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THE BUSINESS OF CARE

Boosting Productivity by
Supporting Workers'
Care Obligations



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Caribbean Policy Research Institute (CAPRI)
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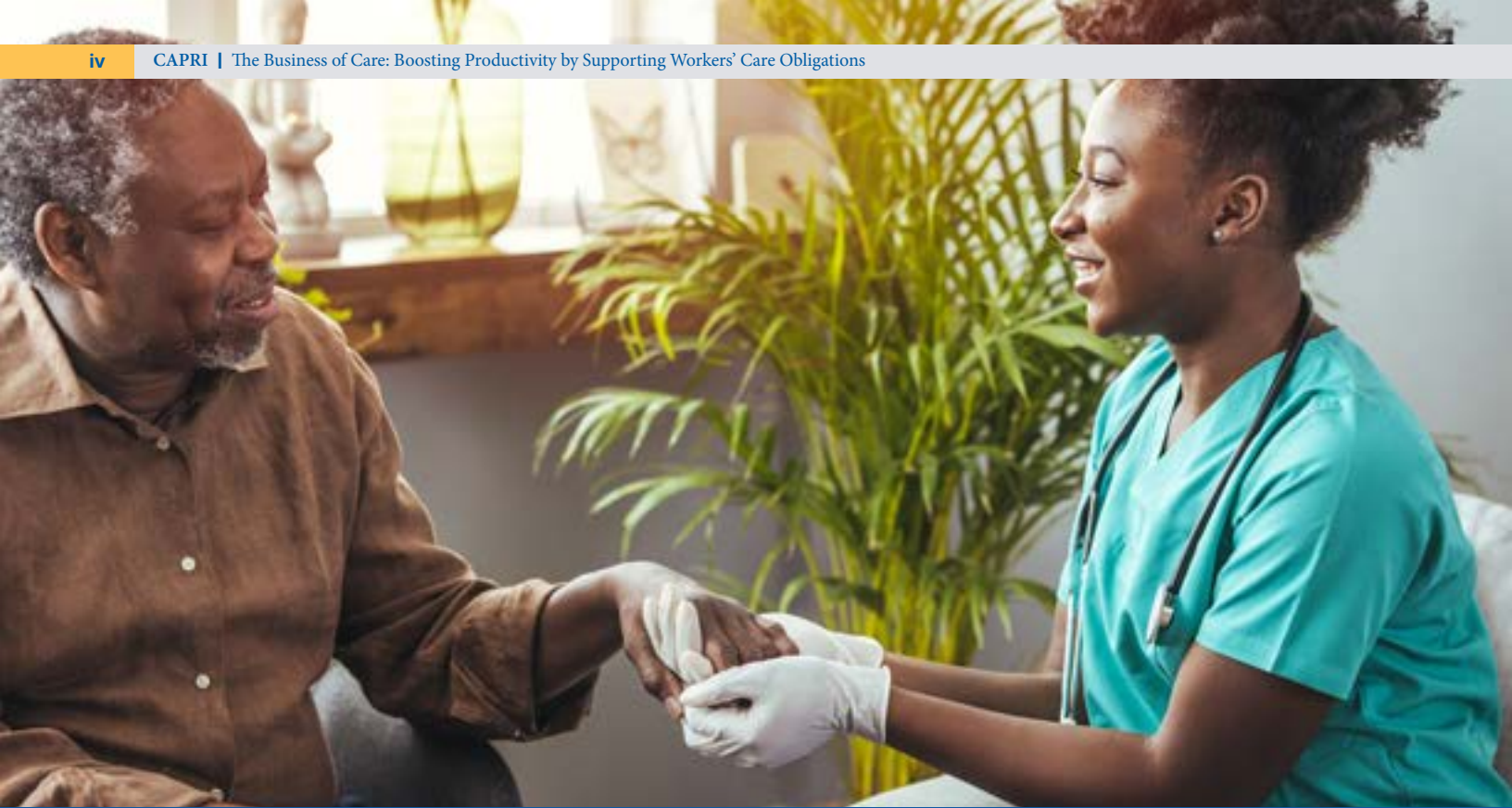
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Acronyms

CAPRI	Caribbean Policy Research Institute
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ESG	Environmental Social Governance
GOJ	Government of Jamaica
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ILO	International Labour Organization
NCB	National Commercial Bank
OECD	Organization for Economic Corporation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STATIN	Statistical Institute of Jamaica



Executive Summary



Flexible working arrangements are a good form of employer-provided care support.

Employer-provided care support for workers with care obligations could be one solution to Jamaica's productivity and labour market challenges. The objective of this study is to situate the unpaid care work-productivity nexus in Jamaica with a view to exploring the case for employer-provided support for workers with care obligations in Jamaica.

Jamaica is well positioned to realize economic growth in the post-pandemic period. In the years leading up to the pandemic Jamaica had stabilized its economy, and was, for the first time in decades, beginning to show some signs of economic growth. Post-pandemic, the unemployment rate is lower than even the historic pre-pandemic low, but this has not been accompanied by the expected commensurate economic growth, and worker productivity is falling, compounded by a tight labour market. A common denominator of these problems is women's lower rate of participation in the work force, and how unpaid care work for children, the elderly, and other dependents impinges on women's participation in the labour market, their productivity, and ability to contribute to economic growth through output in the workplace.

Over two decades of research and practice have shown that there is a positive relationship between reducing women's unpaid care work and improving gender

equality, children's development, worker productivity, business profits, and national economic growth. The link between unpaid care work and paid-productive work is recognized in Jamaica, but mostly implicitly. There is no provision of public services or infrastructure to support unpaid care and domestic work obligations. There are gains to be had when these obligations are accounted for. Internationally, the data shows that both employees and employers benefit when employers provide support for their workers' care obligations. Where those gains result in increased output and productivity, the broader economy also stands to benefit.

This study thus assesses the extent to which proposals for employer-provided support for workers with unpaid care obligations. It found that there is a defined need for support for workers with care obligations, an articulated concern on the part of employers regarding attracting and retaining workers in a tight labour market, recognition by the state of the issue and some existing supportive legislation, and an openness on the part of employers and stakeholders to new solutions, including those proposed in this study.

Nearly half of all workers with care responsibilities state that the lack of care support hinders their ability to focus and this affects their productivity. One-third take time off work frequently to meet their care obligations. Jamaican employers are inter-

ested in improving productivity, but they are more preoccupied with attracting and retaining workers in a tight labour market.

Even where employers are providing care-related support for their workers, there is a role for the state. The state can support the private sector to assist their employees through regulation, guidelines, technical support, and tax incentives.

The study concludes that employer-provided care support for workers with care obligations is one possible solution to boost productivity and growth in Jamaica, as well as to attract and retain workers, and proposes policy measures that would move Jamaica forward towards this ideal. The findings suggest that there is a case to be made for private firms to provide support for their employees' care obligations, and for the government to incentivize, facilitate, and even subsidize that support. Jamaica is well positioned to move forward on the productivity-unpaid care work nexus.

60% of workers indicated that they needed to take time from work to address their care responsibilities. However, when carers take time off from work to tend to their dependents, they are often penalized for it.

Government of Jamaica



1

Push for full implementation of the Employment (Flexible Work Arrangements) Act. Included in this is:

- a). Promote flexi-work policies for all workplaces.
- b). Implement flexitime in public sector operations, thus setting an example.
- c). Provide government services outside of traditional business hours to accommodate others working flexitime.

Make good on stated intentions and commitments to invest in the care economy, to include:

- a). Establish an accessible route to the formalization of informal child care facilities, including basic schools.
- b). Create a voucher system for all workers and job-seekers to access licensed, regulated, quality daycare, including that provided by employers to their own employees.
- c). Provide resources to increase the capacity of existing state and non-state senior citizens' organizations so they can better provide needed support and services to the elderly and their caregivers. Year-End Report.

2



3

Offer incentives to private sector employers to provide support to their workers with care obligations. Among the options to do this are:

- a). Tax breaks for businesses that provide for employees' dependents to attend licensed and regulated educational and care providers, whether at the employer's own establishment, or at another location.

Recommendations

Private Sector



4

Stakeholder bodies should seek multilateral and donor partner support to create detailed, evidence-informed guidance for private sector entities on how to implement programmes for workers with care obligations that are sector-specific and tailored to the Jamaican context, including rigorous cost-benefit analyses.



1

Introduction



In Jamaica there is no provision of public services or infrastructure to support unpaid care and domestic work obligations.

Employer-provided care support for workers with care obligations could be one solution to Jamaica's productivity and labour market challenges.

Jamaica is well positioned to realize economic growth in the post-pandemic period. In the years leading up to the pandemic Jamaica had stabilized its economy, and was, for the first time in decades, beginning to show some signs of economic growth.¹ Post-pandemic, the unemployment rate is lower than even the historic pre-pandemic low, but this has not been accompanied by the expected commensurate economic growth, and worker productivity is falling.² Between 2001 and 2019, labour productivity declined by an average of 0.6 percent annually.³ This dilemma is compounded by a tight labour market, in which employers struggle to attract and retain workers, which further negatively impacts output and growth.⁴ A common denominator of these problems is women's lower rate of participation in the work force, and how unpaid care work for children, the elderly, and other dependents impinges on women's labour market potential, their productivity, and ability to contribute to economic growth through output in the workplace.

Jamaica has recognized the link between unpaid care work and paid-productive

Employer-provided support for workers with care obligations is a solution to boost productivity and growth in Jamaica, as well as to attract and retain workers.

work. Jamaica's Vision 2030's goal to make Jamaica "the place of choice to live, work, raise families, and do business" includes references to the care economy. It specifically states that attention should be given to child and elderly care. This is in line with the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which Vision 2030 is aligned with. SDG 5.4 is to "recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies, and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate."⁵

In Jamaica, however, there is no provision of public services or infrastructure to support unpaid care and domestic work obligations. However, it remains that there are

gains to be had when these obligations are accounted for. Internationally, the data supports the proposition that both employees and employers benefit when employers provide support for their workers' care obligations. Where those gains result in increased output and productivity, the broader economy also stands to benefit. The objective of this study is thus to situate the unpaid care work-productivity nexus in Jamaica with a view to exploring the case for employer-provided support for workers with care obligations in Jamaica.

This is done by:

1. Defining and demarcating Jamaica's care economy with specific reference to how the gender division of labour

A common denominator of low labour productivity and a tight labour market is women's lower rate of participation in the work force, and how unpaid care work impinges on women's labour market potential, their job performance, and ability to contribute to economic growth through output in the workplace.

manifests in women's disadvantaged position in the labour market.

2. A desk review comprising an overview of existing research and relevant data, including specific to Jamaica, on the unpaid care work-productivity nexus. Specifically, the correlation between unpaid care work and low productivity, poor job satisfaction, high turnover, and suboptimal wellbeing is explored. Relevant policies and legislation are considered and included.

3. Providing examples of how governments and firms around the world address

the unpaid care work-productivity nexus, and sharing cases of employer-provided care support, and of state initiatives for private sector provision of employee care support, across the world.

4. An original survey of employees ascertaining their existing care obligations and needs, and their perceptions of what support would best serve them.

5. Ascertaining the attitudes and understanding of private sector stakeholders as regards women's unpaid care work and its relationship to paid work through elite/

stakeholder interviews. The interviews and other qualitative data are interpreted with a thematic analysis approach.⁶

The study concludes that employer-provided support for workers with care obligations is one possible solution to boost productivity and growth in Jamaica, as well as to attract and retain workers, and proposes policy measures that would move Jamaica forward towards this ideal.







2 Unpaid Care Economy and Productivity



The **Care Economy** is that sector of the economy that is responsible for the provision of services that contribute to the nurturing and reproduction of current and future populations.

Care work, paid or unpaid, sustains our societies. Tasks such as caring for children and the elderly, and household chores are indispensable for our daily lives.⁷ Unpaid care and domestic work is an important aspect of economic activity and the well-being of individuals. Markets cannot operate without a workforce which is supplied and sustained through care work. The “care economy” is that sector of the economy that is responsible for the provision of services that contribute to the nurturing and reproduction of current and future populations. It involves childcare, elder care, education, healthcare, and personal social and domestic services that are provided in both paid and unpaid forms within formal and informal sectors.⁸ Unpaid care provision is generally treated as an infinite cost-free resource that fills gaps when public services are not available.⁹

Both men and women do invaluable care work in our societies. However, the gender division of labour—how work is traditionally and usually distributed between men and women—means that women spend twice the amount of time in unpaid work than men do, and this has negative implications for women. Across the globe, 42 percent of women cannot get jobs because of care responsibilities, compared to 6 percent of men.¹⁰ In Jamaica, unpaid care work is the primary obstacle to wom-

en fulfilling their potential in the labour market and engaging in more paid work. As a result, women pay a higher opportunity cost in terms of foregone paid work than men do.¹¹ For working males there are no earnings differences between those who live with children at home and those who do not, but for working females the presence of children is linked to lower earnings.¹²

In Jamaica, the gender division of labour is manifest in the disparity between the time women and men spend doing paid and unpaid work. Women spend over four hours a day doing unpaid care and domestic work, and just under three hours a day in paid work. On the other hand, men spend just under two hours a day doing unpaid care and domestic work, and four and a half hours doing paid work.¹³ This is also the case in many low-income countries, where women in rural areas spend up to 14 hours a day doing unpaid care work.¹⁴ In Caribbean countries, women spend at least 18 hours per week on unpaid care work.¹⁵

There are several valuations of women's unpaid and underpaid care work; though they differ, they are all in the trillions. Ox-fam calculated women's unpaid and underpaid care work at an annual economic value of nearly US\$10.8 trillion, when valued at minimum wage.¹⁶ The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated, based

on time-use survey data in 64 countries, that 16.4 billion hours are spent on unpaid care work every day, equivalent to two billion people working eight hours per day with no pay. If valued on the basis of an hourly minimum wage, that care work would amount to 9 percent of global GDP, which corresponds to US\$11 trillion. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) estimated the value of time spent on unpaid work at between 15 percent and 27 percent of GDP on average, depending on how it is measured, across available OECD countries.¹⁷

The value of unpaid care and domestic work in Jamaica is on par with global figures. Unpaid care and domestic work in Jamaica has a total annual value of J\$340 billion to J\$991 billion, equivalent to 15 percent and 45 percent of GDP respectively, depending on how it is measured.¹⁸ Where the agriculture, forestry, and fishing sector contributes 9 percent to GDP and industry contributes 21 percent, the value of unpaid care and domestic work at the most conservative estimate is twice the value of agriculture, and its value using a less conservative estimate is twice the value of industry.¹⁹ The time spent by women in unpaid care and domestic work in Jamaica is conservatively estimated to be valued at 10 percent of GDP, equivalent to J\$223 billion.²⁰ In other words, if all care and domestic work done by Jamaican

Unpaid care and domestic work is an important aspect of economic activity and the well-being of individuals. Markets cannot operate without a workforce which is supplied and sustained through care work.

woman was compensated, it would add J\$655 billion (calculated using the specialist wage approach), J\$413 billion (measured by the generalist wage approach), or J\$223 billion (as per the minimum wage approach) to the country's GDP.

The Unpaid Care Work-Productivity Nexus

The unpaid care work-productivity nexus refers to the intersection of, on one side, the demands on people's time and energy between attending to their dependents' needs and, on the other, formal work. It also has implications for women's labour market potential, and their economic well-being. The evidence suggests that women who participate in paid labour and perform unpaid care duties are more likely to be stressed, less productive, and experience greater job uncertainty than men or women without onerous care responsibilities.²¹ The outcomes are women's compromised mental and physical health, job instability, poor economic well-being, and lower quality of their children's care. For employers, the outcomes are poor worker output, weak worker morale, and high job turnover.²² Workers with care obligations may forgo paid and productive work, which has implications for labour market outputs, national production and output, and for organizations' bottom lines.

It has been well-researched that the most effective way to increase female employment, support women to participate more fully in formal labour markets, and maximize productivity is by providing access to reliable, affordable, high quality childcare services.²³ Empirical research has found that in developed and developing countries mothers are more likely to use formal childcare arrangements and enter the labour force when free or low-cost childcare options are available.²⁴ This is relevant to Jamaica where the unemployment rate is higher for women than it is for men, at 11 percent and 6 percent respectively.²⁵ Furthermore, the evidence suggests that women take up the role of nurturing at the expense of not being in the labour force. In 2020, there were 15,700 Jamaican women who indicated that their reason for being out



Women

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of the labour force was that they have to be at home with dependents, while 2,200 women stated that home duties was the reason why they were not working or looking for work.²⁶

Supporting workers to relieve some of their unpaid care responsibilities is thus in employers' interests. The lack of good quality, affordable, and accessible childcare for their employees can result in lower productivity, higher turnover, absenteeism, and a diminishing of the pool of possible employees. Particularly for female workers, the lack of childcare can be a barrier to their full and equal participation in paid work.²⁷

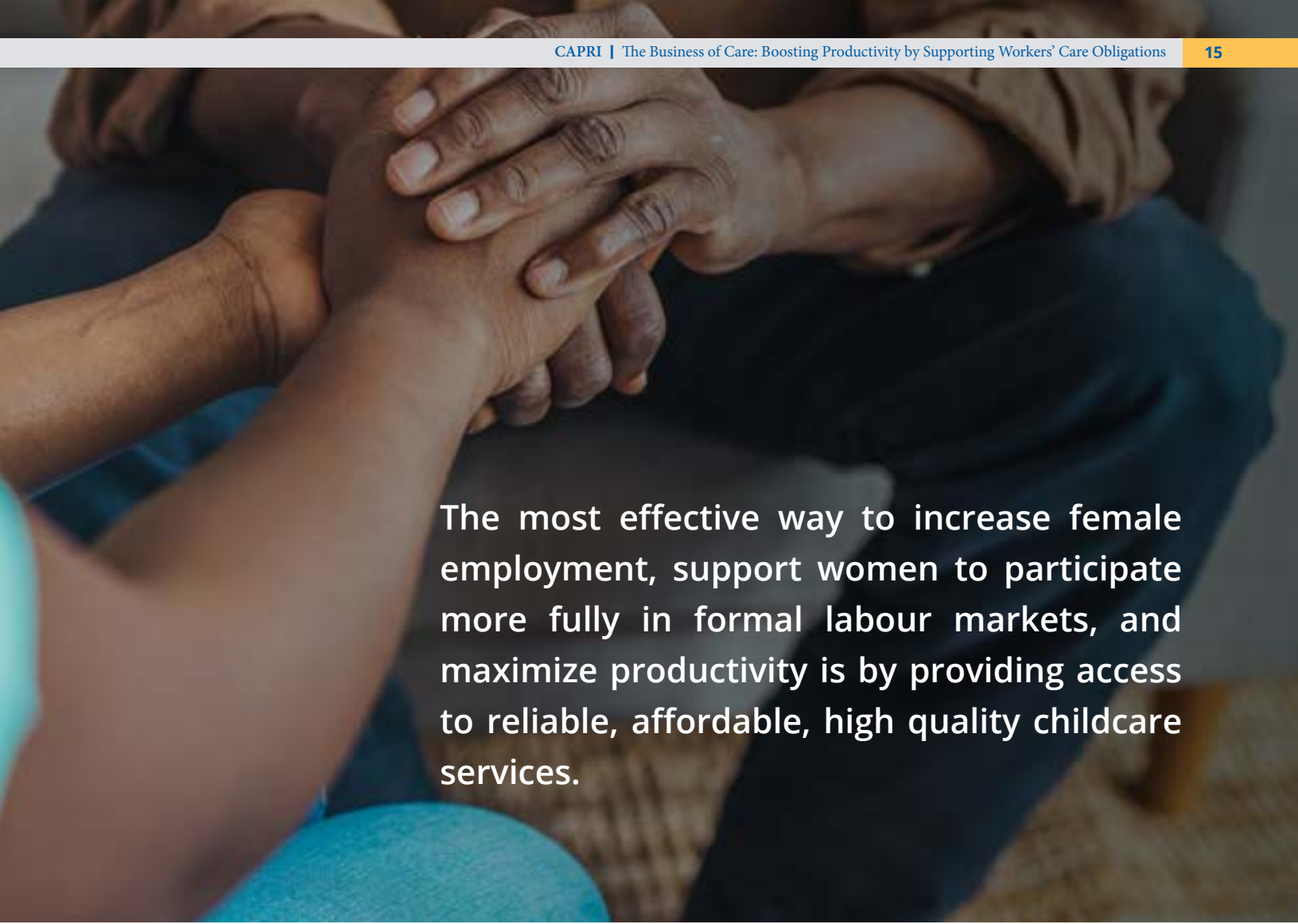
Societal Costs of a Lack of Support for Workers' Unpaid Care Work

There are broader considerations regarding unpaid care work and the availability and accessibility of quality childcare that bear on issues related to socio-economic inequalities and social progress. The burden of unpaid care work that women carry comes with a societal cost. In 2022, the ILO published a 432-page report, "Care at Work," containing guidance. It was based entirely on the premise that "there is an urgent need to invest in a package of care policies and services that are transformative and promote people's well-being, gender equality, decent work, and social cohesion."²⁸

Addressing unpaid care work by put-

ting in policies and measures to alleviate women's unpaid care burden is closely linked to broader societal aspects of gender equality. It is among the biggest opportunities to close gender gaps, along with women in leadership positions, political representation, and financial inclusion.²⁹ Childcare helps parents secure a balance between caring for their children, paid work, and taking care of their own well-being. Where parents, especially poorer parents, do not have access to affordable, high-quality care, unpaid care work becomes a barrier to their own progress and development, ultimately compounding socioeconomic inequalities within countries.³⁰ There are benefits for children since evidence suggests that access to early caring and educational experiences outside the home can have an equalizing effect on children's development and life chances.

In the Jamaican context with a majority of households headed by females, the more that women are able to participate in the labour force and engage in paid work, and the more that women are able to improve their economic and financial security and increase their spending power, the greater will be the effect on the society and economy at large. For poorer women who cannot afford to pay for care, their options are detrimental for their children: if the woman chooses to look after her children/dependents rather than work she suffers financially, as does her dependents' education, health, and wellbeing; if she chooses to work, her children and other dependents may be



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inadequately cared for. The latter's implications have multiple social and economic costs, ranging from a compromised future workforce, to the increased likelihood of neglected children falling into criminal activity and antisocial behaviour, with their own detrimental externalities, many of which consume significant public resources. The better off that women are, the better are the prospects for children's health, education, wellbeing, and reducing the transmission of inter-generational poverty.³¹

Sustainable and inclusive development requires gender-sensitive policy tools that integrate new understandings of care work and its connections with labour market supply and economic and welfare outcomes.³² These understandings and connections impact growth and well-being at the individual, community, firm, and national levels. Policy questions thus arise that seek to understand how the un-

paid care work burden can be relieved or minimized. These questions are germane in the context of the broad international agenda on redistributing unpaid care work and investing in the care economy.³³ They are being asked at the global level by multilateral economic organizations (OECD, the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation), by thought influencers on economic issues (World Economic Forum and McKinsey), and by leading think tanks working on global policy issues, (the Wilson Centre amongst others).³⁴ Answering these questions contributes to greater harmony in aligning people's paid work with their unpaid care obligations by increasing working caregivers' capacity for paid, productive work, and to procuring the corollary effects of increased economic empowerment, and economic growth.

The Business Case: Why Employers Should "Care"

There is a business case for providing support to alleviate workers' unpaid care work burden. The "business proposition" for the care economy is to consider it as a potential market and employment generator, by facilitating or promoting the migration of some share of informal care services to the formal economy. This approach is based on the premise that as long as this economic activity, and the labour deployed, remains in the non-market economy, it represents a misallocation of productive resources in which persons with non-care qualifications are obliged to do care work. Globally, the ILO estimates that formalizing the care economy would be the equivalent of up to 280 million jobs by 2030 a further 19 million by 2035, for a total of nearly 300 million jobs. This total would be constituted of 96 million direct

jobs in childcare, 136 million direct jobs in long-term care, and 67 million indirect jobs in non-care sectors.³⁵

In 2021, The Holding Company and Pivotal Ventures released “The Investor’s Guide to the Care Economy: Four Dynamic Areas of Growth.” The Holding Company is a design team that works in collaboration with Pivotal Ventures, an investment and incubation company founded by the philanthropist Melinda Gates. The report was designed to “immerse investors, entrepreneurs, and businesses in the world of care and help them evaluate, understand and, ultimately, enter the care economy.” This report estimated the size of the care economy

(in the United States) at US\$648 billion, a fifth larger than the US pharmaceutical industry. It put forward significant growth opportunities in four areas: household management, childcare, aging-in-place, and employer benefits.³⁶ That is, there are attractive prospects for returns on investing in care in these four sub-sectors.

Unpaid care work in Jamaica has been estimated to be valued at least J\$340 billion, which is about a sixth of the total economy. Marketizing some portion of that unpaid care work, and the demand for it, into paid care services would entail formalizing care work and distributing it among people who can do it for a wage.

Formalization would add that one-sixth to measured GDP and represent a nearly equal boost to productivity for that share of the economy. This is an intriguing prospect for Jamaica to consider.

It is beyond the scope of this report to explore the details of this “business approach” to the care economy in Jamaica. What the report does, however, is examine how workers’ unpaid care work obligations impact on their work, and on the organizations they work for, and how better support for those workers might improve the quality of their paid work and their unpaid care work.

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Questions about how to improve the balance between paid work and unpaid care work are being asked at the global level by multilateral economic organizations, by thought influencers on economic issues, and by leading think tanks working on global policy issues.





3

Boosting Productivity via Care Economy Initiatives



The concept of the **CARE ECONOMY** has become integrated into mainstream economics and labour market thinking and practice since the start of the 21st century.

The concept of the care economy has become integrated into mainstream economics and labour market thinking and practice since the start of the 21st century. Workers, especially women workers, have, however, always had unpaid care and domestic work obligations. Where it has been deemed that these obligations have a detrimental effect on those workers' ability to optimally work, measures have been proposed and taken to mitigate the negative aspects and outcomes.

Government Support to Unpaid Care Work

Support for unpaid care work is a societal good, as it is necessary for social reproduction, promotes gender equality, reduces poverty and income inequality, and is conducive to better outcomes for children. Even before the concept of the "care economy" became popularized in the policy discourse, governments around the world, including in Jamaica, have recognized this as a policy issue, and have made provisions for it in different ways.

An International Overview

In many developed countries, governments have addressed the correlation between people's paid work vis-à-vis their unpaid care work with a range of solutions,

from tax credits to state-provided day care.³⁷ Scandinavian countries are considered the most advanced in providing quality care options for parents to better balance productive work with their need for care services, and they have enacted policies that encourage or incentivize more sharing of care responsibilities between women and men. Sweden is one Scandinavian country that is considered the gold standard: parents, both mothers and fathers, get up to 16 months of paid leave after the birth of a child, tax credits to support the costs of child-rearing, and access to free, high-quality day-care facilities that are open from 6.30am to 6.30pm. These countries, and others, some of whose examples are shared in more detail further on, have calculated that policies that allow parents to spend more time with young children and access good day care, have quantifiable costs and benefits, including better child and maternal health, higher worker retention, and greater productivity.³⁸

Several Latin American countries have formal state-led solutions, such as state-provided day care.³⁹ For example, in Mexico the government provides childcare vouchers to eligible families that can be used towards day care for their child or children, up to age four, under a programme called Estancias Infantiles. Related to this is the premise that a professionalized childcare industry, with

public-financing support, could not just enable many women to work, but also create formal employment opportunities for others.⁴⁰ As such, this Mexican programme also provides financial support and guidelines to those who wish to operate a childcare facility, and training and employment in childcare for more than 40,000 women.⁴¹

According to the United National Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), very few measures have been put in place by Caribbean governments to mediate the unpaid care work burden, which falls disproportionately on women.⁴² In the region, Barbados is the only English-speaking Caribbean country with state-provided daycare.⁴³

What Obtains in Jamaica

The term "care economy" is mentioned in Vision 2030, and in the 2011 National Policy on Gender Equality. Both documents refer to inclusion of the monetary value of unpaid care work in the national accounts as a means of quantifying its contribution to the economy.⁴⁴ This has not been done, but a first step towards this, a time use model, was included in the national social and economic data collection exercise in 2018. Using that time use data, the monetary value of unpaid work was calculated by the Caribbe-

Due to lack of care support, **27%** of workers are often late for work, **19%** lose income, **17%** miss work, and **14%** are unable to take on a better job.

an Policy Research Institute (CAPRI), an independent public policy think tank, in 2022.

There are currently no other government policy initiatives that directly address the intersection of paid work and unpaid care, nor that expressly use the term or precept “care economy.” There are adjacent policies and programmes, which will be detailed below. But despite there being two decades of work and attention on this, it has not made its way into the parlance of Jamaican policy makers or political decision makers. Where high level government officials have been heard to use the term, it has been conflated with references to paid domestic work.⁴⁵ The implicit understanding of the care economy as unpaid care and domestic work that is not formally valued but which in fact has tremendous value, that ought to be recognized and accounted for, does not appear in Jamaican decision-makers’ discourse.

Nevertheless, there are legislative and policy proposals in Jamaica that contain a recognition of the benefits to be had from improving people’s paid work-unpaid care work balance. The primary example of this is the Employment (Flexibility Work Arrangements) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2014.⁴⁶ This legislation was enacted with the stated intention to

provide a framework for employers to establish flexible work hours (flexi-work) to reform the Jamaican labour market.⁴⁷ As early as 1996 when the recommendation on Flexible Work Arrangements was proposed, it was suggested that “flexibility in the labour market is crucial to the country’s ability to compete and survive in the global economy.” Many stakeholders were consulted in the process. The Flexi-Work Committee was established in 2000, comprised of the Jamaica Employers’ Federation, the Jamaica Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, as well as representatives of the Jamaica Manufacturers’ Association, the Jamaica Council of Churches, the University and Allied Workers’ Union, and other government ministries. The Green Paper was informed by submissions from other church groups, employer groups, and NGOs, and the opinions of organizations such as the Private Sector Organization of Jamaica, the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association, the Jamaica Manufacturers’ Association, and the Association of Women’s Organization of Jamaica were sought. The Act was eventually passed in 2014.⁴⁸

The law does not appear to have gained traction. Four years after it was passed, it was argued that “there is every indication that the flexi-work culture has not

taken root in the Jamaican workplace.”⁴⁹ ECLAC has noted that, for the Caribbean, where flexible working arrangements do exist, they apply more to workers from middle- and high-income households.⁵⁰ In 2021, one commentator posited that “many employees are not even aware of such an act and this law has been gathering dust on Parliament’s bottom shelf.”⁵¹ Employer stakeholders consider that the legislation has not been widely adopted by Jamaican companies, and there appears to be low awareness of the legislation and its provisions.⁵² Nevertheless, according to a survey by the Jamaica Productivity Centre (a department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security), “more Jamaicans are of the view that flexible work arrangements increase their ability to be more productive, and provide a greater balance between work and personal responsibilities.”⁵³ The COVID-19 pandemic brought about conditions that compelled some employers to implement flexitime, in order to comply with the GOJ’s work from home orders that were instituted as a measure to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus.⁵⁴

Since 2022, the GOJ has taken other progressive steps that are relevant to workers’ unpaid care obligations, with the expansion of provisions for parental leave. Specifically, the GOJ intends to update the Public Sector Staff Orders of 2004 to in-



The Flexi-Work Act (2014) in Jamaica⁵⁵

The Employment (Flexible Work Arrangements) Act 2014 provides for the establishment of flexible work arrangements in the Jamaican labor market. The legislation allows employees to request flexible work arrangements from their employers, and requires employers to consider such requests in good faith. Flexible work refers to part-time work, telecommuting, job sharing, and other arrangements that allow employees to have a greater degree of control over the timing and location of their work. The Act also provides for the resolution of disputes related to flexible work arrangements through mediation or arbitration.

crease maternity leave from 40 to 60 days. For the first time in the public service, paternity leave will be granted for fathers of newborn children. Family leave for adoptive parents who are bringing a new child into the home, is also on the list of new measures. These changes came into effect on January 1, 2023. The stated objective is to improve public sector workers' "overall quality of life," and the measures are part of the overall public sector worker compensation review process.⁵⁶ Though it was not an explicit aim of the policy, once implemented, these measures should encourage the increased co-responsibility of care work between working women and men with children, and promote the redistribution of unpaid care work in the household.⁵⁷ These policy changes signal the GOJ's awareness of and intention to make the public sector workplace more "family-friendly," in keeping with general workplace reform trends and ideas about the "future of work."

However, there are no other laws, or other formal state-mandated mechanisms to specifically support workers with care needs in Jamaica. Commitments to investing in social infrastructure to support workers' care needs are regularly made by state officials in their public pronouncements, but they lack implementation. For example, in 2017, Jamaica's prime minister stated the government's intention to expand care services for children and the elderly.⁵⁸ In 2018, then-state minister of education, in parliament, vowed to establish "two day-care centers in each constituency i.e., 126 day-care centers across the length and breadth of Jamaica."⁵⁹ These, however, have not materialized.

Private Sector Support to Unpaid Care Work

In the absence of state support, employers might consider it in their interest to make provisions to support their employees to meet their care obligations.

Providing such support is not only beneficial to employees, but also to the employer for several reasons. Employer-provided care support increases worker satisfaction and well-being, enhances productivity, retains talent, reduces employee turn-



Best practices from around the world, and evidence from cases, show tangible returns on employer's investment in supporting their employees' care obligations.

over, and maximizes their organization's output. Case studies of private sector actors suggest that when there is compelling evidence linking heavy and unequal care responsibilities to the companies' supply chain operations, employers will increase their budgets for care services and infrastructure for their employees.⁶⁰

Even in the absence of such data, there are companies that invest in their employees' care needs based on the assumption, whether implicit or stated, that they stand to benefit from better business outcomes. That assumption is supported by evidence. An International Financial Corporation study of ten companies who provide employer-supported childcare in countries across the world, including in emerging countries, found that these companies all benefitted from improved recruitment, retention, productivity, diversity, and access to markets from that support.⁶¹

International Examples

The general guidance regarding support for workers' care obligations for the employer's benefit is to provide inclusive and gender-sensitive paid leave entitlements, flexible work arrangements, and childcare support systems.^{62,63} Most interventions address unpaid child and elderly care, are tailored to the national context, and are context-specific given the employees' needs, including the relevance to the sector they work in. The proposition is that these can be funded by the employer with a view to recouping that investment via increased worker output and productivity. Best practices from around the world, and evidence from cases, show tangible returns on employer's investment in supporting their employees' care obligations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a



natural experiment that proved the relationship between unpaid care obligations and economic output. There was a direct impact of COVID-19 on unpaid care work as a result of the lockdowns and school closures. The burden of child care impacted families, and the burden mostly fell mainly on women. In the US, women's labour participation hit a 33-year low in January 2021. Mothers of children under 13 were three times more likely than fathers to lose jobs. A third of working women who dropped out of work quoted childcare problems as the reason.⁶⁴ In New York City, the economic impact of parents leaving or downshifting careers due to increased caregiving responsibilities because of the pandemic was estimated to result in a US\$23 billion decrease in economic output, a US\$5.9 billion drop in disposable income, and US\$2.2 billion less in tax revenues.⁶⁵

Similar scenarios and outcomes have played out in jurisdictions the world over. Globally, attention to workers' care

obligations accelerated in the pandemic, as awareness especially among urban employers and multinationals grew with regard to the important role of caregivers. As a result, training and consultancy packages are being developed to advise companies in supporting their employees with care responsibilities.⁶⁶

In this instance, several New York City employers, in response, offered expanded flexibility and other family-friendly benefits to help working parents with care responsibilities to improve productivity, and to attract and retain talent. Examples of new and evolving employer practices include: enabling remote and hybrid work options, granting extra paid time off days, embracing flexibility in work hours, offering childcare subsidies to help employees pay for the type of care they need, adopting mechanisms that allow employees to pay family or friends to provide care for their children, providing on-site childcare, especially for frontline workers who cannot work remotely or who work

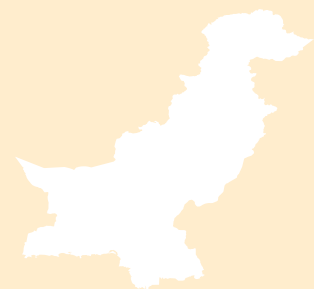
non-traditional hours, and participating in employer coalitions to identify best practices related to supporting caregivers.⁶⁷ These measures are all relevant and replicable, albeit with tailoring to specific circumstances, anywhere that the link between paid work and unpaid care work is producing suboptimal outcomes.

The state can and should step in for those working in the informal sector, who are looking for a job, or who are outside the labour market because their care obligations prevent them from working. A voucher system that could be administered through PATH and redeemed at registered and licensed early childcare centres would be a practical way to bring into effect such a policy in a short space of time.



Case Study: National Foods Limited, Food Manufacturer, Pakistan⁶⁸

The Pakistan food manufacturing company National Foods Limited has 748 employees, of which 5 percent are women. The company sought to employ more women to enhance their employee skill base and to retain more female workers. They put in place several initiatives to support their workers who were parents: an on-site day-care center, flexible work arrangements, telecommuting, and pick-up and drop-off services for women. They measured this initiative and found that over a two-year period they saw a 65 percent increase in the number of women workers, and 117 percent increase in the number of women in management. They had a maternity return rate of 100 percent. National Foods Limited considers that these policies have contributed to the company's healthy attrition rate (10 percent), which is critical to their growth.





Case Study: Socfinaf Company, Coffee Company, Kenya

Socfinaf has a child care centre on each of their coffee plantations. They provide a creche and nursery school for children between 3 months and 6.5 years. The building is a one-room structure which provides free meals and basic health services for children of permanent staff. It is coordinated by the human resource department and costs the employer US\$3 per month per child. The outcomes are positive for both employer and employees. Employees have reported that they can work without interference of childcare responsibilities. As such, they can do more work and earn more.⁶⁹



Case Study: MAS Kreeda Al Sai-Madaba, Garment Manufacturing, Jordan

MAS Kreeda Al Sai-Madaba supports employees with children through an on-site childcare centre, free transportation to and from the factory for mothers and children, doctor and nurses available to serve employees as well as children, paid leave, and on-site breastfeeding accommodations. With the employer-provided support, there is retention of female employees in a region with low maternal employment and strong culture of mothers not working outside the home. Productivity in the workplace has also improved. Employees are more present, take fewer breaks throughout the day, and generally seem more focused and engaged at work.⁷⁰





Case Study: MindTree, Information Technology, India

Mindtree supports employees with children through workplace crèche, reserved places in external childcare centres and free childcare for night shift workers, paid maternity and paternity leave, designated room for lactation, work-from-home options and Baby's Day Out in the campus, which allows parents to work while keeping a watch on their kids. This company's custom-built childcare centre caters to children from age 6 months to 8 years and offers full-time day-care for preschool children and aftercare for older children. Providing childcare benefits have shown to help Mindtree recruit and retain employees, especially parents and new mothers, and to improve productivity by reducing absenteeism and allowing employees to fully focus on their jobs.⁷¹



The Jamaican Private Sector

There are Jamaican employers who provide support for their workers' care obligations. The reporting of these cases is not widespread, nor has there been systematic empirical analysis of the existing initiatives in Jamaica. An attempt was made to ascertain what are existing care support initiatives that Jamaican employers are already offering to their workers, and the thinking behind them.⁷²

The principal employer-provided support regarding care obligations are health insurance, which employees can extend to their spouse and children, and, for some entities, flexible working hours.⁷³ Maternity leave must be given, by law. Variable compassionate leave, or emergency family time off, is not uncommon. This refers to cases where employees can take leave without pay to take care of a family member in need, such as an elderly relative, on a case-by-case basis.⁷⁴

There are some employers, typically large

enterprises, that give some specific forms of childcare support.⁷⁵ These may include a creche and/or afterschool programmes, sometimes located at the workplace premises, and/or subsidy for childcare and/or school fees, subsidies for tutors, and scholarships for staffs' dependents. Other forms of support include flexible working hours, and in a few entities, paternity leave.⁷⁶ There is a large manufacturing company based in Kingston that recently opened a lactation room for its employees who are new mothers.

A best case example in Jamaica is the employer, National Commercial Bank (NCB). NCB is Jamaica's largest financial institution. It provides a number of support services to its employees. Such services are intended to provide workers with support for their care responsibilities, while increasing worker satisfaction and well-being. NCB has a fully equipped Early Childhood Development Centre with trained staff to attend to children of staff members. A nursery allowance is available for staff whose eligible children do not attend the compa-

ny's nursery. There is a fully equipped recreational centre with a gym, tennis court and swimming pool for staff. The center offers a variety of recreational activities as well as aerobics classes.

State Support to Private Sector Initiatives for Workers' Unpaid Care Work

Where the state itself is not providing services or subsidies to relieve workers' unpaid care obligations, or even where it is, governments can enact laws and policies that encourage, mandate, and/or support their private sector to do so. Examples from both developed and developing countries showcase a wide variety of measures that governments have adopted in support of the care economy.

Australia has several state-led provisions

for private sector workers' unpaid care obligations. The Fair Work Act 2009 provides a legal right to parents with care obligations to request flexible work arrangements such as changes to hours, patterns, or locations of work. This Act also provides for up to 12 months of unpaid parental leave (or 24 months with the employer's consent) for parents who are giving birth to, or are adopting a child, and have a minimum of 12 months continuous service. Australia also provides paid parental leave to a child's primary carer for up to 18 weeks, fully funded by the government; payments are processed through the employer's payroll.⁷⁷ The country's National Employment Standards also establishes entitlements for employees that employers are mandated by law to honour. These include specific types of leave based on the type of care obligation.⁷⁸ Apart from legislation, there are also state-led programmes to assist employers in facilitating care support to working parents. For example, the Carers + Employers Programme defines best practice standards for supporting staff with caring responsibilities. Organizations that meet these standards can be recognized as an "Accredited Carer Employer."⁷⁹

In the United States, the federal government offers private sector companies a tax credit to encourage businesses to provide child care to their employees, and to help cover some of the associated costs. The Employer-Provided Child Care Credit provides a tax credit of up to 25 percent of qualified child care expenditures and 10 percent of qualified child care resource and referral expenditures. Employers may also contract with licensed child care programmes, including home-based providers, in addition to operating on-site child care facilities, to offer child care services to their employees. However, there is a low take-up rate by employers.⁸⁰ Some factors influencing this low take-up rate include employers being unaware of the credit, the credit being too small to offer a sufficient incentive to provide child care, child care services not being accessible to all employees such as shift workers, and child care still being unaffordable to some employees, even when subsidized by their employer.⁸¹



In the UK, research showed that granting leave to workers with care obligations would increase productivity, improve employee retention rates, and reduce recruitment costs. This research informed a new law in the UK, the Carer's Leave Bill, that would provide qualifying employees with one week of unpaid carer's leave annually. Once passed, it will help support carers to remain in work while they fulfill their unpaid caring responsibilities. The data that informed the consideration to create this legislation showed that this specific type of leave would improve carers' finances in the short and longer term, and result in economic gains for the country. The rationale stands that as a result of increased productivity, more carers will be able to continue to work alongside their unpaid caring responsibilities, rather than having to leave the labour market.⁸²

In India, a 2017 amendment to the Mater-

nity Benefit Act doubled maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks, and it encouraged companies to allow women to work from home. The stated goal of the amendment was to help boost women's participation in the workforce without compromising on their role in ensuring adequate crucial early care to their children. The amendment also made it mandatory for companies with more than 50 employees to offer a creche on the premises, with costs to be borne by the employers. However, compliance with the mandatory creche clause is limited to larger, multinational companies, and even when facilities are provided, they are often not used.⁸³

This handful of international examples shows that there is a role for the state with regard to private sector provision of support for its employees with care obligations. That support can range from legislation that mandates certain types of family-related leave, laws that oblige firms to offer childcare to their workers,

tax credits on private sector employers' child care expenditures for its employees, and state-led programmes that provide employers with training, subsidies, and certification to provide their workers with quality child care facilities.

Just as there is no state-provided support to workers with care obligations in Jamaica, neither does the government provide any support, subsidy, or other incentive to the Jamaican private sector to do so. It is thus up to employers to seek to reap the benefits of investing in support for workers' care obligations. We will now explore the scope for employer-provided care support in Jamaica based on primary data collected on workers and employers' perceptions of the support needed for the care economy.

49% of workers stated that their care responsibilities compromise their ability to focus at work, **36%** said that having to take time off frequently for their care obligations was detrimental to their work, and **12%** indicated that they are prevented from forming healthy relationships at work, and performing at their fullest potential.





4 Jamaican Perspectives on the Business of Care



Jamaican employers are keen for solutions to current challenges of employee attraction and retention.

Tpaid work of The care economy is a new concept in Jamaica, and it is not well integrated in any national-level discourse on productivity, the labour market, human resource management, worker compensation, or even gender issues. The issues of the tradeoff between unpaid care work and paid work of course exist and have always existed, but they have not necessarily been conceptualized as such. In an effort to assess how that tradeoff is understood and experienced by Jamaican workers and Jamaican employers, primary data was collected. In the first instance a survey of employees assessed their perceptions of the link between productivity in the workplace and attending to their care obligations. Secondly, employers and employer stakeholders were solicited for their understanding of the unpaid care work-productivity nexus.

Survey Results of Workers' Needs for Care Support

In order to have an accurate understanding of the needs of workers with care obligations, a survey was conducted among men and women between the ages of 20 and 40 in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (including Portmore and Spanish Town) and the Montego Bay metropolitan

area. All women in the sample are within the childbearing age group.⁸⁴ The survey sought to discern how workers correlate their unpaid care needs and their ability to perform optimally in the workplace. The survey results confirm what is found in the literature: care responsibilities are a heavy burden to persons who do paid work, workers would do better work with more care support, and there is a gap between workers' care needs and employer-provided care support.

All workers in the sample have care obligations, namely the primary responsibility to care for a child, elderly person, or disabled person. Seventy-two percent of workers indicated that they have the responsibility of caring for a child or children, between the ages of 0 to 12 years old, and they generally have partial responsibility for these children. Eighteen percent have the responsibility of caring for parent(s), of which over 50 percent stated that their parents are aged 65 years and older, and they generally have partial responsibility for them. Eight percent have the responsibility of caring for other relative(s), and 2 percent have the responsibility of caring for non-relative(s), all of which generally have partial responsibility for these persons.

The majority of workers (67 percent) with care obligations work permanently full-time in a salaried job, 15 percent are self-employed, 14 percent work part-time,

and 5 percent work seasonally or temporarily. In addition to the time spent at work, and time spent caring for dependents, full-time, part-time, and self-employed workers commute for 30 minutes, on average (35, 34, and 28 minutes respectively), each day.⁸⁵ Seasonal or temporary workers have a longer commute of 44 minutes on average.

Those without adequate care support experience negative impacts on their work and on earnings. Due to the lack of care support, 27 percent of workers are often late for work, 19 percent lose income, 17 percent miss work, and 14 percent are unable to take on a better job. Other negative impacts experienced include having to change a job they would have wanted to keep, losing their job, missing a promotion, and having to take their child to work. Specifically, on the matter of a worker having to take their child to work, out of the 26 percent of workers who stated that they took their child to work with them, 29 percent described this experience as stressful, while 23 percent stated that the experience was "fine."

As a result of not having adequate care support, workers may occasionally need to take time from work to meet unexpected care needs. Sixty-six percent of workers indicated that they needed to take time from work to address their care responsibilities. However, when carers take

In Jamaica, workers' productivity, focus, attendance, and job satisfaction are hampered by burdensome care obligations, which would be relieved by employer-provided support to manage those obligations.

time off from work to tend to their dependents, they are often penalized for it. Forty-eight percent of workers stated the main consequence they face is their pay being docked, 24 percent stated that time was subtracted from their formal leave, and another 24 percent indicated that their bosses openly expressed annoyance about their absence.

In addition to this, workers highlighted that their care obligations hinder their ability to carry out their work obligations in several ways. Forty-nine percent of workers stated that their care responsibilities compromise their ability to focus at work, 36 percent said that having to take time off frequently for their care obligations was detrimental to their work, and 12 percent indicated that they are prevented from forming healthy relationships at work, and performing at their fullest potential. Other impacts include feeling inadequate or inefficient, losing work opportunities, missing work timelines, and being questioned about their reliability and credibility.

Despite the highlighted adverse effects from their unpaid care work, the majority of workers (35 percent) stated that they are moderately satisfied with their ability to meet their care responsibilities, while only 10 percent stated that they are not satisfied at all. In terms of unpaid care support, 75 percent accessed and/or used the help of a person at home such as a family member. In the same way, for paid care support, 34 percent of workers paid someone at home such as a family member, to provide care services.

Employees have different types of work arrangements available to them, depending on their job type. At least a third of workers stated that their work situation moderately accommodates their ability to meet their care responsibilities. The largest share of workers, at 38 percent, stated that a compressed workweek (doing the traditional 40 hours per week in fewer than five days) is available to them, 21 percent mentioned job sharing (two or more employees work together on the same job), and 16 percent had the opportunity to shift to part-time work (less than 30 hours per week). Despite the var-

ious available work arrangements, workers still need additional support to manage their care obligations. Thirty percent of employees indicated that they have a moderate need for additional support to manage their current care obligations, while 24 percent expressed a “desperate need” of additional support to manage their care responsibilities. Combined, 72 percent of workers need moderate to urgent care support.

Employers can support their workers to improve their ability to satisfactorily meet their care obligations. One-fifth of workers would like their employer to provide health and wellness coverage for their dependents, 18 percent want more flexibility, and 18 percent would benefit from a subsidy for paid child care. Workers also desire other types of employer-provided support, such as a day care at work (11 percent), providing safe and reliable transportation for workers' children (6 percent), remote work or some remote days (9 percent), and having more personal days (13 percent). With this support they would better be able to manage their paid work and their care obligations.

Most employers seem to be aware of their employees' care obligations, according to 77 percent of workers. However, they also indicated a lack of support

from their employers. Workplace-based creches, employer-provided care subsidies, and flexible work time are all types of paid care support that workers could have access to, and use to better manage their unpaid care work responsibilities. Only 5 percent of workers have access to a workplace-based creche, and only 8 percent of workers have access to an employer-provided care support subsidy. To add, even though very few workers have access to workplace-based creche and employer-provided care subsidy, it is heavily used by those who have access to it. Sixty-three percent of workers use their workplace-based creche, while 75 percent of workers use the employer-provided care subsidy. A larger proportion of workers, 34 percent, have access to flexible work time, and out of the persons who have access to it in their workplaces, 95 percent use it. Flexible working arrangements thus seems to serve as a good form of employer-provided care support since there is a larger uptake of it. This data strongly suggests that once support is provided by the employer, the majority of workers who have care responsibilities will utilize it.

Although employers may be aware of their employees' care obligations, they may not know the extent to which their employees may need additional support to better manage their paid work and

Employers recognize that some mothers will not work at full capacity if they are worried about their child, or if they do not have reliable care for their child.



unpaid care work duties. This raises the question of how this can be communicated to employers. A third of workers are not comfortable at all with approaching their employers about providing additional support so that they can meet their care obligations and do their paid work more efficiently. On the other hand, 57 percent of workers are moderately to completely comfortable approaching their employer.

This data confirms that, in Jamaica, workers' productivity, focus, attendance, and job satisfaction are hampered by burdensome care obligations, which would be relieved by employer-provided support to manage those obligations. This finding points to a gap between workers' care needs and employer-provided care support. More employer-provided care support for workers could reduce their burden of care responsibilities, contribute to these workers enjoying a more satisfactory paid work-unpaid work balance, and improve their output at work.

What do Jamaican Employers Think about the Care Economy?

The care economy is only recently beginning to be considered in Jamaica in explicit terms. This study asked, to what extent do Jamaican employers consider the link between productivity and unpaid care work? Where do such considerations place in the Jamaican thinking on improving productivity in the workplace? Employer stakeholders and employers from both private and public sector were interviewed with a view to gaining insight into the prospects for proposals that employers proactively provide support for their workers' care obligations.

For the most part, stakeholders and employers are not familiar with the term "care economy," or of the specific concept of the care economy as it pertains to unpaid care and domestic work. In this way, private sector leaders and decision makers are as unaware as their public sector counterparts. Recognition of the issue was described as "informal,"⁸⁶ and the interviews bore that out. Employers are of course aware that employees have families, and

care responsibilities, and many do have some provision for that.

A key element of the care economy is the empirical relationship between unpaid care work and productivity. Employer stakeholders in Jamaica are not aware of this specific correlation. Even among those whose companies have been providing some form of care support for their employees for several years, increasing worker productivity is not a stated objective, nor is there a policy to institutionalize it.⁸⁷ However, given the basic premise that there is a strong, positive correlation between employee wellbeing, productivity, and firm performance, particularly in service industries, and that this correlation, according to the evidence, is a causal relationship, running from wellbeing to productivity,⁸⁸ employers generally accept that keeping employees motivated and happy is important for their performance on the job.

Within this context, having been presented with the information about the care economy, and the correlation between unpaid care work and productivity, Jamaican employers and stakeholders accept and agree with the premise that employer investment in support programmes for their

Employers that provide high-quality childcare will not only differentiate themselves from the competition but will also create a “sticky” benefit that fosters retention.

employees' care obligations can positively influence employee well-being. It is expected that there will be a downstream effect of increases in productivity levels, greater commitment and loyalty to the employer, and ultimately higher outputs and profits (for profit-making entities). Most of the respondents were enthusiastic about the idea; one called it “the new frontier.”⁸⁹

Beyond these general points, employers and employer stakeholders' responses were organized and analysed according to six themes: the extent to which the care economy is presently considered with regard to, the role of gender; the impact of COVID-19; the tight Jamaican labour market; the future; the need for metrics, policies, and incentives; and the role of government.

Worker Retention in a Tight Labour Market

For the Jamaican stakeholders canvassed, the issue of employer-provided care support was almost always seen from the angle of gaining an advantage in a tight labour market, as much as or even more than increasing output and productivity. Jamaican employers and employer stakeholders are keen for solutions to current challenges of employee attraction and retention. Jamaica is experiencing historically low unemployment, and there is a general and widespread need for workers in several sectors in the economy.⁹⁰ There is an apparent inability of firms to find workers in tourism, business process outsourcing, construction, and, anecdotally, other relatively low-skilled sectors

including food service.⁹¹ As per one respondent: “It is crucial right now; a lot of manufacturers are saying they are not getting persons taking up jobs. They will have to start doing more.”⁹²

Thus, productivity gains aside, employers and stakeholders expressed that it suits them to consider all means by which they might position themselves as “good places to work,” or, “an employer of choice.”⁹³ Jamaican employers are interested in creating “rewarding employee experiences” and meeting employees' needs.⁹⁴ It is recognized elsewhere that employers that provide high-quality childcare will not only differentiate themselves from the competition but will also create a “sticky” benefit that fosters retention. For example, employees are less likely to move to a new job if it also means moving their childcare from an environment they trust.⁹⁵ It is in this context that employers are particularly open to the idea that those who offer support for their employees' care obligations might be better positioned to attract and retain workers, than those who do not offer such support.⁹⁶


Gender

Gender issues were considered germane to the idea of employer-provided support for care obligations. Women make up 47 percent of the Jamaican workforce. Unemployment is higher for women (8 percent) than it is for men (5 percent) but it is also decreasing at a higher rate. Labour force data for July 2022 showed that nearly 80 percent of the increase in employment was accounted for by women, and the growth in the labour force is

largely made up of women. The decrease in the number of people outside the labour force, from 767,500 in July 2021 to 739,600 in July 2022 was almost all women (26,200, and 1,700 men).⁹⁷ Women also do most of the unpaid care and domestic work in Jamaica. It is thus a given that the issue of unpaid care work is not only a concern for women, but with more women in the labour force and more women employed, how unpaid care work impacts paid work requires more attention.⁹⁸ Employer stakeholders in the manufacturing sector recognized that there are more women on the production line, and therefore, the matter of their care responsibilities cannot be met by flexitime.⁹⁹ Options such as remote work/work-from-home are not applicable to most of these workers given the nature of the work. Vouchers, however, are considered a possible alternative.¹⁰⁰

There is also a stated recognition that could be considered practical, where employers recognize that for many mothers they will not work at full capacity if they are worried about their child, or if they do not have reliable care for their child.¹⁰¹ By extension, when a worker's care obligations are inadequately fulfilled, the quality of their working life is negatively impacted, with lateness and absence, for which the employer ultimately pays.

However, provision of care support to workers with such obligations is not a priority for most businesses.¹⁰² The point was made that most employees in Jamaica work in small and medium size enterprises, which do not have the space to provide that amenity, and therefore, such changes might be considered impractical.¹⁰³

A woman with dark, curly hair, wearing a dark business suit with a white collar, is seated in a light-colored chair. She is holding a young child in a white diaper. The child is looking towards the left. In the background, there is a white brick wall and a dark wooden desk with a laptop and some papers. The overall scene suggests a professional woman balancing work and family life.

The state can support the private sector to furnish care support services to their employees themselves. They can do this through regulation, guidelines, technical support, and tax incentives.



Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

There were varied responses to the question of how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted workers with care obligations, regarding their paid work. Unpaid care work makes women workers more vulnerable and more likely to lose their jobs. In the pandemic, more women lost jobs than men did, in part due to responsibilities at home.^{104,105} For many Jamaican employers, flexitime and work-from-home were propelled by the pandemic, though to what extent varied by industry and role. For example, flexitime is better suited for corporate workers than for manufacturing. The pandemic was also seen as a catalyst for employee support programmes, not just flexitime and work-from-home. Such programmes focused on employee well-being. One stakeholder reported that post-pandemic the corporate aspect of her large entity moved to a four-day work week and continued with online meetings, but other positive adaptations, such as a shorter workday have not been retained.¹⁰⁹

The fact that more employees worked from home over the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a study on the perception of productivity resulting from flexible work arrangements. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security gauged perceptions of flexi-work on productivity. It asked

workers if they felt their productivity and balance of work and personal responsibilities increased or decreased. The responses were that balance increased with flexi-work, while frustration and distractions increased. Overall, flexitime was considered beneficial.¹¹⁰

Stakeholders discussed the pandemic's effect on how people work, and how that has played a role in how people consider work-life balance, and what is "worth it" for them to stay in a job, including regarding their care obligations for their children and their elderly relatives. Though not yet well documented in Jamaica, employers and employer stakeholders mentioned "the great resignation" and "quiet quitting" as phenomena occurring on the island.¹¹¹ The "great resignation" is the post-pandemic pattern of high worker attrition rates. It is attributed to the pandemic having reoriented workers to re-examine their personal and professional priorities and reject burnout, at the same time as they were alerted to the possibility of decoupling jobs from a physical workplace.¹¹² "Quiet quitting" refers to opting out of tasks beyond one's assigned duties and/or becoming less psychologically invested in work. Quiet quitters continue to fulfil their primary responsibilities, but are less willing to stay late, show up early, or attend non-mandatory meetings.¹¹³ Interviewees shared anecdotal evidence

that mothers with unpaid care responsibilities are being labelled "quiet quitters" when those responsibilities impact their jobs.¹¹⁴

The Future: "We Need Metrics", and Government Can and Should Do More

The concept of "the future of work" was mentioned by several respondents. This was conceptualized as this is what work will "look like" in the future, and that these are matters to consider "down the road."¹¹⁵ For some, there is a notion that employers may soon not have a choice but to offer these benefits, that provisions such as care support for workers will likely become the norm.¹¹⁶ For others, there is a sense that, for now, "not many workplaces are moving in that direction."¹¹⁷

What keeps these considerations in the future is the dominant workplace culture in Jamaica still focused on hours worked rather than deliverables.¹¹⁸ As one interviewee said, "We still tie presence at work to productivity, and we have not yet started using targets, outputs, and productivity measurements."¹¹⁹ Focusing on hours worked does not accommodate flexitime. However, a shift in such attitudes, from hours at work to deliverables, would align well with a proposal for remote work and/or flexitime,¹²⁰ which has the advantage of

already being buttressed by existing legislation.

Nevertheless, the issue of worker attraction and retention resurfaces as a driver: “This comes down to being an employer of choice! Larger companies set the benchmark and as more of the tools become accessible, others will do it also. The more exposed one company is to work with other firms, through exposure to best practices outside of Jamaica, they will consider how it can be integrated locally.”¹²¹ Another stakeholder emphasized, “employers are competing for talent and the Future of Work will have to encompass these realities.”¹²² There are existing firms that are considered “trendsetters” for the services they provide for their employees’ wellbeing.

Another aspect of the receptiveness to proposals for employer-provided support for workers with unpaid care responsibilities pertains to large entities increasingly seeking equity and financing from institutional investors, and thus being compelled to frame support within the matrix of the environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) principles.¹²³ ESG principles reflect the current trend that businesses should not only pursue shareholder value but also try to achieve environmental, social, and governance objectives, and further, that investors should evaluate firms on that broader basis. Institutional investors incorporate ESG principles in their investment analysis and decision-making processes, based on the premise that ESG issues can affect the performance of investment portfolios.¹²⁴ The care economy and the adjacent issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment fit squarely in the ESG rubric.

Employers requested detailed information and data on programmes of employer-provided support for workers’ care obligations, and their potential results in the Jamaican context. It was suggested that this data will enable the commitment to and endorsement of policies, whether directed at the state or at the private sector.¹²⁵ As one respondent said, “We need metrics.”¹²⁶ Another interviewee stated, “When companies are shown the economic aspect of it, losing for not having policies in place, this would be a compel-

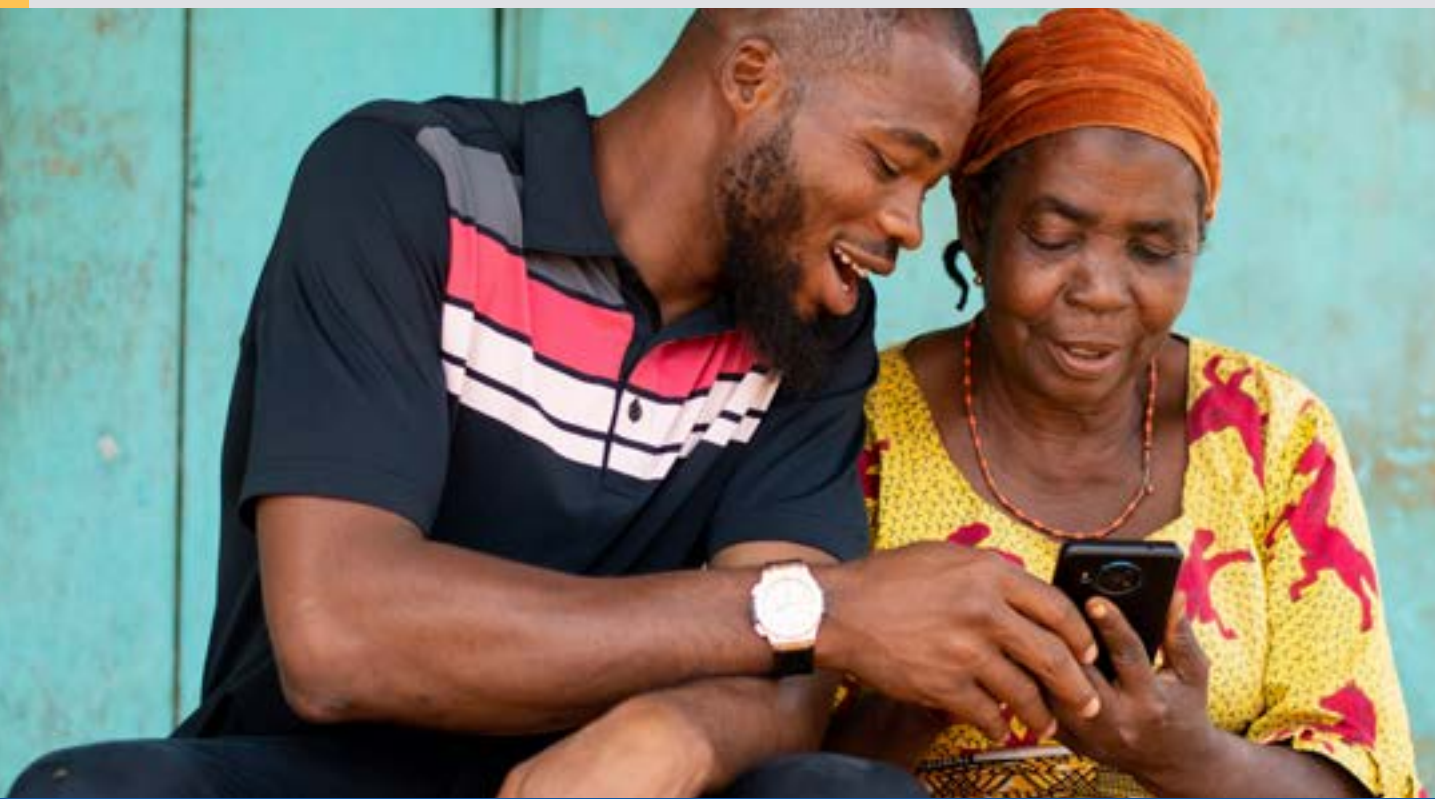
ling argument. A dollar value is what is needed.”¹²⁷ For another, the expressed need was for a cost-benefit analysis.¹²⁸ Technical guidance towards reframing the understanding of worker wellbeing, a healthy work environment, and productivity, both at the workplace and at home, was voiced as a need to move further towards employer-provided support for workers with care obligations.¹²⁹ Although such applied research is beyond the scope of this study, these responses suggest that a policy window exists and that further exploration of these ideas is worthwhile and timely.

There was a consensus that the state needs to do more regarding workers’ unpaid care obligations. There was a general sentiment that government ought to set the bar for both public and private sector to follow.¹³⁰ For example, one public sector employer stated, “The government can set the standard for support (...) it is left up to ministries, departments, and agencies to craft specific arrangements for employees who share that concern. But not everyone does share that concern. People don’t want to be thought of as being unproductive and this can cause concern that it will be used against you e.g., if you are up for a promotion. So, often people also do not share their unpaid care support responsibilities.”¹³¹ They added, “The government has not done enough to pave the way or to be an example to private sector or other workers and employers.”¹³² A first but significant step would be for the government to implement the flexi-work policies for its own workers in the public sector and thus to lead by example.¹³³

Private sector stakeholders shared the view that the state should be the benchmark for both public and private sector employers to follow. Where this may not be functionally possible, it was suggested that the GOJ should at least provide an environment whereby employers would feel supported to implement their own provisions to support their workers to fulfil their unpaid care responsibilities. One private sector employer stated that the GOJ, “should set the pace and show that it (flexitime) can work, and offer taxpayers themselves the flexibility that allows them to be more flexible to conduct their own business. The law/provisions need more promotion.”¹³⁴ Another stakeholder lamented that “the

Ministry of Education, through the Minister of Information, announced day care initiatives. We haven’t heard much from a government standpoint. We have a broken system for early childcare system; entities are not sensitive to the needs of young parents e.g., opening times and after care cost.”¹³⁵

There was a widely held view that the government ought to provide regulated, licensed, quality day care centres for children. Government support in the form of community care facilities would be a social good that will benefit individuals, particularly parents and children, the parents’ employers, and the society and economy overall. The informal system that already exists, such as basic schools that are de facto childcare centers, could be formalized and better regulated, and meet a basic minimum standard. It was also recognized that care needs of elderly dependents deserve attention due to demographic changes. Existing Social Development Commission (a state-funded community development agency) facilities are said to have an inadequate budget to provide needed services at the community level.¹³⁶ However, a private sector stakeholder recommended that this should not be done by taxing employers more than they are already taxed.¹³⁷ This perspective is in line with the view that the current tax burden on private sector disincentivizes them from taking further initiatives to support their employees unpaid care work. On the other hand, should employers provide care support, it was agreed that they should benefit from related tax relief.¹³⁸ Employers were receptive to the suggestion that vouchers could be used to support their workers’ care responsibilities. For example, one employer stated that introducing a voucher system to accredited daycare promotes the dual formalization of both informal existing facilities, as well as informal workers’ statuses.¹³⁹ These contributions all point to the fact that there is interest from employers in Jamaica to support their employees, both from a business bottom-line and employee wellbeing perspective.



5 Conclusion

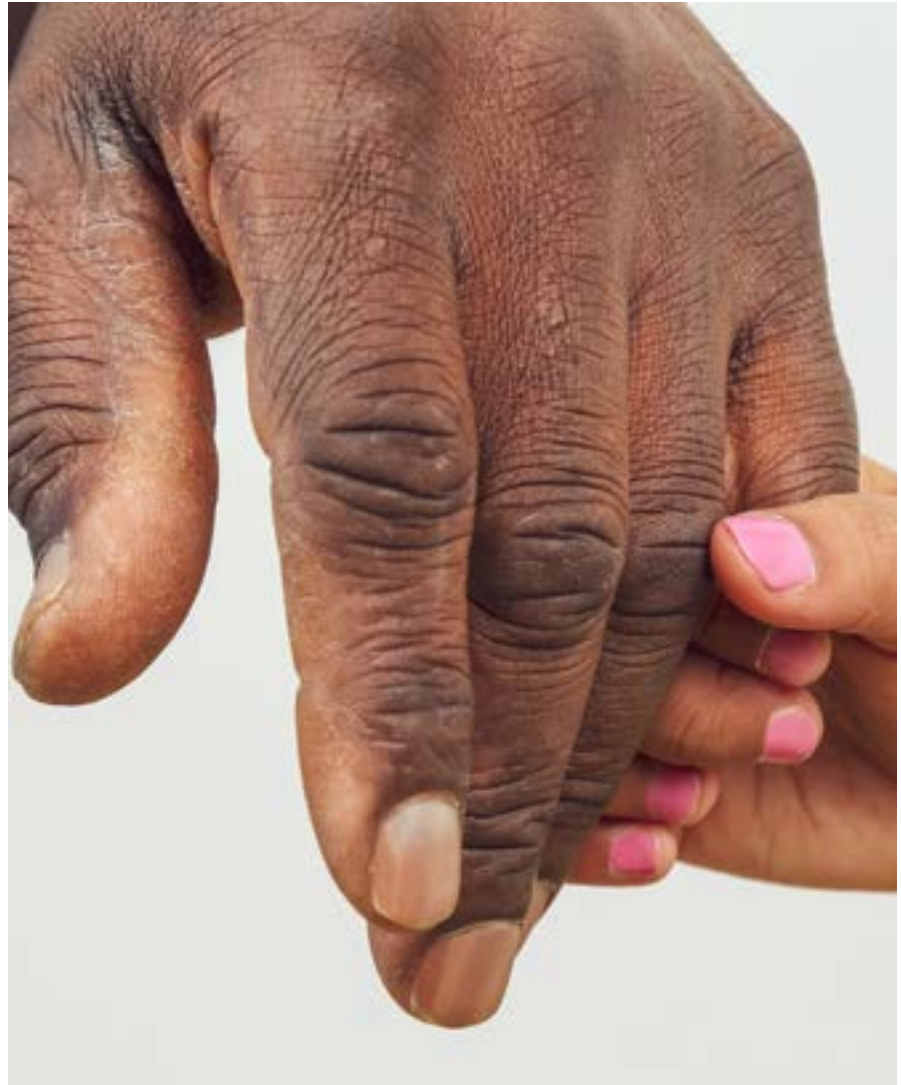


Unpaid care and **domestic work** in Jamaica has a total annual value equivalent to **15%** to **45%** of GDP.

There is a recognition that Jamaica has “done little to create systems to publicly provide and regulate childcare for low-income families and single parents.” That recognition extends to the prospect that the gap “... stifles the progression of women financially and academically. If they don’t have good neighbours, friends, deep pockets, or relatives to help them take care of their child or children it is difficult for them to go out to work or attend school to upskill themselves.” This forces them out of the formal labour market, “a choice they make to have flexible working hours to balance their lives for their children.”¹⁴⁰

Over two decades of research and practice have shown that there is a positive relationship between reducing women’s unpaid care work and improving gender equality, children’s development, worker productivity, business profits, and national economic growth. There are several ways to reduce women’s unpaid care work, including access to basic infrastructure, which can reduce the time women spend on unpaid work, and changing social norms about who bears childcare responsibilities.¹⁴¹

This study sought to situate the link between worker’s productivity and unpaid care work in present-day Jamaica. The study focused on one way to reduce workers’ unpaid care obligations, to both



The dominant workplace culture in Jamaica still focuses on hours worked rather than deliverables. A shift in such attitudes, from hours at work to deliverables would align well with a proposal for remote work and/or flexitime.

women and men, through employer-provided support for their workers with care obligations. The objective of the study was to make relevant and feasible proposals for employers to provide support to their workers with care obligations that would yield greater worker productivity as a direct result, and strengthen employers' ability to attract and retain workers in a tight labour market. The findings suggest that there is a case to be made for private firms to provide support for their employees' care obligations, and for the government to incentivize, facilitate, and even subsidize that support.

Nearly half of all workers with care responsibilities state that the lack of care support hinders their ability to focus and this affects their productivity. One-third take time off work frequently to meet their care obligations. Jamaican employees with care obligations consider that workplace-based creches, employer-provided care subsidies, and flexible work time would be the best forms of employer-provided support with regard to improving their performance on the job. Jamaican employers who do provide such support do so in all the above forms, but the available evidence suggests that such provisions are isolated cases, and are far from widespread, particularly given the lack of awareness of the concept of the unpaid care work-productivity nexus in its modern iteration.

Jamaican employers are interested in improving productivity, but they are more preoccupied with attracting and retaining workers in a tight labour market. The issue of employer support for unpaid care obligations is relevant to both issues. Given the benefits to be derived from reducing time spent on unpaid care obligations, and where the state is not itself providing solutions, it suits employers to implement programmes themselves.

Even where employers are providing care-related support for their workers, there is still a role for the state. Where the state recognizes the added value that reducing unpaid care work brings to so many different realms, and they do not have the capacity or other necessary resources to be direct providers or

Employers were receptive to the suggestion that vouchers could be used to support their workers' care responsibilities. Introducing a voucher system to accredited daycare promotes the dual formalization of both informal existing facilities, as well as informal workers' statuses.

subsidizers, they can support the private sector to furnish these services to their employees themselves. They can do this through regulation, guidelines, technical support, and tax incentives. Where there is existing legislation, such as the Employment (Flexible Work Arrangements) Act (2014), the government can endeavour to raise awareness of it, and to set an example by implementing it themselves in public sector workplaces.

Beyond this, there is still an onus on the state to directly provide subsidies and services for workers to access quality child-care. Women (and men, as applicable) working in the informal sector, who are looking for a job, or who are outside the labour market because their care obligations prevent them from working would not have an employer to turn to for support. The state can and should step in. A voucher system that could be administered through PATH and redeemed at registered and licensed early childcare centres would be a practical way to bring into effect such a policy in a short space of time.¹⁴²

It was beyond the scope of this study to explore detailed options for Jamaican businesses, or public sector entities, on what specific employee care support costs, and what are its likely returns. However, the literature is replete with examples and guidance, and the multilateral economic development and adjacent organizations have, by and large, integrated the issue of unpaid care work into their research, advocacy, technical guidance, and policy guidance.

Jamaica is well positioned to move forward on the productivity-unpaid care work nexus. There is a defined need for support for workers with care obligations, an articulated concern on the part of employers regarding attracting and retaining workers in a tight labour market, recognition by the state of the issue and some existing supportive legislation, and an openness on the part of employers and stakeholders to new solutions, including those proposed in this study.



Government of Jamaica



1

Push for full implementation of the Employment (Flexible Work Arrangements) Act. Included in this is:

- a). Promote flexi-work policies for all workplaces.
- b). Implement flexitime in public sector operations, thus setting an example.
- c). Provide government services outside of traditional business hours to accommodate others working flexitime.

Make good on stated intentions and commitments to invest in the care economy, to include:

- a). Establish an accessible route to the formalization of informal child care facilities, including basic schools.
- b). Create a voucher system for all workers and job-seekers to access licensed, regulated, quality daycare, including that provided by employers to their own employees.
- c). Provide resources to increase the capacity of existing state and non-state senior citizens' organizations so they can better provide needed support and services to the elderly and their caregivers. Year-End Report.

2



3

Offer incentives to private sector employers to provide support to their workers with care obligations. Among the options to do this are:

- a). Tax breaks for businesses that provide for employees' dependents to attend licensed and regulated educational and care providers, whether at the employer's own establishment, or at another location.

Recommendations

Private Sector



4

Stakeholder bodies should seek multilateral and donor partner support to create detailed, evidence-informed guidance for private sector entities on how to implement programmes for workers with care obligations that are sector-specific and tailored to the Jamaican context, including rigorous cost-benefit analyses.

Appendix 1: Elite Interviews

For anonymity, all interviewees are referred to as stakeholders, from their respective sectors:

Private sector stakeholder 1, November 22, 2022.

Private sector stakeholder 2, December 8, 2022.

Private sector stakeholder 3, December 1, 2022.

Public sector stakeholder 4, November 28, 2022.

Private Sector Stakeholder 5, December 2, 2022.

Public sector stakeholder 6, December 2, 2022.

Private Sector Stakeholder 7, November 30, 2022.

Private Sector Stakeholder 8, December 23, 2022.

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- ⁸⁵ It is unclear from the survey data if the commute time is for each trip to and from work, or the trip to and from work combined. Either way, this seems low, based on general observations of urban traffic patterns across the island, where congestion leads to long commute times for those driving their own cars, and those using public transportation.
- ⁸⁶ Private Sector Stakeholder 1, Zoom interview, November 22, 2022.
- ⁸⁷ Private Sector Stakeholder 7, Zoom interview, November 30, 2022. One respondent, a public sector stakeholder, correctly identified that care responsibilities have an impact of presenteeism and worker engagement in the workplace, and that more home responsibilities are correlated to less presence in work, with workers who are tired, distracted, and have their focus elsewhere. Public sector stakeholder 6, Zoom interview, November 28, 2022.
- ⁸⁸ George Ward, Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Christian Krekel, “It’s Official: Happy Employees Mean Healthy Firms,” World Economic Forum and LSE Business Review, July 18, 2019, www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/07/happy-employees-and-their-impact-on-firm-performance/.
- ⁸⁹ Private Sector Stakeholder 8, Zoom interview, November 23, 2022.
- ⁹⁰ Private Sector Stakeholder 7, Zoom interview, November 30, 2022. An empirical review of the take-up of the legislation has yet to be undertaken, but would be relevant to inform any effort to increase awareness of the legislation, its use, and its benefits.
- ⁹¹ “Editorial: How Will the Jobs Gap be Filled?” Gleaner, November 29, 2022, <https://jamaica-gleaner.com/article/commentary/20221129/editorial-how-will-jobs-gap-be-filled>; Private Sector Employer, Zoom interview, December 8, 2022.
- ⁹² Private Sector Stakeholder 1.
- ⁹³ Private Sector Stakeholder 8, Zoom interview, November 23, 2022. Private Sector Employer, Zoom interview, December 08, 2022.

⁹⁴ Private Sector Stakeholder 1.

⁹⁵ Alicia Modestino et al., "Childcare is a Business Issue," Harvard Business Review, April 29, 2021, <https://hbr.org/2021/04/childcare-is-a-business-issue>.

⁹⁶ Public Sector Stakeholder 4, Zoom interview, November 28, 2022.

⁹⁷ Statistical Institute of Jamaica, "The Labour Force Survey in July 2022," News release, October 18, 2022, <https://statinja.gov.jm/PressReleases.aspx?field1=lhs>.

⁹⁸ Private Sector Stakeholder 8.

⁹⁹ Private Sector Stakeholder 5.

¹⁰⁰ Private Sector Stakeholder 5.

¹⁰¹ Private Sector Stakeholder 2.

¹⁰² Private Sector Stakeholder 1.

¹⁰³ Private Sector Stakeholder 9.

¹⁰⁴ Tara Padmore, "Summary Status of Women and Men Report – The Impacts of COVID-19," UN Women, April 2021, <https://caribbean.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Caribbean/Attachments/Publications/2021/20210413%20Summary%20Report%20COVID-19%209%20interactive.pdf>.

¹⁰⁵ GOJ HR Stakeholder.

¹⁰⁶ Private Sector Stakeholder 8.

¹⁰⁷ Private Sector Stakeholder 5.

¹⁰⁸ Private Sector Stakeholder 8.

¹⁰⁹ Private Sector Stakeholder 2.

¹¹⁰ Public Sector Stakeholder 4.

¹¹¹ Private Sector Stakeholder 3, Zoom interview, November 29, 2022.

¹¹² Keith Ferrazzi and Mike Clementi, "The Great Resignation Stems from a Great Exploration," Harvard Business Review, June 22, 2022, <https://hbr.org/2022/06/the-great-resignation-stems-from-a-great-exploration>.

¹¹³ Anthony Klotz and Mark Bolino, "When Quiet Quitting Is Worse Than the Real Thing," Harvard Business Review, September 15, 2022, <https://hbr.org/2022/09/when-quiet-quitting-is-worse-than-the-real-thing>.

¹¹⁴ Private Sector Stakeholder 2.

¹¹⁵ Private Sector Stakeholder 7.

¹¹⁶ HR Stakeholder, Zoom interview, November 29, 2022. Private Sector Stakeholder 2, Zoom interview, November 30, 2022. GOJ HR stakeholder, Zoom interview, November 28, 2022.

¹¹⁷ Private Sector Stakeholder 7.

¹¹⁸ Private Sector Stakeholder 3.

¹¹⁹ Private Sector Stakeholder 1.

¹²⁰ Public Sector Stakeholder 6, Zoom interview, December 2, 2022. HR Stakeholder, Zoom interview, November 29, 2022.

¹²¹ Private Sector Stakeholder 8.

¹²² Private Sector Stakeholder 3.

¹²³ Private Sector Stakeholder 8.

¹²⁴ "What are the Principles for Responsible Investment," UN Principles for Responsible Investment, n.d., www.unpri.org/about-us/what-are-the-principles-for-responsible-investment.

¹²⁵ Private Sector Stakeholder 1; Private Sector Stakeholder 5, Zoom interview, December 2, 2022.

¹²⁶ Private Sector Stakeholder 8.

¹²⁷ Private Sector Stakeholder 1.

¹²⁸ Private Sector Stakeholder 1.

¹²⁹ Public Sector Stakeholder 6.

¹³⁰ Public Sector Stakeholder 6; Private Sector Stakeholder 2; Public Sector Stakeholder 4.

¹³¹ Public Sector Stakeholder 6.

¹³² Public Sector Stakeholder 6.

¹³³ Private Sector Stakeholder 6.

¹³⁴ Private Sector Stakeholder 7.

¹³⁵ Private Sector Stakeholder 1.

¹³⁶ Private Sector Stakeholder 9.

¹³⁷ Private Sector Stakeholder 9.

¹³⁸ Private Sector Stakeholder 9.

¹³⁹ Private Sector Employer 9.

¹⁴⁰ Lisa Hanna, "Jamaica Needs a Babysitter," *Observer*, September 11, 2022, www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/jamaica-needs-a-babysitter/.
Woetzel et al., "Delivering the Power of Parity."

¹⁴¹ This recommendation was made in both of CAPRI's previous studies on the care economy, 2018 and 2022.



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