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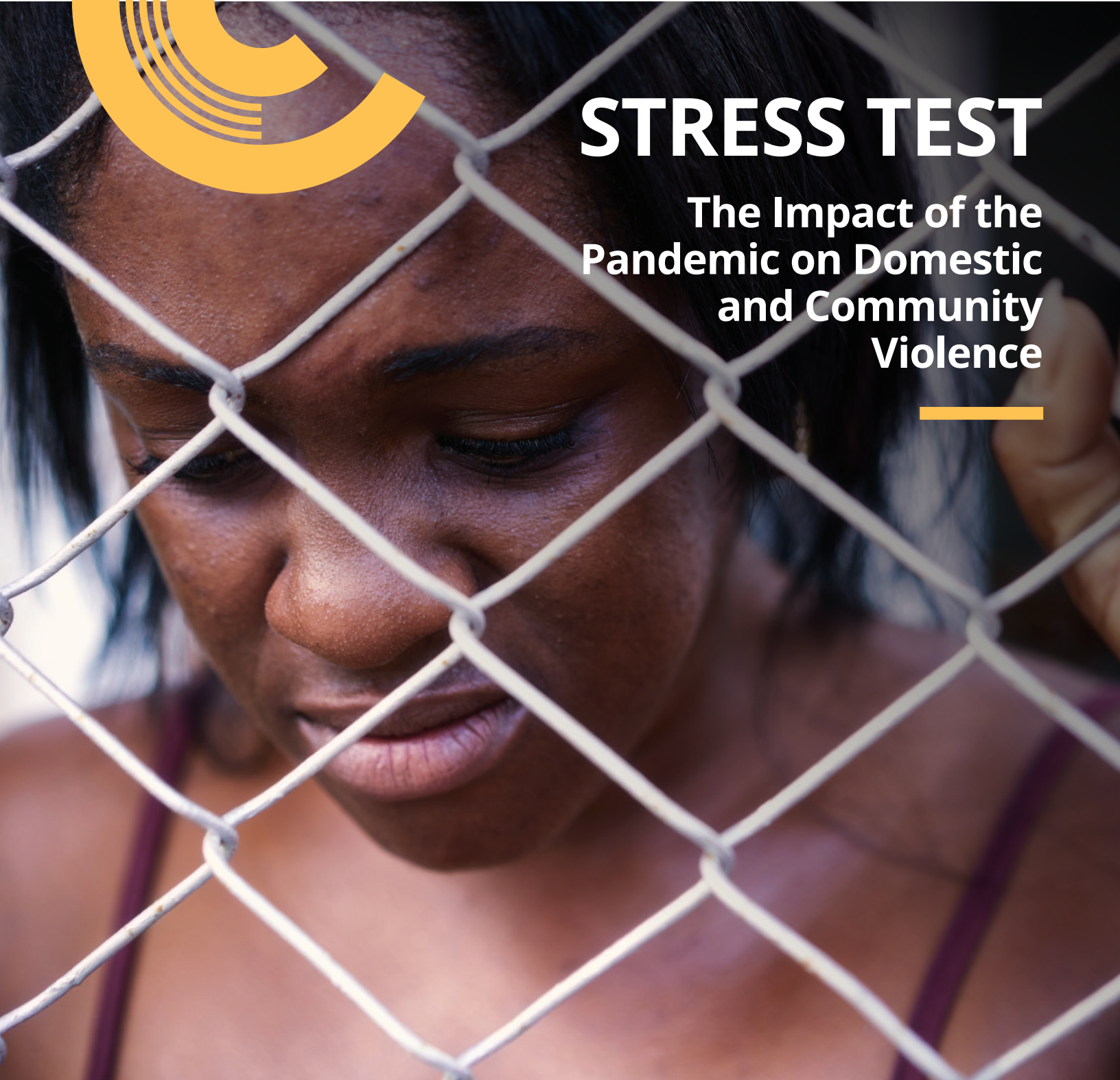


 **CAPRI**

# STRESS TEST

The Impact of the  
Pandemic on Domestic  
and Community  
Violence

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# **Stress Test**

## **The Impact of the Pandemic on Domestic and Community Violence**

**Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI)  
Kingston, Jamaica**

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The views and opinions in this report do not necessarily represent those of the  
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

The Caribbean Policy Research Institute is solely responsible for all its contents.

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# Acronyms

<b>A &amp; E</b>	Accident and Emergency	<b>NIS</b>	National Insurance Scheme
<b>BHC</b>	Bustamante Hospital for Children	<b>PATH</b>	Programme of Advancement through Health and Education
<b>CAPRI</b>	Caribbean Policy Research Institute	<b>PDC</b>	Parish Development Committee
<b>CARE</b>	COVID-19 Allocation of Resources for Employees	<b>PIOJ</b>	Planning Institute of Jamaica
<b>CDC</b>	Community Development Committee	<b>PMI</b>	Peace Management Initiative
<b>CISOCA</b>	Centre for Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse	<b>SDC</b>	Social Development Commission
<b>COVID</b>	Coronavirus Disease	<b>STATIN</b>	Statistical Institute of Jamaica
<b>CSJP</b>	Citizen Security Justice Programme	<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>FFP</b>	Fight for Peace	<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based Violence	<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>IDB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank	<b>UWI</b>	University of the West Indies
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate Partner Violence	<b>UHWI</b>	University Hospital of the West Indies
<b>JISS</b>	Jamaica Injury Surveillance System	<b>VI</b>	Violence Interrupters
<b>JP</b>	Justice of the Peace	<b>VPA</b>	Violence Prevention Alliance
<b>KMA</b>	Kingston Metropolitan Area	<b>VRIs</b>	Violence Related Injuries
<b>KPH</b>	Kingston Public Hospital	<b>VSD</b>	Victim Services Division
<b>MOJ</b>	Ministry of Justice	<b>ZOSO</b>	Zone of Special Operation
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations		



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## Executive Summary



Globally there are indications that the **PANDEMIC** has led to an **INCREASE IN CERTAIN TYPES OF VIOLENCE**



The COVID-19 pandemic and response have wrought widespread changes in employment levels, household income, measures for keeping children safe, and daily life at the household and community level. Globally there are indications that the pandemic has led to an increase in certain types of violence. Given Jamaica's pervasive violence problem, this trend raises concerns, and so ascertaining what impact the pandemic has had on violence, while methodologically challenging, is necessary. Jamaica consistently ranks as one of the most violent countries in the world in all these categories. There is an ongoing need for reliable evidence to inform policies, programmes, and interventions to reduce violent behaviour and enhance citizen security.

The aim of this study is thus to provide an approximation of what changes have occurred in patterns of domestic and community violence, what to make of it, and what can be learned towards improving anti-violence policies and actions, in the ongoing pandemic crisis, post-pandemic, and in other crisis-type



situations in the future.

Using a mixed methods approach, over six weeks in November and December 2020, telephone interviews were conducted with community contacts from 47 of the poorest and most violent communities in Jamaica. Quantitative data on violence-related injuries was also collated for those 47 communities, and three others, for

the period January to September 2020. The interviews sought to ascertain the patterns of domestic abuse, gender-based violence, and community violence in relation to three periods: pre-COVID-19, January to mid-March; during the initial pandemic response, mid-March to July; and post-Emancipence, from August through to the end of December when the interviews ended. The quantitative

**Jamaica consistently ranks as one of the most violent countries in the world. There is an ongoing need for reliable evidence to inform policies, programmes, and interventions to reduce violent behaviour and enhance citizen security.**

study on the communities is aggregated based on monthly record-keeping: the pre-COVID period is January to March, the initial pandemic response is April to June, and the final period is July to September, which includes two months of the post-Emancipence period. While there were limitations, the study did discern some suggestions of what the pandemic's effects on violence might have been.

Most households in the violent communities featured in this study are poor; in normal times they live on the edge. The rise in unemployment and the reduction in income has left adults, and especially parents and caregivers, highly stressed. Violence in some forms of domestic abuse has thus increased, and children have been its major victims. Violent discipline of children overall has increased, which means more families are using it, especially the psychological demeaning and intimidation of children through shouting and name-calling. Although the increase has not been as high in violent physical discipline or beating, it has increased, and in some instances has become more regular and harsher.

With regard to gender-based violence, although full and accurate evidence regarding sexual abuse of under-12 year olds, which carries a heavy stigma for both the victim and the perpetrator, is impossible for even the police to obtain, the feedback and available evidence suggests that without the physical safeguard that school provides, generally the environment is more accessible to predators, particularly those in the household. There is some evidence that bored adolescent schoolboys have been engaging in "experimental" sexual abuse on sometimes very young children. Only if the mother or a truly trustworthy relative or friend is at home are young children more protected.

## Abusive verbal confrontations between couples at home have increased.

Sexual abuse of underage girls from 12 years up by older men, in a situation of transactional sex, is openly accepted in communities. It is a source of income and families often turn a blind eye. While in the first stages of the lockdown this type of sexual abuse might have reduced, since persons were staying indoors most of the time, by the post-Emancipence period it was not only back to normal but had almost certainly increased.

An unexpected finding of this study is that physical intimate partner violence overall appeared to have decreased in twice as many communities as those in which it increased. However, abusive verbal confrontations between couples at home have increased.

The pandemic's impact on community violence – murders, shootings, and street fights – is even more varied and variable, and therefore less conclusive. This category of violence decreased overall in the period immediately after COVID struck. However, the national murder rate for 2020 was similar to that of 2019. There were fluctuations from one community to another: in several communities there was a decrease in the initial pandemic phase, but in three inner city communities, murders and shooting increased, cancelling out an overall reduction. During the post-Emancipence period, community

violence re-surfed in the inner city and suburban residential communities but not to pre-COVID levels. In rural towns and districts violence remained at the same decreased levels as in the initial pandemic phase, though not without exceptions.

Where there was a more discernible effect was in COVID-19's impact on street fighting, which dropped in more communities than it rose in the initial pandemic phase, probably due to fear of contracting the virus through physical touch. From August to November/December street fighting in most communities reverted to pre-COVID levels or even below.

The violence that we attempted to measure the pandemic's impact on was at unacceptable levels pre-pandemic. Verbal abuse of children, even where physical abuse is less, does terrible damage to children; that is has worsened in the pandemic has added insult to injury. The widespread acceptance and approval of girls 12-and-up engaging in sexual relationships where it appears the girl has "given her consent," is problematic, pandemic or no pandemic. These forms of abuse have pernicious and enduring effects on the individual, which redound to the society's detriment. The levels of gun violence, gang violence, and interpersonal violence are also at crisis levels, regardless of any effect COVID-19 had or did not have; but this is a long and well known problem.

What the evidence that this study has put forward should serve to do, nevertheless, is suggest immediate actions to be taken to protect children from domestic and sexual violence in the ongoing pandemic, indicate how other forms of domestic violence are manifesting and how that might be mitigated, and inform future actions to reduce violence, and areas to heed closely in future crisis responses.

## Recommendations



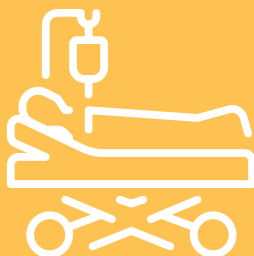
- 1** Expand the cadre of social workers going into communities.

Provide basic training to public sector medical personnel and police to identify non-verbal signs of abuse of women and children.

**2**

- 3** Provide additional reporting mechanisms and support services for women victim-survivors of intimate partner violence and domestic violence generally.

Provide basic training to teachers at all levels of schooling to identify the signs of child abuse (neglect, physical, psychological, sexual) and provide comprehensive training to one teacher in every primary and high school as a reference and training resource for all school staff.

**4**

- 5** Provide hospital-based early investigation, follow-up, and support for persons who are victims of injury related to violence.

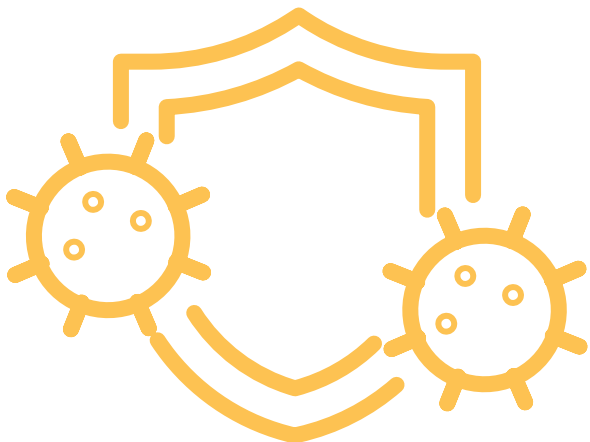
Expand the curriculum of those trained to interface with abuse victims to include the prevalence and harmfulness of verbal abuse of children and the complexity and pervasiveness of child sexual abuse and minors' engagement in transactional sex.

**6**



# 1

## Introduction



The COVID-19  
**PANDEMIC RESPONSE  
IN JAMAICA**  
began, for the most part,  
**3 DAYS**  
**AFTER THE FIRST CASE**  
was diagnosed

The COVID-19 pandemic and response have wrought widespread changes in employment levels, household income, measures for keeping children safe, and daily life at the household and community level. Globally there are indications that the pandemic has led to an increase in certain types of violence. Given Jamaica's pervasive violence problem, this trend raises concerns, and so ascertaining what impact the pandemic has had on violence, while methodologically challenging, is necessary. Jamaica consistently ranks as one of the most violent countries in the world in all these categories.<sup>1</sup> There is an ongoing need for reliable evidence to inform policies, programmes, and interventions to reduce violent behaviour and enhance citizen security.

The aim of this study is thus to provide an approximation of what changes have

occurred in patterns of domestic and community violence, what to make of it, and what can be learned towards improving anti-violence policies and actions, in the ongoing pandemic crisis, post-pandemic, and in other crisis-type situations in the future.

The COVID-19 pandemic response in Jamaica began, for the most part, on March 13, 2020, three days after the first case was diagnosed. The response included a number of measures that attempted to constrain people's movements, changed daily routines of individuals and communities, and affected economic activity across the formal and informal sector, for businesses and for individuals. The border closures should also have affected movement of people and, to a lesser extent goods (given that cargo services were not ordered to reduce or cease activity) in and out of the country.

Such a sudden and dramatic change in daily life would be expected to impact indicators related to social patterns and trends, such as incidences and types of violence. At the same time, many of the pandemic response measures, such as border closures and community quarantines, required security personnel to participate in some manner, and may thus have reduced the personnel resources previously dedicated to violent crime prevention.<sup>2</sup>

The evidence that has so far emerged, internationally, suggests that COVID-19 lockdown measures have reduced criminal violence such as shootings and shooting-deaths only in countries with a relatively low homicide rate, and have had little impact on homicide driven by organized crime and gang violence.<sup>3</sup> In some countries, reports of domestic violence and violence against children

1 "Domestic violence" as the term is used by the Jamaica Constabulary Force is not limited to intimate-partner violence, but applies to any aggression and/or injury that occurs between family members and people with whom the victim shares a domicile, and sometimes extends to disputes between neighbours. The crime data is collected accordingly.

2 JCF and JDF personnel were involved in several aspects of the pandemic response, including enforcing parish lockdowns, enforcing Disaster Risk Management Act measures, providing security to quarantine centres, among several other services.

3 There has been a reported impact on international drug trafficking, given that movement restrictions have disrupted international drug trafficking as a result of greater reliance on land transport, and so it would be reasonable to expect there has been some measurable change in Jamaica which is an active drug transshipment point. Those disruptions, however, would not have adversely or otherwise impacted violent crime in Jamaica in the short term, as it did in other territories, as the drug

**The UK's largest domestic abuse charity, Refuge, reported a 700 percent increase in calls to its helpline in a single day, while a separate helpline for perpetrators of domestic abuse seeking help to change their behaviour received 25 percent more calls after the start of the COVID-19 lockdown.**

have increased, suggesting a rise in such incidents. In the US there was a reported 22 percent increase in the number of minors contacting the National Sexual Assault Hotline, an increase corroborated by the observation (also in the US) that there was a spike in calls to helplines for child abuse and intimate-partner violence.<sup>4</sup> The UK's largest domestic abuse charity, Refuge, reported a 700 percent increase in calls to its helpline in a single day, while a separate helpline for perpetrators of domestic abuse seeking help to change their behaviour received 25 percent more calls after the start of the COVID-19 lockdown.<sup>5</sup>

In Jamaica, there is an expected rise in domestic violence, including child abuse, during the pandemic response. Children who live in abusive homes, or who are vulnerable to abuse in their homes or communities, are safer at school, and with school closures that safe space is no longer available. However, there may be a decline in reporting because the detection of abuse and neglect by teachers or friends has been weakened given that the children are not at school to be directly observed. In addition, there is decreased or no access to main sources of reporting, such as school guidance

counsellors. In intimate partner violence situations, victim and abuser are forced to be confined in the same space because of curfews and quarantine stay-at-home orders. Even homes that were not previously abusive are likely to be affected by elevated stress levels (potentially due to reduced incomes and other changes), which has the potential to increase the propensity for domestic violence.<sup>6</sup>

Using a mixed methods approach,<sup>7</sup> over six weeks in November and December 2020, telephone interviews were conducted with community contacts from 47 of the poorest and most violent communities in Jamaica.<sup>8</sup> Quantitative data on violence-related injuries was also collated for those 47 communities, and three others, for the period January to September 2020 using records from the Jamaica Injury Surveillance System (JISS). National crime data was obtained from the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF). The interviews sought to ascertain the patterns of domestic abuse, gender-based violence, and community violence in relation to three periods: pre-COVID-19, January to mid-March; during the initial pandemic response, mid-March to July; and post-Emancipation, from August through to the end of December when

the interviews ended.<sup>9</sup> The quantitative study on the communities is aggregated slightly differently based on monthly record-keeping: the pre-COVID period is January to March, the initial pandemic response is April to June, and the final period is July to September, which includes two months of the post-Emancipation period.

There were limitations, but the study's findings should nevertheless contribute to a better understanding of the nature and dynamics of violence in Jamaica as they have manifested in this pandemic context, with a view to informing evidence-based policies and programmes that seek to reduce violence and improve citizen security in the home and in the community, particularly in situations that similarly involve widespread social and economic dislocation.

The report describes the context of life in a poor, violent Jamaican community in the first nine months of the pandemic, explores the quantitative data on reported violence over that period, and presents the findings from the qualitative research under the headings domestic violence, gender-based violence, and community violence. Recommendations informed by the evidence follow.

trade is largely disconnected (from violence). "How COVID-19 is changing the world: UNODC highlights impact on homicide and drug trafficking," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, May 13, 2020, [www.unodc.org/unodc/frontpage/2020/May/how-covid-19-is-changing-the-world\\_-unodc-highlights-impact-on-homicide-and-drug-trafficking.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/frontpage/2020/May/how-covid-19-is-changing-the-world_-unodc-highlights-impact-on-homicide-and-drug-trafficking.html).

4 Anya Kamenetz, "Child Sexual Abuse Reports Are on the Rise Amid Lockdown Orders," *National Public Radio*, April 28, 2020, [www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/28/847251985/child-sexual-abuse-reports-are-on-the-rise-amid-lockdown-orders](http://www.npr.org/sections/coronavirus-live-updates/2020/04/28/847251985/child-sexual-abuse-reports-are-on-the-rise-amid-lockdown-orders); "Global Status Report on Preventing Violence Against Children," Geneva: World Health Organization, 2020, [www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention/global-status-report-on-violence-against-children-2020](http://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/violence-prevention/global-status-report-on-violence-against-children-2020).

5 "Revealed: Surge in Domestic Violence During Covid-19 Crisis," *Guardian*, April 12, 2020, [www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/12/domestic-violence-surges-seven-hundred-per-cent-uk-coronavirus](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/12/domestic-violence-surges-seven-hundred-per-cent-uk-coronavirus).

6 Krim Lacey et al, "Domestic Violence Through a Caribbean Lens: Historical Context, Theories, Risks and Consequences," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 2019, <http://drcarolynwest.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/2020-Domestic-Violence-Through-a-Caribbean-Lens-Historical-Context-Theories-Risks-and-Consequences-Published-Copy-.pdf>.

7 See appendix 1 for detailed methodology.

8 See appendix 3 for justification of choosing these communities.

9 "Emancipation" is the period spanning the public holidays of Emancipation Day August 1 and Independence Day August 6.

**Some experts suggest that the limited rise in reported incidents may be because the detection of abuse and neglect by teachers or friends has been weakened given that the children are not at school to be directly observed.**





# 2

## The Context: Life in a Violent Jamaican Community



In Jamaica,  
between 2010 and 2018,  
**GANG-RELATED VIOLENCE**  
accounted for

**56%**  
**of all homicides**



The 47 communities featured in this study were among the top 50 most violent communities in Jamaica, based on the major crime (murder, shooting, assault) trends over the past five years (2014-9).<sup>10</sup> They are divided into three types:

Inner city communities: 26 (just over half – 55 percent) in Kingston, St. Andrew, St. Catherine, Westmoreland, St. James, and St. Ann, the main criteria being dense population and a history of political tribalism, with the majority coming from the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA). There is one community (Central Village) that lies between two urbanised areas but has a history of political tribalism and is also included.

Rural towns and districts: 15 in St. Catherine, Clarendon, Westmoreland, Hanover, and St. James. These communities are not generally densely populated and have access to some land



**Despite the economic fallout,  
THERE WAS LITTLE  
REFERENCE MADE  
by community interviewees  
to the government's**

**J\$10b  
(US\$68.1m)**

**CARE PROGRAMME**

space for chicken rearing and other farming activities. There were no deep rural communities in the list of 47.

Suburban residential areas: six in St. Catherine and St. James. These are suburban areas, close to Spanish Town or Montego Bay, often with housing

schemes. Some of these designated “violent communities” in St. James not only have settlements of poor people, but are also the location of several large well-appointed villas on acres of land for tourist rentals, or owned by wealthy Jamaicans and expatriates.

The qualitative research in this study pertains to the poor communities in these areas.

## The Economic Impact

As in all countries the pandemic has had a devastating economic impact. The IMF data mapper indicated in October 2020 that Jamaica’s GDP for 2021 was expected to fall by 9 percent,<sup>11</sup> while in early 2021 the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ) predicted a decline of 10.5-12.5 percent.<sup>12</sup> In July 2020 STATIN reported that 57 percent of households had seen a reduction in income since mid-March.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See appendix 3 for a list of the communities in the study.

<sup>11</sup> International Monetary Fund, “Country Data,” 2020, [www.imf.org/en/Countries/JAM](http://www.imf.org/en/Countries/JAM).

<sup>12</sup> “Review of Economic Performance, October–December 2020 and January - March 2021,” Planning Institute of Jamaica, February 23, 2021, [www.pioj.gov.jm/product/review-of-economic-performance-october-december-2020/](http://www.pioj.gov.jm/product/review-of-economic-performance-october-december-2020/).

<sup>13</sup> STATIN, “Jamaican Labour Market: Impact of COVID-19,” July 2020, <https://statinja.gov.jm/covidPDF/Jamaican%20Labour%20Market%20Impact%20of%20COVID-19.pdf>

**Children in long-term institutional care suffer from reduced physical, cognitive, and hormonal development, as well as issues around attachment security. They are at increased risk of physical and psychological abuse, and neglect.**



columbo.photog / Shutterstock.com

The closure of the border led to a virtual cessation of the tourist industry, and 90 percent of hotel workers were laid off.<sup>14</sup> Ten of the communities studied are within easy distance of Montego Bay, one being downtown Montego Bay itself, while the eleventh is Ocho Rios, both meccas of the north coast hotel industry. Many of their population would work directly in the tourist industry as hotel staff, or indirectly as drivers, food vendors, craft sellers, and street hairdressers offering the braids popular with tourists. Borders were reopened on June 15, but even ahead of the 2020-21 tourist season, while some of the bigger hotels were having as much as 60 percent occupancy (the break-even), some smaller ones had not yet opened.<sup>15</sup> Negril is another tourist community where locals say 85 percent of the working population are

dependent on tourism or tourism-related services. Four of the communities are located close to Negril, itself one of the four. Visitor numbers from Jamaica's main tourist sources the USA, Britain, and Canada declined further after the number of cases spiked in these countries and flights from the UK and Canada were halted towards the end of 2020 and into 2021. All those who worked on cruise ships are still unemployed.

In non-tourist communities, the unemployed are mainly persons like janitors, vendors, untrained teachers, household helpers, contract workers laid off from big and medium-sized companies, and some fast-food restaurant workers as these businesses had to close early due to curfews. Community business sales are down: barbers, hairdressers, nail technicians, pan chicken men, corner

shops, bars whose customers now generally must leave an hour before curfew; woodwork and bodywork and spray men at mechanic shops now work part-time if at all; while farmers find market sales going down because people have less money. Elderly persons who might sell a few fruits at their gate to supplement a small NIS pension can no longer go out to buy. Purchasing medicine has always been a challenge for the elderly poor; now it is even more so.<sup>16</sup>

The entertainment lockdown has affected the business of running weekly parties and round robins, which are found in every poor community.<sup>17</sup> Social interaction is a critical survival mechanism, a recreational stress reliever, for the harshness of life in poverty.<sup>18</sup> In pre-COVID time feedback from community members interviewed indicates that police

14 "17,000 of Jamaica's 170,000 Tourism Workers Still Employed – Bartlett," *Loop News*, May 12, 2020, [www.loopjamaica.com/content/17000-jamaicas-170000-tourism-workers-still-employed-bartlett](http://www.loopjamaica.com/content/17000-jamaicas-170000-tourism-workers-still-employed-bartlett).

15 Janet Silvera, "Hotels Occupancy Levels on the Rise – Bartlett," *Gleaner*, November 11, 2020, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20201111/hotels-occupancy-levels-rise-bartlett>.

16 The information in this paragraph, and the following, is from interviewees, as well as the interviewers who know the communities well.

17 Round robins are a type of support arrangement between a group of bars in a community. For example, three bars will run their party on an agreed different day of the week. Each will contribute a sum of money towards each party to buy stock and will also pledge to spend a certain amount of money themselves at the party at the other's bar. It enhances friendly competition, and raises standards of customer service as each wants to be the best and get the biggest crowd, while importantly, it is a unifying mechanism as party goers come from different areas of the community and mix together.

18 Robert Salais, "Social Exclusion and Capability," lecture delivered at the International Research Conference Marginalisation and Social Exclusion, Alesund, Norway, May 21-23, 2003, [https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/file/index/docid/430491/filename/Social\\_Exclusion\\_and\\_Capability\\_Volda\\_lecture\\_may\\_2003.pdf](https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/file/index/docid/430491/filename/Social_Exclusion_and_Capability_Volda_lecture_may_2003.pdf).

permits were a regular part of this business operation in all the communities. Permits must be secured as the operators cannot afford to spend money and have the police confiscate their sound system equipment (although they will eventually get this back). Parties can provide a decent income for the bar operators, and facilitate other community businesses like hairdressing, barbering, peanut vending, and jerking. A few of the larger parties may be money-making enterprises for gangs, and in some districts, especially in Westmoreland according to feedback from interviewees, it is reported that the police can be paid to extend hours, even to turn a blind eye in COVID-19 times. Since COVID-19 some parties are held in-house, sometimes in basements, and are open only to a limited WhatsApp (instant message) group who will arrive with their party clothes in a bag and stay the entire night to avoid the curfew hours. The relaxation of restrictions for Emancipendence and then, in practice, for the election campaign in August 2020,



led some community members to rebel, seeing the talk of restrictions as a joke and losing trust in official pronouncements.

The economic depression has caused immense stress: hunger is widespread, affecting the children and the elderly most, while parents, some 42 percent of whom are likely to be single mothers,<sup>19</sup>

are distraught that they often cannot help when their child says, “I’m hungry.” There is also the depression that can accompany loss of income when one can no longer feed one’s family. In this regard there are many grateful references to the care packages received from many sources including central government ministries, local authorities, businesses, the police and soldiers (often the bearers), churches, community organisations like Community Development Committees (CDCs), and others.<sup>20</sup>

Despite the economic fallout, there was little reference made by community interviewees to the government’s J\$10 billion (US\$68.1 million) CARE Programme. Those cash transfers were for workers in the tourist industry, and small businesses including those licensed by local government authorities, e.g., hairdressers, barbers, and taxi drivers. There were also one-off cash grants to the unemployed, and the PATH grant

**If child seh, “Mummy wi hungry” a bare bad wud because she frustrated ‘cause she caan find it - no work ‘cause a COVID... Anything she grab she throw afta’ di child. Worse if di fadda nah gi no support.”**

**(Male, St. Catherine inner city)**

19 D. Oshi et al, “Association Between Single-Parent Family Structure and Age of Sexual Debut Among Young Persons in Jamaica,” *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 51 (2), 177-187, 2019, [www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-biosocial-science/article/abs/association-between-singleparent-family-structure-and-age-of-sexual-debut-among-young-persons-in-jamaica/1F6F3DF54455026F94FECFF090A2501.1](http://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-biosocial-science/article/abs/association-between-singleparent-family-structure-and-age-of-sexual-debut-among-young-persons-in-jamaica/1F6F3DF54455026F94FECFF090A2501.1).

20 Despite the presence in many of the communities of a don, there was no indication from any of the respondents that any don participated in any form of COVID-19 relief, not in discrete references, nor to compare them to the government “not doing anything”. This does not mean that the don was not helping individuals with pandemic-related assistance, but there was no community-level intervention apparent in the first nine months of the pandemic. It is surmised that their own income had also been affected by the pandemic.

was boosted.<sup>21</sup> It raises the question of whether some persons were unaware of benefits they could have applied for. The level of illiteracy in these communities can be quite high, especially among the poorest. A 2020 study of quarantined communities found that the government's efforts to support people with cash transfers were not widely accessed by people in deprived communities. In a sample of 500 people, over half applied, but only about a quarter were successful. The consensus was that the grants, in any case, were inadequate to meet people's needs.<sup>22</sup>

The pressure has led some to robbery including small acts of praedial larceny like stealing a bunch of bananas. There are more beggars on the streets. Transactional sex has also increased, according to the interviews. Since school stopped, the feedback from a number of community contacts is that teenage pregnancy has increased. This is the prediction of the UNFPA in the Caribbean,<sup>23</sup> was reported by respondents in the survey of quarantined communities,<sup>24</sup> was reported by focus groups of high school students in 2020,<sup>25</sup> and was also the experience of the respondents of Peace Management Initiative (PMI) East.<sup>26</sup>

There is also resilience. Persons have turned to making masks, sanitizers,

running cake sales (reportedly these are popular and can be very profitable), getting jobs as garbage collectors, cleaners with cleaning companies, bike couriers - now making "real money" with the huge increase in fast food deliveries, and growing cash crops where there is space, especially in rural areas where they may go into the bush and "wuk a ground."

## School Closures

The stress surrounding education from home has been well documented by the media. The closure of schools brought additional financial and other stresses to parents. Children were now eating more at home, once it was available; no regular school lunches, none of the free breakfasts that some schools operate, especially at primary level. They were consuming more utilities, causing household expenses to increase. Nearly one-fifth of children, or more than 400,000 according to the Minister of Education in early October 2020, did not attend any remote schooling at all once schools closed. For the most part this was because they did not have a device on which to do online school, and/or lack of access to the internet.<sup>27</sup> In general, insufficient devices is a widespread phenomenon among poor families with several children at school. The interviews in the

communities, carried out in November and December 2020, gleaned that many primary school children on PATH had received their tablets as promised by the Minister of Education. This was the majority response.

The problem of access to the internet, which is unstable or non-existent in some communities, or parts of the communities, persisted; on top of which persons could not afford to pay for it. In some communities, power outages are regular. The Google Suite LMS or G-Suite for Education platform used by the Ministry of Education required Wi-Fi for access; it is understood that the two telecommunication companies in Jamaica will not charge for data on the phone if the user is connecting to the MOE platforms, but this waiver is of no use unless there is Wi-Fi access.

For students at the primary level who do have access to Wi-Fi and a device, supervision is always needed to keep them on task. Many communities talk of children roaming streets or playing, while male high school students, in particular, who may or may not have devices but are otherwise demotivated, are standing on corners or, out of personal and family need, looking for whatever work is available.<sup>28</sup>

21 Chris Patterson, "\$10 Billion to Offset Impact of COVID-19," Jamaica Information Service, March 18, 2020, <https://jis.gov.jm/10-billion-to-offset-impact-of-covid-19/>.

22 CAPRI, "The Efficacy of Social Protection Measures in Jamaica's COVID-19 Crisis," forthcoming, 2021.

23 For UNFPA, in the context of Jamaica having the third highest adolescent pregnancy rate in Latin America and the Caribbean, it was expected that school closure could lead to a less safe environment for girls, which would in turn lead to more unplanned pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and increased HIV/AIDS rates: "Outside of the protective environment provided by schools, many girls are more susceptible to adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence." Dr. Denise Chevannes, HIV/AIDS officer at the United Nations Population Fund Subregional Office for the Caribbean, quoted in Nadine Wilson-Harris, "Teen Pregnancy Warning - Expert Warns That Prolonged School Closure Could Lead To More Adolescent Moms, Unsafe Abortions," *Gleaner*, November 28, 2020, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20201128/teen-pregnancy-warning-expert-warns-prolonged-school-closure-could>.


24 CAPRI "The Efficacy of Social Protection Measures."

25 CAPRI, "The Impact of COVID-19 on Education in Jamaica," forthcoming, 2021.

26 Damian Hutchinson, Executive Director related this in his presentation to the VPA Steering Committee, February 9, 2021.

27 Carl Gilchrist, "400,000 May be in Cyber Limbo - Online Deficit Could Leave Students Behind," *Gleaner*, October 5, 2020, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20201005/400000-may-be-cyber-limbo-online-deficit-could-leave-students-behind>.

28 Shanna Monteith, "Students Skip Classes to Work on St Thomas Highway - Nearly A Fifth of Pupils Missing Since March, Principals Say," *Gleaner*, January 11, 2021, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20210111/students-skip-classes-work-st-thomas-highway-nearly-fifth-pupils>.

A young man with curly hair, wearing a denim vest over a black t-shirt with the words 'DO', 'STREET', and 'for' visible, sits on a concrete wall. He is wearing a headband, a necklace, and multiple bracelets. He is looking down and to the left. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a clear sky. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

Many communities talk of children roaming streets or playing, while male high school students, in particular, who may or may not have devices but are otherwise demotivated, are standing on corners or, out of personal and family need, looking for whatever work is available.



# 3

## Changes in Violence Levels during COVID-19



A total of

**1,402 cases**

OF VIOLENCE RELATED  
INJURIES

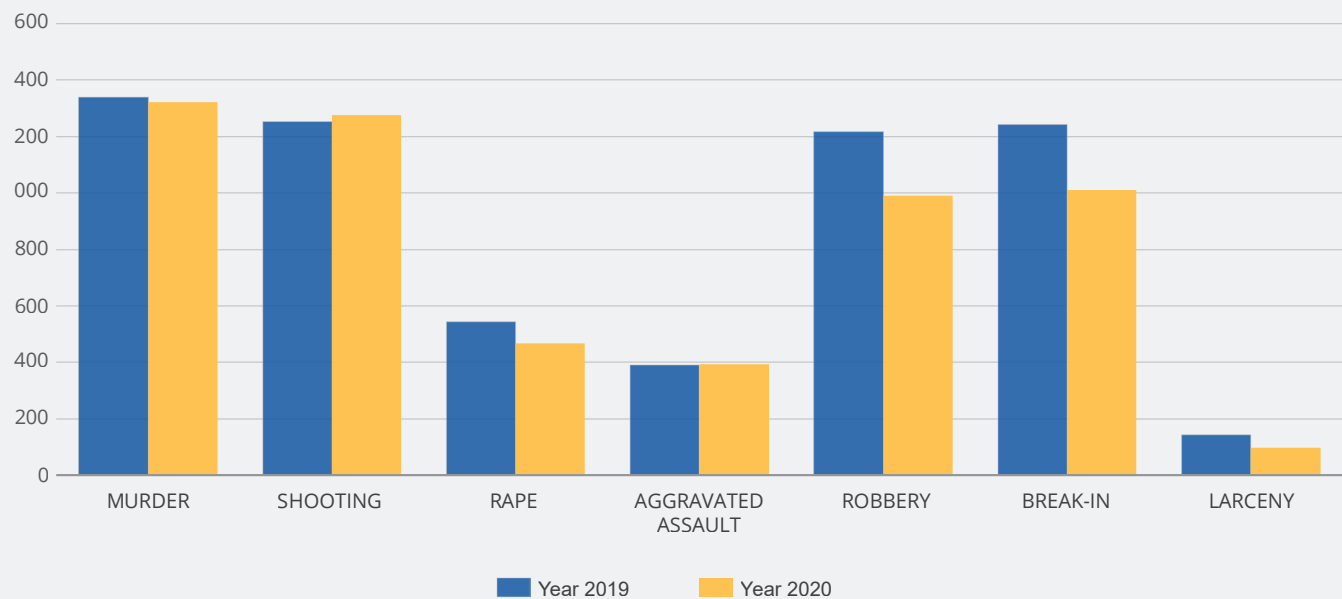
were treated between  
January and September 2020

The finding that COVID-19 lockdown measures have reduced criminal violence only in countries with a relatively low homicide rate, but where homicide is driven by organized crime and gang violence there

has been little or no impact, has borne out. In Jamaica, between 2010 and 2018, gang-related violence accounted for 56 percent of all homicides, with a high of 78 percent in 2013.<sup>29</sup> The data for 2020 compared to 2019 shows that murders

have decreased by only 1 percent, and shootings have increased by 2 percent. Aggravated assault is virtually the same. (See Figure 1.)

**Figure 1: Total Number of Category One Crimes 2019 vs 2020.**<sup>30</sup>



Source: Jamaica Constabulary Force, Statistics and Information Management Unit.

<sup>29</sup> CAPRI, “Guns Out: The Splintering of Jamaica’s Violent Gangs,” Kingston: Caribbean Policy Research Institute, 2020, <https://capricaribbean.org/events/guns-out-splintering-jamaicas-violent-gangs>.

<sup>30</sup> Figure 1 shows all Category One Crimes for the period of January to December 2019 compared to January to December 2020. The figure is the total for all violent and acquisition incidents that have been reported to the Jamaica Constabulary Force. It does not represent arrests, charges, or prosecution within the courts.

The first quarter of 2020 had the highest number of cases of violence related injuries at 508, with just over a 10% reduction in the second and third quarters, to 448 and 446 respectively.

**Table 1: Violence Related Injuries Treated at Hospital**

AGE GROUPS	Age Groups by 2020 Quarters			Total
	Q1 Jan-Mar	Q2 Apr-Jun	Q3 Jul-Sep	
Unknown	0	1	0	1
Under 1	3	0	0	3
1 – 9	12	10	14	36
10 – 19	81	56	59	196
20 – 29	150	147	148	445
30 – 39	115	101	81	297
40 – 49	74	65	67	206
50 – 59	48	42	58	148
60 & Over	25	26	19	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>508</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>1402</b>

All other category one crimes, based on what was reported to police, decreased, comparing 2020 to 2019. Security stakeholders consider that the declines are representative of major crimes trending down in general, absent any COVID-19 effect such as a reluctance to report crime, though break-ins would likely decline given that people are more at home, and there are nightly curfews. Murder and shooting would not show similar trends as violence in Jamaica is not and cannot be considered in the same vein as property crimes, as they have different underlying attributes and motivations. Rape, according to this data, has decreased by 14 percent, but may be underreported, which is an ongoing challenge regardless of COVID-19 (as is detailed in appendix 1).

The data collected at the public hospitals that pertain to the 50 selected communities showed that a total of 1,402 cases of violence related injuries (VRIs) were treated between January and

September 2020. The first quarter of the year had the highest number of cases at 508, with just over a 10 percent reduction in the second and third quarters, to 448 and 446 respectively. (See Table 1; increases are highlighted.)

For the 33 of the 50 communities where comparable data was available, relative to the same period for 2019, overall there was a 12 percent decline in VRIs. (See Table 2; increases are highlighted.)

In one-third of the communities there was an increase in VRIs. Of the 11 communities where there was an increase, the increase was small in three (from seven to 11, 15 to 18, and 18 to 22). Of VRIs treated at hospitals pertaining to all 50 communities, there were 508

in the first quarter of 2020, 448 in the second quarter, and 446 in the third quarter, a decrease of just over 10 percent (Table 1). Presuming that the pandemic (quarantines, stay at home orders, fear) did not prevent people from going to

hospital for treatment, as they would have absent a pandemic, it appears that there was overall a reduction in violence in the most violent communities. However, examining the VRIs according to age, reveals that VRIs for children aged one to nine decreased in the second quarter, and increased in the third quarter, bearing in mind that these numbers are very small, and may not be useful for analysis. Similarly, for the age group 50 to 59, with larger number sets, VRIs decreased in the second quarter and increased in the third, indicating that any decrease was not uniformly seen in all age categories.



**Table 2:** Comparison of VRIs in 33 Communities Jan - Sep 2019 and Jan - Sep 2020<sup>31</sup>

COMMUNITY	2019	2020
<b>ALL COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>914</b>	<b>803</b>
Albion St. James	25	11
Arnett Gardens St. Andrew	40	10
Bethel Town Westmoreland	7	11
Bogue St. James	33	18
Bull Bay/ Seven Mile St. Andrew	22	7
Cambridge St. James	15	18
Central Down Town Kingston	96	41
Central Village St. Catherine	26	17
Cross Roads St. Andrew	40	7
Delacree Pen St. Andrew	47	3
Denham Town Kingston	66	14
Down Town Montego Bay, St. James	65	5
East Down Town Kingston	42	21
Flankers St. James	12	9
Glendevon St. James	39	30
Grange Hill Westmoreland	18	22
Greater Portmore St. Catherine	34	6
Greendale St. Catherine	22	6
Greenwich Town/ Newport West St. Andrew	20	4
Gregory Park St. Catherine	17	3
Hayes Clarendon	9	7
Jones Town St. Andrew	21	5
Lilliput St. James	9	24
Little London Westmoreland	8	55
Majestic Gardens St. Andrew	26	123
May Pen Proper Clarendon	14	45
Negril Westmoreland	46	8
Ocho Rios St. Ann	10	43
Passmore Town Kingston	10	31
Riverton City St. Andrew	21	21
Rose Heights St. James	23	118
Salt Spring St. James	5	50
Waterhouse St. Andrew	26	10

<sup>31</sup> A fuller picture would be obtained with data from several more years, which would likely show that variations in numbers can occur in tandem with rises and lulls in intra- and inter-community conflicts.



# 4

## Domestic Violence in the Context of COVID-19



**8 out of 10**

**CHILDREN** experienced  
some form of  
**PHYSICAL AND/OR**  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE**

In several countries, reports of domestic violence, including violence against children, have increased in the initial lockdown and pandemic response period. In Jamaica, there was, from the outset of the pandemic, an expectation of a rise in domestic violence, including child abuse.

Jamaica has high levels of domestic violence, i.e. intimate partner violence, violence from other relatives, friends, and acquaintances, and physical and

psychological violence against children. The majority of perpetrators are persons known to the victims. In a study on violence related injuries from seven major public hospitals the perpetrator was an acquaintance in 49 percent of cases, an intimate partner in 15 percent of cases and a parent or other relative in 13 percent, i.e. in over three quarters (77 percent) of the cases.<sup>32</sup> While this violence is found at every socio-economic level, it is most prevalent in poor communities. A comprehensive study in 2014 found

that one in four women (from across the country, not only low-income sectors of the population) has experienced physical violence from a male partner; among those at lower educational levels with primary level or below, who would mainly be found in communities at the lower socio-economic level, it is one in three. Young women who entered into live-in partnerships under the age of 19, a common phenomenon in poor communities for survival and cultural reasons, “had a higher prevalence

**Table 3: Perpetrators of Violence Related Injuries Jan-Sep 2020 by Quarters**

Perpetrator	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total	Percentage
Acquaintance	178	153	150	481	35
Stranger	97	64	80	241	18
Girlfriend/Boyfriend	58	49	69	176	13
Other Relative	45	60	62	167	12
Unknown	57	48	33	138	10
Friend	23	18	17	58	4
Other	17	22	13	52	4
Official/Legal	14	9	10	33	2
Parent	4	8	2	14	1
Husband/Wife	5	5	3	13	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>1373</b>	<b>100</b>

32 Violence Prevention Alliance, “Cost of Care: The Burden of Violence-related Injuries and Road Traffic Crashes to the Health Care System of Jamaica,” National Road Safety Council, January 2, 2018, 32, [www.nationalroadsafetycouncil.org.jm/pdf/CostofCare2017\\_Final2Jan2018.pdf](http://www.nationalroadsafetycouncil.org.jm/pdf/CostofCare2017_Final2Jan2018.pdf)

**“Boys, children from poorer households, and children in rural communities are more likely to be subjected to violent discipline.”**

**Table 4: Place of Occurrence (2020 Quarters)**

Place of Occurrence	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total
Street/Public	159	101	187	447
Home	117	159	146	422
Industrial/Commercial	34	31	31	96
Other	27	25	12	64
School/Institution	20	17	13	50
Unknown	16	10	9	35
Recreational/Cultural	10	4	7	21
Farm/Country	0	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>349</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>1137</b>

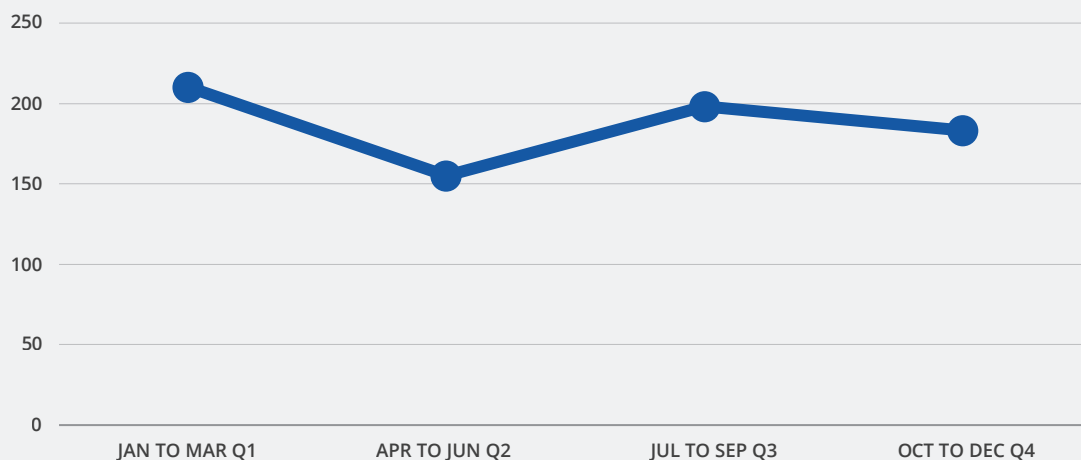
of lifetime intimate partner physical violence — 45 percent compared with 25 percent<sup>33</sup> than those who were 19 or older when they entered such relationships.<sup>33</sup> In the communities considered in this study, the majority of VRIs, 66 percent, were perpetrated by people known to the victim, during the first three quarters of 2020. (See Table 3.)

One indicator pointing to an increase in

domestic violence is where the VRI was inflicted. There was a 36 percent increase the number of VRIs that occurred in homes during the second quarter when compared to the first quarter. There was a decrease from the second to the third quarter, but the increase between the first and third quarters was still substantial, at 25 percent. (See Table 4.)

At the same time (unsurprisingly) there

was a 36 percent decrease in violence in public spaces between the first and second quarters, followed by a much larger increase of 85 percent between the second and third quarter. (There was a decrease in numbers of VRIs that occurred at all other places, besides home, from first quarter to the second quarter of the year.) This may suggest that after the initial fear as well as the shock of the “no gathering” or “stay at home” orders in the

**Figure 2: Domestic Abuse Cases seen in 2020.**

Source: Victim Services Division, Ministry of Justice

33 Carol Watson Williams, “Women’s Health Survey 2016 Jamaica,” IDB, June 2018, 16, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Women-health-survey-2016-Jamaica-Final-Report.pdf>.

second quarter of the year, as restrictions eased, people became complacent and went back to their “old ways” by the third quarter.

Domestic abuse data for 2020, obtained by the Victim Services Division (VSD) of the Ministry of Justice from their parish offices, shows the same trend of a decrease of 26 percent in the initial pandemic response phase, but an increase in the third quarter. This is, nevertheless, unlike the above data on violence related injuries, still marginally lower than the first quarter and then lowers again in the final October to December fourth quarter (Figure 2).

Another indicator of possible pandemic-related shifts in patterns of violence might be the circumstances that led to the violence related injury (Table 5). However, the data does not show an observable trend. The circumstance that led to the highest number of VRIs was fights/arguments, accounting for over 68 percent of all those who gave a response, and 66 percent of the total number of cases seen from these select communities during the review period. The quarterly



MORE THAN  
**80%**  
of children experienced  
**VIOLENT  
DISCIPLINE**

the number of fights/arguments over the period was that there were fewer from quarter one to quarter two while the quarter three increase did not reach quarter one levels. (See Table 5.) A similar pattern is found in the qualitative data: fighting decreased in the initial pandemic phase in near half (45) percent of the communities, remained the same in 28 percent and increased in 17 percent (not counting the five communities who said they had no fighting at all). In the post-Emancipence period the decrease remained in one third (34 percent) of the communities, went back to pre-COVID

and increased in 21 percent (not counting the now three communities who still had no fighting). The increases were in inner city communities in the initial phase and in all but one, a rural town, in the second period. So overall there was a decrease in both COVID periods but less in the second post Emancipence period. (See Table 21, p. [to be inserted when the page number of this table is finalized]).

## Violent Discipline of Children

The high levels of physical and psychological violence from parents and guardians in relation to children in Jamaica have been well documented. In 2011 eight out of ten children experienced some form of physical and/or psychological violence. “Boys, children from poorer households, and children in rural communities are more likely to be subjected to violent discipline.” That is to say, since 80 percent is the average, from these groups more than 80 percent experienced violent discipline.

Preliminary reports of child abuse to

**Table 5: Circumstances of Injuries (2020 Quarters)**

Circumstances	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total
Fight /Argument	325	291	313	929
Robbery/Burglary	14	4	15	33
Drug Related	0	2	0	2
Gang Related	9	2	6	17
Mob/Riot	1	5	2	8
Sexual Assault	34	25	23	82
Child Abuse	2	4	3	9
Police Shooting	5	1	2	8
Other	64	52	45	161
Unknown	36	48	27	111
<b>Total</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>1360</b>

comparisons show that the change in levels in another third plus (38 percent).

Jamaica’s National Children’s Registry in

**Table 6:** Circumstances of VRIs Among Children Under 18 Years Old

CIRCUMSTANCES	Q1 Under 18yrs	Q2 Under 18yrs	Q3 Under 18yrs	Total
Fight/Argument	30	20	21	71
Gang Related	5	1	1	7
Mob/ Riot	0	0	0	0
Sexual Assault	16	14	14	44
Child Abuse	0	4	3	7
Police Shooting	1	0	0	1
Other	6	5	6	17
Unknown	6	5	0	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>158</b>

March 2020 fell by 28 percent compared to the previous month (March 13 being the date that schools across the island were closed).<sup>34</sup> This data is unreliable, however, given that avenues for reporting would have been curtailed by the closure of schools, as well as fewer opportunities for detection by other adults of changes in patterns of behaviour or actual signs

of physical abuse. As but one example of the reduction in reporting avenues, the Centre for Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (CISOCA) offices operated at reduced capacity in the first several weeks of the pandemic, until they secured appropriate protection for their officers.

The clearest pattern of violence in relation

to COVID-19 found by this study was the greater level of abuse affecting children, which emerged in the qualitative data. The increase in violence against children reported by the respondents was attributed to parental frustration at children being constantly at home, with schools closed, congesting the often small space and, even more, having the stress of not being able to provide for their wants, mainly food but also educational devices, because of their reduced and precarious financial situation. There were instances, but significantly less frequently, where, as an earlier UNICEF/CAPRI study found, the COVID-19 restrictions brought parent(s) and children together, causing greater bonding and a decline in parental aggression.<sup>35</sup> The numbers in VRIs related to child abuse are very small but do not contradict the qualitative findings (Table 6).

Table 8 compares this study’s findings in respect of psychological aggression with the UNICEF/CAPRI survey of 505 representative households across the country. In this current study the

**Kick, box, thump, burn, normal thing...  
But the parents don't see a financial way out of this situation, because COVID come wid no help from anywhere...We have never seen this level of frustration. Is just pure stresses!**

**(Female, Kingston inner city)**

<sup>34</sup> Ytske van Winden, “Violence Against Children in Emergencies and Pandemics,” May 17, 2020 conference, UWI, Mona.

<sup>35</sup> UNICEF and CAPRI, “The Effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Jamaican Children. Preliminary Results,” September 2020, [www.unicef.org/jamaica/reports/effect-covid-19-pandemic-jamaican-children-preliminary-results](http://www.unicef.org/jamaica/reports/effect-covid-19-pandemic-jamaican-children-preliminary-results).

interviewers asked community members to estimate, out of every ten families, how many were shouting and “dissing” their children every day, “dissing” being the vernacular for disrespecting, in this instance by calling their children derogatory names or comparing them to a (usually absent) “wutless” (worthless) parent, whether father or mother, depending on the speaker. The UNICEF/CAPRI survey asked adults and children about shouting and name calling. In both studies this was asked for the pre-COVID and the initial pandemic response periods, i.e. January to mid-March, and mid-March to July. The answers are similar in the distribution of responses over time, both having percentages in the 40s for use of shouting more often during the initial pandemic response (mid-March to July), both with percentages close to 30 percent

**Call them names... You dog, you diss, you that, you idiot and stuff like. That is high, that is high!**

**(Female, Mo-Bay inner city)**

for those where the level of psychological aggression remained the same, and both with the lowest percentages for those who were using shouting and name calling less.

Shouting and “dissing” are deeply embedded in Jamaican culture, and are

hard to counter.<sup>36</sup> As will be seen in later tables, physical discipline is actually less widely used. In a few of the communities in the study the majority of parents were perceived by our interviewees to use both psychological and physical discipline equally regularly.

**Table 7: Comparison of Findings on Use of Violent Discipline through Psychological Aggression.**

Study	Language used	Field work	More often after COVID <sup>37</sup>	Same as before COVID	Less often than before COVID	Never <sup>38</sup>
UNICEF/CAPRI	Shouting/Calling names	Jun 23–Jul 13	41%	28%	8%	23%
CAPRI/VPA	Shouting/Dissing	Nov 22–Dec 30	49%	32%	19%	-

What emerges, however, is that the general population is more cautious and aware of the harm of physical discipline, because they know “excessive beating,” as they put it, can be sanctioned in the court, and they are aware of the government

regulations with regard to the non-use of beating in basic schools, although this regulation is by no means always adhered to.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately, however, as a number of community members pointed out, there is little awareness of the damage

that name calling, which often amounts to serious cursing,<sup>40</sup> can do to children’s self-esteem and their confidence in their place in the world.<sup>41</sup>

- “8 out a 10 diss dem pickney pon di

36 Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA), “Social Norms Survey,” unpublished study, Citizen Security and Justice Programme III/Ministry of National Security, 2017, 37. This is not necessarily a feature unique to Jamaican culture.

37 The CAPRI/VPA study asked about two post-COVID periods. The data here is taken from the first mid-March to July period.

38 This option was not suggested in the CAPRI/VPA semi-structured interview outline, although it could have been suggested by the interviewee (Appendix 1). Note that the absence of this option may add more to the percentages in the second row.

39 “Social Norms Survey,” 46, gives a host of specific examples.

40 Women’s Safety and Security Study 2017 cited in “Social Norms Survey,” 46.

41 Verbal abuse of children can affect brain development and have harmful, lasting effects on emotional functioning. Children who are maltreated can develop attachment difficulties, including poor emotional regulation, lack of trust and fear of getting close to other people. They can also form negative self-images, lack self-worth, and suffer feelings of incompetence, all of which can be retained into adulthood. Abuse, including verbal abuse, is correlated with poor educational attainment and the development of health-damaging behaviours, increasing risk factors for poor mental well-being in adulthood, poor health, low employment, and social deprivation. These effects can contribute to cycles of adversity and poor mental well-being whereby individuals that grew up in adverse conditions are less able to

regular. Verbal abuse is common in many homes. Many people tink seh it better than beating di pickney. Pity dem nuh know how destructive it can be.” (Male, Mo-Bay inner city).

- “Parents don’t want to beat but use words fi mek yuh look small. Madda use to call mi “dunce” ‘cause she know it use to bodda mi. Soh mi use it fi motivate mi. She never waan fi beat. A still child abuse - most people don’t want to beat but most don’t know you can still abuse di child wid words.” (Male, Kingston inner city)
- [Post Emancipation period] “Shouting get more severe, more

colourful - it has become di norm. Pickney start use it too. Not beating, but cursing demotivates and demoralizes the child.” (Male, St. Catherine inner city)

- “Some parents believe dat it betta’ fi shout and cuss than lick. But shouting worse than beating because di whole community know and pickney shame like dog.” (Male, Kingston inner city).

The comparison of the two studies in Table 9, in relation to physical violence, has fewer similarities. Although there are similar percentages of those whose use of violence does not change during the initial pandemic response (mid-

March to July), this time hovering a few points above 30 percent, a much higher percentage of persons in the volatile communities in the CAPRI-VPA study have been using more physical discipline in the initial pandemic phase (mid-March to July) – 38 percent compared to 15 percent in the broader socio-economic group in the UNICEF-CAPRI study. This difference in the socio-economic groups, compared to the similarity in their use of shouting and disrespecting their children, re-emphasises the widespread use of psychological violence across all parental groups.

**Table 8:** Comparison of Findings on Use of Violent Discipline of Children through Physical Aggression.

Study	Form of discipline used	Field work	More often after COVID <sup>42</sup>	Same as before COVID	Less often than before COVID.	Never <sup>43</sup>
UNICEF/CAPRI	Spanking	Jun 23–Jul 13	15%	35%	22%	28%
CAPRI/VPA	Beating as a form of discipline	Nov 22-Dec 30	38%	32%	30%	-

The difference suggests that in stressful situations parents and caregivers in these poorer communities may turn more quickly to the use of physical violence, as suggested by some of the responses:

- Initial pandemic response phase: “Pickney deh a dem yard, beating come een like stress relief for dem parents. Every day pickney a scream out dem yard for beatings weh dem a get.” (Male, Kingston inner city)
- Initial pandemic response phase:

“More. Kids not going anywhere again. When dem deh home, get it more often. Yes, persons who never beat, now beat. Frustration from lack of work, no income.” (Male, Kingston inner city)

- Initial pandemic response phase: “More grimy - beat him for nothing. Not being able fi provide, and not getting enough support, living conditions, lack of space, no gadgets fi school, all add to all di other frustrations and di beat’n get worse fi

di pickney dem.”

- From Emancipendence: “Increase again. New frustrations. All-out war a gwan and people a dead. Plus caan help wid di schoolwork, caan access internet or dem not internet friendly.” (Male VI, St. Andrew downtown inner-city community)
- Initial pandemic response phase: “Increase with one woman beating her 2-year old and we had to step in to stop it”

provide optimum childhood environments for their own offspring. K. Hughes *et al.* “Relationships Between Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental Well-being: Results from an English National Household Survey,” *BMC Public Health* 16, 222 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-2906-3>.

42 The CAPRI/VPA study asked about two post-COVID periods. The data here is taken from the first mid-March to July period.

43 This option was not suggested in the CAPRI/VPA semi-structured interview outline although it could have been suggested by the interviewee (Appendix 1). Note that the absence of this option may add more to the percentages in the second row.



From Emancipence: “Still murdering them, because the stress continue, and not coping with unemployment and COVID.” (Female, St. Andrew inner city)

With regard to the prevalence of psychological violence across the two post-COVID periods covered by the qualitative study, and comparing the response in the different community types, to a question about the number in every 10 families who use this way of disciplining their children, in many cases it appears that this is a stress venting mechanism. No one said that no family in the community shouted at their children, although they might say some did not

do it regularly, e.g. every day. There were many who said that eight, nine, even ten families out of ten did this; the division in the table is between those communities that said one to five families, versus those who said six to ten. Of course the 100 percent estimate must be incorrect, but interviewers did not challenge it; it is interpreted as indicating the high prevalence of shouting and name calling in some communities (Table 10).

The data are revealing in several ways:

1. Pre-COVID, the majority of families in every type of community, from two thirds to almost nine tenths, shouted and often, as Jamaicans would say,

“cussed” their children.

2. This is most prevalent in inner city environments.
3. In every community type the number of families who shouted and called names increased in the initial pandemic phase, i.e., from mid-March to July.
4. In two community types it has virtually remained this way up to the time of the field work, over nine months after the first COVID case in Jamaica, suggesting the stress has not lessened, nor has the ability to cope with it improved.

**Table 9:** Comparison of the percentage of families by community type who have used shouting and “dissing” as a form of discipline in pre and post COVID periods.

Community Type (no)	Pre-COVID Jan to Mid-Mar		Post COVID			
	10-50%	60-90%+	Mid-Mar to Jul		Aug to Dec	
			10-50%	60-90%+	10-50%	60-90%+
Inner city (26)	12% (3)	88% (23)	4% (1)	96% (25)	0%	100% (26)
Rural/Rural Town (15)	27% (4)	73% (11)	20% (3)	80% (12)	27% (4)	73% (11)
Suburban residential (6)	33% (2)	67% (4)	17% (1)	83% (5)	17% (1)	83% (5)
<b>Total</b>	<b>19%</b> <b>(9)</b>	<b>81%</b> <b>(38)</b>	<b>11%</b> <b>(5)</b>	<b>89%</b> <b>(42)</b>	<b>11%</b> <b>(5)</b>	<b>89%</b> <b>(42)</b>

5. Only in rural towns and districts has it reverted to what it was before COVID. The totals show that overall, ever since the pandemic, there has been no change in the increase of psychological aggression up to December 2020. This does not mean, however, that there were no changes in individual communities.

Table 11 uses the same approach to look at the percentage of families by

community type that use beating as a form of discipline. The data show that:

1. Fewer families use this form of discipline.
2. Pre-COVID, half or fewer of the families in the majority of the suburban residential communities beat their children.
3. In the initial pandemic response phase, mid-March to July, in rural towns

and rural districts, the percentage of families that beat reduces, and goes down even further in the period following Emancipence.

4. In the initial pandemic response phase, mid-March to July, in inner city areas, there is no increase in the percentage of families that beat their children, but after Emancipence the percentage of families that beat increased, a phenomenon that is

also suggested by a number of the respondents' comments.

5. In each of the post-COVID periods, there is one less community in the

group where more than half the families (60-90%) beat. So in the pre-COVID period 28 of 47 communities were in this group; in the initial

pandemic phase, 27 communities were in this group; in the post Emancipendence phase it has 26 communities.

**Table 10:** Comparison of the percentage of families by community category who have used beating as a form of discipline in pre and post COVID periods.

Community Type (no)	Pre-COVID Jan to Mid-Mar		Post COVID			
	0-50% families	60-90% families	Mid-Mar to Jul		Aug to Nov	
			0-50% families	60-90% families	0-50% families	60-90% families
Innercity (26)	31% (8) <sup>44φ</sup>	69% (18)	31% (8)	69% (18)	27% (7) <sup>45λ</sup>	73% (19)
Rural/Rural Town (15)	40% (6)	60% (9)	53% (8)	47% (7)	67% (10)	33% (5)
Urban residential (6)	83% (5) <sup>46φ</sup>	17% (1)	67% (4)	33% (2)	67% (4) <sup>47λ</sup>	33% (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>40%</b> <b>(19)</b>	<b>60%</b> <b>(28)</b>	<b>43%</b> <b>(20)</b>	<b>57%</b> <b>(27)</b>	<b>45%</b> <b>(21)</b>	<b>55%</b> <b>(26)</b>

It should be noted that, although overall there is no increase in the broad percentages who beat:

1. The percentage ranges are large. They do not indicate if, in mid-March to July or after Emancipendence, in each range more families moved down within the range or the opposite;
2. These figures do not indicate if the beatings became more regular or more severe, although many of the contacts suggested this was the case.

Informants from two communities (one inner city and one suburban residential) reported that there were no families that used beating in the pre-COVID period

(but did after), and informants from another two communities (again one inner city and one urban residential, but both different from the previous ones) reported similarly for the period from August to December. Zero percent may be as unlikely as 100 percent but can be interpreted as an indication of the developing restraint in this aspect of the domestic situation in a few communities in some periods. Contacts said that when children were on the street less, some parents would beat less. Following the onset of the pandemic, although not necessarily immediately, some parents began to listen more to their children and to understand them better.

## Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence (IPV), often severe, takes place in an average of 60 percent of households in violence prone communities.<sup>48</sup> The national 2016 Women's Health Survey, with 1,340 respondents, found one in every four Jamaican women had experienced intimate partner violence.<sup>49</sup> IPV is a classic form of gender-based violence. However, here it follows a discussion on the violent discipline of children. It is placed under Domestic Violence to emphasise the role it plays in violence in the home environment and the impact this violence has on children, an impact

44 Community contacts said there were no families beating in one of these communities in the pre-COVID period.

45 Community contacts said there were no families beating in one of these communities in the second period after COVID-19.

46 Joyce Hewitt, Executive Director, Women Inc, personal communication, December 17, 2020.

47 See appendix 4 for one inner city man's four telling examples of what he sees as the excuses men use to beat women.

48 As calculated from the estimates of the 39 focus groups with 282 participants in the Women's Safety and Security Study which was undertaken in 2017 in 13 volatile communities by VPA for the CSJP. Cited in "Social Norms Survey," viii.

49 "Women's Health Survey," 16. It is difficult to believe that any community in Jamaica, across the socio-economic spectrum, has no couples where the male partner beats (his female partner). Nevertheless, in this study, contacts in two communities, one St. Andrew inner city and one urban residential community, said there was no longer any males beating their female partner in their communities.

which may form their response to violence as adults. For many children and young adults, poorer outcomes are directly related to the family experiences of corporal punishment and verbal abuse, and, for a high percentage, witnessing their mother being physically abused by their father or stepfather.<sup>50</sup>

The data suggest that men beating women may be decreasing. Several contacts from different communities commented that woman beating was less than it was years ago. They gave two reasons for this: many women were more independent and made a significant contribution to the household income. In fact, some were the main breadwinner, so men could ill-afford for these women to throw them out or to leave. Further, more women were more aggressive and fought back in self-defence. In two communities, one rural district, one St. Andrew inner city, it was reported that some women would “gang up” with their friends and beat their aggressive man. A few commented they were noticing that younger couples were no longer necessarily living together even



after having a child. Women preferred to be independent: it caused less problems.

With regard to intimate partner violence (IPV) pre-COVID-19, in 60 percent of the communities IPV took place on average among half the couples (40 to 60 percent). In just over one in four communities (27 percent) it took place among less, 10 to 30 percent of the couples, and in the

smallest group, approximately one in ten communities (9 percent), the prevalence was high, among 70-90 percent of couples. In two communities contacts said there was no IPV. In another two the contacts said they could not comment on something that was private. There was little difference between community types. (See Table 12.)

**Table 12:** Pre-COVID-19 prevalence of IPV among couples in communities

% of couples with IPV	No. of communities
0%	2 (4%)
10-30%	12 (27%)
40-60%	27 (60%)
70-90%	4 (9%)
Total:	45 (100%)

<sup>50</sup> The 2016 Women's Health survey found the following: “Almost half, 48 percent, of women who experienced intimate partner sexual violence had been beaten as children, as were 38 percent of women who were physically abused by their partners.” As one would expect, male children were also affected, as the study found that “men who experienced violence in childhood grow up to abuse their intimate partners in adulthood.” The likelihood of intimate partner violence is much less among women and men who were not abused as children and among men who had not witnessed their own mother being beaten: “Of women who had never been abused, 4 percent had partners who had witnessed their own mothers being beaten; 18 percent had partners who were hit as a child.” What this study also brings out is that the abused tend to attract the abused. “Women's Health Survey;” 54.

Although in the initial pandemic response phase, violence increased among couples in just under one in four communities (23 percent), among almost half the communities (46 percent)

it decreased, while in almost one third (31 percent) it was unaffected (i.e. it remained the same). In the second post-Emancipendence phase intimate partner violence increased again in only seven

communities (16 percent), whereas in one third of the communities (33 percent) it actually remained less than in the pre-COVID period (See Table 13).

**Table 13: Impact of COVID-19 on IPV in communities**

% couples	Impact
15 (33%)	Decreased in both 1st and 2nd periods: mid-Mar – Nov/Dec
6 (13%)	Decreased only in 1st period: mid-Mar – Jul
14 <sup>51x</sup> (31%)	Stayed the same as before COVID in both periods.
3 (7%)	Increased only in initial pandemic response phase: mid-Mar - Jul
7 (16%)	IPV increased in both 1st and 2nd periods: mid-Mar – Nov/Dec
<b>100%</b> <b>(45)</b>	

In injury reports to hospitals in the initial pandemic response phase, April to June, injuries from intimate partner violence were slightly less: down from 63 in January to March to 54 from April to June, a 14 percent decrease, but they increased to 72 in the period July to September. This was among the boyfriend/girlfriend category, possibly a younger group, not among the smaller group of legally married couples (See Table 3, [insert page number after table is situated]).

The data from the communities is surprising as it would be assumed that being in lockdown would have increased tensions from unemployment, the limitations on hustling, resultant shortage of food and other necessities, and being forced to live and move in close proximity with each other as well as with the rest of the family, sometimes

an extended one, in small living quarters. In fact, the ten communities in the parish of St. Catherine which were locked down more severely for 17 days in April did show a different balance of percentages. IPV increased in almost half, in four communities, but decreased in five communities and remained the same in one.

Women Inc. is a Jamaican women’s rights organisation which operates a Crisis Shelter, a 24-hour Hotline, and a Public Education Programme and whose physical office has remained open during COVID. They did not see any spike in cases. Instead they observed that for the few cases they were seeing, “they are the severe cases, been going on for years,” women “at the end of their rope.” These women go through a cycle of denial, self-blame, leaving, going back. Their

understanding was not that women were not able to call or visit the Centre, but that many men who beat are cowards and bullies, and COVID scared them. Furthermore, in lockdown men had to stay with their main woman, and they wanted to be in bed with her at night.<sup>52</sup> This fits with the explanations for the decrease given by some contacts:

- “Man nuh lick nuh ooman inna Covid times. Man want ooman fi lay down a night wid and if him a beat har she gone a hospital and have fi social distance.” (Male, Kingston downtown inner city)
- “They not going to beat them because is corona time and they don’t want them to leave.” (Female, rural district)

In addition, many contacts pointed out that, since everyone is under lockdown,

51 The two communities with no beating stayed the same.

52 Joyce Hewitt, Executive Director, Women Inc, personal communication, December 17, 2020.

there is less jealousy all around. A man is no longer free to visit girlfriends and go to all night parties, but instead has to stay every night with his woman so there may be less jealousy on her part; while at the same time she is not talking on the street or going anywhere that he does not know about, so he also has little reason to accuse her of infidelity.<sup>53</sup> This however could change in the post-Emancipendence period, as this comment indicates:

- Initial pandemic response phase: “Live good - drop to around 2-3 out a 10 [no. couples with IPV]. Cherish ooman more, show him vulnerability. Quarantine life mek dem closer. Next ooman caan call no more - low contact. Family a live good - play domino, watch YouTube together.” Post Emancipendence: “Place open up. Cheating gone up.” (Male, rural town)

Responses from those working in the field on the extent to which there has been a rise or decline in IPV are uneven. The MOJ’s Victim Services Division (VSD) provides counselling in domestic violence cases, which include child abuse and IPV. It collects the data as shown in Figure 2 but does not have the capacity to electronically disaggregate the cases. The head of VSD noted that, while he was aware of the expectation that IPV would increase, in his experience he “did not see any reason to support the claim of an increase.”<sup>54</sup> However, Eve for Life supports

women between 15 – 24 years living with or affected by HIV and AIDS as well as children who are similarly affected. They estimated a 20 percent rise in cases of IPV among their younger target group since COVID.<sup>55</sup>

The interviews yielded several reports of a widespread increase in verbal abuse between couples, even in situations where there is no increase in physical IPV, or where physical IPV has remained the same, as displayed by these quotes:

- “Even if them no get the lick, the level of disrespect in the house is two times the lick.” (Female, rural district, IPV level very high, but some decrease in initial pandemic response phase, mid-March to July.)
- “Verbal confrontation high. Find that across di board...more arguments and verbal clashes.” (Male, Montego Bay inner city, IPV level medium, decreased in initial pandemic response phase, mid-March to July.)
- “This is more verbal; it’s not the norm among relationships.” (Female, Kingston inner city, IPV level medium but dropped several levels in initial pandemic response phase, mid-March to July, and has remained down since.)
- “Less [beating]. Cuss but not physical.” (Male, Kingston inner city, IPV level medium, but decreased in

initial pandemic response phase and has remained down since.)

- “Lock down get stressful pon nuff couples and dem just deh home nah do nutten. Ooman search man phone and find out ‘bout odda ooman and it start argument. Me si increase arguments but no physical altercations.” (Female, rural town, IPV level low, stayed the same)
- “Whole heap more tension between man an woman cause dem a occupy di same space at di same time. Beating hardly occurs again but bitter verbal wars.” (Male, Kingston inner city, IPV level low and stayed the same)

These examples, and there are more, suggest some level of restraint operating at least in the initial pandemic response phase, mid-March to July, perhaps given the fear of an unknown phenomenon. One contact notes that what is happening is “not normal” with regard to the escalation of verbal abuse. The bitterness mentioned, and the disrespect, is worrying if it causes permanent damage to relationships. Moreover, it is stressful for children: “Man ‘n ooman argue, pickney cringe - stress level a go up; more shouting” (female, suburban residential). Intimate partner violence is itself extremely stressful for children and, despite passionate visceral opposition from sons in particular, often leads to them later physically abusing their own partners.<sup>56</sup>

53 See appendix 4 for one inner city man’s four telling examples of what he sees as the excuses men use to beat women.

54 Osbourne Bailey, Head, Victim Services Division, personal communication, March 19, 2021.

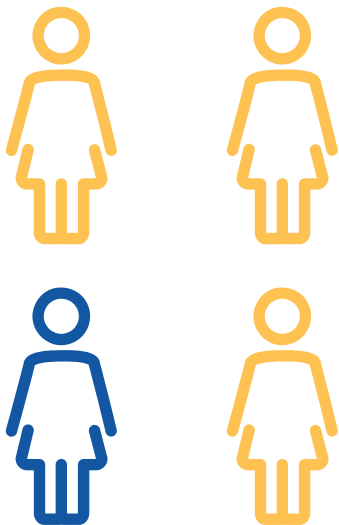
55 Joy Crawford, Executive Director, Eve for Life, personal communication, December 19, 2020.

56 VPA, “Social Norms Survey,” 74.



# 5

## Gender-based Violence



**1 in every 4**

**JAMAICAN WOMEN**

have experienced

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**

**G**ender-based violence refers to harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is based on gender inequality, abuse of power, and harmful social norms.<sup>57</sup> In most instances of gender-based violence the male is the perpetrator and the female is the victim, though there are cases

where the woman is the perpetrator and the man the victim.

Fights/arguments and sexual assaults are the main circumstances through which females become victims of violence related injuries. (See Table 14. )

Of the 477 female victims of violence related injuries between January and September 2020, 139, or 29 percent, were perpetrated by a boyfriend or husband.<sup>58</sup> (See Table 15.) Note that “acquaintance” may be a boyfriend/husband, but out of fear or shame is not named as such when attributing the injury at hospital.<sup>59</sup>

**Table 14:** Circumstances of VRIs - Females (2020 Quarters)

Circumstances	Q1 Female victims	Q2 Female victims	Q3 Female victims	Total
Fight/ Argument	106	95	118	319 (67%)
Sexual Assault	31	24	23	78 (16%)
Child Abuse	2	2	2	6
Drug Related	0	1	0	1
Gang Related	4	0	0	4
Robbery/ Burglary	2	2	1	5
Police Shooting	0	0	0	0
Other	22	10	10	42
Unknown	7	8	3	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>473</b>

57 United Nations Refugee Agency, “Gender-Based Violence,” undated, accessed March 1, 2021, [www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html](http://www.unhcr.org/gender-based-violence.html).

58 The data is recorded as boyfriend/girlfriend; we assume that the relationships within which the violence was committed was heterosexual and thus attribute it to a male boyfriend.

59 Violence Prevention Alliance points out that injuries that take place in the home may be masked as unintentional injuries out of the caregiver’s guilt, fear, or shame, or the perpetrator may be named as an acquaintance when in fact they are a family member. Such injuries would not even appear in lists of VRIs. It is only when there is more in-depth follow up of such cases by a social worker’s visit to the home that the situation can be clarified. The former CAMP Bustamante and the current CAMP Cornwall, both attached to hospitals of the same name, carried out such investigations and not only identified the true perpetrator, sometimes an underage relative, but

There is little to no understanding among most community members that a girl-child under 16 years, however physically developed, cannot legally consent to sexual interaction of any kind. That is, they do not grasp that sex with an under-16-year old is rape, whether the girl has “given her consent” or not.

**Table 15:** Perpetrator of VRIs to Females (2020 Quarters)

Perpetrator	Female victims	Female victims	Female victims	Total
Girlfriend/Boy	38	38	54	130
Husband/wife	4	2	3	9
Acquaintance	58	42	46	146
Other Relative	16	15	23	54
Friend	7	9	8	24
Parent	2	5	1	8
Unknown	10	10	4	24
Other	5	5	5	15
Stranger	31	16	14	61
Official/legal	3	2	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>174</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>477</b>

As explained earlier, in this study intimate partner violence, one form of gender-based violence, has been considered under the label of domestic violence because it is a form of violence often perpetrated within a domestic relationship. It is a particular focus of responses to the COVID-19 pandemic because of lockdowns which force live-in partners and their families to spend long periods together in the same space, a situation of risk where IPV is part of the relationship. Intimate partner violence in the domestic context is an integral and powerful feature of domestic life that has a traumatic effect on the children of that relationship, and other children in the household. Whereas among some couples it may take place while the children are out of the house at school, during the pandemic everyone is together in the house much more frequently. While the male is the perpetrator in the majority of cases, in a few cases the male can be the victim.

were often able to provide counselling and family support.

60 The definitions provided are consistent with those enshrined within the 2009 Sexual Offences Act. Sexual Offences against children cover a range of behaviours including sexual grooming, indecent exposure, intercourse, and sexual touching.

61 Under the Sexual Offences Act (2009), penetration with an object other than a penis is considered to be government sexual assault.

62 This definition of rape is consistent with the Sexual Offences Act (2009). However, it is important to note that the definition of rape is gender-neutral, according to human rights instruments and best practice across most jurisdictions, so that male and female children can be protected equally under law.

63 Ministry of Education, Youth and Information, "Jamaicans Have a Responsibility to Report Child Abuse," July 2017, <https://moey.gov.jm/jamaicans-have-responsibility-report-child-abuse---senator-reid>.

In this section we are investigating other forms of gender-based violence. Child sexual abuse/sexual offences against children, where a child, under the age of 16 years, who in the opinion of experts has not yet developed the intellectual, psychological, emotional, or even physical capacity to understand or cope with a sexual relationship, is taken advantage of for sexual purposes and/or sexually abused by adults or other adolescents;<sup>60</sup> and rape, where females, 16 years and above, are subjected to sexual intercourse under duress, against their will.<sup>61</sup> Males are also victimised in this same manner, but in Jamaica this is not legally called rape.<sup>62</sup>

## Child Sexual Abuse: 0-11 years

It is not easy to get evidence on sexual abuse of young children. There is a

stigma on these young victims and therefore it may be carefully hidden, known only to a few family members and close friends. A 2013 survey by the Office of the Children's Registry (now the National Children's Registry), found that 90 percent of known cases of child sexual abuse remain unreported by adults who were aware of the abuse taking place.<sup>63</sup> "A very underreported crime because of stigma and shame on children," in the words of one community contact, a male Ministry of Health worker. "[T]hey don't want to jeopardize the child's character," explained a young woman, who was aware of two instances: in one the man's attempt to drag a child into the bushes was thwarted by others on the road, while the second case was an old man who paid a child money to sit in his lap. Some interviewees, when asked in a question about cases of sexual abuse of younger children 0-12 years or teenagers between 13-17 years, simply say either



that it doesn't happen in their community or that they do not know. Others will admit that it may happen but because it is so hidden they are unaware of specific instances.

People were not so inhibited in talking about children 12 years and over who were forced to have sex; they just made a clear distinction between these children and those who “consented.” The 2016 Women’s Health Survey found that among the 14 percent of women whose first experience of sex was when she was below 15 years, one in three had been forced.<sup>64</sup> In St. Mary, a police superintendent noted in January 2021 the number of child sex offences in the parish, where most of the victims were between 12 and 16 years old, and the perpetrators included relatives: “[C]hildren are being sexually abused by their stepfathers while their mothers remain silent.” Some of these victims were suicidal.<sup>65</sup>

It is impossible to give a firm estimate on whether COVID-19 has impacted instances of child abuse. Twenty-four instances of child sexual abuse of 12- to 15-year-olds were recounted, most of which were court cases as this is usually the only way most community members will learn of them. Sixteen were reported to have happened in the two and a half months before the pandemic. A number of interviewees commented that information like this often takes a long time to reach the general community, if it reaches at all. It was noted that if the victim of sexual abuse was male the case would almost certainly not be reported. Six of the 24 were identified as cases of incest by fathers, stepfathers, a grandfather and, in one case, a 14-year old uncle. Several persons from different communities explained that money could



## 12% of Jamaican women reported having been **FORCED TO HAVE SEX**

**at some time  
in their life**

“buy them out,” even, it was alleged, if court proceedings had already started. A female respondent from Clarendon: “Most are underreported and hush-hush. If yuh have money yuh can buy it out.” A younger man from Montego Bay simply commented: “I know of a couple of incidents, but I won’t give any kind of information on the matter. All I will say is that money solved all those problems.”

What can be discussed is the community context, both in the initial pandemic response phase and post-Emancipendence, which may give some clues. Immediately after the pandemic began a lot of the residents in these communities, as all over Jamaica, were fearful. Many kept their children indoors, especially in the more rural areas. This may have initially impacted (reduced) so-called “consensual” sex between underage girls and older men, especially when this was without parental consent.<sup>66</sup> It protected the younger children where there was supervision by mother or trusted relatives replacing the normal supervision of three to five-year olds by basic school teachers.

However this is not always the case as the following comments from persons in four Kingston and St. Andrew downtown inner city communities explain:

- “Sections where living is cramped and densely populated have high incidences of these things. Older man come on more to younger girls and some man will use force upon girls and you will have di step-fadda coming on to di children in di household. Anecdotally, I’ll say about two to three females between the ages of 13-17 may be raped or sexually abused during this period (initial pandemic response phase).” (Male)
- “Some homes structured but some more exposed than others. Some a di homes provide more opportunities for predators.” (Male)
- “It’s worse during COVID, because parents get desperate and gone hustle, and the children, who would normally be in school, alone wid the stepfather dem. It is happening, and now you have the increase domestic abuse (i.e. intimate partner violence), because not every mother going to allow it to happen.” (Female VI and JP)
- Referring to school closure in a densely populated downtown inner-city community: “100 kids a roam street at any time - day or night. Child abuse underreported. Stepfaddah perpetuate abuse – nuff maddas knowingly coddle this behaviour.” (Male VI, affirming the findings of the police superintendent in St. Mary)

The comments suggesting that the COVID-19 situation provides greater possibilities for access for predators is borne out by the evidence from the

<sup>64</sup> Watson-Williams, “Women’s Health Survey 2016 Jamaica,” 18.

<sup>65</sup> “St Mary Police Report Disturbing Trend of Child Sexual Offences,” Gleaner, January 15, 2021, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20210115/st-mary-police-report-disturbing-trend-child-sexual-offences>.

<sup>66</sup> Under the Sexual Offences Act (2009) a child under the age of 16 cannot legally consent to sexual interaction of any kind.

Senior Medical Officer at May Pen Hospital of the increase in very young children coming in with injuries from sexual abuse:

If you look at the statistics involving children, most of the rape cases are between the ages 10 and 14. But our cases right now are in the two- to 10-year-old age group. Those cases we would only see once in a blue moon but we are now seeing a sharp increase in the last month. For the whole year, we would probably have one or two cases involving this age group, but now we have seen at least nine cases in one month. We are not

it is very alarming. Some of the cases are vicious, very vicious.

The Head of the Ministry of Justice's (MOJ) Victim Services Division has reported that in May, "the number of sex crimes against children was rivalling those committed against adults in that month." He notes, "[I]f a child becomes a victim of, say, rape, it is very rare that it is a complete stranger. It is somebody in the home, somebody related to the child."<sup>67</sup>

It is well established that rapists are usually known to their victims: of the 12 percent of Jamaican women who reported having been forced to have sex at some time in their life, the majority

of offenders were known to the women, including current or previous partners (36 percent), acquaintances (20 percent), boyfriends or ex-boyfriends (18 percent), and relatives (10 percent).<sup>68</sup> The 2016 Women's Health Survey reported similar findings.<sup>69</sup> Forty percent of all female child visits to hospital are because of a sexual assault, and in the majority of these cases the perpetrator was known by the victim, and the assaults occurred mostly at the child's home.<sup>70</sup> The commanding officer for the Westmoreland police revealed that a number of the 40 rapes committed in Westmoreland in 2020, a 29 percent increase, were apparently perpetrated by school boys: "When you look at who the perpetrators were in a number of those

**Table 16:** Perpetrators of VRIs Among Children Under 18 Years Old (2020 Quarters )

PERPETRATOR	Q1	Q2	Q3	Total
Acquaintances	31	24	19	74
Parent	1	5	2	8
Other Relatives	5	6	4	15
Friend	7	3	8	18
Girlfriend/Boyfriend	2	2	4	8
Official/legal	0	0	2	2
Stranger	9	5	2	16
Other	1	2	2	5
Unknown	7	3	2	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>158</b>

used to seeing those numbers and

cases, they were young boys, students

67 Corey Robinson, "Sharp Increase in Minors Under 10 Being Raped - May Pen SMO Sounds Alarm Over Children Being Viciously Abused During COVID-19 Lockdown," *Gleaner*, June 28, 2020, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20200628/sharp-increase-minors-under-10-being-raped-may-pen-smo-sounds-alarm-over>.

68 Florina Serbanescu, Alicia Ruiz and Danielle Suchdev, "Reproductive Health Survey Jamaica 2008: Final Report," Atlanta, GA (USA) and Kingston, Jamaica, 2010, <https://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/americas/jamaica/2008/reproductive-health-survey-jamaica-2008>.

69 Watson-Williams, "Women's Health Survey 2016 Jamaica."

70 Data for 2014-7, reported in Government of Jamaica, "National Plan of Action for an Integrated Response to Children and Violence 2018-2023," [www.end-violence.org/sites/default/files/paragraphs/download/Action%20plan%20jamaica.pdf](http://www.end-violence.org/sites/default/files/paragraphs/download/Action%20plan%20jamaica.pdf).

who are 16 and under who should be in school. Because of COVID-19, it is easy to deduce that a number of these youths were left alone at home while their parents and guardians go to work when they got involved in sexual activities.<sup>71</sup> The Clarendon police reported an 8 percent increase in sexual assault cases in the period January to April, 2020, that they claimed was attributable, in many situations, to an assaulter who was an adolescent or pre-teen boy who, left unsupervised during lockdown, may have engaged with unhealthy pornographic material, and become influenced to attempt the practices he has observed on young girls within his community.<sup>72</sup>

Violence against children in general is mostly committed by persons known to the child. In the communities surveyed for this study, 123 (78 percent) of the 158 VRIs for children under 18 reported between January and September were committed by a parent, relative, friend, or “acquaintance,” where it is generally understood that “acquaintance” is a family member, but out of fear or shame is not named as such when attributing the injury at hospital. (See Table 16.)

In this context the impact of school closure on child protection can hardly be overemphasized:

For Jamaica’s poorest children, schools are oases of solace from chaotic lives teeming with abuse, disenchantment, and need. It’s much more than academics.

“And when you can’t get to see them face-to-face and hold them and hear them ...,” paused St Aloysius Primary School teacher Nikesha Wright-Bryan, endearingly, “it is really depressing. Every night I go home, I feel guilty because it is as if I owe them something more.”<sup>73</sup>

This information is echoed by a woman interviewee from a St. Andrew inner city community talking about sexual abuse of children:

It is happening but under the quiet; it does not come out so I can’t say how much. This mainly happens in the families among children who would have built a trusting relationship with someone close to them and when children speak out they don’t believe them. They would have shared this information at school but not in the community. The school plays a very instrumental role in children’s life. It’s a safe haven for them and they can share things... school would have been the ideal place to get this information because it would show in the student’s behaviour - withdrawal, change in pattern of behaviour or actions, academics.

School closure limits access to private counselling sessions. A primary school guidance counsellor pointed out the difficulties faced in online counselling, the main one being that parents in many cases are at home with their children and

usually watch the sessions. The children have no privacy to talk about any personal problems and some even look to their parents before giving an answer.<sup>74</sup> These conditions cannot address the needs of children who have psychosocial issues for which they need counselling and support. In January 2021 a 16-year old boy from a rural district in St. Catherine committed suicide. His school principal pointed to the difficulties of “remote psychosocial intervention.” In face-to-face classes “sometimes we can see what is not said.”<sup>75</sup> Practitioners have noted that mental health issues such as depression have worsened since the pandemic. Students are complaining about the volume of homework they are receiving, which anecdotally a number of parents have confirmed. Among the signs children are displaying are cutting and eating disorders. Young people, in particular, are asking “how long the COVID-19 dislocation will last.”<sup>76</sup>

## Child Sexual Abuse: 12-15 years

So-called “consensual” sex between underage girls and older men, according to interviewee feedback, is prevalent in these communities. There was reference to a reduction due to efforts by the police in only two communities, a rural town and an inner city community in Montego Bay. At the same time there are reports of police seeking young men in their late teens, who then flee the community,

71 Albert Ferguson, “High Schoolers Among Westmoreland Rapists Last Year,” *Gleaner*, January 23, 2021, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/news/20210123/high-schoolers-among-westmoreland-rapists-last-year>.

72 “Authorities Alarmed by ‘Decreasing Age’ of Sexual Assault Victims in Clarendon, Pre-Teen Boys Among Top Reported Offenders,” *Nationwide News*, June 25, 2020, <https://nationwideradiojm.com/authorities-alarmed-by-decreasing-age-of-sexual-assault-victims-in-clarendon-pre-teen-boys-among-top-reported-offenders/>.

73 Corey Robinson, “‘We Were Not Trained for This’ - Inequity Bedevils Online Classes as Teachers Battle Assessment and Matriculation Concerns as Low Turnout Marks First Week,” *Gleaner*, October 11, 2020, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20201011/we-were-not-trained-in-equity-bedevils-online-classes-teachers-battle>.

74 P. Thomas, personal communication, October 11, 2020.

75 Patrick Phillips, principal of Enid Bennett High quoted in Jonielle Daley, “Principal: Suicidal Kids Falling Beneath Radar,” *Gleaner*, January 26, 2021, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20210126/principal-suicidal-kids-falling-beneath-radar>.

76 Child and adolescent psychiatrist, Dr Ganesh Shetty, and Consultant Paediatrician, Dr. Abigail Harrison, quoted in Nadine Wilson-Harris, “Child Mental Health Issues Off the Charts,” *Gleaner*, October 12, 2020, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20201012/child-mental-health-illness-charts>.

because they were found to be having relations with, for example, their 15-year-old girlfriend. Yet there is obviously much more damaging child sexual abuse by older men taking place openly as the information below will indicate.

Much of this is transactional sex and, according to feedback, it arises from family need, even more pressing in COVID times, where – to put it in stark terms – the underage girl from 12 years becomes an asset that the family can use as a source of income. Families, often single mothers, may actively encourage this or pretend not to know. Cross-generational relationships where young women engage in sexual activity with older men either for basic needs (money for school supplies, food), financial benefits, or due to coercion, are not uncommon in poor communities. It is accepted by the community generally; the level of acceptance may vary between communities as well as the level of embarrassment among family members.<sup>77</sup>

Although the qualitative data did not provide any clue as to whether there were differences in frequency between pre and post COVID-19 periods, given the economic stress resulting from the pandemic, there is an assumption that it would have increased, and would be a factor in the expected increase in teenage pregnancy. As an indication of how prevalent this phenomenon of older men with underage girls has become generally, these interviewees' responses are revealing:

- “Yes, big men sometimes go with younger girls but it helps out the family. If we see like the age difference is too much we would try to talk to the family, but you have to be tactful because they see this as a support.”

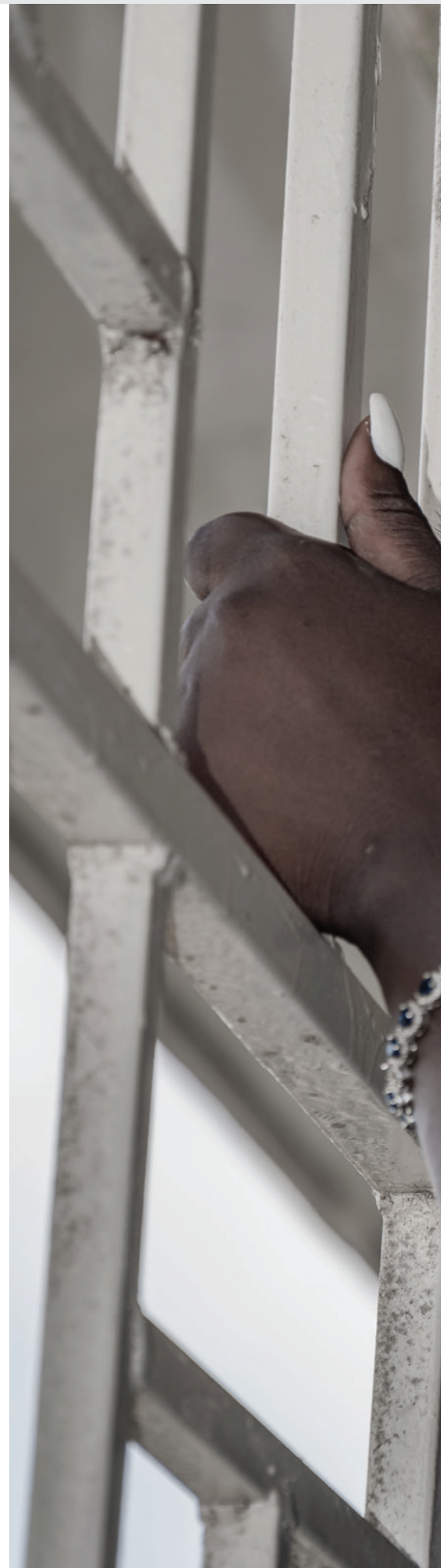
(Female, rural town, Westmoreland)

- “Mi know tings’ happen weh sometimes di public nuh hear - it hush-hush, like big man ‘n likkle gal. Sometimes a big person from di community get involved wid a teenage girl cos she need help.” (Male, St. Andrew inner city community)
- “No rape. From yuh see wah 15 or 16-year-old we seh them big, so we no really keep wi eye on them.” (Female, rural town, St. James)
- “The young gal dem wi tek money from older man. That is not a cause for alarm or a police matter in the community.” (Male, different rural community, St. James)

In contrast, interviewees who seemed more critical of the normalization of this pattern of transactional success commented:

- “Dat plentiful. It is something that is almost like normal. Inna some cases people nuh even notice cause di likkle young girl dem is wid di man and di parents dem allow dem.” (Male, St. Andrew inner city)
- Pre-COVID: January – mid-March. “Three to five cases. Unofficially, big men with young minors, because of money and intimidation, is rampant in the community. The 16-year olds are facing the same situation.” (Female VI, Kingston inner city)
- “Some maddas sell out dem pickney fi money. When mi did younger inna mi teenage days mi use to like a girl my age, and everytime mi come roun’ har madda use to cuss ‘n gwan bad pon di two a wi and tell har nuh fi chat to mi. Then mi start si big man a check har ‘n di madda nah seh nutten.” (Male,

<sup>77</sup> Kay-Anne Darlington, Tania Basta and Rafael Obregon, “Cross-generational Relationships in Rural Jamaica,” *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies: An International Interdisciplinary Journal for Research, Policy and Care* 7, no. 2 (June 2012): 1-11, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450128.2011.647729>.





Kingston inner city)

- Initial pandemic response phase. “Two or three 14-year olds. The families know about this but they need the help so they turn a blind eye.” Post Emancipence. “It continue so what can you do when the families pretending it not happening?” (Female, St. Andrew inner city).
- “[H]ave my suspicions. What is here is carnal abuse. Young yutes with bikes and school girls. Nothing reporting. Di likkle high-school girls “voluntarily” (I think it’s peer pressure) going with these yutes on bikes and most turn a blind eye to it. Most of these girls’ mothers had dem at a young age.” (Male, rural district, Westmoreland). This sounds like “rites of passage” activities with young men, which include underage girls, rather than transactional sex.
- “Mostly statutory rapes. I would say four out of ten cases of such rapes happen here to young girls. Professional man, big man. Some man weh you wouldn’t even think inna dem thing deh – a have sex with under-aged children in the community! It is a big problem in the community of \_\_\_\_\_. This is more accepted in the urban areas of our country. I would say it is a national crisis. And to think it is not demonized like other things!” (Male,

St. Andrew rural community close to Kingston).

- No sexual abuse reported. Girls only getting pregnant and out of school. The problem is worse with school not being kept as usual. They are from 14-17 years of age but the community doesn’t recognize it as sexual abuse. No rapes. Instead young girls are selling sex from \$500 up, so no need for men to be raping them. (Male principal of a basic school in a St. Andrew inner city community.)

What this information has brought out is that there is little to no understanding among many interviewees, most of whom are community leaders, that a girl child under 16 years, however physically developed, cannot legally consent to sexual interaction of any kind. That is, they do not grasp that sex with an under-16-year old is sexual assault/rape, whether the girl has “given her consent” or not. Nor, it would seem, is there an appreciation of the comprehensive and deleterious effects that sexual abuse has on girls’ lives.<sup>78</sup> Only two interviewees, both male Violence Interrupters who would be more versed in such terminology, even used the phrase “carnal abuse,”<sup>79</sup> while another male referred to “statutory rape,” saying it is “not happening again” as young girls “are even having it with the youths, even the 13 and 14-year olds, for a price.” Persons comprehend that sexual interaction with children under

<sup>78</sup> Sexual abuse has damaging effects on girls and women, including earlier onsets of puberty, cognitive deficits, depression, dissociative symptoms, maladaptive sexual development, hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal attenuation, asymmetrical stress responses, high rates of obesity, more major illnesses and healthcare utilization, dropping out of high school, persistent post-traumatic stress disorder, self-mutilation, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders diagnoses, physical and sexual revictimization, premature deliveries, teen motherhood, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic violence. Offspring born to abused mothers were at increased risk for child maltreatment and overall maldevelopment. Penelope Trickett et al, “The Impact of Sexual Abuse on Female Development: Lessons from a Multigenerational, Longitudinal Research Study,” *Development and Psychopathology* 23, 2 (2011): 453-76, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3693773/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3693773/). Speaking to his nearly 20 years of experience conducting psychiatric evaluations on Jamaican women and girls taken into remand, one senior psychiatrist remarked that in the majority of cases the women and girls “are normal people with normal lives, until they are sexually molested or abused; from that instance their lives go off track and they end up coming into conflict with the law.” Personal communication, March 13, 2021. (Data on the causal and correlating factors on women’s and girl’s interface with the law is not systematically, if at all, collated or analysed in Jamaica.)

<sup>79</sup> The use of this terminology is consistent with previous governing legislation, Offences Against the Person Act.

12 years is abuse and it is often severely sanctioned under the laws of jungle justice that operate in many of these communities. This can mean beating and/or eviction from the community or even death. One instance of a killing of a man in his 30s in relation to child sexual abuse in July (2020) was mentioned by a female interviewee from a residential community in Portmore. However once there is apparent consent among girls aged 12 or 13 years and older, such as those who engage in transactional sex,<sup>80</sup> most community members do not see this as abuse.<sup>81</sup>

## Rape

The JCF data shows that reported rapes for 2020 decreased by 14 percent from 2019. The quantitative VRI data and the qualitative data in this study suggests that the initial tight lockdown in the initial pandemic response phase, which did something to cramp parties, and the curfews, may have caused a reduction in the occasions for rape. It is possible that rapes by neighbours and regular visitors have been curtailed somewhat, but child sexual abuse and rape within the family space – and in tenement yard situations – may have increased. The hospital records of violence-related injuries in the initial pandemic response phase indicate a decrease in violence from perpetrators who were acquaintances and friends, as well as from strangers, but an increase in violence from other relatives, particularly, and parents (Table 16). Intimate partner violence also shows a decrease in this phase but an increase over pre-COVID

levels in the third quarter from July to September among boyfriend/girlfriend couples.

Violence related injuries from sexual assault dropped significantly from the first quarter of 2020 through the second and third quarters. From January to March 34 sexual assault-related VRIs were treated at hospital, 25 during the months of April to June (a 26 percent decrease), and 23 from July to September (a 32 percent decrease compared to January to March). (See Table 13.) Whether there was a decrease in sexual assault or, a decrease in people going to hospital to be treated for injuries sustained from sexual assault, is unknown. The difficulty of establishing the incidence of rape and sexual assault is pervasive in Jamaica, and so it is uncertain what to attribute changes in numbers to.

Interviewees recounted 24 cases of rape, for eight of which we have no details other than that they were in court. In 16 cases the period in which the rapes occurred is known: 12 were January to mid-March, two were in the initial pandemic response phase, mid-March to July, and two were in the post-Emancipence period, a reduction as suggested by the JCF statistics. Eight were gang rapes, including one of three teenagers 16 years and over at a party. Parties are known as potential risk events for gang rape. Another reported (by our respondents) gang rape was engineered by a boyfriend who invited his friends to have sex with his girlfriend, unbeknown to her. Her refusal was ignored.

Of the 13 women whose ages were given, 10 were between 16-17 years, while the others were in their 20s, 30s and 40s. A 28-year old was mentally ill and was clearly being abused by the neighbourhood males. Two seem to have been raped by strangers, one being thrown into a hole from which she was rescued the next day. A male youth of 16 years old is counted in the 24 victims, although under the current law the offence against him would be considered buggery, and not counted as rape. There are limited details on only two perpetrators. One was a mentally ill man who attempted to rape someone (not counted in the 24) who was subjected to jungle justice and killed. The second is that it was a man in his 20s who violated the 16-year old boy.

The same avoidance of the topic of rape as with child sexual abuse was found among interviewees. Many women are ashamed or blame themselves for their victimisation, so they avoid discussing it. There is a long-standing history of under-reporting in Jamaica. In 2003, Amnesty International reported that sexual investigation units estimated that only 25 percent of sexual violence is reported in Jamaica.<sup>82</sup> One in eight (12 percent) women have experienced “forced intercourse” at some time in their life,<sup>83</sup> so statistically, out of the 36 women interviewed in this study, four or more might be rape victims or know someone who is. The most senior female interviewer, with years of experience and known to several of the women she interviewed as she has a long history of NGO work in communities, found a

80 Transactional sex can be defined as a non-marital, non-commercial sexual relationship motivated by the implicit assumption that sex will be exchanged for material support and other benefits. UNAIDS, “Transactional Sex and HIV Risk: From Analysis to Action,” 2018, [www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/transactional-sex-and-hiv-risk\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/transactional-sex-and-hiv-risk_en.pdf).

81 This study would distinguish between older men with young girls, some of whom are still in primary school, and sex between two young people, where the girl may be in her early teens and the boy not much older, which falls more into experimental “rites of passage” activity or perhaps solace from abusive parental situations or for other reasons. Surely this has to be distinguished from a much older man soliciting with money and other material bribes, often preceded by grooming, for sex from a vulnerable young girl, who may also be placed in this position by one or more parent.

82 Amnesty International, “Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Jamaica: Just a Little Sex,” June 2006, [www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/72000/amr380022006en.pdf](http://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/72000/amr380022006en.pdf).

83 National Family Planning Board, “Reproductive Health Survey,” 2008.

discussion would flow freely until the issue of rape was raised – then many would suddenly, she reported, “clam up.” Out of respect for their views, interviewers, as with child abuse, might not even ask a question when it came to asking about the third period (post Emancipendence), if the initial denials that it could exist in their community were strong. This hesitation to disclose may be exacerbated by the lack of responsiveness from the state.<sup>84</sup> In 2014, it was reported that only one in five child molesters were convicted, due to the lengthy, delayed court process.<sup>85</sup> Between 2003 and 2015, there was a consistent increase in sexual offences. However, of the 347 rapes reported to the Centre for the Investigation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse (CISOCA) in 2013, only 137 resulted in arrests.<sup>86</sup>

Although there is a greater understanding of rape than of child sexual abuse, some in these communities still see it as done by a stranger using force - “hol’ down an tek

way” - usually using an implement like a gun or a knife, because the emphasis is on “force.” The following selection of comments reveal this concept:

- “The community’s sense of ‘what is rape’ is seen strictly as [an] involuntary sexual act between a ‘man and a woman’ - i. e. one that is forced and stranger to stranger.” (Male, suburban residential)
- “Fi most people inna wi community rape is ‘hold down ‘n tek—it is forced.” (Male, Kingston inner city)
- “It would be just forced intercourse. Whether gunpoint, knifepoint, things like that would be rape.” (Male, suburban residential)

On the other hand there are comments showing awareness that consent is involved, even between friends, even with husbands.<sup>87</sup>

- “Rape to me really mean when woman or girl say no and man tek it

same way.” (Male, St. Andrew inner city)

- “Having intercourse with somebody without their consent.” (Male, rural town)
- “Even though many will say that rape is ‘force’ they know that it also includes against one’s will. Why would they run if they didn’t know that they did something wrong? Dem know!” (Male, rural town)
- “Rape inna my community, as long as yuh tek supm an di smaddy nuh consent is rape. A could a even yuh wife a yuh yawd, is a form a rape.” (Male, suburban residential)
- “Rape for me is like when you guh inna people house and have sex with them and them nuh agree with it. We call it ‘unlawful climb up.’” (Male, suburban residential)

84 It should be noted that where a don or “top man” rapes or sexually abuses a young girl or woman neither she nor her family dare make a report to the police. Hume Johnson and Joseph Soeters, “Jamaican Dons, Italian Godfathers and the Chances of a ‘Reversible Destiny,’” *Political Studies* 56, no. 1 (March 2008): 178, [https://docs.rwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1186&context=fcas\\_fp](https://docs.rwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1186&context=fcas_fp). Some victims may leave the community and then report it to the police, but if they do, one VI suggested, “her family will pay.” This narrative was also reported by others.

85 Paul Miller, “Children at Risk: A Review of Sexual Abuse Incidents and Child Protection Issues in Jamaica,” *Open Review of Educational Research* 1, no. 1 (December 2014), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23265507.2014.972437>.

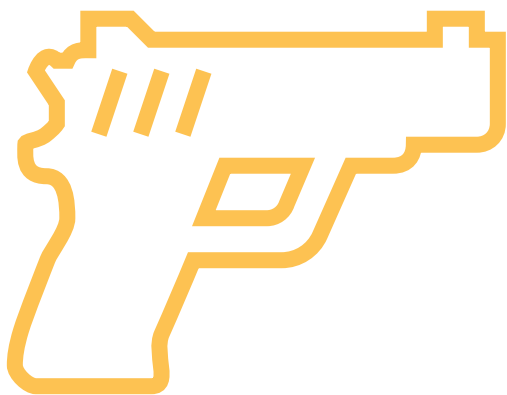
86 Anthony Harriott and Marilyn Jones, “Crime and Violence in Jamaica,” IDB Series on Crime and Violence in the Caribbean, June 2016, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Crime-and-Violence-in-Jamaica-IDB-Series-on-Crime-and-Violence-in-the-Caribbean.pdf>.

87 In current Jamaican law rape is not recognised in “‘intact’ marriages... it is deemed that the consent to sexual relations is ongoing”; Watson-Williams, “Women’s Health Survey,” 23.



# 6

## Community Violence



The murder rate in

**5 violent**

**INNER CITY AREAS**

increased, **DESPITE AN INITIAL REDUCTION** in the initial pandemic response phase



This section looks at violence in public spaces: the extreme violence that can affect the entire community, like murder and the shootings associated with it, usually taking place in the public space; and at lower levels at street fighting. It should be borne in mind that this assessment is based on the reports of two members of each community. Where at least one is a Violence Interrupter, as in 24 communities, they

are likely to be accurate. Otherwise there is less certainty and much depends on the individual interviewed, especially where the community is large. In addition it was necessary to choose specific communities to represent areas like May Pen Proper or Spanish Town Central, whereas in fact many communities feed into these areas. (No data on shootings or fighting specific to the communities was available from the JCF.)

## Murder

Since shootings do not easily lend themselves to counting over long periods, the number of murders per period are the best way to assess the impact of COVID on extreme community violence. In addition, of course, they are the most serious outcome of this violence. Table 17 below indicates that in the initial pandemic phase there was a reduction in

**Table 17:** Murders by community type

Type of community		No. of murders per period			Total by type
		Pre-COVID	1st period	2nd period	
		Jan – mid-Mar	mid-Mar - Jul	Aug – Nov/Dec	Jan – Nov/Dec
Inner city	All 26 (100%)	71 (28 per mth)	60 (13 per mth)	81 (18 per mth)	212 100%
	Most violent 5 (19%)	41 58% of total	31 52% of total	52 64% of total	(124) 58% of total
Rural town/district (15)		42 (17 per mth)	18 (4 per mth)	19 (4 per mth)	79 100%
Suburban residential (6)		14 (6 per mth)	8 (2 per mth)	21 (5 per mth)	43 100%
<b>Total by period</b>		<b>127</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>86</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>121</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>334</b> <b>(100%)</b>

N.B. Figures for monthly averages are rounded.

Where there was a decrease, contacts in one inner city community and one rural town commented that the gunmen were afraid like everyone else in the first period.

the monthly murder rate in all community categories. The percentage decreases differ, from 76 percent in rural towns and districts, to 54 percent in inner cities, to 43 percent in suburban residential areas.

It should be noted, however, that within this average, murders in downtown/inner city Kingston and St. Andrew continued to increase in the initial pandemic response phase and further increased in the post-Emancipence period. In one suburban residential community outside Spanish Town, murders moved from three in the two-and-a-half months pre-COVID period, to two in the initial pandemic response phase of four-and-a-half months, then jumped to 18 in the four-and-a-half month post-Emancipence period. Shootings also sky-rocketed. This is the volatility some of these communities are prone to, and so changes may or may not be related to COVID-19.

The figures in Table 17, which are a compilation of the community reports by interviewees, suggest that in the post-Emancipence period (August to November-December) in inner cities, on average, and in suburban residential communities, the monthly murder rate increased, but not to pre-COVID levels, whereas it remained the same in rural towns and districts. However in five

inner city communities, the monthly rate surpassed pre-COVID levels. Overall, total murders in the second post-Emancipence period were reported to be lower than in the pre-COVID period, bearing in mind that the earlier period is two and a half months, whereas the latter period is four and a half months. The monthly figures by period clearly suggest this.

Where there was a decrease, contacts in one inner city community and one rural town commented that the gunmen were afraid like everyone else in the first period, while another of the rural areas was placed under quarantine early in the first period and, according to the contact, “quarantine frighten everyone and bring calm.” In three rural areas where there was a decrease, interviewees said that it was the police as well as COVID that reduced the violence.

The murder rate in five violent inner city areas increased, despite an initial reduction in the initial pandemic response phase. These are areas that are plagued with gang violence that proved impervious to COVID-19, curfews, and quarantines. Comments from community contacts that point to the types of gangs found in Jamaica and the persistence of intergenerational violence are expanded on below.

Table 18 indicates the average murder rate per community over 11 and a half months in the different community types. Surprisingly, once the five most violent inner city communities are removed, the inner city communities in this group have the lowest rate. Clearly this warrants further investigation from official sources in more communities connected with the larger districts, e.g. Spanish Town, May Pen Proper, Montego Bay etc., combined with community knowledge which may provide extra insights, to see if this still obtains with fuller information.

Many of these murders are gang-related, but some may be interpersonal. In some areas gang conflicts are generational; Clarendon is known for deep family conflicts that have gone on for decades.<sup>111</sup> In one Kingston community the contact gives an idea of the environment of generational violence:

*Shootings always happening in the community; there are breaks in between and then flare up again. The gangs are not really organized in any big way. They just get together for the crime they plan to commit. The crimes are mostly influenced by the older gangsters in the community. They plan it and tell the younger ones what to do. The violence is usually about long*

**Table 18:** Average no. of murders per community by category Jan – Nov/Dec 2020

Category of community	Average no. of murders
Most violent inner city communities (5)	25
Suburban residential (6)	7
Rural town/district (15)	5
Other inner city communities (21)	4

<sup>111</sup> Personal communication on many occasions with Marlon Moore, former PMI Supervisor of Violence Interrupters in Clarendon, and one of the interviewers for this and other VPA studies



*time feuds and vengeance.*

In the final period of August to November he noted:

*More shootings and murders within the community of late, but the community is not too distressed about it. They are used to it because they know the players and the reasons.*

This environment is similar to another St. Andrew community with these same decades-long conflicts:

*The violence is about a long-time gang war. War that is about 30 or so years now. Different characters yes, and different reasons and motivations, but some of these corners and gangs a war fi years now. Them war nah no end, them only break for a while. The ages of most gang members are from about 16-40 years. When it cools off the community nice but it's a different*

*thing when the war on.*

Some of these smaller community gangs are ruthless as the contact for a third St. Andrew community explains:

*Three to four different gangs warring; a type of intercommunity friction going on. Work a bruk inna the community, out by [location] and extortion money is king. They will war and kill for it. Them nuh organized, just friends and close family doing random bad things.*

Some groups could be described as corner crews, unemployed youth and men who may fight for turf. Another community on the outskirts of Kingston is described here: "The conflicts involve young men and those over 35 from groups that hang out on corners and elsewhere. The reasons range from reprisals to retaliation, I would say. No coordinated gangs but conflicts usually bring war among the groups."

In a number of communities the gangs are much more organised. They are criminal gangs involved in extortion. They often commit their murders outside the community – if they target a community member they wait until they leave the community, so community specific data would not necessarily pick this up. They have links with outside gangs, and can earn "big money" from their extortion and other criminal activities. In Westmoreland there was mention of some women gang members. Scamming is particularly connected with the West and with St. James communities.

A confounding factor in understanding the drivers of murders is the possible (it is too early to determine with any certainty) increase in gun deaths resulting from non-gang related murderous family conflict, a factor that the Police Commissioner referred to after a spate of such murders in early 2021.<sup>112</sup> Why it is so striking now may be because the family conflicts have

112 "Commish Says People who Plot to Kill Relatives will be Caught," Loop News, February 2, 2021, [www.loopjamaica.com/content/commish-says-people-who-plot-kill-relatives-will-be-caught](http://www.loopjamaica.com/content/commish-says-people-who-plot-kill-relatives-will-be-caught); Loop News, "Commish Bats for SOEs to Reduce Violence and Bring Calm to Communities," Loop News, February 3, 2021, [www.loopjamaica.com/content/commish-bats-soes-reduce-violence-and-bring-calm-communities](http://www.loopjamaica.com/content/commish-bats-soes-reduce-violence-and-bring-calm-communities).

**Table 1913:** Circumstance of injury by community category in 9 major public hospitals Jan-Sep2020

Community (no)	Fight/Argument	Sexual Assault	Robbery/Burglary	Drug/Gang	Child Abuse	Other*	Total
<b>Inner city (26)</b>	88% (549)	5% (32)	3% (20)	2% (9)	1% (6)	1% (8)	100% (624)
<b>Rural towns &amp; districts (15)</b>	81% (279)	11% (38)	3% (9)	3% (9)	1% (2)	1% (5)	100% (342)
<b>Suburban residential (6)</b>	81% (66)	13% (11)	4% (3)	1% (1)	0% (0)	1% (1)	100% (82)

\*Mob/Riot and Police Shooting (latter alone in suburban residential)

become so open – a murder happening in the middle of a church service – and among more middle class citizens.

Where COVID-19 has had a notable impact is on the young teenagers who model themselves on these gangs and on older adults. With no face-to-face school and with few being able to afford devices (and thus having more free time with little to do), the influence of these “models” is greater. As remarked by a woman resident of a St. Andrew inner city community:

*These same 9 to 13-year-old boys have no device so now drop out, form cliques, and carry knives. Get into lots of fights. The Community Development Committee (CDC) worked tirelessly with the parents during that COVID time to squash potential war from brewing.*

*Bigger high school guys now on street - no device to do school work; smoke, gamble then fight. That is now a problem.*

This latter comment on older school boys was made by a Kingston respondent.

## Shooting

Where there are murders there is shooting, often several bouts a week of nerve-wracking gunshots, terrifying the younger children especially. It is hard to quantify shootings or street fights, except by intensity, as conveyed by respondents in expressions such as:

- “No shootings happen between this time.”
- “There were a bit of shootings.”
- “Periodic shootings that stemmed from party incident.”
- “There has been constant shooting. Down to last night there was shooting.”
- Some interviewees will give numbers:
- “One shooting—three people get shot and one dead.”
- “We will have flare ups periodically, every now and again; it was about 10 shootings.”
- “Shootings gone up 40 percent inna di entire [location]; 100 plus shootings and 30 people get shot.”

The intensity of shootings can be loosely linked to the number of murders.

## Street Fights

Street fighting is a characteristic feature of life in poor, vulnerable, and volatile communities. It can be harsh, and although it does not usually lead to hospitalisation, most violence-related injuries (85 percent) that reach hospitals result from fighting, as Table 19 indicates.

Table 20 looks at the intensity of street fighting in the different categories of communities in the two periods following COVID. In the initial pandemic phase, there was a clear drop in more than one third (38 percent) of the inner city communities, in one third (33 percent) of the suburban residential communities, and in 60 percent of rural towns and districts. Many did not want to risk fist fighting, “punch-outs,” or hair-pulling, or in any way to get physically close to people for fear of catching COVID. Nor did they, for the same reasons, populate the streets as usual, so persons likely to get into conflict did not see each other. Wars between “wifey” and girlfriend, otherwise known as “matie wars,” declined for this

reason and also because girlfriends (or, for that matter, boyfriends) could not be visited. The man stayed with his main woman and children.

In the post-Emancipence period (August – November/December) 38-50 percent in each category of communities returned to pre-COVID levels of fighting, bearing in mind that this data is so

variable as to perhaps not be useful. The rest actually remained below, at decreased levels or even decreased further. The exceptions were nine (34 percent) inner city communities: four stayed at increased levels and in five fighting became even more intense. Added to these exceptions is a rural community who, in the post-Emancipence period, further increased their level of

street fighting beyond the pre-COVID period. This St. James community stands out for the widespread levels of aggression in its population, including, for the post-Emancipence period, intensity of fighting (high), intimate partner violence (eight out of ten couples), and violent discipline of children (nine out of ten families beat, shout, and disrespect their children).

**Table 20:** Impact of COVID on street fighting

	Initial pandemic response: mid-Mar - Jul				Post Emancipence period: Aug – Nov/Dec				
	No fights at all	Decreased	Same as pre-COVID	Increased	Still no fights	Still or newly decreased	As in pre-COVID	Still at increased level	Further increased
Inner city (26)*	4% (1)	38% (10)	23% (6)	31% (8)	4% (1)	27% (7)	35% (9)	15% (4)	19% (5)
Rural town or district (15)**	20% (3)	60% (9)	20% (3)		13% (2)	40% (6)	40% (6)		7% (1)
Suburban residential (6)	17% (1)	33% (2)	50% (3)			50% (3)	50% (3)		
<b>Total: 47</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>100%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>17%</b>					

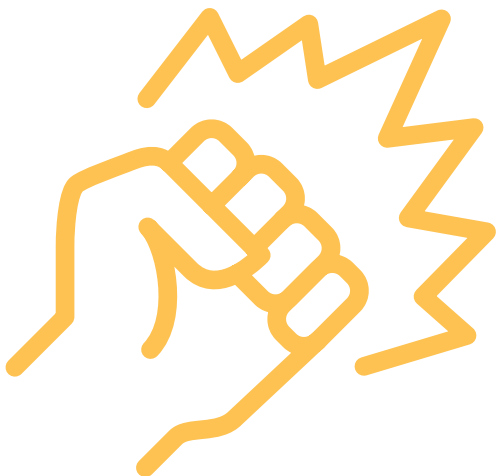
\*Contacts in one MoBay inner city community, up until Sept 2020 a ZOSO, say there have been few or no fights in 2020.

\*\*Contacts in two rural communities say the same for 2020



# 7

## Conclusion



### **Violence**

in some forms of  
DOMESTIC ABUSE  
HAS INCREASED, and

### **children**

have been its  
MAJOR VICTIMS

The extent to which COVID-19 has had an effect on violence, and the nature of those effects, are varied and variable, but it has had an impact on violence in vulnerable and volatile communities. Most households in the violent communities featured in this study are poor; in normal times they live on the edge. The income reduction from unemployment, diminution of opportunities for self-employment, in tourist areas for example but also in myriads of ways in other contexts such as reduction in sales of small community businesses, have all resulted in income falls that have left adults, and especially parents and caregivers, highly stressed. Children above all remind parents of this – there is less food to feed them with or none at times (when they are home more and need to be fed more frequently than usual); there are not enough devices to serve several of them in a family so that they can continue their education or, worse, there are none at all; and where there is no free Wi-Fi, the money cannot buy data for school every day or perhaps at all.

The result is more violent discipline

rained on children who “feel the brunt of the parents’ frustration.”(Female interviewee.) Violence in some forms of domestic abuse has thus increased, and children have been its major victims. Violent discipline of children overall has increased, which means more families are using it, especially the psychological demeaning and intimidation of children through shouting and name-calling. Although the increase has not been as high in violent physical discipline or beating, it has increased, and in some instances has become more regular and harsher.

Although full and accurate evidence regarding sexual abuse of under-12 year olds, which carries a heavy stigma for both the victim and the perpetrator, is impossible for even the police to obtain, the feedback and available evidence suggests that without the physical safeguard that school provides, generally the environment is more accessible to predators, particularly those in the household. There is some evidence that bored adolescent schoolboys, with time on their hands and likely to be watching more pornographic material than usual,

have also been engaging in “experimental” sexual abuse on sometimes very young children. Only if the mother or a truly trustworthy relative or friend is at home are young children more protected.

Sexual abuse of underage girls from 12 years up by older men, in a situation of transactional sex, is openly accepted in communities. It is a source of income and families often turn a blind eye; for the younger girls, fees may be as low as \$500. While in the first stages of the lockdown this type of sexual abuse might have reduced, since persons were staying indoors most of the time, there is no doubt that by, and probably before, the post-Emancipence period (August to November/December) it was not only back to normal but had almost certainly increased. Teenage pregnancy has also increased (though birth data is not yet available to confirm this).

An unexpected finding of this study is that physical intimate partner violence overall decreased in twice as many communities as those in which it increased, which was corroborated in two instances and refuted in one by stakeholders working

**An unexpected finding of this study is that physical intimate partner violence overall decreased in twice as many communities as those in which it increased.**



with women in crisis situations; the one with a different experience working with young women under 25. Feedback from the community contacts suggests that abusive verbal confrontations between couples at home – “bitter verbal wars” – have increased.

Community violence – murders, shootings, and street fights – decreased overall in the period immediately after COVID struck. However, in three inner city communities, murders and shooting increased throughout the two periods following COVID. During the post-Emancipence period, from August to November/December, community violence increased again in the inner city and suburban residential communities but not to pre-COVID levels. In rural towns and districts violence remained at the same decreased levels as in the initial pandemic phase, with one exception: throughout the year this rural community had medium levels of shooting and murdering, and high levels of street fighting, intimate partner violence, child beating, and shouting and disrespecting.

When counting the reported murders for the 11 and a half months that this study covers, inner city communities have the highest monthly average of eight, suburban residential communities have seven, while communities in rural towns

and districts have five. If, however, the five communities with the highest numbers of murders, an average of 25 a month, are removed, the monthly average among the remaining 21 inner cities drops to four murders. One explanation might be that persons were so occupied trying to make ends meet that they did not have time for the usual in-fighting and gang wars. The other is that one community had to be chosen for large areas like Spanish Town and Montego Bay and one community cannot be truly representative.

COVID positively impacted street fighting which dropped in more communities than it rose in the initial pandemic phase, probably due to fear of contracting the virus through physical touch. From August to November/December street fighting in most communities reverted to pre-COVID levels or even below.

What seems clear is that the pandemic has worsened verbal abuse against children, and sexual abuse of children by people within their household or otherwise known to them, and in particular girls 12 years and over engaging in transactional sex. Measures to address these problems should be adopted now, and knowing these effects should inform future shock responses. But these were at unacceptable levels pre-pandemic. The widespread acceptance and approval of girls 12-and-

up engaging in sexual relationships where it appears the girl has “given her consent,” is problematic, pandemic or no pandemic. These forms of abuse have pernicious and enduring effects on the individual, which redound to the society’s detriment. The levels of gun violence, gang violence, and interpersonal violence are also at crisis levels, regardless of any effect COVID-19 had or did not have; but this is a long and well known problem.

There were glimmers of positive changes—less physical intimate partner conflict where COVID-19 restricted people’s movements and thus reduced suspicion and jealousy, but qualified by the fact that there was increased verbal violence which can be more damaging; the instances where parents grew closer to and more understanding of their children, which hopefully will continue; and where fear of catching the disease from touching another person may have dampened the habit of people engaging in physical fights. Most of these effects are likely to be (and in some instances have already proven to be) temporal, and our knowledge about how to sustain advances as yet undeveloped. But we can learn from them as they do suggest possibilities for future actions to reduce violence, and areas to maximise in future crisis responses.



## Recommendations

### 1. Expand the cadre of social workers going into communities.

The removal of the protection that school provided for child victims of sexual abuse has removed a shelter and created more opportunities for such abuse.

### 2. Provide basic training to public sector medical personnel and police to identify non-verbal signs of abuse of women and children.

### 3. Provide basic training to teachers at all levels of schooling to identify the signs of child abuse (neglect, physical, psychological, sexual) and provide comprehensive training to one teacher in every primary and high school as a reference and training resource for all school staff.

This training should include psychological first aid. The comprehensive training should be certifiable so that the teacher so trained can be mobile across school jobs.

### 4. Provide additional reporting mechanisms and support services for adult women victim-survivors of intimate partner violence and domestic violence generally.

The report acknowledges under-reporting

as a potential reason for the decreased number of reported incidents of gender-based violence. Alternative methods of reporting and seeking recourse should be extended throughout the communities, such as extending hotline hours for persons to call, and providing alternative reporting spaces (such as the stationing of CISOCA officers outside of police stations). Partnering with CSOs that are already operating and trusted within the communities would be an effective approach to achieving this as well as private and public sector organisations that citizens engage with regularly for matters not related to gender-based violence.

### 5. Provide hospital-based early investigation, follow-up, and support for persons who are victims of injury related to violence.

Introduce a hospital-based intervention programme at the A&E Departments of all major hospitals providing social workers to follow-up, assess, counsel, and where necessary refer to other services, victims of violence who come there for treatment of violence-related injury. This should be modeled on the experience gained from the Child and Adolescent Abuse Mitigation Programme (CAMP) that has been previously implemented at BHC and CRH which has been effective

in elucidating the circumstances of the VRI and provide opportunities to reduce the recurrence of similar violent events.

### 6. Expand the curriculum of those trained to interface with abuse victims to include the prevalence and harmfulness of verbal abuse of children and the complexity and pervasiveness of child sexual abuse and minors' engagement in transactional sex.

Where the study's findings suggest that there has been a decline in child physical abuse, which could perhaps be attributed to the public education and court sanctions on beating, the ostensible public horror to vicious beatings that have circulated on social media, and the sanctions applicable to observers if not reported (though the extent to which these sanctions have actually been applied is uncertain), a similar effort is needed for verbal abuse against children. All of us need to understand how damaging this is to a child's self-confidence and to the fulfilment of their potential talents.

The survey findings suggest that people genuinely do not understand that girls 12-15 having sex are being abused, and that the abuse inflicts physical, psychological, and emotional damage at that stage of development. It can do great damage.

# Appendix 1: Methodology

Violence-related incidents are underreported in Jamaica.<sup>113</sup> Underreporting is attributed to several factors, including low trust in the authorities,<sup>114</sup> reluctance to bring the state into the community or into one's private life,<sup>115</sup> and reliance on an alternative authority figure in the community such as a don to resolve grievances and disputes.<sup>116</sup> Especially with regard to sexual and intimate partner violence (IPV), the social norms of acceptance of violence might lead to the downplaying of its seriousness.<sup>117</sup> Other factors influencing underreporting violence, particularly IPV and domestic violence, may be shame or embarrassment which leads to hiding incidents for fear of stigma, and fear of retribution by the aggressor.<sup>118</sup>

Any decrease in reports of domestic violence during COVID-19 has thus been interpreted by the relevant experts as an expansion of the preexisting problem of underreporting, rather than a reduction in incidents, given that avenues for reporting were rendered more inaccessible, for example, social workers may have been wary of making home

visits because of the risk of infection.<sup>119</sup> This is in an existing context of limited access and availability of systems to make reports, and insufficient knowledge of these systems by the general public.

Other concerns about the available data include the possible decrease in the reporting of violent incidents more broadly, as victims may not have gone to the hospital or the police, as they ordinarily would have. People would have been afraid of contracting COVID-19 if they left their homes, as well as they were explicitly encouraged by the government to not attend hospitals, health centres, or police stations unless it was a serious emergency. Thus there are questions about the extent to which COVID-19 fears and restrictions may have affected reporting, and thus the extent to which the reporting accurately reflects incidences of violence.

Given these uncertainties about the quantitative data, this study uses a mixed methods approach, and includes qualitative sources. The qualitative material is based on 86 telephone interviews between November 22 –

December 30, 2020 with community contacts (50 men and 36 women), from 47 communities across nine parishes: 16 communities in St. Andrew; nine communities in St. James; eight communities in St. Catherine; five communities in Westmoreland; four communities in Kingston; two communities in Clarendon; and one each in Hanover, Manchester, and St. Ann.

The 50 communities were selected by Violence Prevention Alliance (VPA) using the major crime (murders, shooting, assaults) trends over the past five years (2014-9) and comprise the most violent communities in Jamaica. The sample comprised at least one community from eight parishes, 11 communities that were quarantined, and three of the four communities that were designated as Zones of Special Operations (ZOSOs). However contacts from three communities were not made: the time was too short for our gatekeepers to identify and contact one community in St. James (Rose Heights); a misunderstanding over the location of one downtown community (West Downtown Kingston – not West Kingston), owing to the perennial

113 Heather Sutton et al, "Restoring Paradise in the Caribbean: Combatting Violence With Numbers," Inter-american Development Bank, May 2017, 1, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Restoring-Paradise-in-the-Caribbean-Combatting-Violence-with-Numbers.pdf>. The 2016 National Crime Victimization Survey ascertained that only 41 percent of the crimes recorded were reported to the police. Sixty-three percent of physical assaults were not reported, and for the period surveyed, none of the incidents of rape were reported. Ann-Marie Barnes, Randy Seepersad, Jason Wilks, and Scot Wortley, "The National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) 2016 Final Report," prepared for the Ministry of National Security, Jamaica, April 2016, [www.mns.gov.jm/sites/default/files/notices/NCVS%202016%20Final%20Report%20April%202020%20final%20submitted.pdf](http://www.mns.gov.jm/sites/default/files/notices/NCVS%202016%20Final%20Report%20April%202020%20final%20submitted.pdf).

114 Andrew McLean and Sherrone Blake Lobba, "Assessment of Community Security and Transformation Programmes in Jamaica," United Nations Development Programme, 2009, 84, [undp.org/content/dam/jamaica/docs/researchpublications/governance/CommunitySecurityAssessmentReport.pdf](http://undp.org/content/dam/jamaica/docs/researchpublications/governance/CommunitySecurityAssessmentReport.pdf).

115 Carol Watson-Williams, "Women's Health Survey 2016 Jamaica," Statistical Institute of Jamaica, Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, 2018, 39, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Women-health-survey-2016-Jamaica-Final-Report.pdf>.

116 Tracian Meikle and Rivke Jaffe, "Police as the New Don? An Assessment of Post-Dudus Policing Strategies in Jamaica," *Caribbean Journal of Criminology* 1, 2 (2), 2016, <http://security-assemblages.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Meikle-Jaffe-2015.pdf>.

117 "Women's Health Survey 2016 Jamaica."

118 Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014: Jamaica," Washington, DC: US Department of State, 2014, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2014humanrightsreport/index.htm#wrapper>.

119 Livern Barrett, "Domestic Abuse Caution - Experts Wary of Gender-Based Violence During COVID-19 Stay-At-Home Measures," *Gleaner*, April 12, 2020, <http://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/lead-stories/20200412/domestic-abuse-caution-experts-wary-gender-based-violence-during-covid>.

problem of different borders used by the Social Development Commission (SDC) and the Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) for some communities; and in one previously quarantined community (Old Harbour Road – not Old Harbour), rated quite low on the list at 41, our SDC gatekeeper could not find a contact willing to be interviewed based, it would seem, on a level of fear.

Given the constraints of time and the pandemic, it was decided to interview in each community two knowledgeable and respected community contacts, preferably one man and one woman. The descriptor “respected” does not refer per se to any formal status; it refers to leaders and influencers who the community trusts and who, if only for this reason, since they have their ear to the ground, but usually also for other leadership characteristics, are knowledgeable. For such contacts the obvious gatekeepers were Peace Management Initiative (PMI) East, based in Kingston, PMI West, based in Montego Bay, and the Social Development Commission (SDC).

The interview itself covered domestic abuse and gender based violence (psychological and physical aggression against children, intimate partner violence, abuse and rape) and community violence (street fighting, shooting and murder). Questions on all these different areas of abuse were asked three times in relation to three periods:

Pre- COVID: January to mid-March, a period of two and a half months.

The initial pandemic response period: mid-March to July, a period of four and a half months.

Post-Emancipendence (August) through elections to the current period (November/December). This period was

also treated as four and a half months since interviews spanned mid-November to the end of December with a short break for the public holidays.<sup>120</sup>

At the beginning broad questions were also asked on employment, community businesses, devices and internet connections for school and, generally, how the community had been coping.

Since the 86 interviewees had to rely on their memory, the periods after COVID were not broken by exact numbers of months but rather by events like Emancipendence and the elections, which would be clear memory landmarks.

Among the interviewees were 31 Violence Interrupters (VIs), one Parish Development Committee (PDC) President, five Community Development Committee (CDC) Presidents, one CDC Vice-President, four Justices of the Peace (JPs), three Fight for Peace (FFP) Community Coordinators, three teachers including one basic school principal, two pastors, and one ex-policeman. There were almost certainly others in these categories, some of which cross in one person, but no specific enquiries were ever made. It was only if SDC or PMI provided this information or it emerged during the interviews.

To reach these persons and provide the best chance for the level of trust needed for interviews on sensitive topics such as domestic and community violence, the process was threefold:

Request from the Consultant to Gatekeepers to provide contacts. The Executive Directors would provide for PMI. For SDC the Executive Director and the Parish Managers of eight parishes were contacted and the managers would pass on to the Consultant the telephone contacts for particular supervisors, who

would then first check the contact, or in some cases the managers would check contacts themselves.

Once contacts who had agreed were received, which took several weeks, the Consultant would call them. They had already agreed to be interviewed but it was felt necessary for the Consultant to brief them so that they were fully aware of the study and its objectives and would have a second chance to decline if they wished.

Interviewers from the team of six, three males and three females who would interview their own gender, would then contact them to find out the most convenient time for interviews, which could be on weekdays or weekends.

The process, at all stages, frequently involved making several calls to link with someone.

It should be noted that 27 of the 86 persons interviewed were known to either the Interviewers and/or the Consultant. Two of the male interviewers were Violence Interrupter Supervisors so they knew all the PMI East VIs and had a fraternal link to those from PMI West. The most experienced female interviewer is a well known community specialist who has headed NGOs in two Kingston inner city communities and has also worked in Montego Bay.

The contacting process began on October 28, and interviews were carried out between November 22 and December 30. No contact turned down an interview and many appeared to speak freely, except, in some cases as indicated, on rape and sexual abuse. They seemed to appreciate a chance to share – grateful for any attention given to their particular community. One interview, which was actually with the incorrect community

<sup>120</sup> Most persons were eager to be interviewed. They were the ones who set days just before and after Christmas.

contact, was rejected. The correct one was never located. The rest fell in the range of adequate to good to very good, with the great majority in the upper ranges.

The quantitative data on violence-related injuries was provided by the Violence Prevention Alliance from the Jamaica Injuries Surveillance System (JISS) which is run in the Accident and Emergency Departments by the Ministry of Health and Wellness in the nine major public hospitals, namely Bustamante Hospital for Children (BHC), Kingston Public Hospital (KPH), Spanish Town Hospital, May Pen Hospital, Mandeville Regional Hospital, Sav la Mar Hospital, Cornwall Regional Hospital, St Ann's Bay Hospital, and Annotto Bay Hospital.

Each violence related injury is recorded daily and summarised monthly. The data has been collated and divided into three equal three-month periods between January to September 2020:

- i. January – March, mainly the pre-COVID period.
- ii. April – June, the initial pandemic response phase.
- iii. July – September, including the period after Emancipence.

These are similar enough to the qualitative study periods to allow comparison.

Additional quantitative data was sourced from the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) Statistics and Information Management Unit.

## Limitations

A number of the communities are actually large towns with many districts.

Since interview numbers were limited to two per community it was decided to interview two persons from the same district, seeking advice from VPA and SDC as to the poorest districts around the larger communities, such as Mandeville or Ocho Rios for example. Necessarily this would be less representative than a larger study.

For nine communities, six in the KMA (Ambrook Lane, Delacree Pen, Jones Town, Passmore Town, Penwood, Seaview Gardens) and three in St. Catherine (Central Village, Greater Portmore, Linstead) only one person was interviewed. Sickness, being overseas, exams, or phone numbers no longer in use, were some of the reasons for this.

In another nine communities the two interviewees were of one gender, usually male. Thus in six communities, two in the KMA (Riverton City and Waterhouse), two in St. Catherine (Spanish Town and Willowdene), and two in Westmoreland (Grange Hill and Negril) two males were interviewed. In three communities, one in Clarendon (May Pen Proper) and two in St. James (Flanker and Lilliput) two females were interviewed. As a general rule males usually have more exact data on community violence while females are more likely to be open about Intimate Partner Violence. These are broad generalisations – what is needed is a gender perspective from both on all issues.

In relation to the quantitative material, while hospitals in rural towns are likely to be the main source of emergency assistance for their parish, this is not necessarily true for the Kingston

Metropolitan Region, which has more and larger comprehensive health centres accessible to poor violence prone communities. Health centres do not have an electronic injuries surveillance system to capture VRI information. Similarly, an electronic VRI data capture system is not available at the University Hospital of the West Indies (UHWI) which is widely used by St. Andrew communities in that area despite the fees, especially in emergency situations. To obtain more complete data on injuries from health centers and UHWI would have necessitated manual extraction from the medical records at these locations. Time and resources did not make this possible. In the context of COVID-19, Kingston Public Hospital and the other major hospitals were only able to see persons who had serious injuries. Persons with minor, non- life threatening injuries were diverted to the nearest health center in their community of residence for treatment. This therefore is a limitation, especially for representation of Kingston and St. Andrew inner city communities which make up 20 of the 26 inner city communities in the study. The fact that persons might also have been hesitant to go to any health facility, especially in the initial pandemic phase, has already been noted in the Introduction.

For these reasons interpretation of the quantitative data has to be done with caution. Moreover no statistical tests of significance have been carried out. It will be noted that in many cases the numbers are too small for this. What the quantitative data can do, along with the qualitative data, is suggest patterns and trends.

# Appendix 2:

## List of Communities in the Study

The choice of these communities was made with regard to the availability of data within the time constraints of the study's duration. The original idea was to select 50 communities: the 20 most violent, the 10 least violent, and a sample of 20 in between, that would add geographical representation. That selection was forestalled by the lack of availability of violence related incident (VRI) data for the less violent communities. The decision to focus on the most violent would provide us with data from the injury surveillance system that could be analyzed, whereas the less violent communities had few or no VRIs events available for analyses. Another factor in the decision was that the qualitative researchers had fewer pre-existing contacts in those communities, and the time constraint did not permit the additional work needed to find appropriate contacts across the 30 communities. A more comprehensive study on the impact of COVID-19 on violence, conducted when a more clearly defined time period could be designated as "the pandemic period" would include available a random household survey, and/or a health records survey (from health clinics) from a sample of less violent and most violent communities.

Communities in yellow were quarantined, in blue were, or still are, ZOSOs.

	COUNT	RANK
Spanish Town Central, St. Catherine	294	1
Down Town Montego Bay, St. James	268	2
Old Harbour, St. Catherine	213	3
Delacree Pen, St. Andrew	195	4
Central Down Town, Kingston	177	5
Whitfield Town, St. Andrew	166	6
Linstead, St. Catherine	160	7
Negril, Westmoreland	143	8
Central Village, St. Catherine	143	9
Denham Town, Kingston	137	10
Arnett Gardens, St. Andrew	137	11
Mount Salem, St. James	126	12
Hayes, Clarendon	123	13
Gregory Park, St. Catherine	122	14
East Down Town, Kingston	119	15
Glendevon, St. James	118	16
May Pen Proper, Clarendon	113	17
Savannah-la-mar Business Dist. Westmoreland	110	18
Grange Hill, Westmoreland	110	19
West Down Town Kingston	110	20
Albion, St. James	105	21

	COUNT	RANK
Flankers, St. James	93	22
Mandeville Proper, Manchester	87	23
Greater Portmore, St. Catherine	86	24
Bull Bay/Seven Mile, St. Andrew	83	25
Penwood, St. Andrew	83	26
Riverton City, St. Andrew	80	27
Ocho Rios, St. Ann	79	28
Cross Roads, St. Andrew	77	29
Wilton Gardens/ Rema, St. Andrew	75	30
Seaview Gardens, St. Andrew	72	31
Rose Town, St. Andrew	71	32
Cambridge, St. James	70	33
Waterhouse, St. Andrew	70	34
Bogue, St. James	68	35
Jones Town, St. Andrew	67	36
Majestic Gardens St. Andrew	67	37
Greenwich Town/ Newport West St. Andrew	67	38
Lilliput, St. James	67	39
Willowdene, St. Catherine	66	40
Salt Spring, St. James	65	41
Old Harbour Road, St. Catherine	64	42
Cockburn Gardens, St. Andrew	63	43
Rose Heights, St. James	63	44
Greendale, St. Catherine	62	45
Half-Way-Tree, St. Andrew	62	46
Bethel Town, Westmoreland	61	47
Green Island, Hanover	58	48
Little London, Westmoreland	58	49
Passmore Town		50

# Appendix 3:

## Man-woman Relationships

According to a man from a St. Andrew Inner City Community. English translation follows.

### During the pandemic

Yuh have a whole heap a argument an a whole heap a ... but yuh nuh really see. One a di tings I would seh, while di man is there now it create a tension. Whole heap more tension between man an woman. Cause dem a occupy di same space at di same time. Dem nuh have the type a breathing space again. Suh it a drive a wedge between dem. Suh yuh find whole heap a verbal spar an yuh nuh? Man will lick but once yuh see a licking or ting occur dem generally sever, dem usually put distance between each other. Suh yuh nah guh find it a reoccur over an over. But it a destroy di family an destroy di relationships dem more.

### Beating of women by men

Yuh nuh really see, when it comes to beaten, mi nuh really see it a happen. When it come to beaten dem ting deh kinda a phase out. Based pan di dynamic an how relationship a structure an how di relationship a operate. Suh di beaten ting now, mi know it create a whole heap a argument, it create a whole heap a tension, it create a whole heap a other tings. But in terms of a man a guh beat a woman, dem tings deh a phase out. Man nah hardly a guh beat woman an woman nah tek nuh beaten inna dat. Yeah verbal argument yeah an more split up a relationship.

### Women are taking over their children fully

One a di ting dem weh set in terms a di dynamic inna inner city community is dat di woman tek full responsibility fi har child. She nuh even a carry father guh family court again. She nuh waa di man have too much handle or too much talk pan she. "A yuh pikney suh yuh gi yuh pikney yuh tings - a nuh me yah gi, yuh nah feed mi, yuh nah mind mi." Cause she don't want when she deh a party an she a talk to somebody fi get something, you behave as if yuh have suh much handle pan it. Suh as mi seh is a, it can destroy man an woman relationship. Is like it a guh outta existence. Dem ting deh weh man an woman foster children a guh out; everything a guh to single parent.

### Many relationships are cash and money. And the woman with money now in control.

Man see woman out deh, him know she haffi a survive cause she haffi deal wid har pikney dem. She an him nuh deh. If she waa exchange some sex an dem way deh, is a different ting. Is just money, is really just money. Cash and money. Woman also tek on di role of a man inna many ways. Fuss time yuh know a man would a have a woman; him live inna a community an him have a woman yahsuh, an him a deal wid a girl dehsuh an a girl dehsuh. An di woman now come an she argue or she may a talk. Now di girl dem a deal wid several man inna di same one area. An

nutin nah come outta it because every man know she, bwoy a money she a deal wid, a money she a deal wid.

Suh di whole ting change. Just like how man used to, woman look man. In some case weh the woman have certain resources she basically tek a one man an a deal wid another man. Any man a guh to har dem know seh is a money.

### The effect on children, especially girl children

Suh yuh have di children dem a grow up inna dem environment deh. Dat is where di whole ting, cause dem a sensitize. Some children, some girls, the only relationship she have wid har father is fi guh to him fi money. Suh right away she realize fi associate di man an relationship wid getting money from di man. Nuh bond, nuh relationship, nuh nutin cause di man haffi a up an dung an ting an him nah tink fi hold on she and she nah tink fi hold on pan nobody, cause she nuh waa nobody hold pan she.

### The pressure on a man when he has to be the provider

An him nah tink fi commit like dat because if him commit himself dah way deh him haffi guh have extra resources weh him don't have. Suh is better him mek it deal wid a freelance ting weh him nuh haffi commit himself. Cause dat used to gwaan an dat used to cause suh much crime an violence inna di community. Cause when a man tek on fi ... woman,

him haffi tief, him haffi rob or him a guh do anything at all fi get money. Dat is one a di ting dem, him had to find it. Suh di relationship dem now sever; right now an is a freelance ting most people inna di ghetto a deal wid. Suh dat now tek di pressure off a di man cause she not even a carry him guh family court. A fi har pikney an she will mine it. She will tek a man yahsuh an tek a man dehsuh an she buy tings fi har child. If yuh waa gi har supm yuh gi har; she nah carry him guh family court.

## Some relationships are wholesome

A one man mi know a beat woman yah now. When mi seh a one man mi know, a di man weh inna di woman an woman relationship. Only dem one a beat dem one another. But in terms of man in a man an woman ting, yuh nuh really find dem ting deh a gwaan. Dem relationship nuh really exist. Di one dem weh exist a operate at a higher level. Why nuh beating nah tek place, dem have a common understanding, dem have a common income, the wholesome relationship. Suh yuh nuh find beating a tek place.

Translation:

## During the Pandemic

You have a lot of argument and a lot of... but you don't really see. One of the things I would say, while the man is there now it creates a tension. A lot more tension between man and woman. Because they are occupying the same space at the same time. They no longer have breathing space. So it drives a wedge between them. So you find a lot of verbal sparring. A man will hit, but once you see hitting happen, they generally move apart, they usually put distance between each other. So you

not going to find it reoccurring over and over and over. But it destroys the family and destroys the relationships more.

## Beating of women by men

You don't really see, when it comes to beating, I don't really see it happening. When it comes to beating, that kind of thing is sort of phasing out. Based on the dynamic and how the relationship is structured, and how the relationship is operating. So the beating thing now, I know it creates a lot of argument, it creates a lot of tension, it creates a lot of other things. But in terms of a man beating a woman, that type of thing is phasing out. Men are seldom going to beat a woman and women are not taking beating. Verbal arguments, yes, and more broken relationships.

## Women are taking over their children fully

One of the things that is in place in terms of the dynamic in inner city communities is that the women are taking full responsibility for the child(ren) (of the relationship). She doesn't even take the father to family court any more. She doesn't want the man to have too much handle or too much control over her. "It's your child so you give the child what it needs – it's not me you are giving, you're not feeding me, you're not minding me." Because she doesn't want when she is at a party and she is talking to somebody to get something, he behave as if he has so much of a handle on it. So as I say, it can destroy man-woman relationships. It's like it's going out of existence. Those things where man and woman both mind their child that's happening less, everything is being done by a single parent.

## Many relationships are cash and money. And the woman with money now in control.

A man sees a woman out there, he knows she has to survive because she has to look after her children. They are not together. If she wants to exchange some sex, it's different. It's just money, cash and money. Women are also taking on the role of a man in many ways. Before you know a man would have a woman, he lives in a community and he has a woman there, and he is also involved with another girl somewhere else, and yet another somewhere else. And the woman would have argued about it. Now women are themselves dealing with several men, in the same area. And nothing is going to happen as a result because every man knows her, and it is money she is dealing with.

So the whole thing is changing. Just as men used to do with women, women are doing now, with regard to men. In some cases where the woman has certain resources she basically has more than one man. Any man who goes to her knows she has money.

## The effect on children, especially girl children

So you have the children growing up in these environments. That is where the whole thing starts, because they are becoming sensitized. Some children, some girls, the only relationship she has with her father is to go to him for money. So right away she associates a relationship with a man with getting money from a man. No bond, no relationship, nothing more, because the man has to be up and down and he doesn't think about holding on to her, and she doesn't think about holding on to anybody, because she



doesn't want anyone to hold on to her.

## The pressure on a man when he has to be the provider

And he doesn't think to commit like that because if he commits himself that way he has to have extra resources, which he doesn't have. So it's better he does it freelance, where he doesn't have to commit himself. Because that used to happen and that used to cause so much crime and violence in the community. Because when a man takes on a woman, he has to steal, rob, or do anything at all

to get money. That is one of the things, he had to find it (the money). So the relationships have now broken up; right now it's a "freelance thing" most people in the ghetto are engaging in. So that now takes pressure off the man because she is not even taking him to family court. It's her child, and she will mind it. She will take a man here, and take a man there, and she buys the things for her child. If you want to give her something you give her; she is not going to take him to family court.

## Some relationships are wholesome

I only know one man who is beating a woman now. When I say it's one man that I know, it's the man that is has relationships with several women. Only those men are beating. But in terms of men in relationships with just one woman, you don't really find those things happening. Those relationships don't really exist. The few that exist operate at a higher level. Why there is no beating is because they have a common understanding, they have a shared income, a wholesome relationship. So there is no beating.

# Appendix 4:

## Intimate Partner Violence

**According to a man from a Kingston inner city community. English translation follows.**

**1. EXAMPLE:** A man wi gone a work an him ooman used to have a baby fadda weh she an him did deh before dis man yah; but rememba now enuh, dem haffi talk bou' di kids, so probably di baby fadda wi pass an stop an a talk to har. An den somebody see har an say 'Bwoy, you know me pass an see di one Tom Jones a talk to Michelle. Two a dem me see stan' up a talk, you nuh.' When dis man yah come, him nah come an confront har an ask har say 'Bwoy, weh you an Tom Jones a talk bout?' Argument escalate an him box har up, beat har up.

**2. EXAMPLE AGAIN:** You wi deh

yah so, as a male, an you come out, you siddung pon di corna di whole night wid you fren dem an you smoke an you drink an you gaa party an enjoy yourself. An di moment your female get up an say Bwoy, she a walk go up a wah party up dehso, somebody call an tell you, 'You know me see you baby madda up deh so a wine paa one bwoy, or me see you ooman up deh so.' Box ina har ears, beat har up.

**3. EXAMPLE AGAIN:** A man wi a work an him come een an him baby madda say to him say "Bwoy, memba say di internet fi pay enuh an di grocery dem fi buy you know" an thing; but becaas him did wah buy wah new shoes fi go wah party up di road, an one jeans an one shirt, an say him affi go party, caas him a go party

heavy, him nuh really spen nuh money ina di house like dat. An den now she an him now ina argument, an him beat har up becaas him say a him a di man.

**4. EXAMPLE AGAIN:** You wi have dis female here who deh yahso a wash, cook, clean, fi you right tru; wash cook an clean an you an har deh ina di house right an your phone ring right tru di day an right tru di night an you answa it an talk. As you phone ring, you step outside an talk, an you come an see your female pon har phone a text or a talk to somebody: "Who dat yaa talk to?" An she nuh tell you, or she nuh show you har phone, you beat har up!

So dere's so much me can elaborate pon!

### Translation

**1. EXAMPLE:** A man will go to work. His woman used to have a baby father that she was with before that man; but remember now, they have to discuss their children, so probably the baby father will stop to talk to her. And then someone sees her talking to that man and says to her partner, "you know I passed and saw the one Tom Jones talking to Michelle. I saw them talking, you know." When the man gets home, he's not coming to confront her and ask her, "what are you and Tom Jones talking about?" The argument escalates and he beats her up.

**2. EXAMPLE AGAIN:** You will be there, as a male, and you come out, you sit down on the corner all night with your

friends, and you smoke and you drink and you go to a party and enjoy yourself. And the moment your woman gets up and decides she is going to a party herself, somebody calls and tells you, "I saw your baby mother dancing with a man," or, "I saw your woman at the party." Hit her in the ears, beat her up.

**3. EXAMPLE AGAIN:** A man will work and he comes home and his baby mother says to him, "remember the internet bill has to be paid, and the groceries have to be bought," and so on; but because he wanted to buy a new pair of shoes to go to a party, and a pair of jeans and a shirt, and he says he has to go to the party, because he is a heavy partier, he doesn't really

spend money on home expenses. And now she and him get in an argument, and he beats her up because he says he is the man.

**4. EXAMPLE AGAIN:** You will have a woman who is washing, cooking, cleaning for you, all along; washing, cooking, and cleaning, and you and her are in the house, and your phone rings all day and all night, and you answer it and talk. As your phone rings you step outside and talk, yet you come and see your woman on her phone texting or talking to someone: "Who are you talking to?" And she doesn't tell you, or she doesn't show you her phone, so you beat her up!

So there's a lot I can elaborate on!



# Stress Test

## The Impact of the Pandemic on Domestic and Community Violence

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