITY: NON-STATE ACTORS

Photo: wirestock

07 BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH SOLIDARITY: NON-STATE ACTORS

7.1 Limits on State Capacity

The present research has reemphasised several mutually reinforcing factors affecting the ability of governments to close decent work deficits in the Caribbean labour market.

First is the increasing complexity of governance brought about by the nature of the international economic system. Second is the range of shocks and disruptions that impact or potentially impact Caribbean society and economies and the limitations of Caribbean states in addressing them. Third are the economic, human, and governance resource constraints countries face.

Despite efforts to diversify, the economies of the Bank's client countries continue to be concentrated in a few sectors. This reality creates inflexibility in the labour market and limits the scope of government policy's impact on outcomes. Governments are also constrained by limited fiscal space to manoeuvre as they grapple with high levels of national debt servicing.

Even as the government seeks to address these challenges, it is becoming more apparent that there is space for non-state actors (NSAs) to contribute to solutions to promote decent work and social justice. This section examines some of these options.

7.2 The Social and Solidarity Economy

On April 18, 2023, the UN General Assembly adopted A/RES/77/281, "Promoting the Social and Solidarity Economy for Sustainable Development."

The resolution recognises that the social and solidarity economy (SSE) can "contribute to the achievement and localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals", particularly its contribution to decent work, poverty alleviation, and social transformation and inclusion.[37]

37 https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-welcomes-new-un-resolution-social-and-solidarity-economy.

The UN resolution A/RES/77/281 highlights the social and solidarity economy (SSE) as key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in decent work and poverty alleviation.

The features of the SSE are:

- Voluntary cooperation.
- Mutual aid.
- Democratic and participatory governance.
- Autonomy and independence.
- Working across economic sectors.
- Primacy of people and social purpose over capital in distributing and using profits and assets.

SSE entities include cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, foundations, self-help and voluntary groups.

NSAs have traditionally played an important role in promoting social justice in the Caribbean. This was highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when financial and non-financial cooperatives proved invaluable lifelines for their members and the broader community in many countries.

SSE provides a robust framework to address some of the challenges of closing decent work deficits. It can also build social capital, increasing community resilience, including during disruptions when vulnerable people fall further behind. It can also mobilise community financial assets and create tangible economic opportunities.

Two other specific and interrelated links relate to this research. First, SSE provides a potential framework for addressing the formalisation of economic activity. This can be done either through the agency of non-financial cooperatives as formal business entities or through the agency of credit unions with their unique perspectives as financing and advisory products and services.

Indigenous communities were examined in four countries. In two of them, Suriname and Guyana, the communities advocated for the recognition of their communal land rights. In Dominica, on the other hand, communal land rights are recognised. However, because no member of the community has title, they are unable to use property to secure financing for economic activities. The SSE model is well framed to empower indigenous and other community groups.

Access to financial resources is a critical catalyst for the development and expansion of SSE, enabling organisations and initiatives to scale their impact and reach. In many cases, SSE enterprises, such as cooperatives, community-based organisations, and social enterprises, need help accessing traditional sources of financing due to their non-profit orientation or unconventional business models. However, by facilitating access to capital through innovative financing mechanisms, such as community investment funds, microfinance, or impact investing, SSE can unlock new opportunities for growth and sustainability.

Furthermore, equitable access to financial resources empowers marginalised communities, including women, minorities, tribal and indigenous communities and rural populations, by providing them with the means to invest in their development and create economic opportunities. By ensuring that SSE initiatives have the necessary financial support to thrive, societies can harness the transformative potential of SSE to address pressing social and environmental challenges, promote inclusive economic development, and build resilient, community-driven economies.

Most client countries face the challenge of prioritising the use of financial resources against the impact of major natural disasters and disruptions in the client countries. The players in SSE, particularly financial cooperatives/credit unions and externally funded NGOs have stepped up to provide the financial resources required. Interestingly, these financial resources must also be divided to assist in recovery efforts and help build communities' capabilities for enterprise development. In every instance of disruption, financial resources were assigned to assist recovery efforts, often alongside government and other providers. There have been issues with the administration and allocation of financial resources; however, governance structures need to be improved to manage the flow of financial resources to the players in the SSE.

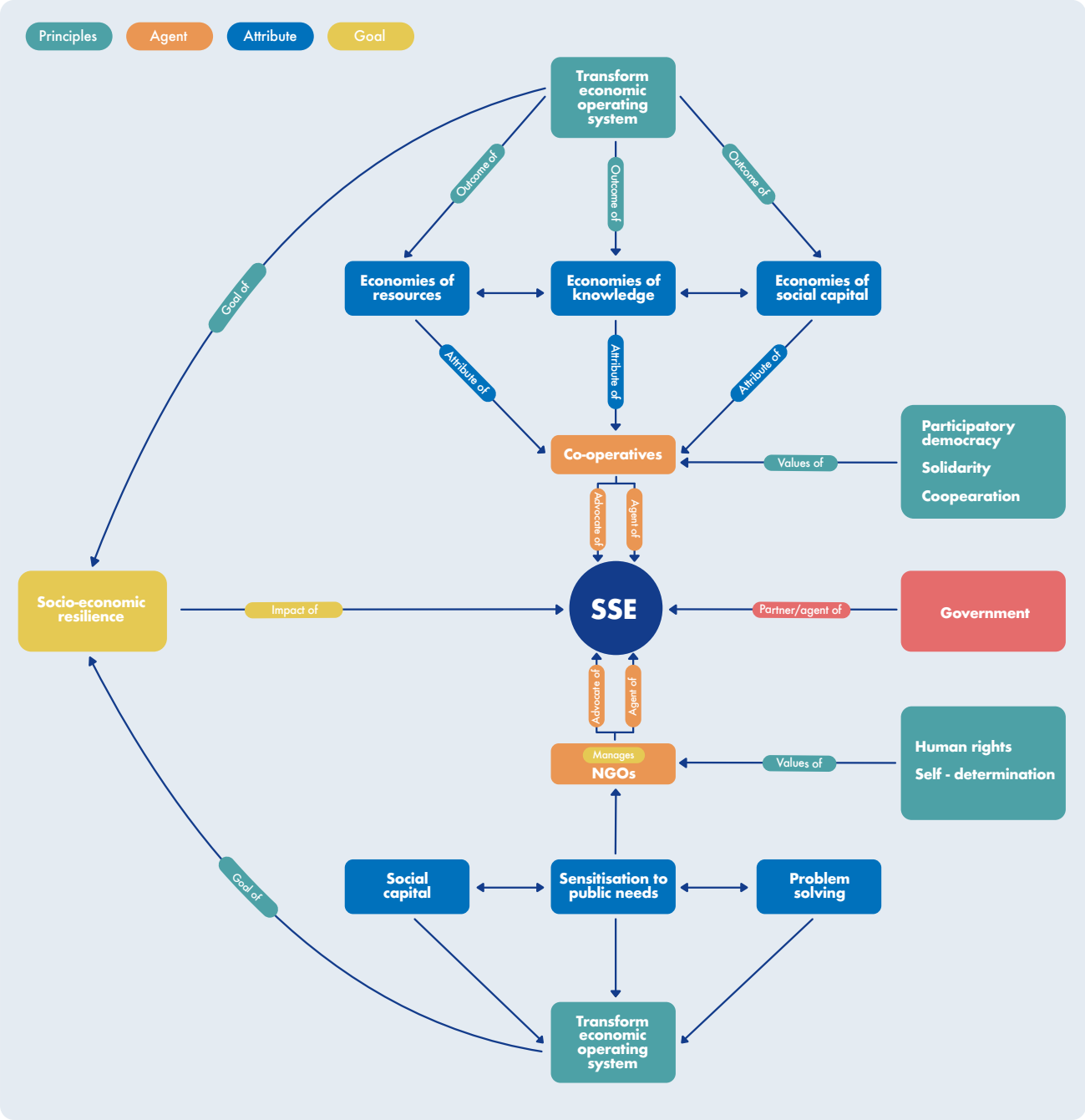
7.3 Social Capital

The SSE serves as a catalyst for mobilising social capital by nurturing trust, reciprocity, and social cohesion within and across communities.

Through collaborative endeavours and mutual support networks, the SSE actors build resilient relationships based on shared values and common goals, thus strengthening the social fabric and enhancing community resilience. Moreover, by promoting participatory governance structures and fostering a sense of ownership among stakeholders, SSE encourages active civic engagement and empowers individuals to shape their socio-economic realities collectively.

The SSE offers a transformative paradigm for mobilising economic and social capital, transcending traditional development models by placing people at the forefront (See Figure 9). By harnessing the collective power of communities and fostering inclusive, participatory approaches to economic organisation, SSE promotes sustainable livelihoods and cultivates resilient, cohesive societies grounded in solidarity and social justice principles. As the global community grapples with complex challenges ranging from economic inequality to environmental degradation, SSE emerges as a beacon of hope, demonstrating the potential for a more equitable, sustainable future built on principles of cooperation, solidarity, and shared prosperity.

Figure 9: *Framework for socio-economic resilience and transformation through SSE*



7.4 Creating Economic Opportunity

The credit union movement is the most significant component of SSE in the Caribbean.[38]

In 2020, almost 2.7 million people in CDB's client countries were members of credit unions. There are nearly 300 credit unions with total assets of more than USD7.6 million (See Table 13).

38 Excluding Suriname for which information is not available.

The penetration rate of credit unions in the Caribbean is one of the highest in the world; indeed, Dominica has the highest rate of penetration globally.

Non-financial cooperatives (NFTs), especially producer cooperatives, play a significant role in some countries, especially those with active agriculture and fishing communities.[39]

Table 13: *CDB client countries credit union profile*

COUNTRY	MEMBERS	SAVINGS AND SHARES (USD)	RESERVES (USD)	ASSETS (USD)	PENETRATION (%)
Anguilla	1,139	4,527,883	(11,857)	4,876,563	68.23
Antigua and Barbuda	45,982	136,167,546	7,439,286	162,748,828	10.96
The Bahamas	45,467	NA	225,900,000	NA	16.37
Barbados	221,789	2,760,342,671	285,202,555	1,396,774,886	115.99
Belize	169,723	479,722,290	74,001,978	570,841,668	64.88
Dominica	83,789	291,584,287	29,314,847	346,164,143	169.06
Grenada	76,450	312,241,191	11,238,872	402,770,316	102.27
Guyana	48,588	35,437,500	4,114,631	50,688,446	9.54
Jamaica	1,034,962	741,855,761	62,294,843	959,506,332	51.73
Montserrat	5,681	22,700,909	1,000,260	24,994,740	137.42
St. Kitts and Nevis	31,079	145,490,430	19,473,098	176,931,498	82.58
Saint Lucia	117,128	348,909,427	36,580,150	438,891,148	88.89
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	74,618	184,222,019	15,496,780	211,986,148	98.64
Trinidad and Tobago	718,484	2,381,662,122	360,667,622	2,918,965,580	75.03

Source: World Council of Credit Unions.

Interaction with representatives and regulators of cooperatives (financial and NFTs) revealed their recognition of the movement's potential to contribute to economic development and social justice in the region. Some governments, notably Saint Lucia, Dominica, and Barbados, encourage forming and expanding cooperative enterprises, recognising their importance in community development and economic resilience. Representatives of the movement called for multifaceted support, including financial assistance, technical training, and social protection measures tailored to the needs of cooperatives.

39 NFTs fall into three categories: producers, consumers, and multi-purpose.

The credit union movement is the most significant component of SSE in the Caribbean, with 2.7 million members and assets over USD 7.6 million.

In Saint Lucia and Dominica, there are calls for policy reforms and increased government support to enhance the effectiveness of cooperatives in the agricultural and fishing industries.

The presence of a support infrastructure for mobilising social capital was rare. Instead of the mechanisms in place to mobilise and disseminate economic capital, there was less concern with harmonising systems and processes, which allowed for social cohesion and the creation of platforms for issues to be addressed in a structured manner. It was observed that the initiatives and social programmes were often in response to disruptions instead of being primarily structured to bring about organisation in an organic manner. It was observed mainly that these initiatives were more reactive than proactive. The government's focus on income distribution, including social protection programmes and checks, is noted as a strategy to maintain support despite economic challenges.

Capacity building was focused mainly on building capacity to withstand disruptions when they did exist. In Dominica, for example, training focused on community responses to natural disasters in government-assisted programmes and among NGOs. Some client countries enhance the sector's entrepreneurial capabilities as part of macro policy to generate income and contribute to employment generation and poverty alleviation. However, more structure was needed to track the results from these training and capacity-building initiatives, and exact figures remained largely speculative.

Trust-building initiatives are crucial components in fostering the principles of SSE. Within SSE, which prioritises collective well-being and sustainable development, establishing trust is fundamental as it forms the basis of cooperative relationships among various stakeholders. Environmental sustainability programmes contribute to the overall social and economic fabric, enhancing trust among employees, consumers, and local communities. This was particularly evident in the client countries, such as Dominica and Saint Lucia, which were required to build resilience capacity against natural disasters.

Moreover, trust-building initiatives play a significant role in promoting inclusivity and social cohesion within the SSE framework. By actively involving stakeholders in decision-making processes and addressing their concerns, businesses empower marginalised groups and promote social justice. For example, many client countries would need to prioritise diversity and inclusion initiatives to build community trust and support the principles of solidarity by fostering a sense of belonging and equal opportunity. These efforts contribute to developing a more equitable society, a central tenet of SSE.

Furthermore, trust-building initiatives drive systemic change and promote sustainable development within SSE. When enterprises (governmental or private) prioritise social and environmental objectives alongside financial goals, they contribute to creating shared value for society. Credit unions, in particular, responded to the players in the SSE community by providing avenues to finance needs, whether for disaster recovery, job and income loss, or even entrepreneurial endeavour. By investing in initiatives addressing pressing social and environmental challenges, credit unions contributed to building trust among stakeholders while fostering innovation and resilience within communities. Ultimately, by integrating trust-building initiatives and corporate social responsibility into their operations, other agencies can align with the principles of SSE and contribute to creating a more just, inclusive, and sustainable economy.

7.5 Governance Systems in the SSE

In SSE, as in other sectors of society that can impact the labour market, the governance systems are inadequate and hinder the sector from realising its potential.

In several client countries in the Caribbean, the governance structures have emerged as largely outdated and insufficient. The national laws that regulate activities in SSE are outdated and inadequate for the sector's dynamic needs. The core cooperatives legislation for Jamaica dates back to 1950, for Barbados to 1993, and for Trinidad and Tobago to 1971. Credit unions in these three countries have assets of more than five billion dollars.

However, some progress has been made in the micro and small enterprise sector, as most client countries have developed legislation to foster entrepreneurial endeavour increases in the BMCs. It may be a missed opportunity to not seek greater coherence.

7.6 Gender and Age in the SSE

Young people, especially in Dominica and Saint Lucia, posited that the sector, especially NFTs, could not realise their potential because the leadership was dominated by older people.

This is the reverse of other sectors, where bias against older people was apparent. The leadership was also male dominated, reflecting patterns observed in other parts of Caribbean society.

08

CONCLUSIONS

08 CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Overview of Decent Work Deficits

The Caribbean labour market exhibits decent work deficits. These are heightened in times of crisis and disruption, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the natural disasters experienced by the region, and the impacts of economic, political, and other occurrences from the international system.

Many workers in the Caribbean exist from one pay cycle to the next; some are one pay cheque from poverty. The region's labour market continues to demonstrate many of the structural and system weaknesses identified by Downes (2009).

Some groups in the labour market are more vulnerable to disruptions and have demonstrated less resilience in dealing with and recovering from disruptions. The factors influencing this position are unemployment, underemployment, low earnings, and poor working conditions. These factors can be further exacerbated by issues focused on in this study – gender, age, and indigeneity. The result can be a confluence of factors denying some workers fundamental principles and rights at work. The failure of labour market administration systems to adequately remediate deficits through law, institutions and policy perpetuates these challenges.

The Caribbean labour market has a hierarchy of social justice, equity, and fairness. The public sector, governed by rules set in constitutional and other legal provisions, has the best framework of provisions for protecting workers' rights. The private sector[40] follows and the informal sector is last. However, it was observed that in some countries, some insidious practices, such as sexual harassment, were more prevalent in the public sector.

Patterns of employment show that women, young people, and indigenous and tribal people are over-represented in the informal sector, creating a structural bias towards increased vulnerability. The research also suggested that individuals in the LGBTQI community and PWDs were also disproportionately vulnerable.

Pursuing equal opportunity and treatment for women in the Caribbean workplace remains an ongoing challenge. While there have been significant strides in education, training, and employment opportunities and efforts to reduce workplace discrimination and bias, persistent issues continue to undermine progress; inclusive of GBV.

40 It is acknowledged that the private sector is not monolithic; practice can vary widely.

The Caribbean labour market has significant decent work deficits, particularly affecting vulnerable groups like women, youth, and indigenous people.

Further, with the increases in female educational attainment (compared with male underachievement), women are increasingly dominating the senior ranks of the civil service. However, this needs to be reflected in the private sector.

The situation of LGBTQI people is an area of concern. The research revealed a reluctance on the part of people from this community to engage. Consequently, within this investigation's scope, it is impossible to make detailed inferences. However, this reluctance to engage, even with independent researchers, suggests objective vulnerability and significant insecurity.

Interaction with PWDs suggested that there was not active discrimination as much as benign neglect founded on a lack of appreciation of the challenges of PWDs. Whatever the motivation and cause, however, PWDs remain a disadvantaged group in the labour market. In most countries, while there were policies for the protection of PWDs, these were not necessarily reflected in practical provisions, primarily to facilitate participation in the labour market. PWDs require infrastructure such as public transport and handicap-accessible buildings to access the labour market, including toilets. Moreover, in many countries, the provision of educational facilities for PDWs was adequate. Disabilities also proved to be an additional element of disadvantage for indigenous people who lived in the interior, especially in Guyana and Suriname.

The situation of PWDs highlights one of the governance deficiencies observed in labour market management (and wider governance systems) in the Caribbean: the establishment of laudable policies that are not buttressed by effective systems of implementation, accountability, and monitoring.

The region's economic vulnerabilities, particularly those impacting the youth labour force, have been highlighted by the compounding effects of natural disasters, economic shocks, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike the general labour force, youth unemployment levels have struggled to return to pre-2008 global financial crisis levels.

The investigation into indigenous and tribal peoples focused on four countries. Except for Belize, where many indigenous and tribal communities are located in areas of a vibrant tourism sector, these communities are located in areas with limited employment options. Those who remain within the community must often rely on vulnerable and precarious employment. Their participation in the labour market is mainly in the informal sector; many engage in dangerous work with inadequate protection. The unregulated nature of these sectors poses significant risks to workers' health and safety, as evidenced by tragic accidents and environmental pollution incidents.

Moreover, the further removed from major population centres that these communities are located, increases their vulnerabilities as evidenced in larger client countries like Guyana and Suriname.

The research confirmed that there is an urgent and continuing need to interrogate the foregoing issues further, particularly issues related to worker groups that are less visible than others.

Moreover, the client countries must navigate the allocation of financial resources amidst the challenges of natural disasters and systemic disruptions. CDB has noted that its client countries need more space to address the complex challenges in such a dynamic environment. The research suggested that there is an opportunity (maybe more of a need) to mobilise civil society and community resources to close gaps that persist due to government constraints.

The ILO has identified a role for SSE in this regard, particularly financial cooperatives and NGOs. The potential of the institutions in SSE was vividly demonstrated during the pandemic. To realise this potential, there needs to be a rethinking and redesigning of the operating environment, especially credit unions, which have the financial assets to impact the labour market. These people-based institutions can mobilise community assets, create social capital, and fill gaps left by the government in a crisis, as demonstrated when they provide necessary financial support for recovery and enterprise development during COVID-19.

To address these multifaceted issues, it is essential to re-evaluate and enhance the transparency and inclusivity of M&E mechanisms associated with legislative frameworks for equality. Greater advocacy efforts involving robust collaborations among government entities, the private sector, trade unions, and civil society, alongside improved social dialogue among stakeholders, are crucial. These steps are vital for building resilience in the client countries as they navigate the evolving dynamics of the modern workforce amidst ongoing systemic disruptions.

09

APPENDIX – METHODOLOGY

Photo: wirestock

09 APPENDIX – METHODOLOGY

9.1 Overview

This research project started as an investigation into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on workers in Trinidad and Tobago and, subsequently, was expanded to the wider Caribbean region.

The pandemic highlighted the range of vulnerabilities faced by workers in the Caribbean. Anecdotally, it also highlighted the differentiated impact of disruptions on various population groups across the region, specifically women, young workers, workers in the informal economy, and indigenous and tribal peoples.

The design of the research was initially informed by a series of 12 webinars during the height of the pandemic and in its waning stages when "normalcy" was returning. Participants in the webinars included:

- Representatives of workers' organisations from across the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean.
- Representatives of credit unions and non-financial cooperatives.
- Human resource professionals.
- Employers' associations.

The design was also informed by the proceedings of the Second Caribbean Workers' Forum (CWF II), which was held virtually in October 2021, with the theme *"Re-imagining the New Normal"*. CWF II has more than 450 participants drawn from every BMC of CDB, as well as from outside the region. Further, the design benefitted from input from the Ministry of Labour, Trinidad and Tobago, and from the ILO Decent Work Team and Office for the Caribbean, located in Port of Spain, which provided seed money for some initial investigation. The design was finalised in consultation with CDB.

These varied engagements assisted the researchers in determining which factors were relevant to protecting workers and closing decent work deficits in the region. Further, background research highlighted the paucity of Caribbean-specific data and information related to the world of work.

Accordingly, it was determined that the objectives of the research would be to:

i. Create a baseline map of the Caribbean labour market, specifically focusing on differentials related to gender, age, and indigeneity.
ii. Assess the resilience of identified population groups.
iii. Assess the institutional capacity of BMCs (government, workers' organisations, the private sector and its support organisations, and community-based and people's organisations) to support social justice in the world of work.
iv. Inform policy designed to close social justice and decent work deficits in the labour market.

9.2 Desk Research

A desk review was completed for all the target countries, focusing on the labour market, labour relations, worker participation and representation, labour laws, and ratification of treaties and conventions. This was necessary as it gave a context for the study, interrogating and investigating the issues that affect workers (formal and informal) in the economies. In this way the research was able to place the relevant issues in a national context and allow for the identification of gaps that existed in the labour markets.

9.3 Specific Methodology – Focus Group Interviews

In each country, a group of major stakeholders (trade unions, cooperatives, employers and employees) was selected and disaggregated into demographics to ensure that the maximum amount of data was collected. The Focus Group participants were selected on the basis of gender and whether they are union members or non-union members, members of NGOs, and members of the indigenous and tribal communities where applicable. This disaggregation was necessary for the purposes of analysis as different genders and groups had unique perspectives on the issues being interrogated. It is also necessary to determine opinions from the different groups as this will give a more holistic view of the requisite topics under investigation.

9.4 Specific Methodology Key – Informant Interviews

In each country a group of major stakeholders and experts (trade unions, cooperatives, employers, and employees) were selected and disaggregated into demographics to ensure that the maximum amount of data was collected. The Key Informant Interviewees were selected on the basis of their particular level of expertise in the areas under investigation.

This approach allowed for perspectives from a variety of informed and qualified sources that contribute to the comprehension of the issues under investigation.

9.5 Specific Methodology – National Surveys

9.5.1 Sampling Methodology

The study used a household survey method to collect data from respondents in specific age and gender demographics. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using a pre-designed questionnaire. The data collection period was two months long. To ensure quality assurance, interviewers and two supervisors were used to collect data in all countries. Prior to conducting the survey in each country, all interviewers and supervisors underwent a training programme.

9.5.2 Sampling Design

The methodology employed in collecting data was multi-stage cluster sampling using a stratified random sample. Cluster sampling involves dividing the population of interest into groups or clusters and then selecting a number of these groups or clusters through a random process. This approach was useful because it avoided compiling an exhaustive list of every individual in the population.

9.5.3 Sample Size Selection

The sample allowed for the detection of differences across groups within the populations. While it was not intended to be proportionally representative of the populations, it was effective in that it allowed for the perspectives to be captured. Using data from available sources (national statistical offices, international and regional organisations), the size of the labour market in each BMC was identified (See Table 14). BMCs were divided in five groups:

- Labour force under 5,000.
- Labour force between 5,001 and 50,000.
- Labour force between 50,001 and 100,000.
- Labour force between 100,001 and 250,000.
- Labour force between 250,001 and 500,000.
- Labour force between 500,001 and 1,000,000.
- Labour force over 1,000,000.

Table 14: *Sampling Framework*

COUNTRY	POPULATION	LABOUR FORCE	TARGETED SAMPLE
Anguilla	19,000	6,049	100
Antigua and Barbuda	93,219	51,931	200
Bahamas	412,623	239,760	400
Barbados	400,031	142,648	300
Belize	281.200	190,010	400
Dominica	72,412	25,000	300
Grenada	124,610	57,136	200
Guyana	804,567	289,264	500
Jamaica	2,825,544	1,572,790	700
Monserrat	4,992	2,703	50
St. Kitts and Nevis	47,755	-	100
Saint Lucia	179,651	102,430	200
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	103,698	52,090	200
Suriname	612,985	251,640	400
Trinidad and Tobago	1,526,000	678,100	500

9.5.4 Selecting Households

The communities were divided into geographical clusters. A similar random process selected households from the selected clusters. At the household level, the interviewees were selected using a random process. This approach is useful because it allows researchers to capture the experiences and views of different age groups and reduces the need for complex stratification. The last birthday method was utilised to select interviewees from the household level. In this approach the interviewer selects the person in the household at the time of the survey who had the most recent birthday in the designated age category. Interviewees should be at least 18 years old and not older than 70 years old.

9.5.5 Oversampling of Indigenous and Tribal Communities

The research included an oversample of indigenous and tribal communities in Belize, Dominica, Guyana, and Suriname. In each country, a sample of 100 was drawn. This was necessary as the issues that affect these populations are particular to them, and the survey sought to assess vulnerabilities as they relate to the world of work, as well as the levels of resilience that exist.

9.5.6 Training of Staff

Prior to the implementation of the survey, interviewers and supervisors were trained to administer the questionnaire in each country. Manuals detailing the interviewing process were provided to each participant. Topics covered within the training programme include:

i. Thorough explanation of the purpose of the survey and a discussion of the survey procedure.
ii. Discussion and explanation of the questionnaire.
iii. Conduct of a pre-test and field exercise and further discussion of interview techniques.
iv. Household selection.

9.5.7 Managing Field Work

To minimise non-response, the survey exercise revisited households where the identified demographic resided if they could not participate in the initial round. The survey was also conducted each day of the week and at various times to ensure that respondents with diverse schedules were captured in the exercise. When necessary, to reduce non-response, interviewers arranged to contact respondents at times convenient to them.

9.5.8 Data Entry

Interviewers turned in their completed questionnaires to their field supervisors. Supervisors reviewed each questionnaire to ensure that it was complete and that each question was answered only once and in a way that is clear and unambiguous. Questions or errors that were found were referred to the interviewer for clarification. Data cleaning was an ongoing process, and questionnaires were pre-coded. A data back-up system was used to ensure that the possibility of losing data was at an absolute minimum.

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