

"Implementation of the UN Joint SDG Fund Programme on Integrated Population and Policy Solutions to Accelerate SDGs Achievement in Barbados and Montserrat"

CONTRACT N° UNFPA/BRB/PSC/23/002

Population Situation Analysis Montserrat

March 18, 2024

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	4
1. COUNTRY CONTEXT	8
1.1. GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL CONTEXT	8
1.1.1. GOVERNANCE, POLITICAL SITUATION, AND LEGAL ENVIRONMENT.....	8
1.1.2. POPULATION POLICY.....	10
1.2. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT	11
1.2.1. ECONOMIC GROWTH.....	11
1.2.2. LABOUR MARKET SHIFTS.....	14
1.2.3. TRADE AND EXTERNAL FINANCE.....	17
1.2.4. SOCIAL CONTEXT.....	19
1.2.5. POVERTY AND INEQUALITY INDICATORS AND POLICIES.....	21
1.2.6. EDUCATION AND HUMAN CAPITAL.....	23
1.2.7. HEALTH CARE.....	26
1.2.8. SOCIAL PROTECTION.....	28
1.2.9. GENDER POLICY.....	28
1.3. PROGRESS IN FULFILLING ICPD AND SDGs	29
1.3.1. PROGRESS ON REPORTED SDG INDICATORS.....	30
1.4. NATIONAL DATA ECOSYSTEM	31
2. POPULATION DYNAMICS	34
2.1. OVERVIEW	34
2.2. POPULATION TRAJECTORY AND GROWTH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION ...	34
2.3. COMPONENTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE	36
2.3.1. FERTILITY.....	36
2.3.2. NUPTIALITY.....	36
2.3.3. MORTALITY.....	38
2.3.4. MIGRATION.....	38
2.3.5. FORCED MIGRATION/HUMAN TRAFFICKING/SMUGGLING OF MIGRANTS.....	41
2.4. CONSEQUENCES OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE	42
2.4.1. CHANGING POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE.....	42
2.4.2. CHANGING SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION.....	46
2.4.3. CHANGING HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILY STRUCTURES AND SUPPORT SYSTEM.....	47
2.5. POPULATION COMPOSITION	48
2.5.1. GEOGRAPHY.....	48
2.5.2. CITIZENSHIP.....	49
2.5.3. RELIGION.....	50
2.6. FUTURE EXPECTED TRENDS	51
3. POPULATION HEALTH	53
3.1. HEALTH, MORBIDITY, AND MORTALITY	54
3.1.1. HEALTH AND MORBIDITY: CURRENT SITUATION AND MORBIDITY DIFFERENTIALS.....	54
3.1.2. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH-RELATED DISEASES.....	54
3.1.3. COVID IMPACTS.....	56
3.2. UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE	56
3.2.1. HEALTH SERVICE COVERAGE.....	56
3.3. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH	57
3.3.1. PREGNANCY AND DELIVERY HEALTH SERVICES.....	57

3.3.2.	CONTRACEPTION	58
3.3.3.	ABORTION	60
3.3.4.	HIV/AIDS.....	61
3.3.5.	ADOLESCENT MENTAL HEALTH	61
3.4.	GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE	62
4.	LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND (LNOB).....	63
4.1.	PRINCIPLES OF LNOB.....	63
4.1.1.	DIGNITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS.....	63
4.1.2.	FACTORS OF INEQUALITY	63
4.1.3.	RACE AND ETHNICITY	64
4.1.4.	MIGRATORY STATUS.....	64
4.1.5.	GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION.....	67
4.1.6.	DISABILITY.....	70
4.1.7.	AGE AND OTHER TYPES OF SOURCES OF INEQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION.....	72
4.1.8.	LGTBQI RIGHTS	72
4.2.	GENDER EQUALITY	73
4.2.1.	ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY	73
4.2.2.	SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF GENDER EQUALITY.....	75
4.3.	INTERSECTIONALITY / COMPOUNDING VULNERABILITIES.....	76
5.	VULNERABILITY, RISKS AND RESILIENCE.....	78
5.1.	POPULATION SIZE AND GROWTH AS A VULNERABILITY	78
5.1.1.	THE CONCEPT OF DEMOGRAPHIC RESILIENCE	78
5.1.2.	VULNERABILITIES CREATED BY THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE	78
5.1.3.	IMPACTS OF DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN CREATING VULNERABILITIES	79
5.2.	EVALUATION OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL VULNERABILITY AND RISK FACTORS	79
5.3.	IDENTIFICATION OF GROUPS AT HIGHER RISK OF BEING LEFT BEHIND.	80
5.4.	MEASURES TO DEAL WITH HUMANITARIAN NEEDS AND REDUCE VULNERABILITIES.....	82
6.	POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS	84
6.1.	MAIN FINDINGS	84
6.2.	MAIN COMPONENTS OF A POPULATION POLICY	86

Abstract

Montserrat, a small British Overseas Territory in the Eastern Caribbean, grapples with challenges typical of Small Island Developing States, such as climate vulnerability, a narrow economy, and high dependency on imports due to limited local resources. Historical natural disasters like Hurricane Hugo and the Soufriere Hills volcano eruptions have intensified the island's difficulties, making about two-thirds of the island inaccessible. The 1995 eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano drastically reshaped the island's economic and population landscape, decimating its tourism and agriculture sectors, once the backbone of its economy and led the focus of its economy mainly towards construction and sand mining.

Montserrat also contends with the economic fallout from COVID-19, including low vaccination rates and a cost-of-living crisis heightened by inflation that significantly affects incomes, wages, and underemployment. Access to the island is problematic, with limited air travel and no permanent ferry service. Despite the UK government's ongoing financial aid and infrastructural support to reduce aid dependency, Montserrat is working to devise a long-term plan to enhance self-sufficiency, supporting the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) aligning with this objective¹.

Efforts to rebuild and diversify the economy have been underway, focusing on high-end sustainable tourism based on the island's unique volcanic features and revitalising agriculture with resilient practices. However, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the country to put some brakes on this process.

Despite these efforts, Montserrat's economy still faces crucial challenges, including a small domestic market, import dependency, and vulnerability to natural disasters, hurricanes, and volcano risks. Economic resilience will involve strengthening efforts to diversify its economy, including recovery of the agricultural lands destroyed by the 1995 volcanic disaster (which will provide new employment and will make the island less dependent on imported food), improve infrastructure, develop and implement a strong tourism strategy, enhance disaster preparedness to mitigate the impacts of future natural events, with a commitment to sustainable development, balancing growth with environmental conservation, and navigating its political relationship with the UK, all while preparing for future natural adversities..

However, a significant hurdle makes it difficult for Montserrat to achieve economic development. Today, Montserrat is one of the most demographically fragile countries in the World due to a small and declining total and working-age population and rapid ageing due to very low fertility, high emigration, and low immigration.

This PSA identifies the main challenges and delineates some policy recommendations. They are based on linking PSA findings to Montserrat government authorities' national

¹ UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (2023).

development plans, which position population size and growth, particularly working-age ones, as a crucial determinant of the island's sustainability and economic health. There's a symbiotic relationship between economic development, population, and the enhancement of living standards. Economic growth hinges on having enough working-age individuals to fuel the economy and contribute to government revenues through taxes. These funds are vital for improving public services, which, in turn, are essential to retain and attract residents, including those who may consider returning or relocating to Montserrat. Additionally, a robust working-age population is necessary to fill public service roles, ensure quality service delivery, and support the private sector, whose expansion is critical to stimulating further economic growth and generating additional tax revenue. This cycle of growth and improvement in public services aims to make Montserrat more appealing to current and potential residents, underlining the critical importance of the population for the island's future development.

Introduction

Montserrat, a British Overseas Territory in the Caribbean with around 5,000 residents, is a small island part of the Leeward Islands known as the "Emerald Isle of the Caribbean". Its territory is about 16 km (10 mi) long and 11 km (7 mi) wide, with a coastline of about 40 km (25 mi) long. Montserrat is renowned for its dramatic landscape, which includes the active Soufrière Hills volcano. Montserrat is a full member of the Caribbean Community and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean State.

The island has shown unique and remarkable resilience in natural disasters. Hurricane Hugo, a Category 5 storm in 1989, had a catastrophic impact on Montserrat. It damaged most of the island's infrastructure, destroyed or affected the airport, docking facilities, and most homes, and left the population without water, electricity, or communication for extended periods. The hurricane's aftermath necessitated a long and arduous recovery process for the island's residents and economy.

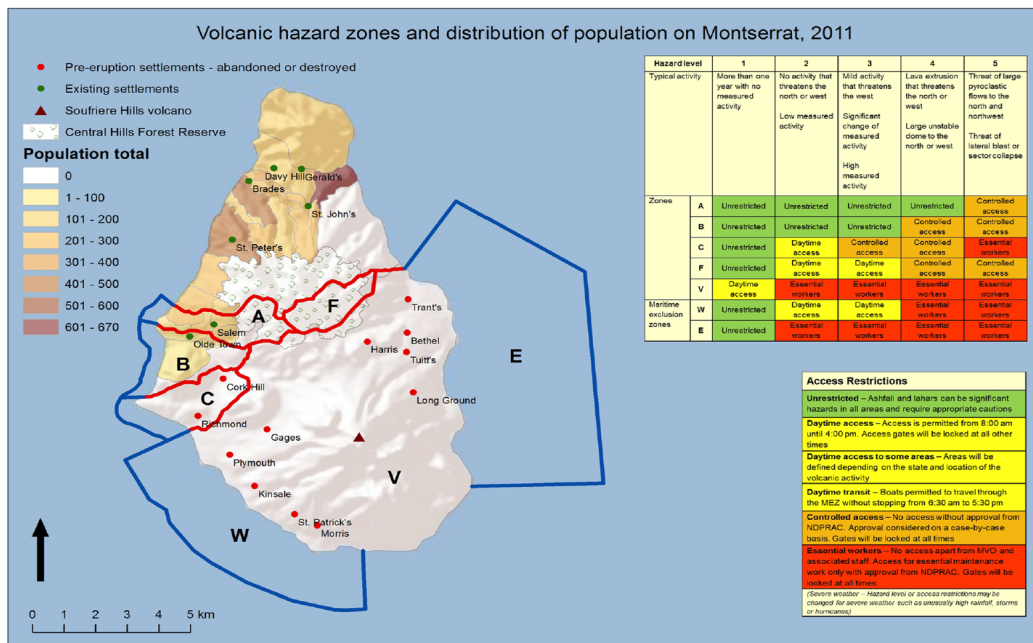
Only six years later, in 1995, the Soufrière Hills volcano erupted, and the country faced a decade of turmoil after the Volcano's reawakening after centuries of dormancy. The initial eruptions in 1995 forced evacuations and left the southern part of the island uninhabitable²³. In 1997, catastrophic pyroclastic flows and lahars obliterated the capital, Plymouth, necessitating its abandonment and causing 19 deaths. Further eruptions and dome collapses through the early 2000s repeatedly disrupted attempts at recovery, destroying the airport and leading to the establishment of a new capital in the north. Despite these challenges, the Montserratian community demonstrated remarkable resilience, rebuilding lives and infrastructure while adapting to the ongoing volcanic threat and considering the limitations in the geographic mobility caused by the eruption, as seen in maps of Figure 1. In the aftermath of the volcanic disaster, 60-70 percent of the population left the island, mainly for the United Kingdom. In recognition of the disaster, in 1998, the people of Montserrat were granted full residency rights in the United Kingdom, allowing them to migrate if they chose. British citizenship was granted in 2002.

The third catastrophic event is the country's population crisis, which risks its existence. The reduction of the population size in the late nineties because of the emigration that resulted from the volcanic eruption and the small -or negative- natural population growth that followed has generated stagnation in the number of inhabitants of the country.

² Beyond the horrendous effect of Soufriere volcano eruption, "... the volcanic ash flow while devastating to the environment and public health in the immediate aftermath, provided numerous minerals important to plant and animal nutrition and to human health and health water sources". *Micronutrient Mineral and Nutrient Content of Volcanic Soils and Creeks from the Montserrat Soufriere Hills Volcano. Nature's Fertilizer: Mineral Nutrient Content of Volcanic Soils*. Vol. 11 No. 2 (2023): European Journal of Applied Sciences. <https://journals.scholarpublishing.org/index.php/AIVP/article/view/14253>

³ Beyond the horrendous effect of Soufriere volcano eruption, "... the volcanic ash flow while devastating to the environment and public health in the immediate aftermath, provided numerous minerals important to plant and animal nutrition and to human health and health water sources". *Micronutrient Mineral and Nutrient Content of Volcanic Soils and Creeks from the Montserrat Soufriere Hills Volcano. Nature's Fertilizer: Mineral Nutrient Content of Volcanic Soils*. Vol. 11 No. 2 (2023): European Journal of Applied Sciences. <https://journals.scholarpublishing.org/index.php/AIVP/article/view/14253>

Figure 1
 Montserrat: Population distribution and exclusion zones of Montserrat in 2011, rated by hazard level from low (A) to high (V).



Source: Wilkinson, E. Beyond the volcanic crisis: co-governance of risk in Montserrat. *J Appl. Volcanol.* 4, 3 (2015).

The population Situation Analysis document aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the population dynamics and their implications on Montserrat's development to help create targeted strategies to strengthen national capacities for building environmental and demographic resilience, which has become a critical component of national strategies due to the current demographic situation. In this regard, Montserrat's Population Situation Analysis (PSA) aims to foster sustainable development and enhance quality of life by encompassing a detailed assessment of demographic trends and patterns, enabling an understanding of population growth, migration, and other demographic trends.

A critical focus of the Montserrat PSA is evaluating the country's situation on reproductive health and gender equity, spotlighting issues such as gender-based violence and disparities in education and employment. Youth challenges are another critical component, emphasizing education and employment opportunities for young people in the country. The PSA will play a pivotal role in shaping policies and programs in Montserrat, ensuring they are evidence-based and effectively address the identified needs, looking for those left behind, and contributing significantly to achieving sustainable development goals. Therefore, the inclusion in each chapter of policy recommendations will be extracted from this document when developing the country's national population policy.

1. Country Context

1.1. Governance and Political Context

1.1.1. Governance, political situation, and legal environment

Montserrat is a self-governing United Kingdom (UK) Overseas Territory (OT) in the Caribbean. It is the only non-fully sovereign full member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). Montserrat is a self-governing United Kingdom (UK) Overseas Territory (OT) in the Caribbean. It is the only non-fully sovereign full member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

The political system of Montserrat is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy. Its new constitution was adopted in 2011. The island's head of state is King Charles III, an appointed governor representing Ms. Sarah Tucker. The primary role of the governor is to appoint the Premier, the head of government, among the members of the Legislative Assembly, which consists of nine elected members. The leader of the party, who has the majority of seats, is usually the one appointed. The current Premier of Montserrat is Easton Taylor-Farrell of the Movement for Change and Prosperity. Apart from the Office of the Premier, there are five Ministries: Finance and Economic Management; Education, Youth Affairs and Sports; Health and Social Services; Agriculture, Lands, Housing and Environment; Communications, Works, Labour and Energy.

The legislative branch is a unicameral body represented by the Legislative Council, which has eleven seats: nine members popularly elected to serve five-year terms, plus the attorney general and the financial secretary as ex officio members. Elections are carried out every five years.

The Judiciary is independent of the executive and legislature. It is administered by one domestic court, the Magistrates Court, which has jurisdiction over minor criminal and civil cases, and the High Court and the Court of Appeal of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court of Justice. In the United Kingdom, there is a final right of appeal to the Privy Council.

Montserrat's defence is the United Kingdom's responsibility to maintain British sovereignty for the overseas territories, provide humanitarian aid and disaster relief during disasters such as hurricanes, which are common in the area, and conduct counter-narcotics operations. The Royal Montserrat Defence Force is the home defence unit of the British Overseas Territory of Montserrat. The unit comprises about forty volunteer soldiers, primarily concerned with civil defence and ceremonial duties.

For local government, Montserrat is divided into three parishes. Going north to south, they are the Parish of Saint Peter, Parish of Saint Georges, and Parish of Saint Anthony.

However, the locations of settlements on the island have been vastly changed since the first eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano on July 18, 1995, and the subsequent secondary eruptions in 1996, 1997, 2006, 2007, 2008, and 2010. Montserrat National Sustainable Development Agenda

The Government of Montserrat's Policy Agenda for 2021/22 to 2023/24⁴ is structured around five main priorities.

The first priority focuses on transitioning from recovery to sustainable self-sufficiency, preserving cultural heritage, and establishing strategic regional and international partnerships. It aims to attract foreign direct investment by leveraging Montserrat's unique characteristics and developing sector-specific strategies to stimulate economic growth and address business obstacles. There's a significant emphasis on innovation within sector development strategies, enhancing the capacity-building program to meet sectoral needs, and attracting the Diaspora and expatriate community in national development.

The second priority is directed at improving healthcare access through technology, expanding health promotion services, and strengthening community-based programs for vulnerable groups. It also focuses on advancing educational quality to achieve regional and international competitiveness and creating a social protection framework that supports labour market re-entry and assists those unable to work. Affordable housing and increased social housing, enhanced youth development, and improved sports and recreational facilities are also targeted.

The third priority aims to manage Montserrat's natural resources sustainably, improving legislation, scientific oversight, and public education to become a centre for ecological and volcanic research. It also focuses on strengthening disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response capabilities. Additionally, the agenda advocates for building disaster-resilient infrastructure, including durable housing and communication systems that can withstand natural events.

The fourth priority aims to enhance Montserrat's governance by boosting transparency, accountability, and public engagement. It involves reforms to improve public service through institutional development and better efficiency in service delivery, including process and policy refinement. Additionally, it seeks to uphold Montserrat's status as a fair, secure place by maintaining high standards of justice and security. Together with those listed in the third priority, these efforts aim to foster a resilient and secure environment for Montserrat's community and natural setting.

Finally, the fifth priority, directly relevant to establishing a national population policy, is focused on advancing social cohesion and managing population growth. It includes developing and implementing initiatives that embrace diversity, aiming to create a more

⁴ [Government of Montserrat Policy Agenda 2021/22 - 2023/24. Montserrat, 2021.](#)

inclusive society that attracts new residents and retains current ones, contributing to population growth, which is crucial for the island's development. The government plans to attract and retain skilled individuals to address skills gaps. It involves immigration management strategies that welcome needed talents and outreach to the Montserratian Diaspora, encouraging their return or engagement with the island's development. Through these efforts, the government expects to bring the necessary skills to the local workforce and help drive economic growth and sustainability.

1.1.2. Population policy

The situation of Montserrat concerning population policy is quite particular. With an estimated total fertility rate of 1.55, in the middle range of the rates found in other countries in the Caribbean region, the country's fertility is well below replacement level. Measures to raise this level are not being contemplated. Instead, the priority is to bring back part of the population that left the island after 1995 and to bring in migrants from other countries in the region. Ageing is also a concern, and the government has a National Policy on the Care of Older Persons for 2020-2026.

As yet, there is no specific national population policy. Still, the policy guidelines can be found in the Montserrat Sustainable Development Plan 2008-2020⁵, under Strategic Goal 5, a sustainable population. For the most part, the objectives formulated in the Plan are to recover from the population losses that have occurred since 1995. The Plan notes that "it is a widely held view that Montserrat does not now have a viable population. Consequently, if Montserrat is to make significant progress economically, it must not only stem the haemorrhaging of the population but must put in place policies and initiatives that will attract the required number of residents with the characteristics desired."

The Plan included revising population, immigration, and labour legislation and developing policies and regulations to grow the labour force and broader population. The medium-term strategic objective detailed in the Plan is aimed at establishing a comprehensive policy framework, designing incentives, and ensuring the provision of essential social services to motivate people to remain on Montserrat⁶, entice overseas Montserratians to return, and encourage specific CARICOM nationals to move to the island.

The Plan also focuses on population retention strategies to encourage residents to remain and contribute to Montserrat's development. It introduces population growth strategies, including incentives to achieve the targeted population growth. To achieve this objective,

⁵ [MONTERRAT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2008 - 2020 Ministry of Economic Development and Trade Government of Montserrat, 2010.](#)

⁶ In July of 2021, in an online conference on population and development, the former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Shirley Osborne, called for concrete steps to stem the flow of persons leaving that has contributed to the decline of the population. She expressed the view that Montserrat needs a change in immigration policy and that the time has come for politicians to be bold and extend the time for naturalization. Ms. Osborne suggested that proper health care and ease of doing business are key encouraging Montserratians to return home.

[ZJB Radio. Montserrat \(2021\). Is Montserrat's Immigration Policy Hindrance to Growing the Island's Population?](#)

the Plan outlines several specific actions: 1) the development and implementation of policies related to population, labour, and immigration that are intended to contribute to population growth; 2) the creation of initiatives focused on retaining the current residents of Montserrat; 3) the establishment of incentives geared towards increasing the population numbers on the island.

In support of these objectives, the Plan calls for drafting a population policy and an accompanying action plan, as well as the necessary legislation. It also highlights the need to draft or revise current labour and immigration policies and their corresponding legislation. Finally, it stresses the importance of enacting this new or revised population, labour, and immigration legislation.

This population situation analysis will analyze the country's situation and propose some policy recommendations that will be incorporated into a proposal for a national population policy for Montserrat.

1.2. Economic and Social Context

1.2.1. Economic growth

Historically, the economy of Montserrat was based on sugar and later cotton and lime juice. Before 1995, the main economic activities used to be tourism and agriculture. However, the damage caused by Hurricane Hugo (1989) and the continued volcanic activity affected the economy and caused Montserrat to become dependent on international aid, mainly British and Canadian.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs summarizes well the profound impact that the Soufriere Hills volcano eruptions between 1995 and 1997 had on Montserrat. This event rendered nearly 60 per cent of the southern part of the island uninhabitable and led to the departure of about half of the population. The eruption in 1996-1997 was particularly devastating, affecting almost half of the island's residents, resulting in the loss of about 70 per cent of the arable land and destroying halves of the natural water sources, such as springs and wells. These events have significantly hampered agricultural development and food security, making the territory increasingly reliant on imported food.

Between 1994 and 2001, the Gross Domestic Product fell by 61.1 percent. Since then, growth has returned, but at a prolonged average rate of 1.86 per cent per year between 2001 and 2018. In 2022, the growth rate was 2.52 per cent. The COVID-19 lockdowns and travel restrictions established by the Government negatively affected economic growth. High levels of vaccination hesitancy have led to low (50 per cent) vaccine uptake.

Given limited natural resources and the difficulties of external communications, Montserrat's overriding development issue is increasing productive activity with gainful employment for the population. Three areas offer the potential for achieving this

objective: (1) The tourist industry's Expansion and diversification have traditionally served a retiree population; (2) Agricultural development based on vegetable and fruit production, with a view towards processing to absorb surpluses and facilitate marketing; and (3) The attraction of offshore and other light industries for employment generation.

As analyzed by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office⁷, the Government of Montserrat has been working to rebuild the nation and its economy following significant destruction for the past quarter-century.

Despite these efforts, the lost infrastructure has yet to be completely restored. Economic activities have primarily focused on the construction sector, spurred by infrastructural investments from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and unregulated sand mining. Private sector investments in agriculture and fishing remain minimal, leading to a high dependence on imported goods to ensure food security.

In February 2005, Princess Anne officially opened what is now called the John A. Osborne Airport in the north. The John A. Osborne Airport⁸, which opened in July 2005 and is essential for air access in Montserrat, replaced the Bramble Airport, which the Soufriere Hills Volcano destroyed. This airport was designed mainly to allow twin-otter aircraft.

One of the most critical government projects is the Port Development Project, which provides a safe harbour with broad access to all users, such as cargo vessels, ferries, cruise ships, yachts, and fishing boats. This project is supported by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) under the UK Caribbean Infrastructure Partnership Fund (UKCIF). Correspondingly, the largest budget categories are Economic Infrastructure development (EC\$⁹ 16.52 million, 49.1 percent of the total) and Social Infrastructure development (EC\$ 14.65 million, 43.6 percent). This port will improve the island's accessibility, trade, and economic opportunities, and it is expected to be completed in April 2024¹⁰.

The Montserrat Energy Policy for 2016-2030 sets an ambitious goal to ensure that by 2030, Montserrat achieves reliable, low-cost, sustainable energy provision, equitably distributed across all societal sectors, utilizing diverse and robust energy sources and technologies, with a significant shift away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy sources like geothermal, solar, and wind to reduce carbon emissions. Geothermal energy, initiated with drilling three wells (one of which collapsed), stands at the forefront, promising to supply 3 to 4MW of power. Governed by the 2023 Geothermal Resources Development Act, geothermal energy offers a solution for reliable and affordable power. It opens avenues for economic development, enhancing local businesses, tourism, and

⁷ [UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(2023\). Policy paper UK-Montserrat development partnership summary. July 2023](#)

⁸ [Government of Montserrat. Airport Management.](#)

⁹ The currency of Montserrat is the Eastern Caribbean dollar (EC\$), issued by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB). It is equivalent to 0.37 United States Dollars (March 6, 2024).

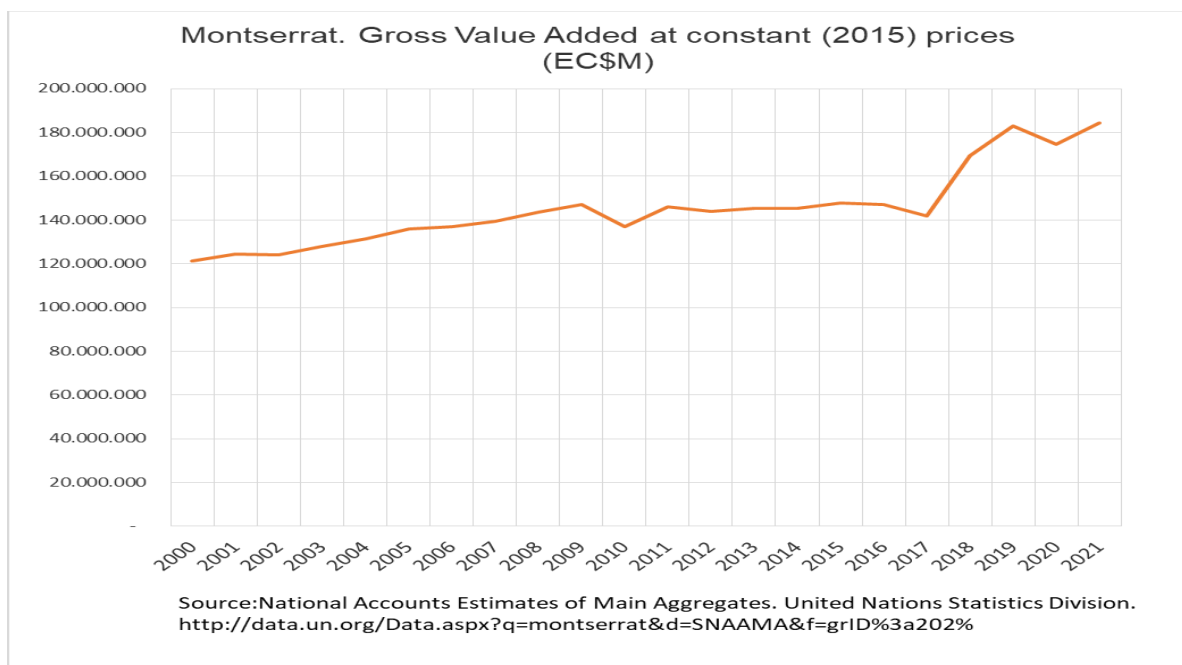
¹⁰ [UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(2023\). Idem.](#)

the possibility of energy export after further study. The five-year plan focuses on transitioning to geothermal energy, underlined by the government's plans to build geothermal power generation facilities. This initiative is part of a broader strategy to meet the UK's climate commitments, with the Energy Task Force - Preliminary Report (draft)¹¹ outlining a business case for either a 3 MW or a 1.5 MW geothermal plant, marking a critical step towards Montserrat's sustainable energy future.

The GDP in 2022 was USD 77 million. The graph below shows the evolution of the Gross Value Added in EC\$ since 2000 (Figure 2). While the economy is recovering, growth has been slow, at least until 2017. More than half of the Gross Value Added originates from the Public Administration, Real Estate and business activities, and Transport (Figure 3). There are few internal suppliers, and most goods must be imported, including machinery and transportation equipment, food, and manufactured goods.

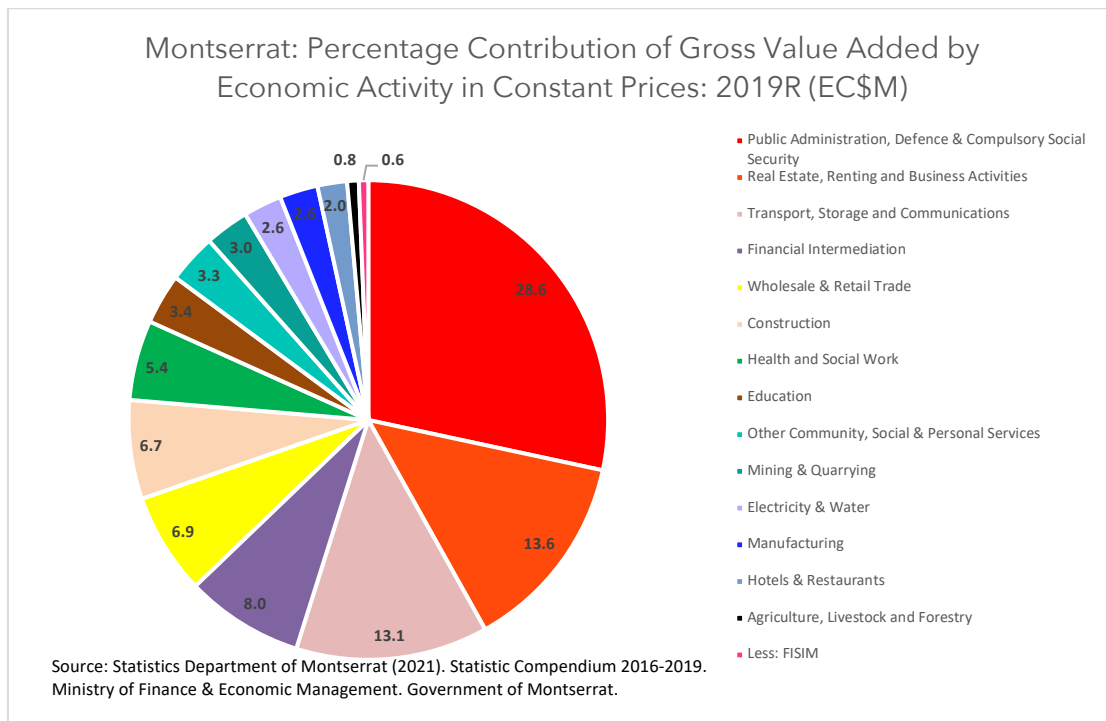
Interestingly, despite the many challenges faced by the Montserratian economy, the country has the sixth highest GDP per capita in the Caribbean region if one does not count tax havens like Bermuda and the Cayman Islands. With USD 16,199 in 2021, it came only after the Bahamas (USD 27,478), St. Maarten (USD 26,199), Anguilla (USD 19,216), St. Kitts and Nevis (USD 18,083), and Barbados (USD 17,225).

Figure 2
Montserrat: Evolution of the Gross Value Added in constant 2015 prices, 2000-2021



¹¹ <https://www.gov.ms/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Energy-Task-Force-Final-Report.pdf>

Figure 3
 Montserrat: Percentage contribution of Gross Value Added by economic sector, 2019P



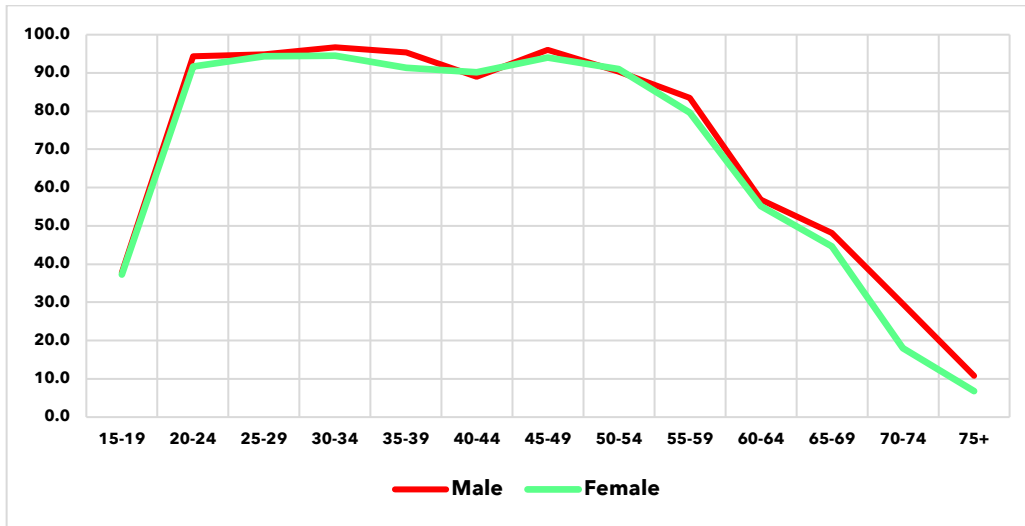
1.2.2. Labour market shifts

As of September 2018, Montserrat's Labour Force stood at 2,703 persons, 1,348 males and 1,355 females. The figures obtained in the 2020 Labour Force were quite similar. The participation rate was also quite similar between males (73.1 per cent) and females (72.5 per cent).

When the participation rates by age are presented (Figure 4), they show that rates are very high for both men and women, particularly between 20 and 55. It also shows that men and women participated in the labour force at similar rates, which is unique when compared with most countries: Female labour force participation rate is around the same as that of men in almost all ages, but the later ages when older women participation rates are lower than older men.

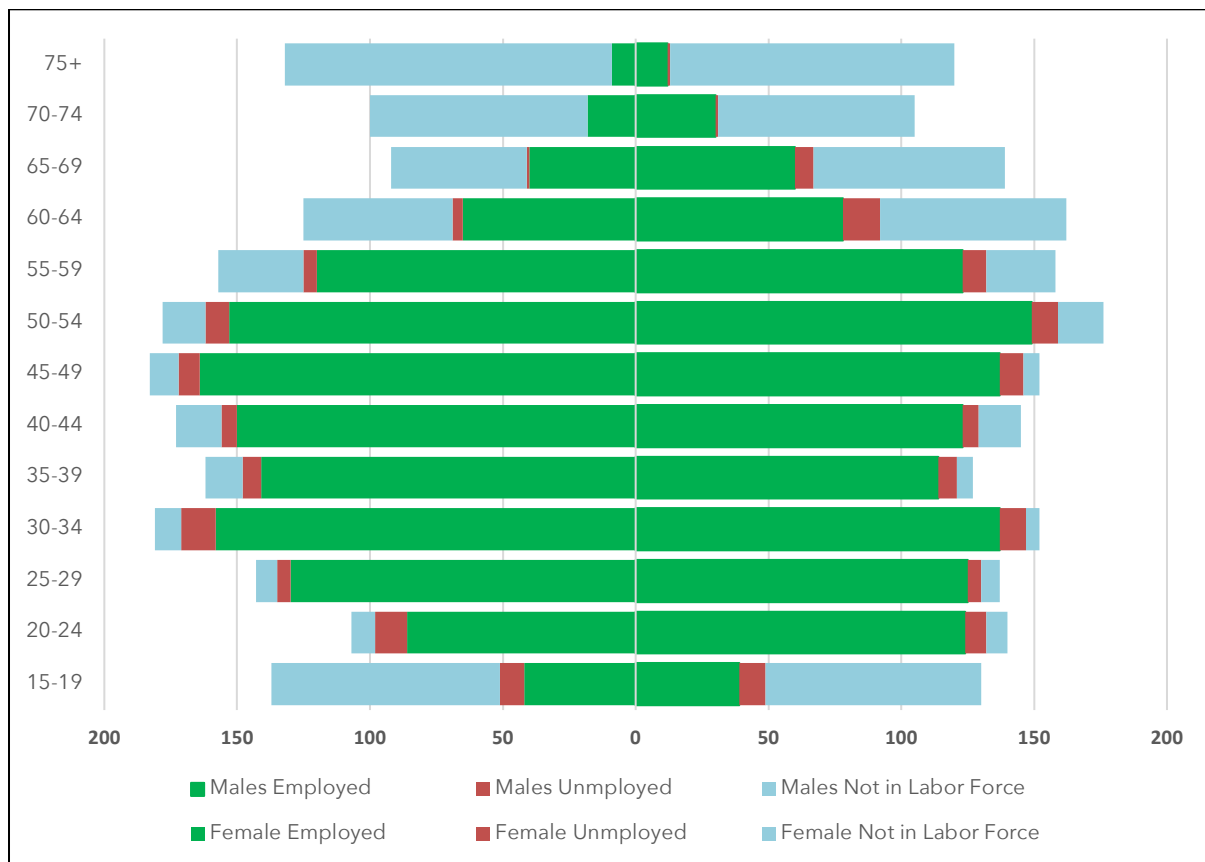
This explains the high number of women employed, which in some ages is higher than the figures for men (Figure 5). This result shows a unique characteristic of the Montserrat economy. Unemployment is mostly low (6.5 percent in September of 2018) but starts increasing substantially after 60 in males, indicating the interest of this population in working and the limitations they face in the local market.

Figure 4
 Montserrat: Economic Participation Rates by age and sex
 Males and Females, 2018



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count - 2018.

Figure 5
 Montserrat: Composition population of Montserrat by age, sex, and economic activity,
 2018.



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count - 2018.

Table 1 shows that the overall unemployment rate for both sexes as of September 2018 was 6.5 percent. The unemployment rates for males and females were 7.2 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively. Additionally, the youth unemployment rate was 19.0 percent. A further breakdown by sex for the youth unemployment rate was 17.6 percent male and 20.4 percent female. Regarding those not in the labour force, as expected, most of them are less than 20 years old or 65 years old or older.

Table 1
Montserrat: Economic activity rates: Participation, Employment, Unemployment

Age Group	Population (numbers)			Labour Force									Not in Labor Force Rates		
	Male	Female	Total	Participation rates			Employment rates			Unemployment Rates			Male	Female	Total
				Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total			
15-19	130	137	267	37.7	37.2	37.5	79.6	82.4	81.0	20.4	17.6	19.0	62.3	62.8	62.5
20-24	140	107	247	94.3	91.6	93.1	93.9	87.8	91.3	6.1	12.2	8.7	5.7	8.4	6.9
25-29	137	143	280	94.9	94.4	94.6	96.2	96.3	96.2	3.8	3.7	3.8	5.1	5.6	5.4
30-34	152	181	333	96.7	94.5	95.5	93.2	92.4	92.8	6.8	7.6	7.2	3.3	5.5	4.5
35-39	127	162	289	95.3	91.4	93.1	94.2	95.3	94.8	5.8	4.7	5.2	4.7	8.6	6.9
40-44	145	173	318	89.0	90.2	89.6	95.3	96.2	95.8	4.7	3.8	4.2	11.0	9.8	10.4
45-49	152	183	335	96.1	94.0	94.9	93.8	95.3	94.7	6.2	4.7	5.3	3.9	6.0	5.1
50-54	176	178	354	90.3	91.0	90.7	93.7	94.4	94.1	6.3	5.6	5.9	9.7	9.0	9.3
55-59	158	157	315	83.5	79.6	81.6	93.2	96.0	94.6	6.8	4.0	5.4	16.5	20.4	18.4
60-64	162	125	287	56.8	55.2	56.1	84.8	94.2	88.8	15.2	5.8	11.2	43.2	44.8	43.9
65-69	139	92	231	48.2	44.6	46.8	89.6	97.6	92.6	10.4	2.4	7.4	51.8	55.4	53.2
70-74	105	100	205	29.5	18.0	23.9	96.8	100.0	98.0	3.2	0.0	2.0	70.5	82.0	76.1
75+	120	132	252	10.8	6.8	8.7	92.3	100.0	95.5	7.7	0.0	4.5	89.2	93.2	91.3
Total	1,843	1,870	3,713	73.1	72.5	72.8	92.8	94.2	93.5	7.2	5.8	6.5	26.9	27.5	27.2

Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count - 2018.

Regarding the distribution of the economically active population, Table 2 shows that a high percentage of workers (24.9 per cent) are employed in public administration. If one adds to this the health, education and social work categories, the result is almost 45 per cent. Another 11 per cent of the workforce is active in wholesale and retail trade. While manufacturing accounts for only 1.6 per cent of the workforce, there is significant construction activity in the country, which employs 9.4 per cent. The relatively small participation of agriculture (4.4 per cent) is because the 1995 volcanic disaster destroyed most productive lands of the island.

Montserrat imports most of its consumer goods, resulting in a negative trade balance. In 2022, it exported USD 6.58 million but imported USD 41.2 million according to OEC¹². The top exports of Montserrat are Sand (\$1.53M), Gravel and Crushed Stone (\$1.28M), Packaged Medicaments (\$899k), Other Lead Products (\$325k), and Liquid Pumps (\$195k), mostly exporting to the United States (\$1.54M), France (\$1.37M), Antigua and Barbuda

¹² <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/msr>

(\$1.23M), Ireland (\$985k), and United Kingdom (\$473k). On the other hand, the top imports of Montserrat are Refined Petroleum (\$4.33M), Office Machine Parts (\$1.94M), Machinery Having Individual Functions (\$1.39M), Petroleum Gas (\$1.02M), and Stone Processing Machines (\$786k), importing mostly from United States (\$22.3M), United Kingdom (\$3.49M), Singapore (\$1.7M), Antigua and Barbuda (\$1.59M), and Trinidad and Tobago (\$1.51M).

Table 2
Montserrat: Composition of the employed population by industry, 2018

Industry	2018	
	Number	%
Agriculture, Hunting, Forestry and Fishing	109	4.4
Mining and Quarrying	38	1.5
Manufacturing	40	1.6
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	79	3.2
Construction	231	9.4
Wholesale and Retail Trade	280	11.4
Hotels and Restaurants	136	5.5
Transport, Storage and Communication	143	5.8
Financial Intermediation	85	3.4
Real Estate, Renting and Business Activities	72	2.9
Public Administration, Defence and Compulsory Social Security	613	24.9
Education	163	6.6
Health and Social Work	207	8.4
Other Community, Social and Personal Service Activities	136	5.5
Activities of Private Households as Employers	107	4.3
Non-Stated	26	1.1
Total	2,465	100.0

Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count - 2018.

1.2.3. Trade and external finance¹³

Montserrat imports most of its consumer goods, resulting in a negative trade balance. In 2022, it exported USD 6.58 million but imported USD 41.2 million according to OEC¹⁴. The top exports of Montserrat are Sand (\$1.53M), Gravel and Crushed Stone (\$1.28M), Packaged Medicaments (\$899k), Other Lead Products (\$325k), and Liquid Pumps (\$195k), mostly exporting to the United States (\$1.54M), France (\$1.37M), Antigua and Barbuda (\$1.23M), Ireland (\$985k), and United Kingdom (\$473k). On the other hand, the top

¹³ What follows on trade and external finance has been mainly based on the following publications:

[UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(2023\)](#). *Idem*.

[The Governor's Office on Montserrat. World news story. UK increases budget and capital support for Montserrat. Published 14 November 2022.](#)

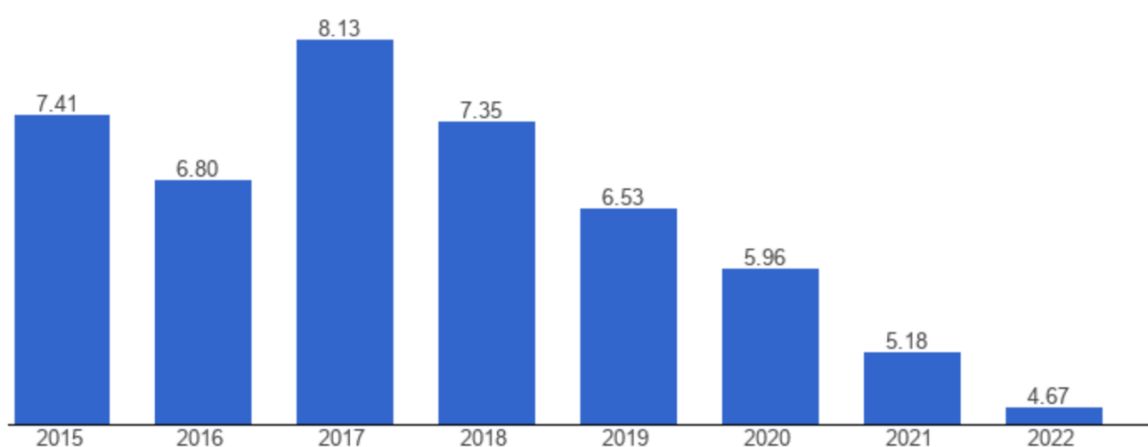
<https://oec.world/en/profile/country/msr?yearSelector1=2020&latestTrendsFlowSelectorNonSubnatLatestTrends=flow1&yearlyTradeFlowSelector=flow0&depthSelector1=HS4Depth>.

¹⁴ <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/msr>

imports of Montserrat are Refined Petroleum (\$4.33M), Office Machine Parts (\$1.94M), Machinery Having Individual Functions (\$1.39M), Petroleum Gas (\$1.02M), and Stone Processing Machines (\$786k), importing mostly from United States (\$22.3M), United Kingdom (\$3.49M), Singapore (\$1.7M), Antigua and Barbuda (\$1.59M), and Trinidad and Tobago (\$1.51M).

Besides exports, tourism is another potential source of revenue for the country. It increased steadily from 9,600 visitors in 2010 to 21,000 in 2019, but due to COVID-19, it collapsed in 2020 and has only recently begun to recover. Despite a negative trade balance, the country's debt level is low. In 2022, the debt-to-GDP ratio was only 4.67 per cent. It has been higher in the past (Figure 6). Several streams of financial assistance for reconstruction and development offset the trade deficit. Foreign Direct Investment has been declining since 2014 but was still USD 2.37 million in 2022, according to UNCTAD¹⁵, while personal remittances were about USD 2 million annually in recent years.

Figure 6
Montserrat: Evolution of the Government Debt as a Percentage of the GDP, 2015-2022



Source: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Montserrat/Government_debt/

Montserrat's operational budget relies heavily on external funding from the UK's Department for International Development (DFID). Between 2000 and 2015, 61.3 per cent of Montserrat's total revenue came from grants, mainly from the UK and the EU. As part of a new financial agreement signed in late 2022, the UK committed an additional £4.72 million to compensate for inflation, thereby ensuring the continuity of public services.

Other significant investments include the Montserrat Port Development Project (£28 million), to be completed in April 2024. The UK's Capital Investment for Resilience Economic Growth (CIPREG) contributes £40 million towards infrastructure development to spur economic and private sector development. It has allocated funds for several high-impact projects, including constructing a new National Hospital, developing a Parliament

¹⁵ UNCTAD <https://unctadstat.unctad.org/CountryProfile/GeneralProfile/en-GB/500/index.html>

Building, and completing a subsea fibre optics project. FCDO has provided £15.5 million to build geothermal production wells, in addition to 250 kW solar PV and plans for an additional 750 kW. The Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund (CSSF) has channelled funds into law enforcement, health, and capacity building for maritime governance. Funds have also been allocated to renovate educational facilities, provide social housing, and enhance healthcare by purchasing medical equipment (mammograms and CT scanners).

Alongside UK support, Montserrat has also benefited from the aid provided by the EU. Under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF), Montserrat received €18.4 million for 2014-2022, with the funding directed towards energy, accessibility, tourism, and ICT developments. UNDP has supported initiatives to bolster the local economy and ensure food security through grants to farmers and fisherfolk and technical and financial support to Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) within the tourism sector, which was hit hard by COVID-19.

Nevertheless, Montserrat faces financial challenges, particularly after Brexit, which has been described as an existential threat to the economic models of several British Overseas Territories¹⁶. The UK has pledged to continue contributing to the EU's overseas aid programme until 2024. This has momentarily heightened Montserrat's dependency on UK budgetary support and Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Looking ahead, the government plans to reduce its reliance on such funds, seeking a more self-sustained economic model.

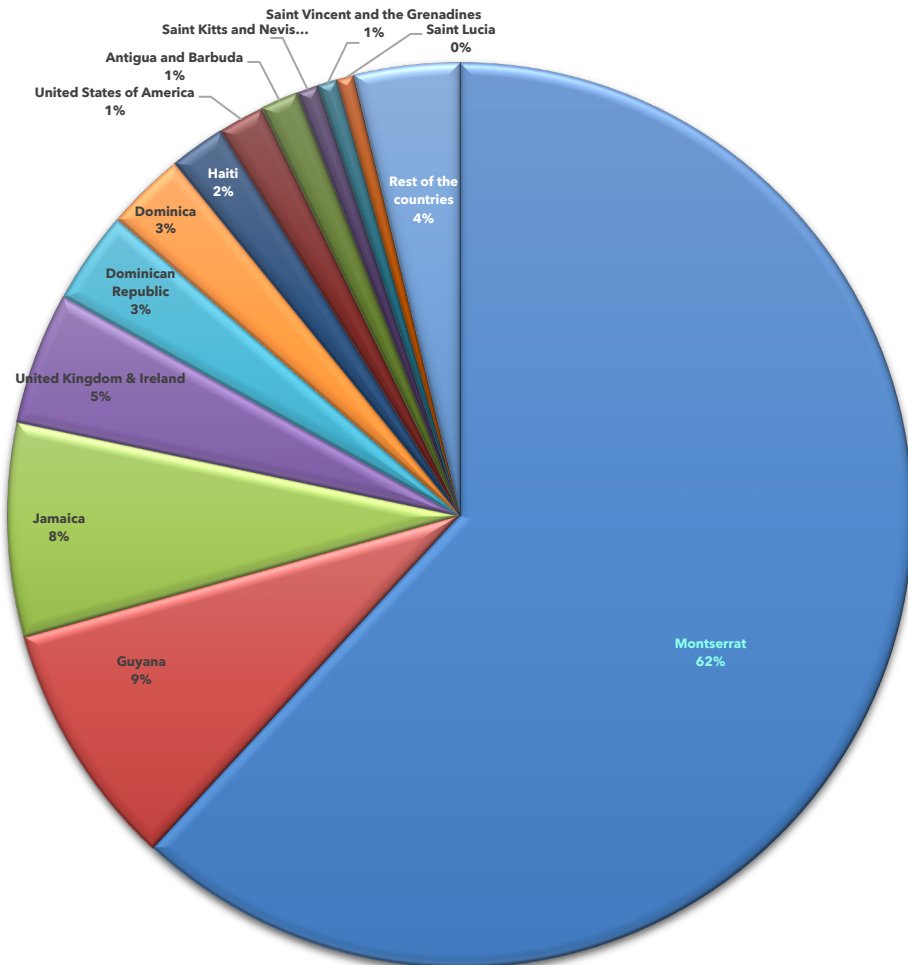
1.2.4. Social Context

According to the 2018 Intercensal Count and Labour Force Survey, a significant share of the population of Montserrat (38 per cent) consists of foreign nationals, mainly from Guyana, Jamaica, the UK and Ireland, the Dominican Republic, Dominica, Haiti, and the US, in order of importance (Figure 7). In the age group between 15 and 39, the percentage of foreign nationals is even higher, namely 56 per cent. This result also means that much of the country's labour force comprises foreign nationals. Only those over age 65 comprise more than 80 per cent of the population, consisting of Montserratian citizens.

Ethnically, the population of Montserrat consists of 86.2 per cent of persons of African descent. The second largest group is that of persons of mixed descent (4.8 per cent). The other relevant groups are Hispanics (3.0 per cent), Caucasians / whites (2.7 per cent), East Indians (1.6 per cent), Amerindians (0.4 per cent) and Others (1.4 per cent). Historically, Montserrat has a connection to Ireland, as many of the first European settlers (1632) were Irish. Until the mid-19th century, Irish were still spoken on the island, even by people of African descent.

¹⁶ Montserrat is highly vulnerable to the impacts of Brexit due to its reliance on the European Development Fund. The territory self-finances roughly 35% of its total expenditures, depending on external sources for the remainder, making it susceptible to shifts in aid policies and the dynamics between the UK and the EU (OCHA: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2022). Montserrat: Overseas Territory Profile (as of July 2020) <https://reliefweb.int/report/montserrat/montserrat-overseas-territory-profile-july-2020>

Figure 7
 Montserrat: Population by nationality, 2018.



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018

The largest religious denomination in Montserrat is the Anglican Church, which made up 17.8 per cent of the population in 2020. The Pentecostal/Full Gospel Church and the Seventh Day Adventists are also quite numerous, with 17.1 and 15.7 per cent of the population, respectively, followed by the Methodists, with 15.0 per cent. Roman Catholics comprised 11.4 per cent of the population, while 13.7 per cent had other religions and 9.4 per cent had no religion.

The island is fully digitalised by landline telephones, with 3000 subscribers. According to data from the Intercensal Count 2018, more than 93 percent of the population lives in households with at least one mobile phone.

Using the same source, 78 per cent of the population lives in households with internet access. Radio Montserrat provides public radio service. There is a single television

broadcaster, PTV. Cable and satellite television service is available. Montserrat also has one national radio station, Radio Montserrat. The station offers news on the island and the internet for Montserratians living overseas.

Montserrat does not suffer from the security threats faced by other countries in the region, such as human trafficking, arms trafficking, gun crime or money laundering. It is considered one of the most secure places in the area, and crime and violence have historically been low. The crime statistics of the Statistics Department of Montserrat (SDM) from 2012 to 2019¹⁷ report fewer than five murders, 251 burglaries, 360 thefts, 458 cases of assault.

1.2.5. Poverty and inequality indicators and policies

According to OCHA¹⁸, Montserrat is one of the countries of the Eastern Caribbean Region with a higher incidence of poverty, with over a third of its population (36%) being considered poor, including 3% in extreme poverty. Notably, nearly half of the impoverished (47%) are children under 18, a rate considerably higher than the 31% poverty rate among adults over 18. The COVID-19 pandemic has probably exacerbated these issues, with predictions of a significant rise in overall poverty, particularly affecting children. Migrants experienced higher poverty levels than their national counterparts, as shown by the income data from the 2018 Labour Survey and Intercensal Count.

The average monthly income in 2020, according to the Labour Force Survey, was EC\$ 3,100.90, equivalent to 1,147.3 USD. These incomes were distributed as shown in Table 3. The Gini coefficient for Montserrat for 2008/09 was estimated at 0.39. This is about average for the countries of the Caribbean region¹⁹.

Table 3
Montserrat: Distribution of monthly incomes of the employed population, 2020

Income bracket	Percentage of monthly incomes
Less than EC\$ 200	0.7
EC\$ 200-399	1.5
EC\$ 400-799	5.1
EC\$ 800-1,199	11.3
EC\$ 1,200-1,999	19.1
EC\$ 2,000-3,999	37.5
EC\$ 4,000-5,999	16.6
EC\$ 6,000 or more	8.2

Source: DSM Labour Force Survey 2020

¹⁷ <https://statistics.gov.ms/subjects/social-and-demographic-statistics/crime-and-justice/yearly-comparative-return-of-crime-2012-2019/>

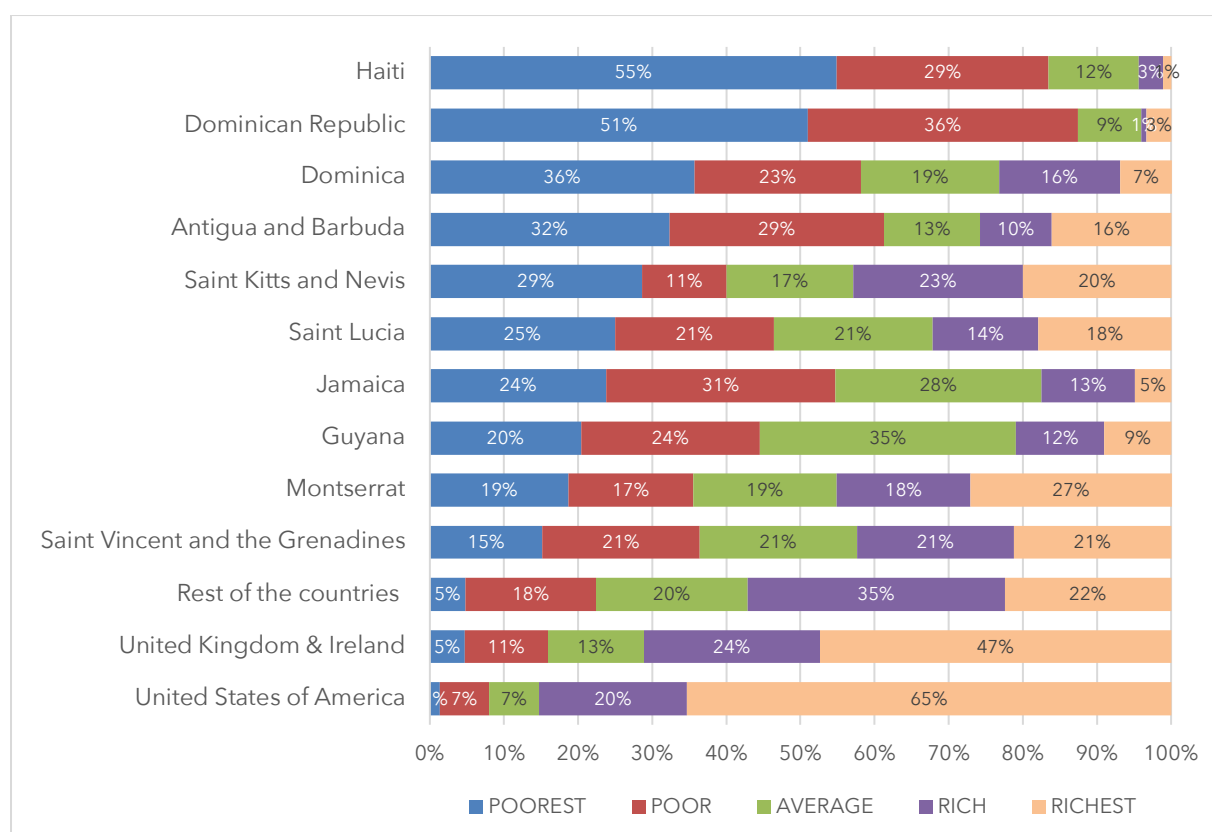
¹⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/montserrat/montserrat-overseas-territory-profile-may-2022>

¹⁹ ECLAC (2019). Implementation of the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development in the Caribbean. A review of the period 2013–2018. Studies and Perspectives Series–The Caribbean 76 (1)

The different nationalities are clearly stratified in terms of income and education levels. According to the Intercensal Count and Labour Force Survey of 2018, US citizens have the highest incomes, with 65 per cent belonging to the highest wealth quintile (Figure 8). Of the British and Irish citizens, 47 per cent belong to the highest wealth quintile.

Montserratian citizens are also better off than the average, with 27 per cent belonging to the highest quintile. The poorest population groups are the Haitians, Dominicans (both from Dominica and the Dominican Republic) and Antiguan, more than 30 per cent of whom belong to the lowest wealth quintile.

Figure 8
Montserrat: Distribution of the population by nationality and wealth quintile, 2018



The educational stratification is partly related to levels of wealth, but also influenced by other factors. While the Haitians, Dominicans (from the Dominican Republic), and Jamaicans have the lowest percentages of persons with tertiary education, less than 20 per cent, this is also the case of the US citizens on the island, whereas the citizens of Dominica have the highest share, 33 per cent, of persons with tertiary education. The percentage for Montserratian citizens is 28 per cent.

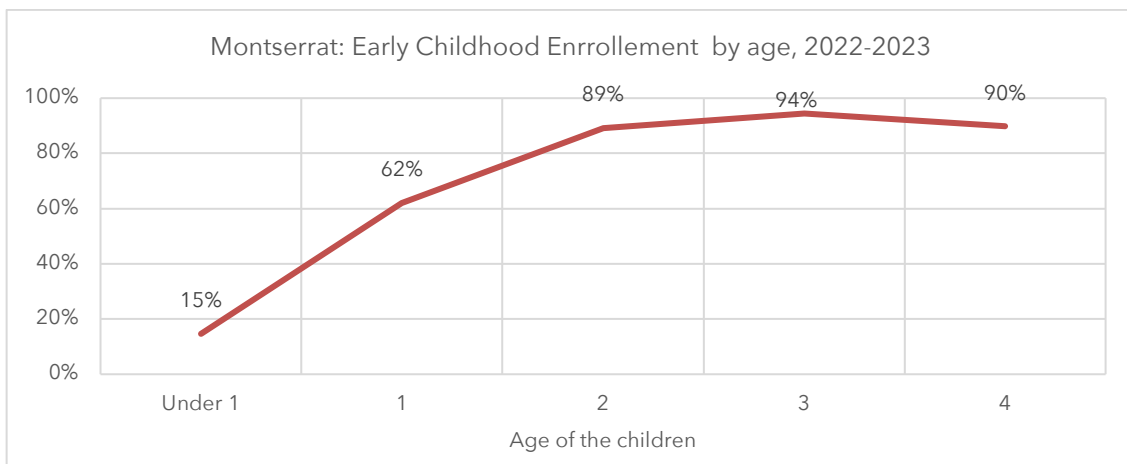
1.2.6. Education and human capital

No school attendance data are available from the census or surveys, but there are administrative data from the Ministry of Education from 2016-2019 (Table 4). No significant changes are observed during this period.

Montserrat allocated a more significant proportion of its GDP to the health and education sectors, exceeding the ECA average and the average for the small Caribbean states and the world. Montserrat also allocated a greater proportion of its GDP to the social sector, exceeding the ECA average.²⁰ Before the volcano eruption, Montserrat spent 20 percent of its budget on education, but this percentage has diminished since then.

As reported by UNICEF²¹, in Montserrat, while education is mandatory for children between the ages of 5 and 14, it remains free for those up to 17, as mandated by the Education Act. Early childhood education and tertiary education, though not obligatory, are integral components of the formal education system and are actively promoted. Early childhood enrollment is high (71 percent) in children under five. But it increases from 15 percent in children under a year of age to 90 percent or higher in children 2-4 (Figure 9). This result is consistent with women's high participation rate in the labour force.

Figure 9



Source: Calculations based on data for 2022-2023 from Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance & Economic Management (MoFEM) Montserrat

Primary school enrollment is nearly 100 percent and lasts ages five to 12. Secondary lasts from ages 12 to 16, and Tertiary lasts from ages 17 to 21. The island's only secondary school (pre-16 years of age) is the Montserrat Secondary School (MSS) in Salem. Montserrat Community College (MCC) is a community college (post-16 and tertiary educational institution) in Salem. The University of the West Indies maintains its Montserrat Open Campus. University of Science, Arts and Technology is a private medical

²⁰ Nabinger, S. (2017). Review of Social Sector Expenditures in the Eastern Caribbean Area. UNICEF Office for the ECA: Christ Church, Barbados

²¹ [UNICEF \(2021\). Generation Unlimited: The Well-being of Young People in Montserrat FACT SHEET. July 2021](#)

school in Olveston. Table 4 shows the number of students enrolled at the different educational levels. The island needs to be bigger to afford its university, but it offers many opportunities to study abroad in the US, Canada, or the UK. Most students will study abroad and then seldom move back home.

The Government of Montserrat aims to increase access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) opportunities and improve the quality of education. According to a UNICEF report²², girls in education have advanced considerably, such that they now outperform boys in primary and secondary exams, and young women dominate postsecondary education. This report also shows that in 2018-2019, 20 per cent of boys and 22 per cent of girls were out of school at the upper secondary level; this is similar to the average of 21 per cent for boys and 20 per cent for girls in the Eastern Caribbean.

Table 4
Montserrat: Enrollment at the different educational levels, 2016-2019

Montserrat. Education data from the Ministry of Education, 2016-2019						
Total enrollment day-care centres 2016-2019						
Year	# of Day Care Centres	Male	Female	Total	# of Caregivers	Pupil/Teacher Ratio
2016	4	26	25	51	10	5.1
2017	6	48	50	98	13	7.5
2018	6	48	45	93	16	5.8
2019	6	54	46	96	14	6.9
Pre-school (nursery) enrollment by sex 2016 - 2019						
Year	# of Pre-Schools	Male	Female	Total	# of Practitioners	Pupil/Teacher Ratio
2016	4	50	40	90	11	8.0
2017	6	39	46	85	16	5.3
2018	6	43	47	90	16	5.6
2019	6	42	47	89	17	5.2
Primary School enrollment by sex 2016-2019						
Year	# of Primary schools	Male	Female	Total	# of Teachers	Pupil/Teacher Ratio
2016	4	214	238	452	28	16.1
2017	4	227	233	460	28	16.4
2018	4	212	226	438	29	15.1

²² [UNICEF \(2021\). Generation Unlimited: The Well-being of Young People in Montserrat FACT SHEET. July 2021](#)

2019	3	194	218	412	29	14.2
Secondary school enrollment by sex						
Years	# of Secondary Schools	Male	Female	Total	# of Teachers	Pupil/Teacher Ratio
2016	1	164	163	327	36	9.1
2017	1	155	162	317	36	8.8
2018	1	160	162	322	37	8.7
2019	1	161	149	310	37	8.4

Source: Ministry of Education / Statistics Department

The primary education repetition rate was 2 percent; data on repetition rates at the secondary education level are not available. Boys (3 percent) were three times more likely than girls (1 percent) to repeat primary grades. Montserrat's Gross Enrollment Rate for tertiary education is 105 percent, the highest in the Eastern Caribbean. The average gross enrollment rate for tertiary education is 44 percent in the Eastern Caribbean.

Similarly, it was shown that in Montserrat during the 2018-2019 period, 76 percent of primary education teachers were trained, a figure that is slightly above the average for both OECS Member States and the Eastern Caribbean Area, which stood at 72 percent and 70 percent respectively. However, at the secondary education level, only 46 percent of teachers were trained, below the OECS and Eastern Caribbean averages of 60 percent and 61 percent, respectively.

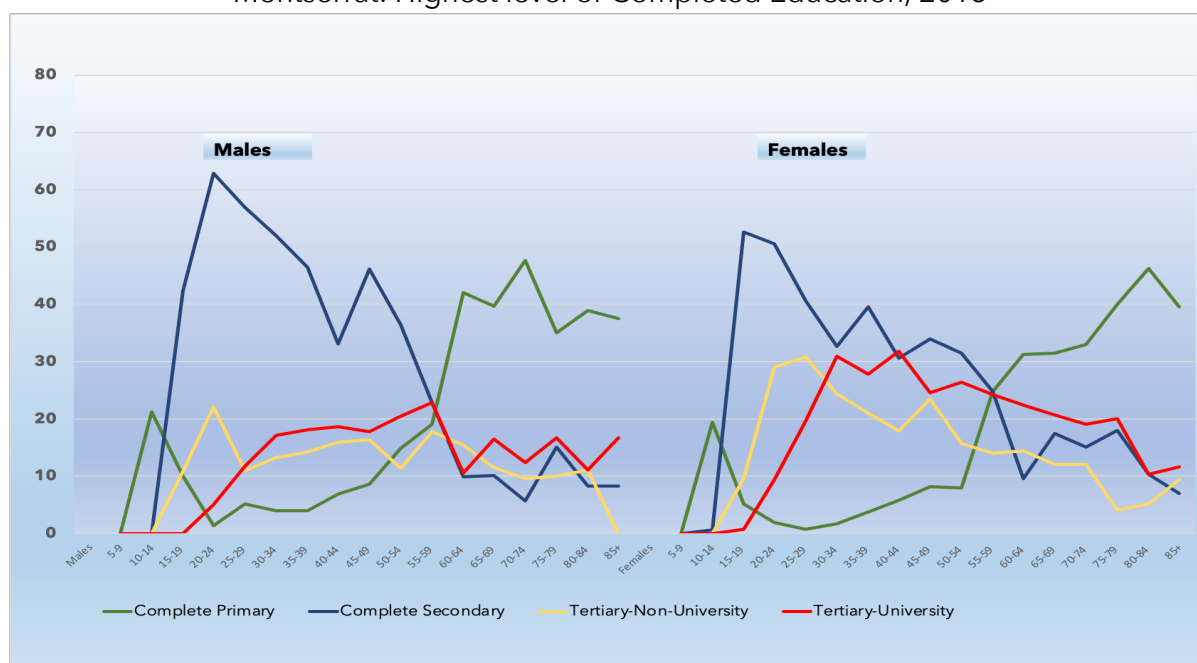
According to the data of the Key Finding Report of the Intercensal Population Count and Labour Force Survey in 2018²³, 1.5 percent of Montserrat's population aged 15 and over had yet to complete formal education, a slight increase from 1.3 percent in 2011. Those who had finished only primary education accounted for 15.7 percent, decreasing from 22.8 percent in 2011. For the population aged 20 and over, 31.2 percent had completed secondary education, up from 24.7 percent in 2011. Furthermore, there was an increase in tertiary education completion among those aged 25 and over, from 17.2 percent in 2011 to 20.7 percent in 2018.

The same source²⁴ shows that the adult population's completed education level is relatively high (Figure 10). In the 20-44-year age group, 79.6 percent of males and 86.9 percent of females have at least complete secondary education. In contrast, 29.4 percent of males and 49.3 percent of females have tertiary education. After the age of 60, these figures decline. This shows the progress in education of the new generations. The graph below details the profile of educational qualifications by age group. It shows a considerable improvement in qualifications over time.

²³ [Intercensal Population Count and Labour Force Survey 2018 Key Findings Report. Montserrat Statistics Department, June 2019.](#)

²⁴ Own calculations

Figure 10
 Montserrat: Highest level of Completed Education, 2018



Source: Intercensal Count and Labour Force Survey 2018

One of the most salient facts is the significant differences by sex in the level of education attained. The proportion of post-secondary education in women is substantially higher than in men, particularly between the ages of 25 and 50. Either men are being left behind, or the propensity to emigrate of more educated men is higher in men than in women.

1.2.7. Health care

Montserrat's Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) is committed to reforming and improving the health system to make it more integrated, equitable, and focused on primary care. The ministry's strategic plan for 2019-2022 outlined a shift from hospital-based secondary care to a community-based, preventive primary care model—this shift aimed to promote health and prevent disease, reducing the need for costlier secondary medical interventions.

However, rebuilding Montserrat's health system has been slow, and there still needs to be an identified basic package of care on the island. Also, the charging system could be more efficient, and charges are inconsistently applied. Private insurance arrangements, for example, exclude persons with pre-existing conditions and are subsidised primarily for civil servants, who constitute around half of the island's working population.

Montserrat's total health expenditure is only around 13 percent of total government expenditure, below the global average of 15.5 percent. Although the volcanic eruption in Montserrat was over 25 years ago, the only hospital on the island is a converted school with a limited range of facilities. The hospital provides casualty, medical, surgical,

obstetric, and paediatric services, but each remains vulnerable, and the range of services is negligible.²⁵

Primary healthcare services in Montserrat²⁶ are delivered through district clinics, which provide community care and make referrals to the hospital, specialists, or other agencies like the Social Services Department as necessary. Primary Care serves as the initial point of contact for health advice or treatment, encompassing a range of services from doctor's clinics and pharmacies to specialized care like dentistry and ophthalmology²⁷.

The primary health care system also includes a dental clinic, environmental health department, health promotion unit, nutrition department, and mental health unit, offering a comprehensive health support network. The island is equipped with one dental clinic. The main facility for secondary care is the Glendon Hospital, which is supplemented by basic laboratory tests, pharmacy services, routine diagnostic imaging, essential physiotherapy, nutrition and dietetics services, outpatient clinics, accident and emergency services, ambulance services, surgical operations and biomedical maintenance. Access to accident and emergency services and related diagnostics incurs a nominal fee.

Montserrat, tertiary care, and specialized medical procedures are available through overseas referrals.²⁸ Three homes provide long-term geriatric care for older people. Within the hospital compound, the Margetson Memorial and Hill View Homes offer high-dependence care services, such as bathing, feeding, and toileting assistance. The Golden Years home caters to seniors who can live more independently, supporting those in less dependent living situations.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) developed a Strategic Plan for 2019-2022 to address health challenges. This plan focuses on building a more robust health system anchored by a new 'SMART' Hospital and enhanced primary healthcare. It aims to increase healthcare access, promote social participation, and encourage collaborative government efforts.

In a UNICEF survey conducted in 2022 across seven Caribbean nations (Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, Montserrat, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago)²⁹, Montserrat exhibited the highest levels of vaccine hesitancy. The survey showed that over 70 percent of parents with children in primary and pre-primary education were unwilling to vaccinate their kids. The hesitancy remained high among

²⁵ Craig Brewin (2022). Disability and Health Development in Montserrat: My Presentation to the University of the West Indies Disability Conference. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/disability-health-development-montserrat-my-west-indies-craig-brewin>

²⁶ PAHO (2008). Health Systems and Services Profile Montserrat 2008. Area of Health Systems and Services HSS-SP Office of Eastern Caribbean Cooperation Barbados. Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization

²⁷ See <https://www.gov.ms/government/ministries/ministry-of-health-and-social-services/primary-health-care/>

²⁸ PAHO (2008). Idem.

²⁹ UNICEF, USAID (2022). Montserrat COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy Survey Report 2022. UNICEF Office for the Eastern Caribbean Area, Barbados.

parents of older children, with more than 60 percent opposing vaccination at secondary and post-secondary levels.

1.2.8. Social protection

Montserrat's social protection framework, established under the Social Welfare Act of 2013, offers various benefits, as outlined in the table. These benefits include social welfare for those over 60 without support, rental, incidental grants for necessities like medical expenses, school supplies, and hardship payments. There's also support for school-related costs, such as subsidized transport and lunches, along with services for older people, like Meals on Wheels and home care.

These Social Welfare benefits are primarily funded by the beneficiaries themselves through the Montserrat Social Security Fund. Employees contribute 4 percent of their wages, while their employers add another 5 percent. Self-employed individuals contribute a higher rate of 8 percent. However, individuals of pensionable age are not required to contribute to this fund. Combining this with the detailed assistance programs, the social protection mechanisms in Montserrat are comprehensive, addressing the needs of various vulnerable groups, including the elderly, school children, and those facing financial hardships.

Both the Labour Code and the Employment Act make provision for women in the labour force to be granted 28 days of paid maternity leave after not less than one year of continuous service with an employer. The subject of paternity leave is not commented on in the Employment Act; however, the Labour Code grants the husband or de facto spouse, upon application, paternity leave for up to two weeks.

1.2.9. Gender Policy

The most complete assessment of gender in Montserrat was conducted in 2015 by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)³⁰. The preparation of this Country Gender Assessment (CGA) was intended to evaluate the gender dynamics and opportunities in Montserrat. The CGA examines gender roles in sectors such as the economy, education, culture, and crime to enhance gender equity. It finds that men predominantly occupy the primary economic sectors and that women's economic participation is often an extension of domestic roles. Although access to financial resources is formally gender-neutral, in practice, women access these less frequently.

This analysis establishes that education in Montserrat is in a strong position. There is a high literacy rate, and public education is free up to the secondary level. While girls and boys participate equally in primary and secondary education, women pursue tertiary education more often. The labour market shows a high level of gender segregation, with men holding most leadership roles in the public sector but not in the private sector.

³⁰ [Caribbean Development Bank \(CDB\) \(2015\). Country Gender Assessment \(CGA\)](#)

It also stresses that cultural norms strongly associate certain occupations and roles with one gender, impacting the representation of women in politics and other fields. Montserrat is peaceful, but domestic violence is a concern, and the economic cost is not well understood. Efforts to combat violence against women are ongoing but need strengthening.

The Ministry of Health, Community Services, Sports, and Youth leads gender equality efforts, but legislative backing is minimal, and international agreements like CEDAW have not been fully adopted. There is a lack of gender mainstreaming capacity, and while policies are leaning towards gender equality, significant work remains. The CGA has identified specific gender entry points for action, suggesting strategies across various sectors to promote gender equality, including agricultural policies, labour market policies, and strategies against domestic violence. It recommends establishing a gender coordinator role to effectively implement these strategies and integrate gender-sensitive indicators into all development policies and plans.

1.3. Progress in Fulfilling ICPD and SDGs

Due to its status as a UK Overseas Territory, Montserrat has very limited autonomy for signing or ratifying international treaties or conventions. In most cases, treaties that apply to Montserrat are concluded and ratified by the UK government and extended to cover Montserrat³¹. On certain occasions, however, the government of Montserrat has been authorised to conclude and ratify treaties for itself. This is particularly the case with respect to treaties or conventions regarding regional coordination and cooperation within the Caribbean region.

Montserrat is a member of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union (ECCU), and the CDB. It is not a member of international organisations such as the WHO, WTO, or UNFPA. Montserrat has neither signed nor ratified CEDAW or the ICPD Plan of Action. It does not participate in the regional follow-up meetings of ICPD or the Montevideo Consensus and has not ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

³¹ They include the following: Convention on the Rights of the Child, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right, Convention Against Discrimination in Education, Protocol to the Convention against Discrimination in Education, Environmental Modification Convention, Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, Protocol to the Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific or Cultural Materials, Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages, Montreal Protocol, Convention on the Political Rights of Women, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, International Labour Standards Convention, and, Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer.

1.3.1. Progress on reported SDG indicators

Montserrat started monitoring SDG indicators in 2018 and so far, only a limited number of indicators have been tracked, most of which come under Goals 3 and 5. The following is a list of the indicators thus far published (Table 5):

Table 5
Montserrat: Progress in the achievement of selected SDG indicators

Indicators	Value	Most recent Year
3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio	No maternal deaths since 2018	2022
3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel: Total, delivered by midwife and by both doctor and midwife	100.0, 38.0 and 62.0 percent	2020
3.2.1 Under-5 mortality rate	5	2021
3.2.2 Neonatal mortality rate	3	2021
3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age, and key populations	64.9	2020
3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population	No cases reported	2020
3.3.3 Malaria incidence per 1,000 population	No cases reported	2020
3.3.4 Hepatitis B incidence per 100,000 population	172.9	2020
3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases	No cases reported	NA
3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease (per thousands)	Males 8.1, Females 7.5, Total 7.9	2021
3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate	No suicides reported	2020
3.6.1 Death rate due to road traffic injuries	No deaths reported	2021
3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years; aged 15-19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group	10-14: 0.0 15-19: 14.8	2018-2022
3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services	100 percent	2020
3.b.3 Proportion of health facilities that have a core set of relevant essential medicines available and affordable on a sustainable basis	100 percent	2021
3. c.1 Health worker density and distribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Density of medical doctors (per 10,000 population) Density of nursing and midwifery personnel 	Total (both sex) - 10.6 Females - 8.4 Males - 12.9 Total (both sex) - 100.0 Females - 189.5 Males - 8.6	2020
4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age)	90 percent	2019

5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination based on sex	No	NA
5.5.1 Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments	0.25	2019
5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of women in senior and middle management positions 	50 percent 37 percent	2020
5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex	93.3 percent	2020
6.1.1 Proportion of population using safety managed drinking water services	99.6 percent	2018
7.1.1 Proportion of the population with access to electricity	98.4 percent	2018
8.7.1: Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age	Total: 3 percent Males: 4 percent Females: 3 percent	2018
9.2.2: Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment.	Total: 1.7 percent Males: 1.8 percent Females: 1.5 percent	2018
9.5.2: Researchers (in full-time equivalent) per million inhabitants.	4.0 percent	2018

According to UNWomen,³² as of December 2020, Montserrat faces a significant challenge, with only 9.3 percent of gender-specific SDG indicators being available. Critical gaps exist in data on violence against women, unpaid care work, labour market disparities, and gender pay gaps. Comparable methodologies for regular monitoring are lacking in critical areas such as gender-related poverty, harassment, asset access, and environmental impacts. They consider addressing these gaps vital for meeting gender-related Sustainable Development Goals in Montserrat.

1.4. National data ecosystem

As was noted before regarding the monitoring of the SDG indicators related to gender, the availability of statistical data in Montserrat for some indicators is still limited. The central statistical authority of the island, the Statistics Department of Montserrat (SDM), oversees the national Population and Housing Census. Currently, the most recent one has been conducted in 2023. In addition, SDM carried out an Intercensal Count and Labour Force Survey in 2018, which was a survey that covers the whole population, and a Labour Force Survey in 2020 in a sample of the households of the country. Most of the analysis conducted in this report was done with the Intercensal Count and Labour Force Survey in 2018 for its coverage because it took place before COVID-19.

³² [Fact sheet from UNWOMEN. Montserrat](#). Accessed November 10, 2023.

Regarding data to measure demographic components (vital events and migration), the situation is the following:

Vital events³³: The vital statistics system of Montserrat exhibits comprehensive coverage and user accessibility as key strengths. The system achieves a 100 percent registration rate for vital events, demonstrating its universality and inclusive nature, with no reports of unregistered vital events. The simplicity of the registration process is bolstered by the country's small scale, having a single office and Registrar responsible for the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system, simplifying the user experience and minimising bureaucratic hurdles. Timely registration is legally mandated, with established timeframes for the completion of registrations. Accuracy and reliability are also addressed through legal avenues that allow for correcting clerical errors post-registration. While the transition to digital records is underway, the process aims further to enhance the precision and accessibility of the data.

However, the Montserrat CRVS system faces several challenges. The protection of personal data is a significant concern. Although efforts are being made to digitise records, the full implementation of an electronic system is pending, which, once completed, is expected to improve the system's accuracy and efficiency. The system's interoperability with other government sectors remains manual, indicating that enhanced technical integration is needed to facilitate more efficient data sharing and service delivery. Lastly, Montserrat's push towards a fully digital infrastructure aims to bolster the system's sustainability and resilience, which is particularly important given the island's vulnerability to natural disasters like volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and tropical storms. This transition is crucial for ensuring the uninterrupted functioning of the CRVS system in the face of such adversities.

Migration: The impact of international migration on recent demographic trends in Montserrat is difficult to quantify precisely due to its inherent challenges. The Statistical Department of Montserrat (SDM) relies on data from migration authorities concerning arrivals and departures to estimate net migration, yet this data provides only an approximation. The fact that Montserratians are UK citizens allows them to move to other countries without significant restrictions, exacerbating the complexity of migration measurement. Similarly, migrants from other CARICOM member states can move freely within the region for work purposes without needing a working visa. This freedom of movement presents significant challenges in accurately estimating the population and understanding migration's true impact.

Montserrat will need to implement more robust mechanisms for tracking migration flows to address these difficulties, which could include the development of integrated data systems that capture information on emigration and immigration, the establishment of

³³ See UNFPA (2023). Consultancy to prepare key components of the assessment of the coverage and quality of the national Civil Registration and Vital Statistics System of Montserrat. Developed under the UN Joint SDG Fund Programme on "Integrated Population and Policy Solutions to Accelerate SDGs Achievement in Barbados and Montserrat " (Unpublished).

longitudinal studies to track migration trends over time, and collaboration with international bodies to share data and with countries of the Caribbean Region that include in their census a question about nationality and place of residence five years before the census. Improving the registration and monitoring of border crossings and establishing a system for residents to report their departure and return can also provide more accurate data. Additionally, implementing policy measures requiring employers to report about their foreign workforce may help capture CARICOM nationals' movements.

The Statistics Department of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management produces national accounts and other economic statistics in collaboration with the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports produces data on enrollment and other administrative information on the country's schools. Most of the information on epidemiology and health, as well as vital statistics, is compiled by the Glendon Hospital and published by SDM. Crime statistics are compiled by the Royal Montserrat Police Service (RMPS). Montserrat Utilities Limited (MUL) maintains water and energy consumption records. The Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Housing and Environment produces fishing and agricultural production statistics³⁴.

There are, however, some regional opinion surveys carried out by UNICEF that include Montserrat. The study on COVID vaccination hesitancy in seven Caribbean countries (Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, Montserrat, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago), carried out in 2022, was already mentioned in section 1.2.3. In 2017, UNICEF also conducted an opinion survey regarding child safeguarding in the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Turks, and Caicos Islands. In 2000, Montserrat was also included in WHO's Global Youth Tobacco Survey.

Together with Barbados, Montserrat is the recipient of a two-year USD 814,000 United Nations joint programme led by UNFPA, UNWomen and the UN Resident Coordinator Office for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean and aimed at improving access to quality, real-time demographic data and gender analysis, to support evidence-based national sustainable development policies. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Fund Joint Programme for Small Island Developing States (SIDS), "Integrated Population Data and Policy Solutions to Accelerate SDGs Achievement in Barbados and Montserrat", was launched in November of 2022³⁵.

³⁴ Due to its small size and its status as an overseas territory of the UK, Montserrat is not considered in international data collection projects such as the Demographic and Health Surveys, the World Values Surveys or the Transparency Index of Transparency International.

³⁵ The project seeks to strengthen the capacity for implementing rights-based population policies and programmes that integrate evidence on population dynamics, sexual and reproductive health, and gender equality and their links to sustainable development. Better population data will also help beneficiary Governments plan for development and better respond to crises, including natural Disasters.

2. Population Dynamics

2.1. Overview

Demographically speaking, Montserrat is one of the most fragile countries in the world due to its very small population, low fertility, and high emigration, which are aggravated by the potential dual attacks of volcanic eruptions and hurricanes. According to the projections of the UN Population Division, if trends continue, the population of Montserrat will continue to decline by 0.5-0.6 percent per year until 2050, when the total population will be 3,782.

Although the population is also expected to continue ageing, it isn't easy to make predictions about how much due to the significant effect of international migration on Montserrat's population growth and age structure. In any case, to reverse this trend, the Government would need to revitalize the economy and make the island attractive to return migrants or migrants from other countries in the region; for now, the territory seems destined for a persistent population decline, combined with further ageing.

As part of policies aimed at reverse, the Government may want to take measures in the economic, social, and demographic domains. Population trends in Montserrat are an issue that has been of some concern to the Government. The Government's goal is to get to a viable population size that will help with economic progress. For example, one strategy considered is the Diaspora Engagement Programme, geared towards strengthening the ties between Montserradians on the island and those in the diaspora to encourage a return of Montserradians to invest and provide technical assistance. The success of this program is yet to be evaluated.³⁶.

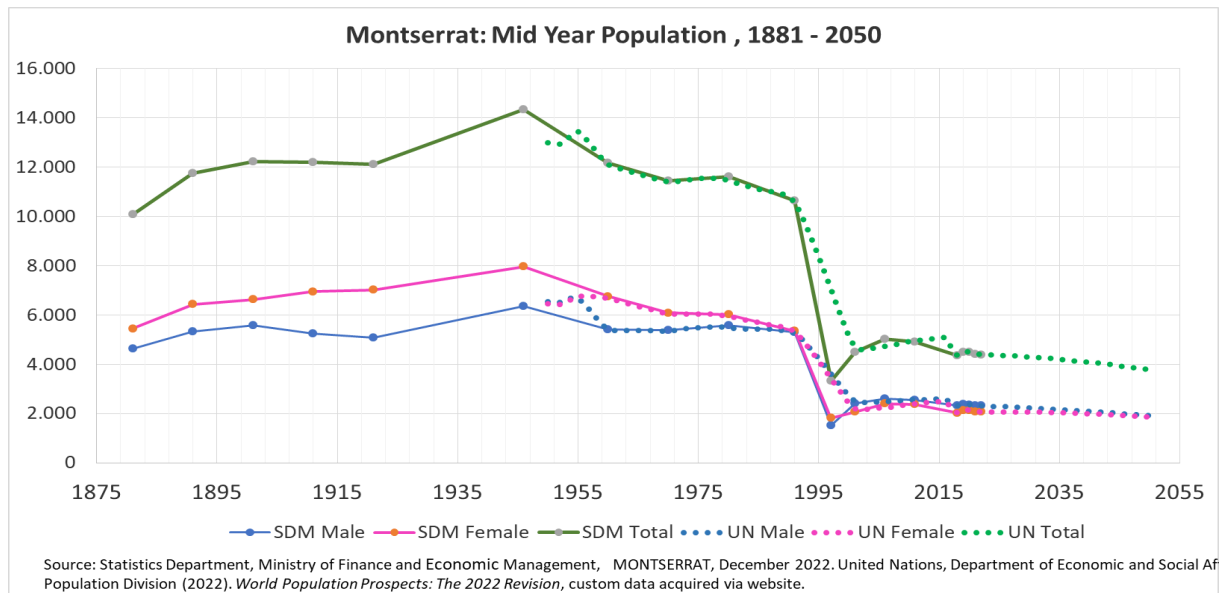
2.2. Population trajectory and growth in the context of the demographic transition

Montserrat is the fourth country (territory) with the smallest population size in the World. The most recent estimates show about 4,433 people (2022). Figure 11 shows the historical population growth of Montserrat according to the censuses and the projections up to 2050 according to SDM and the UN Population Division. After the La Soufriere Volcano eruption in 1995, the population of more than 10 thousand (10,639 in 1991) decreased by about two-thirds (3,338 in 1997). The significant dip in population after the 1995 volcanic disaster is visible. However, after reaching a peak of 14,333 inhabitants in 1946, the population had declined for several decades, reaching 10,639 in 1991, four years before the disaster. In the subsequent years, a slight recovery occurred as former residents returned to the island. Still, after reaching a post-disaster maximum of 5,033 in 2006, the trend has slowly declined, notwithstanding the efforts of the government to

³⁶ Other actions include a recovery of the agricultural lands destroyed in the 1995 volcanic disaster and a resettlement of the current exclusion zone, which could attract migrants to the island, revitalize the once vibrant agricultural sector and make the island less dependent on imported food.

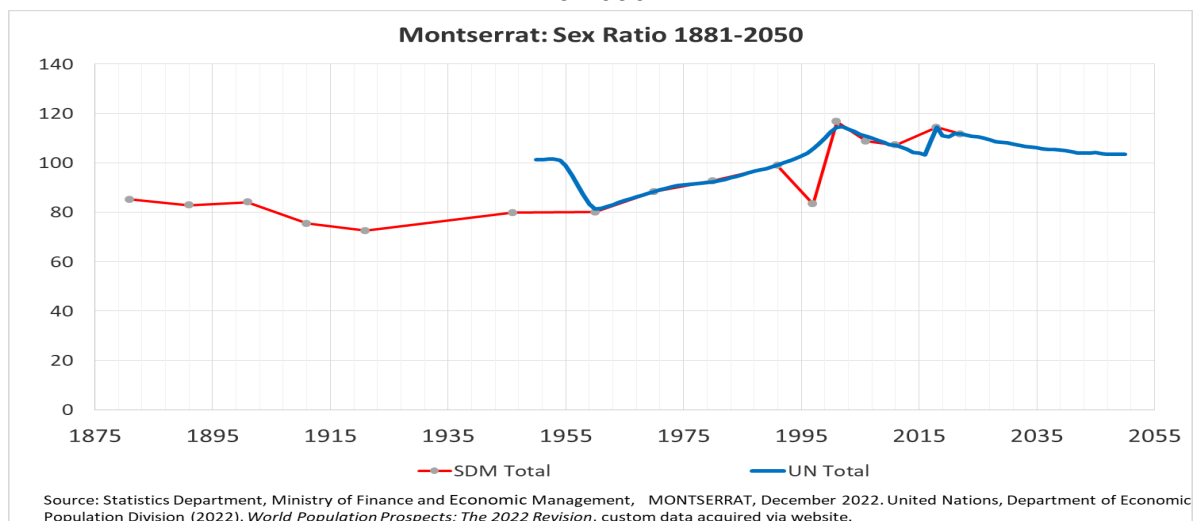
revitalize the economy and bring back former residents or bring in new migrants. Based on the current trends, the UN Population Division projects 3,782 people by 2050.

Figure 11
 Montserrat: Evolution of the population by sex since 1881 and projected up to 2050



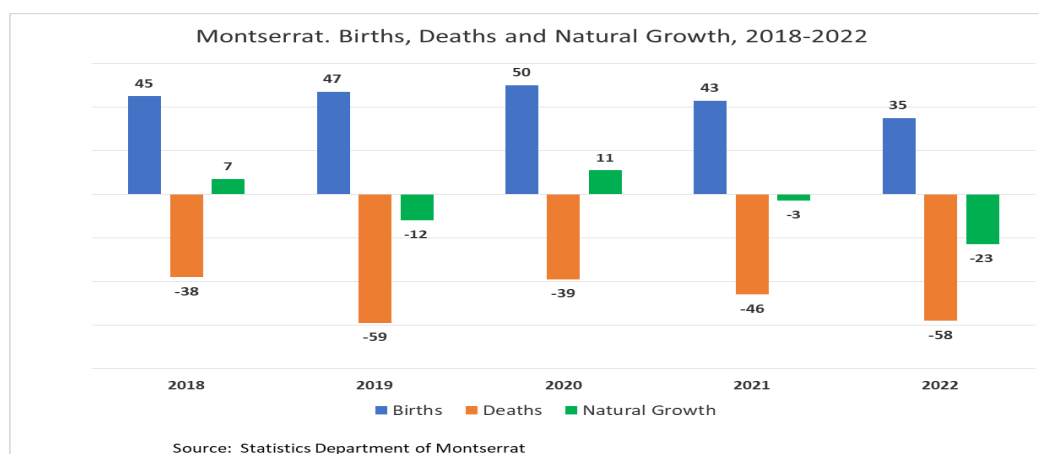
The historical tendency has been for the number of females on the island to exceed the number of males. In 1921, the overall sex ratio was as low as 72.5 males per 100 females. Over the years, however, this imbalance has diminished, and by the time of the 1995 eruption, it had disappeared

Figure 12
 Montserrat: Evolution of the overall sex ratio of Montserrat since 1881 and projected up to 2050.



For the last five years, the number of deaths has exceeded largely the number of births, implying negative natural population growth (Figure 13). The difference was particularly large in 2022 when there were only 35 births compared to 58 deaths.

Figure 13
Montserrat: Births, deaths, and natural growth, 2018-2022



2.3. Components of Demographic Change

2.3.1. Fertility

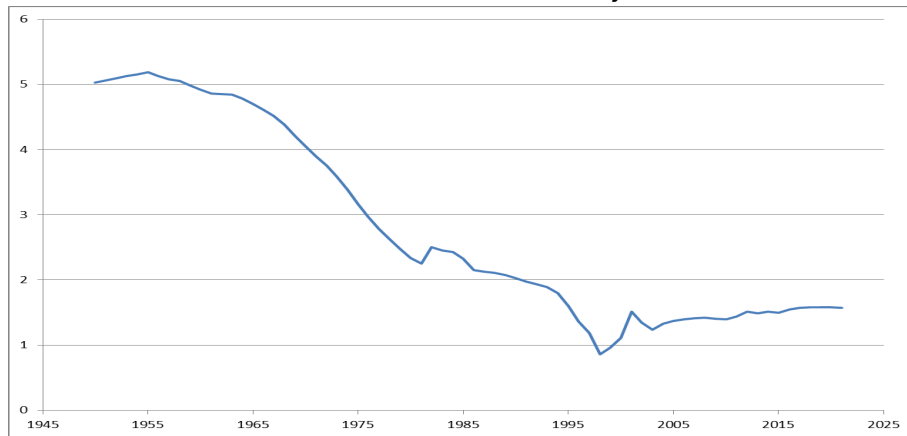
Fertility declined rapidly in Montserrat, from over five children per woman in the 1950s to below replacement level by 1988 (Figure 14). In 1998 and 1999, it dropped to below one child per woman. Since then, the TFR has partially recovered to 1.55 in 2022, which is still well below replacement fertility.

As expected, the fertility pattern peaks in the 25-29 age group (Figure 15). The average age of childbearing is 29.2. Adolescent fertility is low, at 14.8 births per thousand in the 15-19-year age group. Less than 5 percent of the births registered on the island between 2018 and 2022 were to mothers in this age group.

2.3.2. Nuptiality

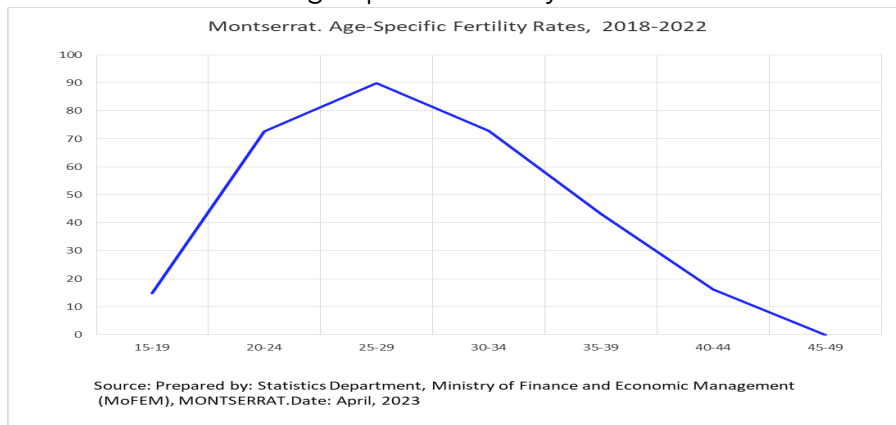
In Montserrat, in both males and females, there is a relatively high percentage of persons who never marry (Figure 16). These high values continue up to older ages: by the end of the reproductive period, half of women declare they have never married. It calls attention to the fact that the situation is not different in men, which indicates that celibacy seems not to be related to population imbalance by sex but more to a decision not to marry. These percentages are similar to those in other Caribbean countries (Figure 17) and could be an important factor contributing to the low fertility rate in Montserrat and other Caribbean countries.

Figure 14
 Montserrat: Evolution of the Total Fertility Rate, 1950-2021



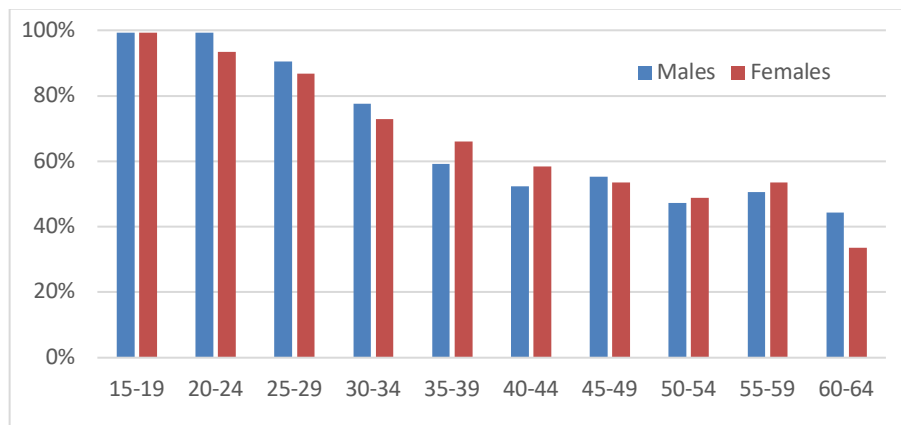
Source: UN Population Division (2022)

Figure 15
 Montserrat: Age Specific Fertility Rates 2018-2022



Source: Prepared by: Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MoFEM), MONTSERRAT. Date: April, 2023

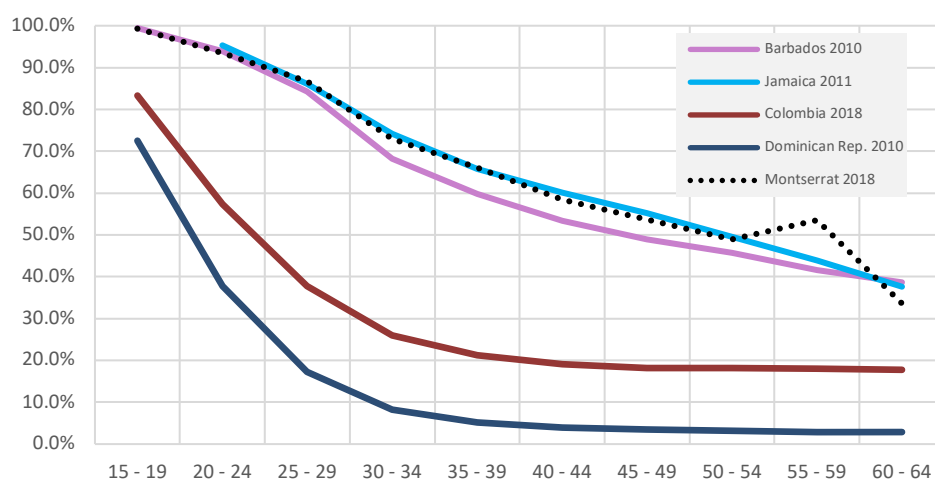
Figure 16
 Montserrat: Percentage of persons never married by age and sex.



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018.

Figure 17

Montserrat and other selected countries: Percentage of never married women by age.



Source: Population by marital status, age, sex and urban/rural residence. UN Statistics Division. [United Nations Statistics Division](https://data.un.org/). Accessed on November 13, 2023

2.3.3. Mortality

According to estimates from the UN Population Division, the life expectancy at birth in Montserrat in 2021 was 74.3 years for males and 77.2 years for females. Between 2016 and 2020, there were 119 male and 99 female registered deaths on the island. The average age of the male deaths was 75.6 years, and that of the female deaths was 82.4 years. No deaths were registered of children under the age of 10, and only one death in the 10-19 age group. The average Crude Death Rate for 2018-2022 was 9.0 per thousand: 10.0 for males and 8.0 for females.

In terms of causes of death (Table 6), over half of all deaths in Montserrat are caused by non-communicable diseases. By far, the most prominent cause was that of diseases of the heart and circulatory system (112 deaths), followed by allergic endocrine system metabolic disorders (38) and malignant neoplasms (37). There were only 16 deaths due to infectious and parasitic diseases, in addition to 13 diseases of the respiratory system, including fatalities from COVID-19. No deaths due to AIDS were recorded, and the Ministry of Health has no record of anyone living with AIDS on the island. The Ministry did communicate in 2019, however, that there were 11 recorded HIV-positive cases here, 2 of which were new cases recorded in 2018.

2.3.4. Migration

Emigration. Migration is the principal component of Montserrat's demographic dynamic. While the number of births and deaths hovers around 45 per year, with the latter usually slightly larger than the former, the average annual number of immigrants to the country from 2016 to 2020 was almost twice as large (86).

Table 6
Montserrat: Deaths by cause and sex 2016-2021

CAUSE OF DEATH	Total	Males	Females
Infective & parasitic diseases	16	11	5
Malignant neoplasms (cancers)	37	20	17
Allergic endocrine system metabolic disorders	38	22	16
Disease of the blood & blood forming organs	0	0	0
Disease of the nervous system and sense organs	5	3	2
Disease of the heart and circulatory system	112	61	51
Diseases of the respiratory system	13	6	7
Diseases of the digestive system	6	4	2
Diseases of the genitourinary system	5	2	3
Congenital abnormalities	0	0	0
Certain conditions originating in the perinatal period	0	0	0
Signs, symptoms & ill-defined conditions	1	1	0
All other causes	25	11	14
Mental and behavioural disorders	2	0	2
Disease of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue	1	0	1
Disease of the skin and subcutaneous tissue	3	1	2
Total	264	142	122

Note: Coding of deaths has not been done yet for 2022

Source: Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MoFEM), February 2023.

Given that total growth is slightly negative, a similar number of migrants must have left the country during the same period. One of the determinants of this migration, which is shared by several other countries in the Caribbean region, is the mass emigration of working-age individuals, especially those with high skills, to countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Antigua and Barbuda, the US Virgin Islands and Canada - in order of importance³⁷. One of the areas more affected is health and education due to the hiring of professionals like teachers, nurses, and doctors from abroad. Because of this, many of the people who had this profile have left. This exodus of talent has resulted in pronounced skills gaps in critical sectors like education, health, and information technology within these Caribbean nations. The departure of these skilled professionals is a significant concern, as it hampers the region's ability to maintain and develop these essential sectors.

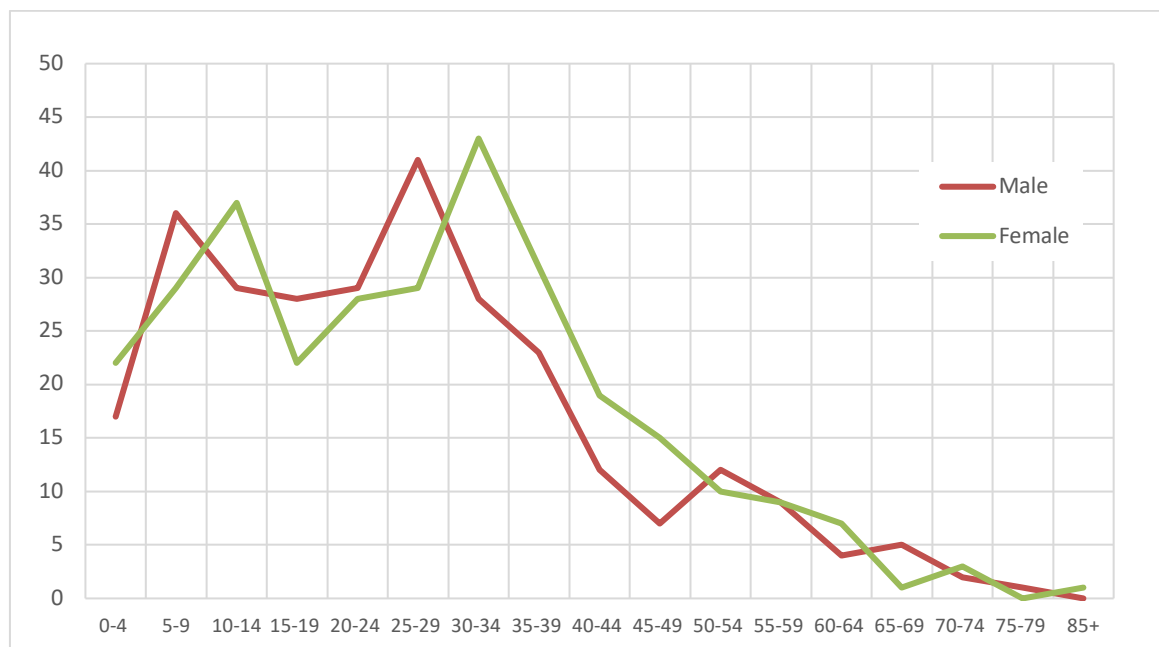
Montserratians in the UK, including Montserratian-born immigrants to the UK and their British-born descendants, constitute the second largest number of overseas British citizens living in the UK (after Gibraltarians). The 2011 UK census counted their number as 7,284, almost 50 percent more than the 4,922 persons living on the island then.

³⁷ United Nations, DESA-Population Division and UNICEF (2014). *Migration Profiles - Common Set of Indicators*. <https://esa.un.org/migmgprofiles/indicators/indicators.htm>.

Immigration: Immigration is not without its problems. The assimilation of new immigrant groups into various societal segments remains minimal. Immigrants frequently encounter stigma, and friction between citizens and non-citizens is a common occurrence. Additionally, Montserratians residing overseas are concerned that the current demographic makeup, dominated by immigrants, significantly dilutes Montserratian cultural heritage³⁸.

The 2018 Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count provide information on immigrants in the last five years. Data from this source shows that from 2013 to 2018, 589 people arrived, representing 13% of the island's total population. Figure 18 shows the age profile of these migrants. A distinctive feature of this graph is the large number of children under age 15, mainly under age 5. This suggests that migrants typically move with their families, including children. The relatively small difference between the total number of male (283) and female (306) migrants during this period points in the same direction. Of these 589 immigrants in the last five years, 15 were Montserratians, which means the diaspora is not returning to the country as expected. At the same time, the data also shows that 3 of each four arriving in Montserrat in the last five years came from 6 countries: Jamaica, the UK, Guyana, Dominica, the Dominican Republic and Haiti (Figure 19).

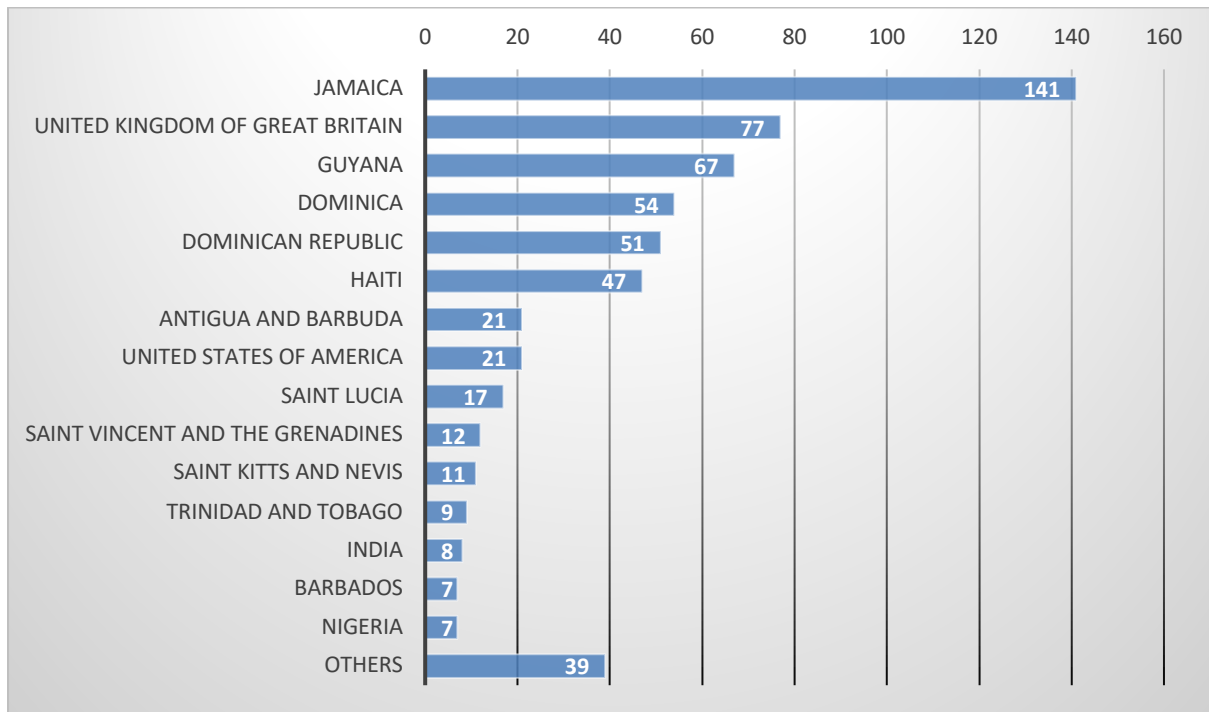
Figure 18
Montserrat: Immigrants during the period 2013-2018 by age group and sex



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count 2018.

³⁸ Monteil, C., & Simmons, P. (2017). Immigration in Montserrat after the Volcanic Disaster: A Tool and a Challenge for the Recovery of the Island. In *Migrants in Disaster Risk Reduction: Practices for Inclusion* (pp. 104-109). <https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/2018-07/Migrants-in-DRR.pdf>.

Figure 19
 Montserrat: Immigrants during the period 2013-2018 by place of birth



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018

2.3.5. Forced migration/Human trafficking/Smuggling of migrants

The most significant instance of forced migration from the island was the exit of 60-70 percent of the island's population because of the Soufrière Hills volcano eruption in 1995. It is estimated that 35 percent of the population migrated to the UK and 25 percent to other Caribbean islands. By 1997, the population had been reduced to 3,338 persons, down from 10,639 in 1991. Some of these inhabitants later returned; by 2006, the population was 5,033. However, as noted above, many of the refugees never came back. In 2011, the number of Montserratians and their descendants in the UK was larger than the island's population.

There is no systematic data on human trafficking or smuggling of migrants to or out of Montserrat. In 2022, the Royal Montserrat Police Service (RMPS) initiated a swift investigation into a suspected human trafficking network located in Montserrat's southern region, particularly in the Gingoos area. Five Haitian men were identified who aided the RMPS in their investigation, providing information on connections to individuals on the island and the scope of human trafficking activities³⁹.

³⁹ Report from ZJB Radio: <https://www.zjbradio.com/news/2022/1/11/police-investigate-possible-human-trafficking-on-montserrat>

2.4. Consequences of Demographic Change

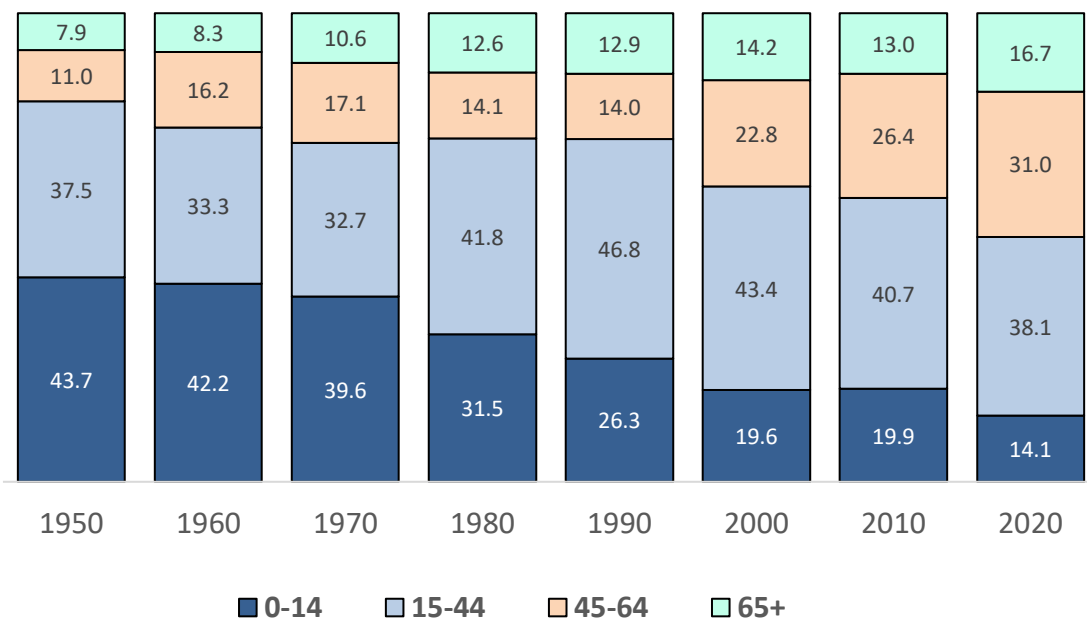
2.4.1. Changing population age structure

Over the past 70 years, the age structure of Montserrat's population has drastically changed. The primary cause for this has been the precipitous decline in the number of children under age 15, who made up 43.7 percent of the population in 1950 but currently account for less than 15 percent.

The percentage of young persons (age 15-24) reached a maximum of just over 20 percent in the early 1980s but has since fallen to less than 15 percent. Most of this change is due to the strong reduction in fertility levels since 1960. However, Figure 20 also suggests that after 1995, this accelerated ageing of the age structure may have resulted from the composition of refugees that left the territory, disproportionately concentrated in young families with small children.

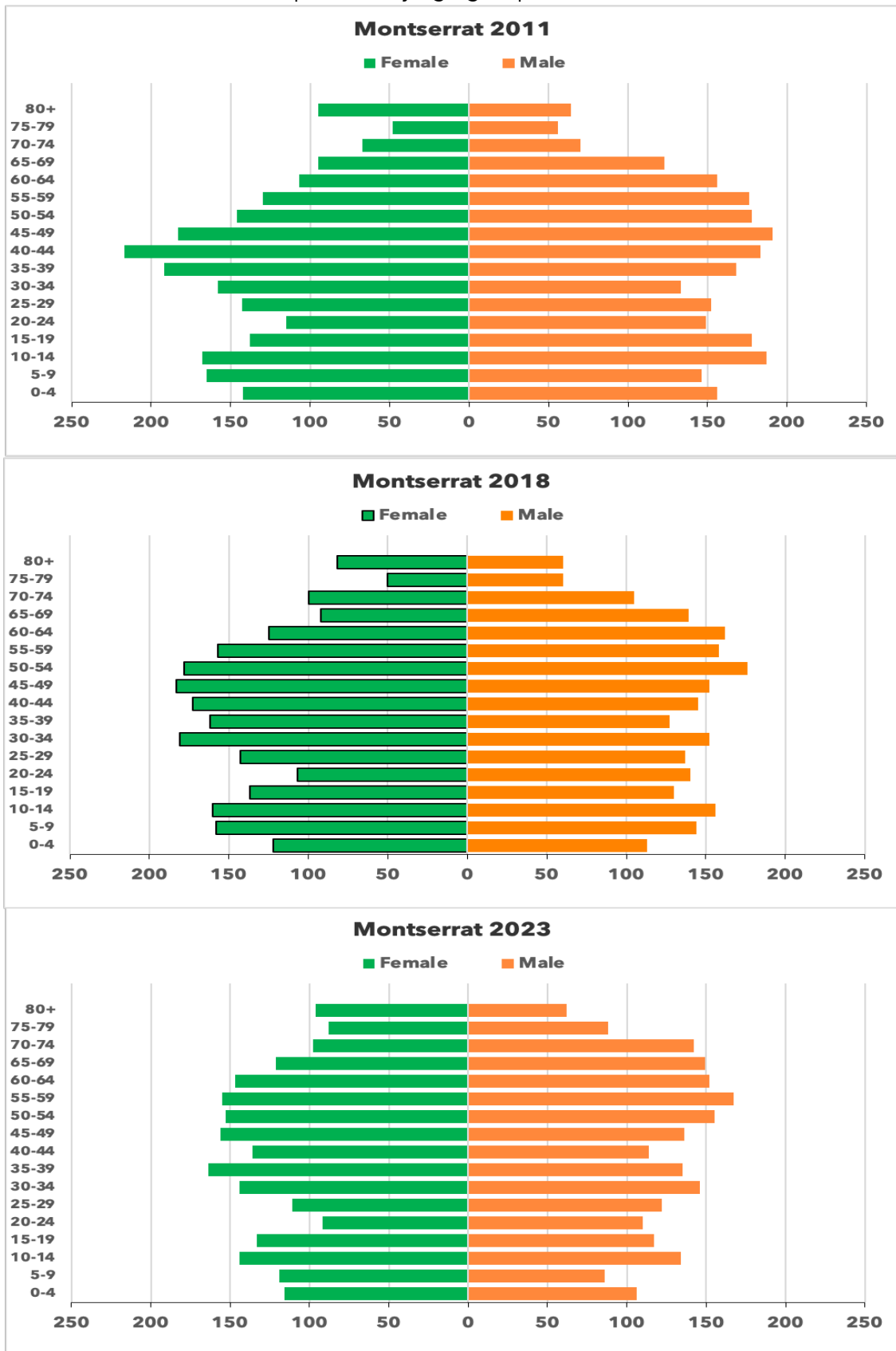
Figure 21 shows in more detail the most recent transformation in the age and sex structure of the population over the last 13 years. It shows how the number of people at younger ages has been reduced simultaneously, and the older population is increasing rapidly.

Figure 20
Montserrat: Percentual distribution of the population by ages groups, 1950-2020.



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2022). World Population Prospects 2022, Online Edition.

Figure 21
 Montserrat: Population by age groups, 2011, 2018, 2023



Source: Prepared by: Statistics Department, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management (MoFEM), Montserrat.

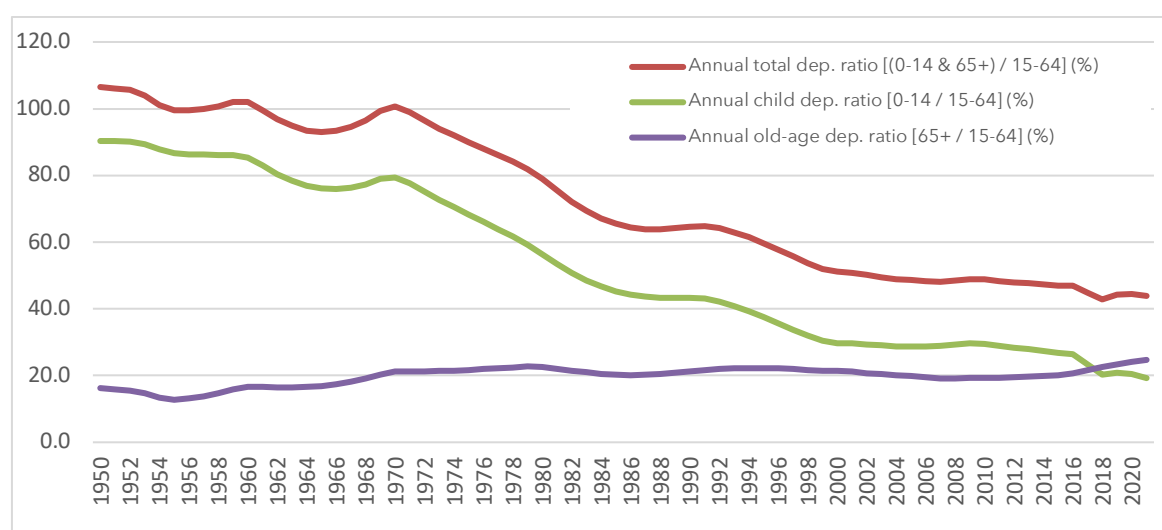
As a result, the proportion of the population aged 25-64 has increased, from about a third in 1950 to around 55 percent since 2000. As a result, the dependency ratio (100 times the population under 15 or over 65 divided by the population aged 15-64) has continued to fall, from more than 100 in the early 1950s to about 44 at present, mainly driven by the decline of the population at younger ages. The dependency ratio of older persons has been stable and just recently is starting to increase (Figure 22).

In theory, this would predispose the territory to the benefits of a first demographic dividend. However, the territory is experiencing so many other economic challenges that any benefits resulting from a more favourable age structure are not likely to be visible soon.

Effects on children and young people

With only 28 percent of the population under the age of 25, children and young people have become a distinct minority group on the island. The trend to decline of the child dependency ratio shows a favourable ratio between the size of the educational infrastructure and the number of children seeking education. It should also facilitate, *ceteris paribus*, the entry of young adults into the labour market. However, higher employment opportunities are also related to the market size, which has been narrowing because of the slower (negative) population growth in some years.

Figure 22
Montserrat: Evolution of the dependency ratio, 1950-2021



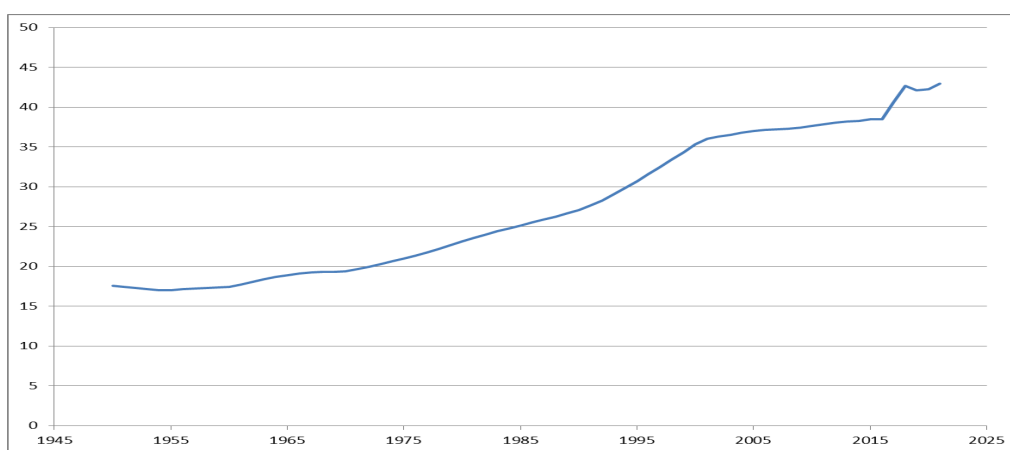
Source: UN Population Division (2022)

Ageing

Rapid ageing challenges health and pension systems. Demand for public services, especially health care, will grow because of the ageing population. Figure 23 shows that the median age in Montserrat has increased from less than 20 years in the 1950s and

1960s to about 43 years at present, the fourth highest in the Caribbean Region, after Guadeloupe, Martinique, and Puerto Rico. This has primarily been due to the drastic reduction in children under age 15. As noted earlier, the percentage of young persons (age 15-24) has also diminished, from just over 20 percent in the early 1980s to less than 15 percent. Consequently, the increase in the median age is not only due to the rise of the population over age 60 but also because of the reduction in the percentage of young people. Persons over 60 made up 7.9 percent of the population in 1950 but increased to 17.2 percent in 2021.

Figure 23
Montserrat: Evolution of the median age of the population, 1950-2021



Source: UN Population Division (2022)

Montserrat has a contributory pension system allows persons to retire after making at least 12½ years of contributions. The pensionable age was 60 years until 2011, but since then, it has been gradually raised to 65 years as of 2020⁴⁰. According to a 2020 report by the Auditor General, the Social Security Fund⁴¹ has had a sizeable yearly deficit for the past decade. Between 2015 and 2017, it more than tripled, from EC\$1.42 million to EC\$4.63 million. Financially, the system is strained due to low contribution rates and insurable earnings ceilings, which have not been adjusted for years and must be revised to cover benefits costs.

Demographically, a declining and ageing population reduce contribution revenues while increasing benefit expenditures, especially for pensions. The Fund needs to be better diversified, overly reliant on low-yield, short-term assets, and aligned with its investment policy, jeopardizing the necessary returns for benefit payouts. Large annual deficits and a rapid depletion of reserves also mark the system. These issues underscore an urgent need for reforms to ensure the system's sustainability. The Auditor General's general

⁴⁰ Data from the 2018 Labour Survey -Intercensal Count showed that the percentage of the population 50-54 and 55-69 declared as retired was 10 percent and 29 percent, respectively (unpublished).

⁴¹ Office of the Auditor General Montserrat (2020). Performance Audit of the Montserrat Social Security Fund: governance and sustainability. Marsha V E Meade Auditor-General (Ag). June 2020

assessment⁴² was that without immediate corrective action to boost contributions to the Fund, all reserves would be gone within as little as 3 to 4 years.

As was mentioned in section 1.1.2, to face the challenges associated with ageing, the country has a National Policy on the Care of Older Persons 2020-2026⁴³, which seeks to prioritize educational programs that encourage community-based care for older people, ensuring they can remain at home surrounded by their loved ones. It emphasizes the need for facilities that deliver adequate care and protection within a suitable environment, thus enhancing their quality of life and that of the disabled population. Providing basic human necessities is deemed essential, fostering support mechanisms for the self-reliance and independence of older individuals. Where feasible, the policy calls for appropriate resource allocation to safeguard older people's social and economic welfare.

Additionally, the policy advocates for protective measures and care through support services that honour the dignity of older persons, allowing them to lead productive lives. It supports the promotion of both formal and informal care services that facilitate individual's ability to stay within their family units. The initiative also involves strategies and programs aimed at reshaping the societal perception of older people in Montserrat, actively challenging age discrimination.

Moreover, the development of programs that encourage the economic participation of the elderly is encouraged, offering them opportunities to contribute with their expertise, skills, and experience. Lastly, the policy aims to reinforce the collaboration between non-governmental organizations and statutory bodies, ensuring a united approach to enhancing care in older ages.

2.4.2. Changing spatial distribution

Since 1995, the spatial distribution of the population of Montserrat has dramatically changed. Today, the population of Montserrat is predominantly concentrated in the island's northern region, primarily because of the volcanic activity of La Soufrière. The eruption of this volcano, which began in 1995 and continued for several years, had a devastating impact on the southern part of the island, including the capital city, Plymouth. This catastrophic event led to the forced evacuation and displacement of thousands of residents from their homes, causing them to seek refuge in the safer northern areas.

Of the three Parishes that make up the island, only the Parish of St. Peter, in the northwest, is inhabited now. The other two are known as the exclusion zone, which is still considered too dangerous for resettlement. Consequently, the Northern region, which includes towns such as Salem and Olveston, became the primary hub for the population, offering essential services, infrastructure, and a relatively safer environment. The country's population now lives in twenty villages (only 19 appear in the data). There is no data

⁴² <http://audit.gov.ms/?p=509>

⁴³ Government of Montserrat. Ministry of Health and Social Services (2020). National Policy on the Care of Older Persons, 2020-2026

regarding internal migration in the Labour Force Census and Intercensal Count 2018. As shown in the following chapters, the villages have essential socio-economic and demographic differences.

While St. Peter Parish makes up only about 40 percent of the island's territory, the current population is also close to 40 percent of what it was before 1995. This means that the effective demographic density at the Parish level has remained the same to a significant extent. There needs to be systematic data to assess whether the current population of St. Peter Parish consists mainly of families that already resided there before 1995 and to what extent former residents of the other two Parishes have sought refuge there. According to some accounts, however, 90 percent of those who remained on the island after 1995 had to change residence at least once during the years immediately after the eruption.⁴⁴

2.4.3. Changing households and family structures and support system

Household sizes in Montserrat have been negligible since 1990, with an average size of 2.76 in 1991 (Table 7). This fell to 2.16 in 2001, suggesting that the refugees from the 1995 volcanic disaster consisted mainly of larger-than-average families. Since then, the size has stabilized around 2.1, with almost half of the households comprising only one person. In 2011, the number of children per household was as low as 0.42. One of the most significant indicators in Table 7 is the percentage of uniparental households. After 2001, almost half of the households comprise only one person. Of the households counted in the 2011 census, 38 percent were female-headed. This indicator increased to 41.3 percent in 2018.

Table 7
Montserrat: Number of persons by household size, 1991-2018

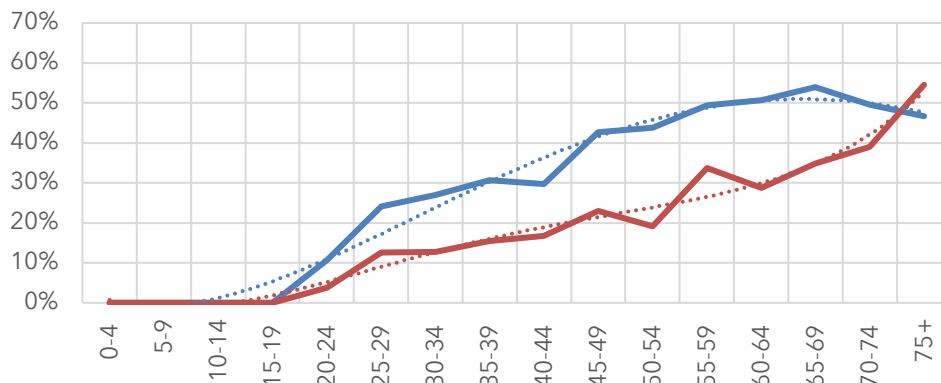
Number of Persons	1991		2001		2011		2018	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
One Person	1,314	34.1	1,024	49.2	1,146	49.1	1,064	47.3
Two Persons	871	22.6	464	22.3	538	23.0	570	25.3
Three Persons	568	14.7	272	13.1	297	12.7	285	12.7
Four Persons	436	11.3	176	8.5	185	7.9	202	9.0
Five Persons	288	7.5	86	4.1	118	5.1	86	3.8
Six Persons	181	4.7	36	1.7	32	1.4	30	1.3
More than Six Persons	197	5.1	24	1.2	19	0.8	14	0.6
Total	3,855	100.0	2,082	100.0	2,335	100.0	2,251	100.0
Population	10,639		4,491		4,922		4,649	
Average household size	2.76		2.16		2.11		2.07	

Source: DSM, based on 1991, 2001, and 2011 Censuses and 2018 Intercensal Count

⁴⁴ Edward Clay, Christine Barrow, Charlotte Benson, Jim Dempster, Peter Kokelaar, Nita Pillai, and John Seaman (1999). An Evaluation of HMG's Response to the Montserrat Volcanic Emergency Volume I. EVALUATION REPORT EV635. Department for International Development (DFID) December 1999.

Looking in more detail at those living alone, 62 % are males and 38 % females. When this proportion is calculated by age, it is observed that at most ages, men outnumber women in their probability of living alone (Figure 24). Only after 75 do these values tend to equalize.

Figure 24
 Montserrat: Percentage of the population living alone by age and sex.



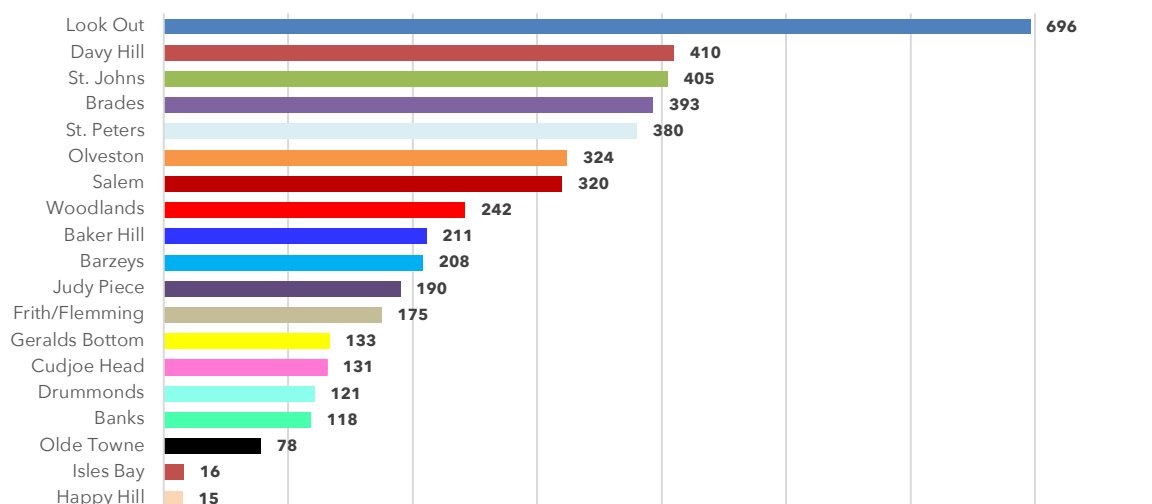
Source: Labour Force Census and Intercensal Count 2018.

2.5. Population Composition

2.5.1. Geography

The population of Montserrat is unequally distributed in its territory, with most of the population living in seven villages, particularly Look Out, Davy Hill, St. Johns, Brades, St. Peters, Olveston, and Salem (Figure 25).

Figure 25
 Montserrat: Population by Village, 2018



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018

2.5.2. Citizenship

About 40 percent of Montserrat's population still needs Montserratian citizenship. Most come from Guyana, Jamaica, the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Dominican Republic, Dominica, and Haiti. However, there are apparent differences by age (Table 8). Between the ages 20 and 40, the proportion of Montserratians is less than 50 percent. This may result in Montserratians emigrating for work or studying abroad (Figure 26).

Table 8

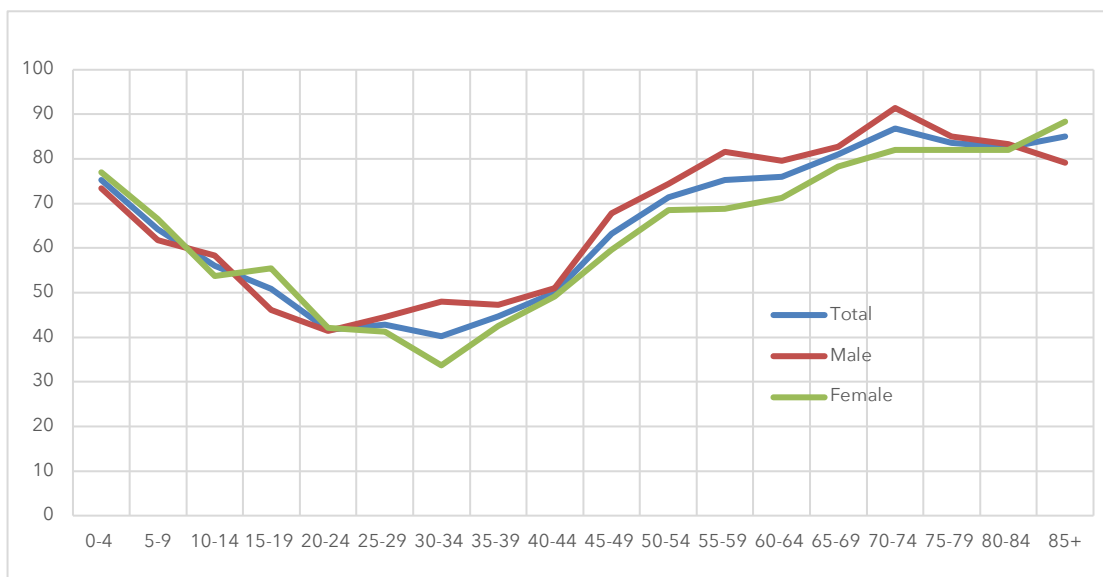
Montserrat: Age Composition of the population by citizenship, 2018.

Age	Country of Citizenship													Total
	Montserrat	Guyana	Jamaica	United Kingdom & Ireland	Dominican Republic	Dominica	Haiti	United States of America	Antigua and Barbuda	Saint Kitts and Nevis	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Saint Lucia	Rest of the countries	
	Total (%)													
0-4	75.3	0.9	4.7	5.1	4.3	1.7	0.4	0.9	1.7	0.0	0.4	0.9	3.8	100.0
5-9	64.2	3.6	8.6	6.6	1.0	3.6	3.3	2.0	1.0	1.3	0.3	0.7	3.6	100.0
10-14	56.0	4.4	9.8	9.5	5.4	2.2	3.8	0.9	2.5	1.9	0.0	0.9	2.5	100.0
15-19	50.9	9.4	11.2	10.9	3.4	3.4	0.7	1.5	3.7	0.4	0.7	0.7	3.0	100.0
20-24	41.7	20.6	13.0	2.4	4.9	4.9	1.2	1.6	2.0	0.0	1.2	1.2	5.3	100.0
25-29	42.9	16.8	15.4	3.6	5.4	4.6	2.9	1.1	1.4	0.4	1.1	0.7	3.9	100.0
30-34	40.2	18.0	16.2	2.1	4.5	5.4	4.2	1.2	0.3	0.9	1.2	0.9	4.8	100.0
35-39	44.6	16.3	12.8	2.4	6.2	4.8	5.2	0.7	2.4	0.0	1.0	0.0	3.5	100.0
40-44	50.0	11.6	10.7	0.9	6.6	2.2	3.1	0.6	1.3	1.6	1.6	0.9	8.8	100.0
45-49	63.3	11.6	6.6	3.0	5.1	1.2	1.2	0.0	1.2	0.6	1.2	1.2	3.9	100.0
50-54	71.5	7.3	3.7	3.7	2.0	4.8	1.1	0.3	1.7	0.6	0.6	0.0	2.8	100.0
55-59	75.2	5.4	3.5	5.7	1.6	1.0	1.3	2.5	0.0	1.6	0.3	1.0	1.0	100.0
60-64	76.0	6.3	1.0	3.8	0.7	1.7	0.7	2.4	1.4	0.7	0.3	0.0	4.9	100.0
65-69	81.0	2.6	0.9	5.2	0.0	0.9	0.4	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.0	3.5	100.0
70-74	86.8	0.5	0.0	3.9	0.0	0.5	0.5	2.4	0.5	1.0	0.5	0.5	2.9	100.0
75-79	83.6	0.0	0.0	6.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.2	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.9	100.0
80-84	82.7	0.0	0.0	10.7	0.0	1.3	0.0	2.7	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.3	100.0
85+	85.1	1.5	0.0	6.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	3.0	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	1.5	100.0
Total	61.9	8.8	7.6	4.7	3.3	2.8	2.0	1.6	1.4	0.8	0.7	0.6	3.7	100.0
Total (Numbers)	2,825	402	349	215	151	129	91	75	62	35	33	28	171	4,566

Source: Labour Force Census and Intercensal Count 2018.

Figure 26

Montserrat: Percentage of the population with Montserratian citizenship, 2018



Source: Labour Force Census and Intercensal Count 2018.

However, among the older people (65+), this proportion is much higher (around 85 percent), probably resulting from the Montserratians diaspora that comes back to the country to retire combined with the arrival at these ages of the larger generations from the past.

As can be seen in the following table (Table 9), 75 persons born in Montserrat do not have Montserratian nationality, which results from the fact that to get the nationality, a person born in the country must live at least eight years. The same explains that 365 persons not born in Montserrat have the nationality.

Table 9

Montserrat: Population by nationality and place of birth, 2018

Nationality	Place of Birth		
	Montserrat	Other country	Total
Montserrat	2,460	365	2,825
Other Country	75	1,666	1,741
Total	2,535	2,031	4,566

Source: Labour Force and Intercensal Count 2018.

2.5.3. Religion

Most of the population (90 percent) has one religion, but the proportion of people with no religion has increased doubled in the last ten years (Table 10). The predominant religions are Anglican, Pentecostal/Full Gospel, Seventh Day Adventist, and Roman Catholic.

Table 10

Montserrat: Population by religion, 2011-2020

Summary: Religion			
Religion	2011	2018	2020
Anglican	19.5	17.7	17.8
Church of God	7.7	6.7	3.9
Methodist	15.9	13.9	15.0
Pentecostal/Full Gospel	16.5	16.1	17.1
Roman Catholic	12.5	11.4	11.4
Seventh Day Adventist	13.9	15.0	15.7
No Religion	4.5	7.9	9.4
All other categories	9.6	11.3	9.8
Total	100	100	100

Source: Statistics Department of Montserrat.

2.6. Future expected trends

The small number of births and deaths and the lack of reasonable estimates of migration make it difficult to project the country's population in the long term (Table 11). United Nations has projected the following figures for Montserrat. UN estimates that without migration and keeping fertility almost constant, the population will be reduced by a third in the next 30 years due to the increase in death and birth rates. The demographic ageing process will accelerate. The population's median age would increase from 42 to 48 years during the same period.

Table 11
Montserrat: Demographic Indicators by United Nations Population Prospects, 2020-2050

Year	Life expectancy at birth	Total population by sex	Crude birth rate	Crude death rate	Natural growth rate
2020	75.3	4,500	9.23	11.12	-1.89
2025	76.3	4,360	9.55	11.94	-2.40
2030	77.1	4,301	9.51	13.07	-3.55
2035	77.8	4,211	8.96	14.11	-5.15
2040	78.6	4,081	8.20	14.97	-6.77
2045	79.3	3,940	7.70	15.63	-7.93
2050	80.0	3,781	7.75	16.16	-8.41

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2023). Data Portal, custom data acquired via website. United Nations: New York. Available from <https://population.un.org/DataPortal/> (accessed 01 June 2023).

Another modelling exercise has been done for this document, changing some of the parameters of the United Nations projection. First, fertility was projected using two hypotheses: First Scenario: Fertility remains constant throughout the period. Second Scenario: Fertility increases so that by the end of the period, the total fertility rate increases to 3.2 (more than double).

The results show that keeping 2050 at the same size as 2020 would require an enormous and highly improbable increase in fertility. This exercise shows that fertility increase alone will play a minor role in ensuring the country's demographic resilience. Increasing immigration and reducing emigration seem to be the only option available (Tables 12 and 13).

Table 12
 Montserrat: Demographic Indicators in Scenario I, 2020-2050.
 Population Modelling Exercise

Indicators		2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Population	Females	2,342	2,292	2,270	2,243	2,207	2,161	2,107
	Males	2,284	2,219	2,165	2,103	2,039	1,978	1,918
	Total	4,626	4,511	4,435	4,346	4,247	4,139	4,026
% 65+	Females	16.9	17.0	18.4	21.3	23.3	24.8	26.2
	Males	18.0	19.0	20.7	22.3	22.6	22.7	21.9
	Total	17.4	18.0	19.5	21.8	23.0	23.8	24.2
Dependency Ratio	Females	52.8	48.7	50.3	54.3	59.3	63.4	67.1
	Males	53.3	50.9	55.2	59.1	60.5	61.4	59.3
	Total	53.0	49.8	52.6	56.6	59.9	62.4	63.3
Total Fertility Rates	Total	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5

Source: Modelling Exercise by NoBrainerData

Table 13:
 Montserrat Demographic Indicators in Scenario II. Montserrat, 2020-2050.
 Population Modelling Exercise

Indicators		2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Population	Females	2,342	2,298	2,297	2,309	2,333	2,363	2,402
	Males	2,284	2,226	2,193	2,170	2,165	2,180	2,214
	Total	4,626	4,525	4,490	4,479	4,498	4,544	4,616
% 65+	Females	16.9	17.0	18.2	20.7	22.0	22.7	23.0
	Males	18.0	18.9	20.4	21.6	21.3	20.6	19.0
	Total	17.4	17.9	19.3	21.1	21.7	21.7	21.1
Dependency Ratio	Females	52.8	49.1	52.1	58.8	67.5	75.0	81.0
	Males	53.3	51.4	57.2	64.1	69.5	74.0	74.2
	Total	53.0	50.2	54.5	61.4	68.5	74.5	77.7
Total Fertility Rates	Total	1.5	1.7	2.0	2.3	2.6	2.9	3.2

Source: Modelling Exercise by NoBrainerData

3. Population Health

Montserrat's healthcare system⁴⁵ is designed to provide accessible and high-quality care to all its residents, emphasizing a public health model supported by government funding and international aid, including contributions from the UK. The focus on primary healthcare services aims to ensure comprehensive coverage across the island, with a healthcare infrastructure centred around a leading hospital. Montserrat's health system is unique because there is only one Hospital that provides services to the country's whole population⁴⁶. Community health centres supplement this to facilitate primary care access.

Despite these efforts, the system grapples with challenges such as limited resources for advanced treatments, necessitating referrals abroad for complex medical conditions⁴⁷. Recent initiatives aim to improve healthcare delivery, infrastructure, and resilience against natural disasters, highlighting the island's proactive approach to healthcare amidst its vulnerability to volcanic activities.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) is at the forefront of transforming Montserrat's health system into one more integrated, equitable, and focused primary care. This shift from a hospital-centric model to one emphasizing community and preventative care is pivotal in reducing the need for costly medical interventions and building a foundation for solid health promotion.

The MoHSS's strategic plan for 2019-2022 outlines a commitment to addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, enhancing service quality to meet international standards, and fostering community development through social safety nets and support for all life stages. This plan is underpinned by a vision for a 'SMART' Hospital initiative and more robust primary healthcare to break down access barriers and foster a more inclusive health system.

At the heart of Montserrat's health vision is creating a resilient and high-quality system that empowers citizens to manage their health effectively, ensuring prompt and easy access to affordable care. The MoHSS's commitment to primary healthcare, underlined by core values of ethics, equity, and solidarity, views health access as a fundamental human right.

This approach aims to build partnerships and promote ethical practices in healthcare provision, aspiring to provide all individuals, regardless of socio-economic status, with an essential package of quality health services. This vision aligns with the national agenda, focusing on resilience, quality, and empowerment in health and wellness for the entire Montserrat community.

⁴⁵ <https://www.gov.ms/government/ministries/ministry-of-health-and-social-services/>

⁴⁶ The Ministry of Health and Social Services of Montserrat is in the process of building a new [National Hospital](#), financed by Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office investment from the Capital Investment Programme for Resilient Economic Growth (CIPREG), with HM Governor's Office in Montserrat.

⁴⁷ Montserrat has just installed the first CT-Can machine in the country.

3.1. Health, morbidity, and mortality

3.1.1. Health and morbidity: Current situation and morbidity differentials

With current health trends, obesity, particularly in adolescents, represents a particularly crucial health issue to address. A recent school survey provided valuable information on the nutritional status, diet, and physical activity patterns of adolescents in Montserrat. In 2004, the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute reported that the prevalence of overweight and obesity was up to 15% in adolescents in some Caribbean countries. In Montserrat, that prevalence is over 25%

Nearly half of all adults visiting a health facility have diabetes, and a quarter have diabetes and hypertension. In addition, 66 percent of all hospital admissions are due to diabetes, hypertension, or both. The prevalence of diabetes in adults in Montserrat was reported to be 14 percent in 2020. However, this figure could be underreported.

Data from the Morbidity and Risk Factor Prevalence Survey conducted in 2021- 2022 shows that about one of every four men has ever used tobacco or marihuana (Table 14). These values are lower for women (6% and 10%, respectively) than for men. At the same time, the prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCD), such as hypertension (49%) and diabetes (17%), is very high. This survey data also shows that 70% of men and women have at least one NCD. These results are consistent with data on causes of death presented in Chapter II, which showed that heart and circulatory systems, allergic endocrine systems and metabolic disorders deaths were the leading causes of death in the country.

3.1.2. Environmental health-related diseases

Environmental health-related diseases, which address factors and behaviours impacting a person's surroundings, decreased Montserrat from 440 cases in 2015 to 289 in 2017. Gastroenteritis and respiratory infections were the most reported illnesses, with gastroenteritis cases rising from 85 in 2016 to 106 in 2017 and 111 in 2018. Access to safe drinking water is nearly universal, with 99% household coverage as of September 2018. Water demand is met by six springs, but storage capacity needs to be increased, highlighting the need for increased reserves. Wastewater management primarily relies on individual septic systems, with Montserrat Utilities Limited adhering to WHO standards for effluent quality.

The Ministry of Health and Social Services officially reported in September 2023 the emergence of dengue fever cases on the island, identifying confirmed and probable cases. In their statement, the Ministry highlighted the severity of dengue fever, urging individuals with symptoms to seek medical attention promptly. The Ministry's response to this health crisis strongly focuses on prevention. No data on the incidence of dengue has been available since the outbreak was detected.

Table 14
 Montserrat: Morbidity Indicators for the Population 18 +, 2021-2022

Drink/Smoking practices	Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
Ever drink	56.5	77.2	65.1
Ever smoked regularly	6.2	23.6	13.5
Ever used marijuana	10.2	23.6	15.8
2nd hand smoke exposure	5.1	13.4	8.6
NCDs prevalence			
Hypertension			48.6
Diabetes & hypertension			18.1
Diabetes			17.1
Cardiac problem & hypertension & diabetes			2.9
Kidney disease			1.9
Lung disease			1.9
Cancer & hypertension			1.9
Cardiac arrest & diabetes			1
Stroke & diabetes			1
Stroke & hypertension			1
Total with 1 NCD			70.5
Total with 2 NCD			26.7
Total with 3 NCD			2.9

Source: UK Health Security Agency (2022). Morbidity and risk factor prevalence Survey, Montserrat, February 2022. Authors: Adelle Springer, Epidemiologist & Senior Scientist, UK Overseas Territories, Global Operations, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA); Sharra Greenaway-Duberry, Chief Medical Officer, Montserrat Ministry of Health, and Social Services (MoHSS); Natalie Wright, Health Protection Lead and Consultant in Global Public Health UK Overseas Territories, Global Operations, UKHSA. The survey includes information about adult residents aged >=18 years that have resided in Montserrat for at least 6 months during the period Jan 2021 to Jan 2022.

3.1.3. Covid impacts

COVID-19 has an impact on Montserrat population health and mortality. WHO data shows that eight people died from COVID-19, most of them (7) in 2022⁴⁸. The number of cumulative cases is 1,403, almost all of them in 2022. That gives a deaths/cases ratio of 571 deaths for 100,000. In 2020, there were a total of 13 cases of COVID-19 and one death caused directly by COVID-19. In 2021, 33 identified cases. In 2022, there were 1,280 identified cases and seven deaths. In 2020,

Montserrat ranked 25th in the Region of the Americas in terms of the number of deaths from COVID-19 and 1st in 2022. By December 31, 2021, 38 percent of the country's population had at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. As of April 20, 2022 (the latest available data), only 37 percent of the population was fully vaccinated.

3.2. Universal health coverage

3.2.1. Health Service Coverage

Given the country's geography and the main hospital's proximity to all inhabitants of Montserrat, primary and secondary health service coverage is, in principle, 100%. However, medical visits and referrals require people to visit the hospital. For this to happen, public sensitisation campaigns and outreach activities are needed.

It is important for the country to reduce the impact of the prevalence of NCDs by ensuring the population has regular medical check-ups. However, this is not the case for most persons with hypertension and diabetes (Table 15). About 60% of registered diabetics did not complete an annual physical, and 66% of registered hypertensives did.

The same happens with children. The same table shows that only one of every four overweight/obese children has had access to services to which they are referred.

The country shows a positive outlook regarding immunisation coverage. Data in Table 15 show that around 96 % of the target population receive age-appropriate vaccines during the annual school health programme. The same applies to Tetanus and Diphtheria at 15 years (95%).

The good news also extends to the number of cases of local transmission of targeted vaccine-preventable diseases and the maintenance of zero instances of congenital infections (HIV, Syphilis, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C, which have been kept zero.

⁴⁸ (WHO,2024) WHO COVID-19 dashboard. Montserrat. Accessed on January 18, 3:35 PM. <https://data.who.int/dashboards/covid19/deaths?m49=500>

Table 15
Montserrat: Health Indicators, 2021-2022

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	Value
Output Indicators	
Proportion of overweight/obese children who access services to which they are referred	5/21 (24%) accessed the service
Number of pregnant women reached at dental clinic	29
% of target population receiving 3 rd dose of pentavalent vaccine	50 of 59 (85%)
% of target population receiving age appropriate vaccine during annual school health programme	Age 4-5 yrs.
	Oral Polio Virus (OPV) Booster= 96.7% (58/60)
	Diphtheria Tetanus (DT) Booster= 96.7% 58/60
	Age 15 yrs.
	Tetanus
	Diphtherias (TD) Booster= 95% (57/60)
Outcome Indicators	
Proportion of registered Diabetics who complete an annual physical	92 of 228 (40.4%)
% diabetics who had an acceptable HbA1c ($\leq 7.5\%$) at last check during 2021/22 (denominator: # diabetics who had their HbA1c checked during the last year)	77/171 or 45%
Proportion of registered Hypertensives who complete an annual physical	116 of 354 (32.8%)
Proportion of children assessed as overweight / obese	21/83 (25.3%) students aged 8-9 were assessed
Number of cases of local transmission of targeted vaccine preventable diseases	Measles = 0
	Polio = 0
	HIV = 0
	Syphilis= 0
	Hepatitis B= 0
The maintenance of zero cases of congenital infections	Hepatitis C= 0

Source: Strategic Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26. Ministry of Health and Social Services, 2023 (Draft)

3.3. Sexual and reproductive health

3.3.1. Pregnancy and delivery health services

According to a PAHO report⁴⁹, the territory has been successful in maternal health. All pregnant women received prenatal care, and all deliveries were attended to by medical personnel.

Not all data on reproductive health services is available, except for some maternal and child health components. Most deliveries occurred when the foetus was at least 33 months of gestational age (Table 16). There were no births, neonatal births, or fetal or maternal deaths. But there were 3 cases with low birth weight. Data from the two years' deliveries shows midwives delivered in 42% of cases, while doctors and midwives did it in 58% of cases. The mode of delivery by C-section was 42 % for the same period. Finally,

⁴⁹ Pan American Health Organization (PAHO). Territory Profile: Montserrat. Accessed on November 9, 2023.

55% of deliveries came from women who do not possess British or Montserratian nationality.

Table 16
Montserrat: Health indicators, 2019-2020

INDICATOR	2019	2020
Total number of deliveries:	47	50
At less than 28 weeks' gestation	0	0
At 28 - 32 weeks' gestation	0	0
At 33 - 36 weeks' gestation	1	6
At 37 - 40 weeks' gestation	45	38
At greater than 40 weeks' gestation	1	6
Total number of live births:	47	50
Males	22	21
Females	25	29
Twins	0	0
Negative outcomes:		
Total number of still births	0	0
Total number of neonatal deaths	0	0
Total number of maternal deaths	0	0
Total number infant deaths	0	0
Number of low birth-weight infants	3	3
Birth attendees:		
Number of deliveries by midwife	22	19
Number of deliveries by midwife and Doctor	25	31
Number of infants born before arrival at hospital	0	0
Teenage births:		
Number of births to teenagers 16- 19yrs	3	0
Mode of delivery :		
Number of spontaneous vaginal deliveries	25	26
Number of lower segment caesarean section	22	24
Nationality		
Number of births to residents	16	28
Number of births to non-residents*	31	22

*Mothers who do not possess a British or Montserrat passport

Source: Glendon Hospital Statistical Report, 2019/2020.

3.3.2. Contraception

There is no data available in Montserrat about unwanted pregnancies nor on contraceptive use, which makes it impossible to know what's the contraceptive prevalence rates and the type of methods used that are. However, UNFPA conducted 2020 an assessment of the situation on commodity security on reproductive health for the Caribbean countries ⁵⁰. Here is a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the

⁵⁰ UNFPA (2020). Reproductive Health Commodity Security Assessment for the Caribbean. December 2020.
https://caribbean.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/rhcs_assessment_for_the_caribbean_-_unfpa_2022-01-12.pdf

reproductive health commodity security system found by UNFPA in the study of Montserrat:

Strengths:

- The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) fully funds contraceptives and maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) commodities.
- Four contraceptives and five MNCH commodities are included in the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) formulary.
- The MoHSS is exempt from import taxes, potentially reducing costs and facilitating procurement.
- Both state and private pharmacies are the only family planning (FP) providers, suggesting a streamlined service provision.
- Pooled procurement through OECS guarantees economies of scale and potentially enhances the quality of products.
- World Health Organization (WHO) medical eligibility criteria are utilized for counselling and training, ensuring adherence to international standards.
- As of October 2020, the only secondary-level hospital had stock for seven essential commodities, indicating good stock availability.

Weaknesses:

- There is no specific sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) policy, strategy, or plan, and no national Reproductive Health Commodity Security (RHCS) coordinating committee exists.
- Despite some commodities being part of the OECS formulary, Montserrat lacks an official formulary or Essential Medicines List (EML).
- Method choice in primary health facilities is limited, with only four types of modern contraceptives available.
- Coverage of women of reproductive age (WRA) by MoHSS is only 25%, based on distribution and an estimated couple of years of protection (CYP).
- Increased freight charges due to COVID-19 have led to budget constraints and delays.
- Quantification of needs is not based on consumption data or an essential Logistics Management Information System (LMIS) but rather on demographic data.
- Legal barriers prevent adolescents under 18 from accessing services without parental consent, and no family planning training has been conducted for health providers recently.
- Central pharmacy stock levels needed to be improved as of December 2019, and no max-min inventory control systems were reported to be in place.
- Issues with organized distribution and supply chain management exist, including insufficient warehouse space and suboptimal conditions for storing certain medicines.
- There is a lack of a monitoring plan for RHCS, no management of stock on hand, and an oversupply of certain commodities such as male condoms and oxytocin.

This summary highlights that while there are systems in place for funding and procurement that may strengthen the security of reproductive health commodities, there are critical gaps in policy, coordination, data management, and service provision that need to be addressed to improve the overall effectiveness of the reproductive health commodity security system in Montserrat.

The report presents a set of policy recommendations aiming to bolster Montserrat's SRHCS by addressing policy gaps, enhancing financial protection, ensuring commodity availability, and improving overall health system responsiveness to the needs of its population. They are as follows:

- Develop a Comprehensive SRH Policy: A robust policy framework for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is needed.
- Incorporate SRH and RHCS into broader national policies and plans: Consider Montserrat's unique characteristics as a small island nation in post-disaster reconstruction.
- Secure and Increase Financing: Advocacy is needed to protect and increase financing for contraceptives, particularly in the wake of funding challenges exacerbated after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Utilize the OECS Medical Product List: Continuing leveraging the OECS Medical Product List while advocating for the inclusion of a broader range of commodities, such as female condoms and emergency contraceptive pills, until Montserrat develops its own formulary or Essential Medicines List (EML).
- Integrate FP counselling and contraceptive provision with other health services.
- Strengthen Internal MOHSS Processes: Enhancing the internal processes within the Ministry of Health and Social Services to ensure more accurate order quantification, inventory control, and timely payments to OECS, mitigating the risk of supply delays.

3.3.3. Abortion

The abortion ratio was 6 % (60 per thousand) in 2020, higher than the value observed in 2019 (3%) (Table 17). However, because of the small number of observations, these trends need to be taken with caution⁵¹.

Table 17
Montserrat: Abortions, Births and Abortions/Births Ratio (per thousand)

Component	Year		
	2019	2020	2019-2020
Abortions	3	6	9
Births	47	50	97
Ratio: Abortions/Births (per thousand)	64	120	92

Source: Glendon Hospital Statistical Report, 2019/2020

⁵¹ There is no indication if there are spontaneous abortions in the number reported.

3.3.4. HIV/AIDS

Between 1985 and 2009, there have been 38 reported cases of HIV, 5 cases of AIDS and 4 AIDS-related deaths. There was one newly diagnosed case of AIDS in the public care system in the last quarter of 2009.

Voluntary counselling and testing are fully sponsored by the Government of Montserrat and are offered by all four government clinics, hospitals, laboratories and private doctors. All blood donors and expectant mothers in Montserrat are screened for HIV. Although data on these tests exists, it is yet to be understood how many people were tested more than once and whether these persons are residents or visitors. Since 2005, all pregnant women have been offered testing for HIV, Hepatitis B and Syphilis. During 2007-2009, there has been 100% acceptance.

3.3.5. Adolescent mental health

Peer interactions in schools are significant behaviour shaping children and adolescents' social skills and well-being. However, according to the same UNICEF report⁵², in Montserrat, these interactions also open the possibility of violence and victimization among peers. The prevalent form of such violence is bullying, with more than a quarter (28 percent) of adolescents aged 13-15 experiencing it. Boys were more affected, with 32 percent facing peer bullying and 50 percent getting into physical altercations, compared to 25 percent of girls being bullied and 29 percent involved in fights. Furthermore, 34 percent of adolescents have been physically attacked in the past year, with boys (44 percent) experiencing a higher rate of physical attacks compared to girls (25 percent).

According to the UNICEF report⁵³, 33 percent of adolescents ages 13-15 drank at least one drink of alcohol in the past 30 days, and 28 percent ever drank so much alcohol that they were drunk. Boys were more likely to drink alcohol (36 per cent) and to ever drink so much that they were drunk (34 per cent), compared to girls (32 and 22 per cent, respectively). Only 23 percent of adolescents ages 13-15 were physically active for one hour per day on five or more days during the past seven days. In comparison, 48 percent of adolescents spend three or more hours per day sitting and watching television, playing computer games, talking with friends when not in school or doing homework during a typical or usual day. Boys (51 percent) were likelier than girls (45 percent) to spend three or more hours per day sitting. More than 1 in 4 or 28 percent of adolescents ages 13-15 experienced peer bullying, and 39 percent were in a physical fight one or more times during the past 12 months.

⁵² [UNICEF \(2021\) Idem](#). This data was collected through a In February 2021, consultations were conducted with young people ages 10-24 years in Montserrat as part of a UNICEF initiative focused on engaging children and young people in the ECA.

⁵³ UNICEF, 2021. Idem.

3.4. Gender-based Violence

There has been some acknowledgement that gender-biased violence is prevalent in Montserrat. The Statistics Department of Montserrat reported 56 cases of rape or sexual offence and 176 cases of domestic violence. Between 2005 and 2021, only one death of a woman at the hands of an intimate partner or former partner was reported. However, data is extremely limited in this area. It is expected that under the Domestic Violence Act, approved in 2020⁵⁴, in Montserrat, the victims of domestic violence now have specific rights and avenues for assistance and protection. They are entitled to request the help of police officers to protect themselves and their children, and officers are required to inform victims about obtaining a protection order. Victims can also ask the police to escort them and their children to a safe place, which could include a shelter or the home of someone they trust and have the option to keep their address confidential when making a report of domestic violence.

If medical treatment is necessary, victims have the right to police assistance in accessing healthcare services. They are also able to obtain an interim protection order against their abuser at any time, which is issued free of charge and must be served on the abuser; however, for this order to become permanent, a subsequent court appearance by the victim is necessary. The court can mandate the abuser to provide emergency financial relief and may restrict any form of contact with the victim and children. Additionally, victims can request the court to convict the abuser and prevent the abuser from barring the victim from their shared household. For counselling or support, victims should reach out to the Director of the Social Services Department. Finally, victims can lodge a criminal complaint if a criminal offence has been committed against them or their children. It is important to note that giving false information or making a false report to the police is considered a criminal offence under this act.

⁵⁴ [Government of Montserrat \(2020\). Domestic Violence Act 2020, No. 13 of 2020.](#)

4. Leaving No One Behind (LNOB)

4.1. Principles of LNOB

4.1.1. Dignity and human rights

Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch list no major human rights violations on the island. Nevertheless, it has been noted that the special status of Montserrat as a British Overseas Territory (BOT) has implications for the application of human rights in the country. Under UN Charter 73, the administering countries overseeing non-self-governing territories are responsible for the human rights of their populations. But, for example, by redefining disability rights as a welfare issue, the UK has exempted itself from this responsibility⁵⁵.

As was mentioned earlier, not all international conventions signed by the UK automatically extend to the BOTs. In addition to the CEDAW and CRPD, the list of conventions that Montserrat has not ratified also includes the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, the ILO Conventions No. 138 and 182 on the minimum age for admission to employment and work and on the worst forms of child labour, and the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children.

The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) also covers Montserrat. Still, academics and human rights groups are concerned that the ECHR's legal application is in name only and that the Constitution should reflect it more appropriately. As it is, there is no affordable mechanism to bring cases under it. Anti-discrimination legislation has existed since 2012, but there are no specific policies and procedures to ensure compliance.

4.1.2. Factors of inequality

Monetary poverty is not the only factor in marginalization. Progress diverges significantly when considering gender, rural-urban divides, and specific marginalized populations such as adolescent girls, individuals with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and forcibly displaced people. To improve the equitability of its programming, UNFPA recognizes a variety of factors that - in addition to gender- create barriers to accessing services, lead to

⁵⁵ In the words of one critic, "the British Overseas Territories find themselves in a unique situation regarding disability rights. Earlier in the year, the UK Government implemented a new strategy focused on disability within its foreign development aid, grounded in human rights principles. This strategy, adopted by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), includes a commitment to integrate disability rights into resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. In these territories, handling disability-related matters is the responsibility of the local governments, as established by the constitutional arrangements set in 2012. This means that the British Overseas Territories are not only outside the scope of the UK's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) but are also not included in the disability strategy that guides the UK's international aid efforts." Craig Brewin (2022). Disability and Health Development in Montserrat: My Presentation to the University of the West Indies Disability Conference. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/disability-health-development-montserrat-my-west-indies-craig-brewin>

poorer health outcomes, or otherwise limit fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Those factors include age, culture, ethnicity, race, language, and religion; disability status; HIV/AIDS status; location of residence; migration, asylum and displacement status; sexual orientation and gender identity; and income and wealth..

4.1.3. Race and ethnicity

Until the 1990s, Montserrat's population was ethnically quite homogeneous. Even in 2020, 86.2 percent of the population was of African descent. The Race Relations Act of 2000, revised in 2002, prohibits discrimination based on race. However, as was noted in the previous chapter, migration is now the main component in Montserrat's population dynamics, and much of this migration is from non-English-speaking countries in the region. This has created new challenges in the relationship between ethnic communities.

There is some difference between inhabitants of African descent and other racial groups in terms of income (EC\$ 665 versus EC\$ 581 per week, according to the 2018 intercensal count), but this is entirely due to the low weekly incomes of women of other racial groups (EC\$ 437). Men from different racial groups had slightly higher median incomes (EC\$ 736 per week) than those of African descent (EC\$ 709).

4.1.4. Migratory status

There is a significant income difference between Montserratian nationals and immigrants from other countries, especially those from Spanish or French-speaking areas. Table 18 presents the median weekly incomes of the working population by sex and nationality. This table identifies working immigrant women from Spanish or French-speaking countries as disadvantaged. Male migrants from these countries and migrants from other countries, male or female, are also at a disadvantage, but to a much lesser extent. If one takes all the immigrants together, it is remarkable that the income difference with nationals does not appear to be due to educational differences. The percentage of female immigrants with at least complete secondary education is about the same as that of nationals (75 percent); in the case of men, it is higher (72 compared to 62 percent).

Table 18
Montserrat: Median weekly incomes in EC\$ by sex and nationality, 2018

	Males	Females	Total
Montserratian nationals	745	739	743
Immigrants from Spanish or French speaking countries	594	263	361
Immigrants from other countries	684	475	586
Immigrants from all countries combined	672	431	542

Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018

Reportedly, the assimilation of new immigrant groups into various societal segments still needs to be improved. Immigrants frequently encounter stigma, and friction between

citizens and non-citizens is a common occurrence. Additionally, Montserratians residing overseas are concerned that the current demographic makeup, dominated by immigrants, significantly dilutes Montserratian cultural heritage⁵⁶.

Systematic data regarding these issues are hard to obtain. Hence, much of the evidence is based on case histories such as the following account from a Jamaican migrant who has been living in Montserrat since 2014, published on the website of the Regional Office of IOM⁵⁷.

In 2017, UNICEF carried out a study on discriminatory practices against migrant children in the British Overseas Territories (BOT)⁵⁸. This brought out several problems concerning the status of these children in the country. The Montserrat Constitution Order 2010 states that no law shall make any provision that is discriminatory either of itself or in its effect, and no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by any written law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority. Notwithstanding these provisions, the Constitution allows for different treatment concerning those persons who are not Montserratians (belongers).

Despite Montserrat's ratification of the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, it isn't accessible for children born in Montserrat whose parents are not BOT citizens to obtain nationality from their country of origin. For adults, the Government of Montserrat requires eight years of consistent residence to qualify for permanent residence and later register for naturalization. During that period, "migrants are considered temporary residents who have to renew their work permits every year; if they lose their employment, they can be deported regardless of the years under-documented status.

This puts an enormous burden and pressure on migrants, who are constantly afraid of losing their jobs and being deported, which would make the path to citizenship much more challenging for both parents and children. Granting naturalization is still highly discretionary and involves several costs and fees, and some migrants cannot afford these expenses. A child born in Montserrat whose parents are non-Montserratians can obtain naturalization in their own right at the age of 10 after having lived there continuously since birth, or whenever their parent or parents qualify and apply for permanent residence or naturalization and include their minor child or children as part of that application. This

⁵⁶ Monteil, C., & Simmons, P. (2017). Immigration in Montserrat after the Volcanic Disaster: A Tool and a Challenge for the Recovery of the Island. In *Migrants in Disaster Risk Reduction: Practices for Inclusion* (pp. 104-109).

<https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/2018-07/Migrants-in-DRR.pdf>.

⁵⁷ In this account, the protagonist, a Jamaican woman, refers to the fact that when she arrived, she found acceptance in the community, with some even mistaking her for a Montserratian who returned to the post-volcanic crisis. However, once her true nationality was known, she was disturbed by what she called discrimination against migrants in Montserrat. Now, she is working on identifying migrant needs, empowering the vulnerable, alleviating poverty, and encouraging migrants to contribute to Montserratian society actively. <https://rosanjose.iom.int/en/blogs/how-help-migrants-integrate-using-disaster-recovery-and-preparedness>.

⁵⁸ Morlachetti, Alejandro (2017). *Study on Children in Situations of Migration and Statelessness in the Caribbean UK Overseas Territories*.

means that a child may be without nationality for an extended period if s/he does not obtain a nationality from their parent's country of origin.

In the educational system, the fact that many of the migrant children do not speak English is one of the main causes of their poor educational performance as there are no specialized teachers or programmes to deal with this issue. "The inability to speak the language leads to frustration on the part of both students and teachers, and misunderstandings between migrant and local children sometimes flare up into conflict."⁵⁹

Interviews carried out by UNICEF regarding the treatment of migrants by the Social Services Department suggest that it "only caters to Montserratians and people with permanent residence and all others are referred to the Red Cross. The Red Cross receives a subvention from the Government to help migrant families; however, the amount is minimal compared to the number of cases and expenditure incurred in addressing them."

- UNICEF also made several recommendations. The main ones are reproduced below:
-
- Align legislation and policies with the British Nationality Act about the time required for resident migrants to apply for naturalization;
- Amend the Constitution to at least recognize equal treatment between national and migrant children, abolishing discrimination between belonger and non-belonger children;
- Undertake a publicity campaign to ensure that migrants accessing any government service are treated with respect and to promote understanding;
- Strengthen cooperation mechanisms that foster cooperation, dialogue, and consensus with countries of origin;
- Consider amending legislation to facilitate the acquisition of permanent residency/BOTC/ belongership status to children born in Montserrat, mainly to prevent statelessness;
- Establish effective procedures to assess, in a child-friendly manner, the risks children would face if returned to their country of origin or any risk of 'chain refoulement' (i.e., removal to third countries in which the person would be at risk of refoulement), including access to asylum procedures and procedures to establish whether they have been subject to trafficking and other serious human rights violations;
- Consider reform of the BNA to provide citizenship to children born automatically.
- Montserrat regardless of their parents' status (This requires action by the UK);
- Adopt/amend legislation and policies that apply to all children without any distinction between national and migrant children;
- Amend national legislation to automatically provide children born in Montserrat with permanent residence status, granting them full access to rights on equal terms with national children;

⁵⁹ Idem.

- Fully recognize the right to family reunification in case of parents and children living separately;
- Disseminate information (internet, etc.) about the procedures and requisites to apply for family reunification, including information and full respect for due process of law, such as the right to appeal decisions;
- Adopt a proactive approach to identify migrant children in need of health care, immunizations, etc. and abolish the imposition of higher fees for medical services for children based on their migratory status and their parent's status;
- Repeal/amend the Social Welfare Regulations to make it applicable to all children regardless of their migratory status and of their parents;
- Remove any barriers and facilitate and promote the integration of migrant children into the education system;
- Implement ESL programmes in primary and secondary schools and reinforce initiatives to assist children from non-English-speaking countries;
- Avoid migration-related detention of parents with children, adopting alternative measures for the entire family and developing policies for placing the whole family in alternative locations;
- Comply with the consular notification and access obligations set forth in the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations so that States may provide appropriate, child-friendly consular assistance, including legal assistance.
- Prioritize the collection of age- and gender-disaggregated data across all government departments on the human rights situation of children in the context of migration to make migrant children visible in Montserrat.

4.1.5. Geographic location

Given the small size of the country, most geographical disparities are relatively modest. However, using data from the Intercensal Count of 2018, a wealth index indicator⁶⁰ has been created that allows for the classification of the enumerated population in one of five quintiles, going from the first quintile (lowest 0-20 percent) to the highest 80-100 percent).

The percentage of the population in the wealthiest quintiles (4th and 5th) indicates wealth (Table 19). At the village level, this indicator shows significant differences in wealth by villages (See maps in Figure 26). Isles Bay, Olde Towne, Woodlands, and Olveston are the wealthiest villages. Happy Hill, Salem, Davy Hill, and Gerald's Bottom are the poorest villages. This information is essential when planning, particularly on policies related to social protection and environmental impacts.

Other geographical differences can be seen in the Table 19 and maps (Figure 27). Some of the insights are the following:

⁶⁰ This indicator has been created using a similar methodology used by the DHS Program.

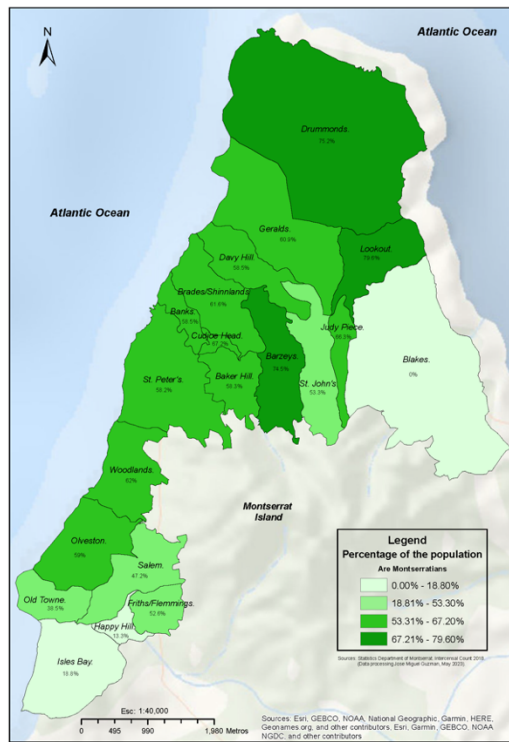
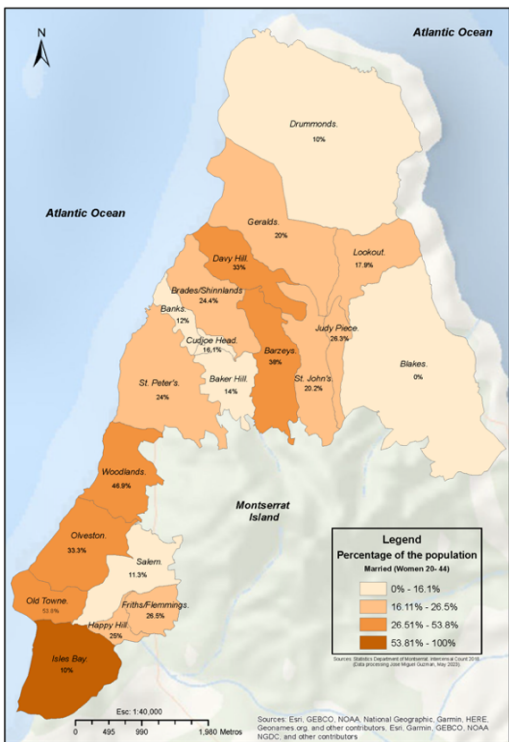
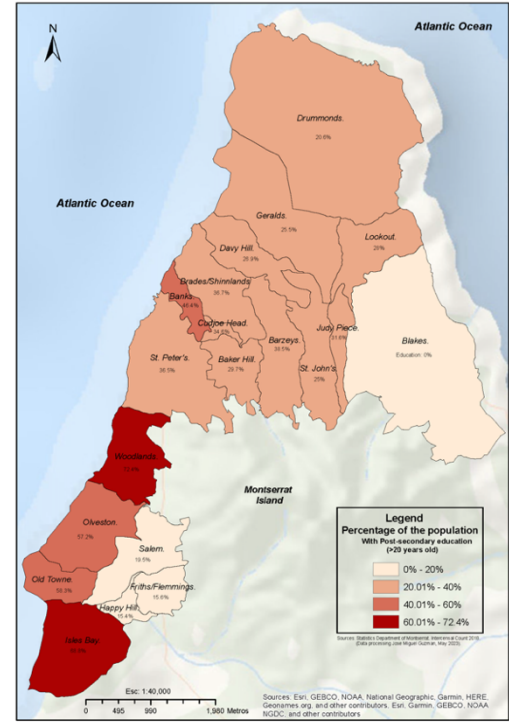
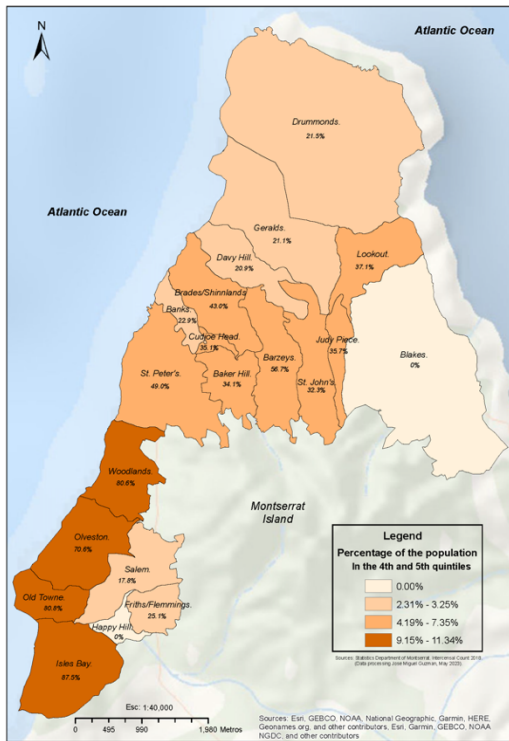
1. The differences between villages in the percentage of people with post-secondary education are extremely high, from 15 percent in Happy Hill to around 70 percent in Woodland and Isles Bays;
2. The proportion of married women, which is an indicator of the potential for births, is low in general in the country but is markedly low in some of the villages;
3. The concentration of older people varies by village, but it is exceptionally high in Isles Bay. Finally, the towns with the most Montserratian nationals are Lockout and Drummonds.

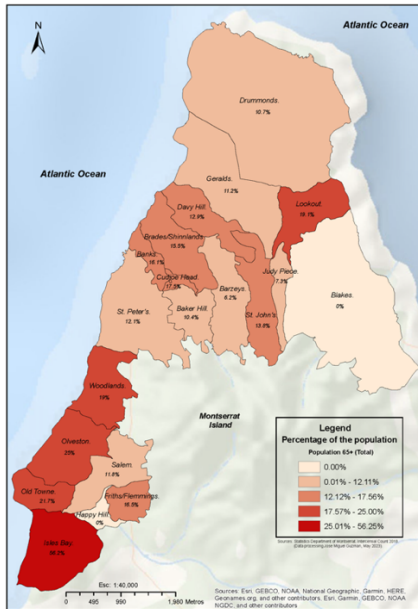
Table 19
Montserrat: Selected Indicators by villages, 2018

VILLAGE	Percentage of the population:				
	In the 4th and 5th quintiles	With Post-secondary education (>20 years old)	Married (Women 20-44)	65+ (Total)	Are Montserratians
Baker Hill	34.1%	30%	14%	10%	58%
Banks	22.9%	46%	12%	16%	59%
Barzeys	56.7%	39%	38%	6%	75%
Brades	43.0%	37%	24%	16%	62%
Cudjoe Head	35.1%	35%	16%	18%	67%
Davy Hill	20.9%	27%	33%	13%	59%
Drummonds	21.5%	21%	10%	11%	75%
Frith/Flemming	25.1%	16%	27%	17%	53%
Geralds Bottom	21.1%	26%	20%	11%	61%
Happy Hill	0.0%	15%	25%	0%	13%
Isles Bay	87.5%	69%	100%	56%	19%
Judy Piece	35.7%	32%	26%	7%	66%
Look Out	37.1%	28%	18%	19%	80%
Olde Towne	80.8%	58%	54%	22%	39%
Olveston	70.6%	57%	33%	25%	59%
Salem	17.8%	20%	11%	12%	47%
St. Johns	32.3%	25%	20%	14%	53%
St. Peters	49.0%	37%	24%	12%	58%
Woodlands	80.6%	72%	47%	19%	62%
Total	39.8%	34%	24%	15%	62%

Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018.

Figure 27
 Montserrat: Spatial distribution of major socioeconomic indicators, 2018





Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018

4.1.6. Disability

According to the latest data from the 2011 census, the prevalence of disability in Montserrat is 6.0 percent for men and 5.4 percent for women. This is considerably higher than the corresponding numbers for the Caribbean region, 3.3 percent for men and 3.7 percent for women in the 2010 census round. Compared to other countries in the area, Montserrat had an exceptionally high prevalence of disabilities related to seeing and walking. Unfortunately, the 2018 ECLAC Report on Disability, Human Rights and Public Policy in the Caribbean does not contain any further data on the social and economic implications of disability in Montserrat. The report suggests, for example, that over 80 per cent of persons with disabilities in the Caribbean are unemployed, but no specific data are available on the situation in Montserrat.

The Constitution of Montserrat specifies that "No person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner in respect of access to any place to which the general public has access." Similarly, Clause 502 (1) (a) of the OECS Building Code requires all buildings to have a certificate of compliance covering accessibility. Nevertheless, relatively little seems to have been done to facilitate the access of people with disabilities to public spaces.

The Labour Code states that one cannot dismiss someone on the grounds of disability and that employers should make reasonable adjustments to accommodate employees with disabilities, but this has not been implemented. A planned 80 percent fare reduction for people with disabilities on public transportation has not been implemented, partly because there is very little public transportation to apply it to.

Similarly, the cooperation agreements with the European Union and the British government for the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure contain provisions for

the treatment of persons with disabilities. The FCDO Business Case for Montserrat's aid states that "Government services should focus on the most vulnerable, including the disabled" and that "the new capital programme will adopt best practice for disability-friendly infrastructure". However, these directives have not been implemented in practice..

In 2015, a National Disability Policy was drafted which proposed measures in 12 strategic policy areas:

1. Advocacy, awareness, empowerment, and statistics
2. Early detection, Identification, Intervention, and Rehabilitation
3. Effective inclusive education services and programmes
4. Access to information and communications technology
5. Access to the built environment and transport systems
6. Training and employment, including self-employment
7. Promoting the rights of women and children with disabilities
8. Provision of housing and community care
9. Poverty alleviation, social security and livelihood programmes
10. Disability sports and recreation
11. Agency coordination, networking, and regional and international cooperation and participation (DPI and other NGOs) are also necessary
12. Policy Monitoring, review, and implementation

However, this policy was never officially adopted, and more needs to be done to implement it.

In 2021, the Montserrat Civil Service Association (MCSA) called for the application of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to be extended to Montserrat. Several other civil society entities have made similar demands.

Under current law, the British Government does not require aid-dependent territories to comply with the CRPD. Disability is not a human right but a welfare policy issue. In 2017, the UN called for the UK to extend its ratification of the Convention in its Overseas Territories following a review carried out in 2016, but the UK considered it a local issue. A 2019 mission to Montserrat by the UN C24 Committee led directly to the 2020 resolution at the General Assembly that called upon the UK to assist Montserrat in preparing for the extension of the application of the CRPD to the island and to report progress to the General Secretary annually. The UK still needs to do this⁶¹.

⁶¹ Craig Brewin (2022). Disability and Health Development in Montserrat: My Presentation to the University of the West Indies Disability Conference. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/disability-health-development-montserrat-my-west-indies-craig-brewin>

4.1.7. Age and other types of sources of inequality and discrimination

There are no systematic data on elder abuse and other types of violation of human rights against older adults in Montserrat. However, the National Policy on Older Persons 2020-2026⁶² does address the issue of older persons rights in some detail.

The text outlines a comprehensive approach towards enhancing the welfare and rights of older persons, emphasizing the importance of independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment, dignity, and peace in their lives. It sets forth principles against discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin, religious belief, disability, or gender, advocating for accessible, affordable, and equitable healthcare, sustainable programs that adapt to the changing needs of older persons, and the protection of their rights, including the right to a safe living environment, freedom from abuse and exploitation, and the safeguarding of their funds and property.

The objectives and commitments of the policy are focused on developing and implementing laws to protect older persons from abuse, violence, and discrimination, with a particular emphasis on safeguarding them from physical and emotional abuse, fraudulent dealings, domestic abuse, and violations related to inheritance and property rights. It aims to promote positive images of older persons in Montserrat, challenge age discrimination, and ensure their rights through specific legal frameworks.

The policy identifies several priority areas, including the development of laws to protect the rights of older persons, regulatory frameworks for long-term care settings, support for older persons in disaster situations or those facing abuse or neglect, and public awareness programs to combat stigma and discrimination against older persons with sexually transmitted infections. Despite the outlined policy recommendations, there is an acknowledgement of the need for more evidence regarding their implementation and evaluation, highlighting a gap between policy formulation and practical application.

4.1.8. LGTBQI rights

There are no data regarding the actual situation of LGTBQI persons in Montserrat. However, the legislation on the issue is relatively liberal. There is no censorship concerning manifestations of sexual orientation (according to Caribbean Territories (Criminal Law) Order 2000), and discrimination of any kind on these grounds is illegal. There are no restrictions on military service, although this is somewhat hypothetical as Montserrat does not have military service. Foreign same-sex marriages are recognized, but persons of the same sex can't be married in Montserrat. LGTBQI persons cannot donate blood, the right to gender change is not recognized and same-sex couples cannot adopt children. Based on this relatively scant information, the equality index for

⁶² Government of Montserrat. Ministry of Health and Social Services (2020). *National Policy on Older Persons 2020-2026* (V.5 Draft). <https://www.gov.ms/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/National-Policy-on-Care-of-Older-Persons-v5.pdf>. Accessed on Jan 23, 2024.

Montserrat is estimated at 79,⁶³ one of the highest in the Caribbean Region and even higher than the UK. However, to what extent this translates into actual tolerance of differences in sexual orientation is unknown.

4.2. Gender equality

The most complete assessment of gender in Montserrat was conducted in 2015 by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)⁶⁴. The preparation of this Country Gender Assessment (CGA) was intended to evaluate the gender dynamics and opportunities in Montserrat. The CGA examines gender roles in sectors such as the economy, education, culture, and crime to enhance gender equity.

The Ministry of Health, Community Services, Sports, and Youth leads gender equality efforts. Still, legislative backing is minimal, and international agreements like CEDAW have not been fully adopted, nor does the country have an explicit national gender policy. There is a lack of gender mainstreaming capacity, and while policies are leaning towards gender equality, significant work remains. The CGA has identified specific gender entry points for action, suggesting strategies across various sectors to promote gender equality, including agricultural policies, labour market policies, and strategies against domestic violence. It recommends establishing a gender coordinator role to effectively implement these strategies and integrate gender-sensitive indicators into all development policies and plans.

4.2.1. Economic dimensions of gender equality

The CGA stresses that cultural norms strongly associate certain occupations and roles with one gender, impacting the representation of women in politics and other fields. The CGA also found that men predominantly occupy the primary economic sectors and that women's economic participation often extends domestic roles. Although access to financial resources is formally gender-neutral, in practice, women access these less frequently. This analysis establishes that education in Montserrat has a high literacy rate, and public education is free up to the secondary level. While girls and boys participate equally in primary and secondary education, women pursue tertiary education more often. The labour market shows a high level of gender segregation, with men holding most leadership roles in the public sector but not in the private sector.

As was noted earlier, economic participation is high for both men and women. Women's Unemployment is lower (5.8 percent in 2018 and 6.6 percent in 2020) than for men (7.2 percent in 2018 and 10.7 percent in 2020). These numbers also suggest that female employment was affected less by COVID than male employment. However, this contradicts the finding of the IADB telephone survey carried out six months before the 2020 Labour Force Survey, according to which job losses were higher among women (36

⁶³ <https://www.equaldex.com/region/montserrat>.

⁶⁴ [Caribbean Development Bank \(CDB\) \(2015\). Country Gender Assessment \(CGA\)](#)

percent reporting losing their jobs) than men (32 percent). According to the IADB survey, low-income women were the most affected, with 62 percent reporting job losses, compared to 38 percent in men.

Men predominate in agriculture, fishing, mining, quarrying, manufacturing, utilities, construction and transportation, real estate and business activities, and communication. These sectors employed 583 men in 2018, compared to only 152 women. Women predominate in education, health and social welfare, hotels, restaurants, and financial intermediation. In total, these sectors employed 490 women, compared to 114 men. The number of male and female employees in the large public administration sector was about the same: 305 and 312, respectively. The wholesale and retail trade sector had more women (153), but the difference with men (133) was relatively small.

On the whole, the median weekly income of women in the labour force, according to the 2018 intercensal count, was EC\$ 586, compared to EC\$ 712 for men, a 22 percent difference.⁶⁵ In the sectors where men predominate (see above), the median weekly incomes of male and female employees are almost the same (EC\$ 678 and 665, respectively). Still, the differences are more considerable in the sectors where women predominate (EC\$ 764 and EC\$ 565, respectively). Among government employees, salary differentials between women and men are relatively slight: a median of EC\$ 803 for women compared to EC\$ 859 for men. The salaries of employees in the private sector are substantially lower and display larger gender differentials, with a median of EC\$ 406 for women compared to EC\$ 591 for men.

These differences are not due to differences in education, as women generally have higher education levels than men. Completing secondary education does not favour women, who earned a median weekly income of EC\$ 432, compared to EC\$ 647 for men with completed secondary education, a difference of almost 50 percent. Even at the post-secondary level, women were at a disadvantage. However, the difference was small here, with a median weekly income of EC\$ 914 for women, compared to EC\$ 981 for men, i.e. a 7.3 percent difference. What does make a difference, however, is nationality. Among Montserratian citizens, there is hardly any difference between median weekly incomes for women and men: EC\$ 739 for women, compared to EC\$ 745 for men. Therefore, income differentials between men and women are largely caused by the highly unfavourable income situation of migrant women, especially those from Spanish or French-speaking countries. This is even more relevant because women comprise the majority (54 percent of those arriving between 2010 and 2018) of the migrant population.

On the other hand, the wealth index identified in section 3.2.3 shows a slight difference in favour of women in the population distribution by quintiles. For example, the proportion of the population in the poorest quintile is 24 percent for men and 17 percent for women. The wealth index, however, depends not only on individual income but also on the

⁶⁵ The <https://worldsalaries.com/average-salary-in-montserrat/> website estimates that men earn generally earn 11 percent more than women on average, across all professions, for performing the same job, but it is not clear what methodology was used in this estimation.

household. About 37 per cent of men but only 20 per cent of women in the lowest income quintile had incomes above the overall population median for men (ED\$ 712) and women (R\$ 586), indicating that these concepts measure different things.

Women also hold 50 percent of the managerial positions and 37 per cent of the senior and middle management positions (SDG indicator 5.5.2). Also, two-thirds of the professionals are women, but this does not mean that the incomes of men and women in these positions are the same. In the case of managers, the difference is not significant: a median of EC\$ 1,243 for female managers, compared to EC\$ 1,344 for male managers. The difference is more considerable for professionals: a median of EC\$ 1,000 for women, compared to EC\$ 1,250 for men.

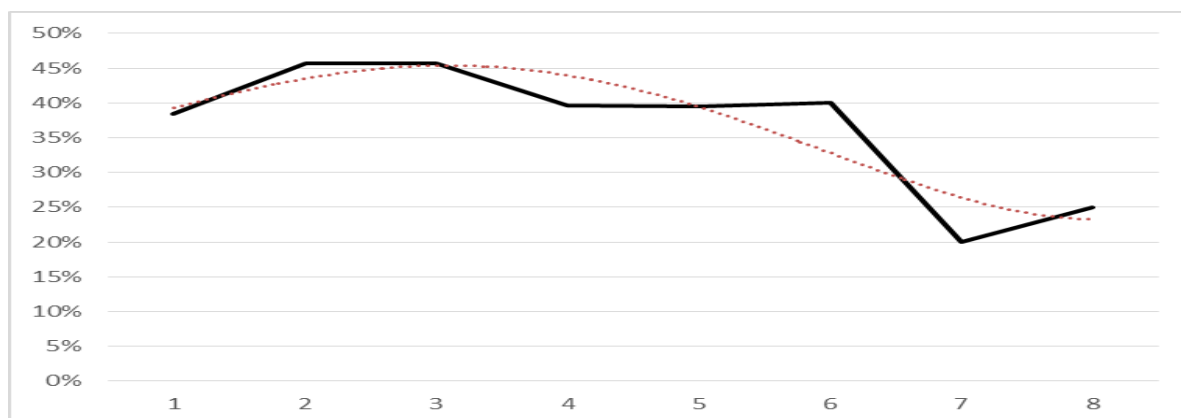
4.2.2. Social dimensions of gender equality

Women in Montserrat still need to improve their political decision-making power. Only one of the nine regular members of the Legislative Assembly is a woman, but the speaker is also a woman. All the Ministers are men, but three of the Permanent Secretaries are women, while the other three are men.

The right to bodily autonomy is one of the rights recognized in the SDG agenda and is measured primarily through indicator 5.6.1. Unfortunately, as shown in Table 4, this indicator has not been calculated for Montserrat, as is the case for many gender-relevant SDG indicators.

As Table 7 noted, households in Montserrat are tiny nowadays. This practically does not vary by the sex of the head of the household. In most Caribbean countries, a high percentage of households (41.3 percent) are female-headed. In absolute terms, the largest number (406) of female-headed households are one-person households. Still, as Figure 28 shows, female headship is most common among households with 2-6 members, suggesting that most female-headed households consist of several members, especially children.

Figure 28
Montserrat: Percentage of female-headed households by household size, 2018.



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018

Table 20 analyzes the relative wealth of households in terms of headship and number of household members. It shows that not all female-headed households are necessarily poorer than male-headed households. Single-person female-headed households are better off than their male-headed counterparts, whereas for two-person households, the situation is roughly the same for male and female-headed households.

However, among the three members, the disadvantage of female-headed households started appearing and widening as more members were added. In total, households with three or more members make up about 27 per cent of the total, and in these households, female headship is a definite socioeconomic disadvantage.

Table 20
Montserrat: Percentages of households in the lowest two wealth quintiles, by sex of the head and number of household members, 2018

Number of members	Male Head	Female Head
1 member	63.7	50.2
2 members	35.1	35.4
3 members	28.5	35.4
4-5 members	25.6	44.2
6+ members	37.9	66.7

Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count 2018.

4.3. Intersectionality / Compounding vulnerabilities

According to the 2018 Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, there is a disproportionate disadvantage in wages of migrant women, particularly migrant women from Spanish or French-speaking countries. While being a migrant from one of these countries or being a woman are both associated with a lower median income, combining these factors leads to a more significant reduction in median income than expected based on combining these two factors without considering their interaction (Table 21).

The situation of migrant workers from Spanish or French-speaking countries, mainly the Dominican Republic, Haiti and, to a lesser extent, Jamaica, requires greater attention. In these countries, more than 50 per cent of the employees receive incomes below 2000, compared to lower figures for citizens of Montserrat, the UK, and other Caribbean Countries.

But what is more striking is that even in all these countries, women are at a disadvantage; the difference is more remarkable in countries where workers receive less income. This is an example of the double vulnerability of being a migrant woman.

Table 21

Montserrat: Percentage of the population in the labour force that receives less than \$EC 2,000 as wages per month.

Country	Males	Females	Total
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland	10%	21%	17%
Montserrat	26%	31%	29%
Dominica	35%	49%	40%
Guyana	25%	56%	42%
Jamaica	42%	61%	54%
Dominican Republic	21%	83%	61%
Haiti	58%	90%	75%

Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count 2018.

5. Vulnerability, Risks and Resilience

Montserrat is known for its green hills and volcanic landscapes. However, its beauty is juxtaposed with various vulnerabilities and risks, particularly from natural disasters, necessitating a comprehensive approach to building resilience. This chapter focuses on evaluating risk factors, identifying high-risk groups, and proposing policy actions for reducing vulnerabilities, with a particular focus on population growth.

5.1. Population size and growth as a vulnerability

5.1.1. The concept of demographic resilience

Demographic resilience refers to a society's ability to adapt, recover, and potentially thrive in the face of demographic changes and challenge⁶⁶. These changes can include shifts in population size, age structure, fertility and mortality rates, and migration patterns and flows. The concept encompasses the quantitative aspects of these changes and the qualitative responses regarding social, economic, and policy adaptation.

This concept involves a society's capacity to effectively navigate demographic changes, ensuring stability and sustainability of social, economic, and political structures through adaptability and strategic policymaking to align them with changing population dynamics.

Additionally, it encompasses preserving the community's social fabric and cultural identity as demographics evolve. It calls for economic flexibility, through diversification and innovation, as a crucial investment to ensure the economy aligns with the changing demographic needs and the implementation of proactive and effective policies anticipating these demographic trends.

UNFPA⁶⁷ has emphasized, evidence-based policy responses addressing demographic change should respect and enhance individual rights, including reproductive rights and gender equality principles.

5.1.2. Vulnerabilities created by the demographic change

As shown before, Montserrat experienced catastrophic demographic changes primarily due to the Soufrière Hills volcano eruption in 1995. This natural disaster led to large-scale emigration, drastically reducing the island's population.

⁶⁶ Roger Nark de Souza (2015). Demographic Resilience: Linking Population Dynamics, the Environment, and Security. [SAIS Review of International Affairs](#) 35(1):17-27 March 2015

⁶⁷ UNFPA. The UNFPA Demographic Resilience Programme. A regional programme enabling countries in eastern Europe to thrive amid rapid demographic change. addressing eastern Europe's demographic crisis. https://eeca.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/224_demres_brochure_2023_update_print.pdf

The current demographic landscape is characterized by an increasing ageing population and the continuation of very low birth rates, which make a demographic recovery difficult. The workforce has diminished, and there is a notable shift in the age structure, with an increasing proportion of the population being increasingly older.

The shallow population size of the country, together with the stagnant or even negative population growth of its population, challenge the government's capacity to provide short-term solutions. The country risks going even further below a critical mass of inhabitants that can make the country sustainable from an economic and political point of view.

5.1.3. Impacts of demographic changes in creating vulnerabilities

These enormous and multifaceted demographic changes have extensive economic, social, and environmental impacts. A smaller and aged population workforce can lead to reduced economic productivity and growth. It will also increase social demands by increasing the dependency ratio, with fewer working-age individuals supporting a larger elderly population. The ageing population may also face increased health and social care needs. This kind of changing demographic requires evaluating investments in infrastructure and services. For example, there is a growing need for age-friendly infrastructure and healthcare services tailored to an older population. The impacts are related to more than just decreased population size. A significant emigration can lead to a loss of cultural identity and community cohesion.

In summary, high emigration and low birth rates pose a long-term risk to the island's population sustainability, potentially leading to further economic and social challenges.

5.2. Evaluation of the environmental vulnerability and risk factors

Many factors can contribute to increased environmental risks and population vulnerability. Montserrat's vulnerability primarily stems from its geographical and geological setting. The Soufrière Hills volcano, which became active in 1995, remains a significant threat. A new eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano could have severe consequences for the population. Another eruption of the Soufrière Hills volcano in Montserrat is still possible⁶⁸. If that happens, it could significantly disrupt the island's economy⁶⁹.

⁶⁸ See <https://uwiseismic.com/island-profiles/montserrat/>

⁶⁹ Local businesses would face severe disruptions and losses, especially in agriculture and tourism. Tourism, a critical economic sector, would likely decline due to safety concerns, impacting related industries. The eruption could cause extensive damage to critical infrastructure such as roads, airports, and ports, complicating immediate response efforts and long-term economic activities. Agricultural sectors would suffer from ash and pyroclastic flows, affecting food supply and potential exports. Healthcare demands would increase, straining the system with costs associated with treating injuries and respiratory issues. A significant eruption might also lead again to population relocation and emigration, reducing the workforce and impacting various economic sectors. Insurance premiums in the region could rise, and the government might need to invest more in disaster risk management. Dependence on international aid could increase, affecting economic sovereignty and development plans. Finally, the uncertainty and risks associated with volcanic activity could deter investment, challenging economic diversification and growth efforts.

The response to the volcanic eruptions in the 1990s, which led to the abandonment of the capital, Plymouth, provides insights into effective crisis management. Critical interventions include timely evacuation, establishment of early warning systems, and ongoing geological monitoring. International aid and the development of new infrastructure in safe zones were crucial.

Hurricanes are a potential risk for Montserrat, as shown by the devastation caused by Hurricane Hugo, a Category 4 storm that struck the Caribbean and Virgin Islands on September 17th and 18th, 1989. Although its eye missed Montserrat, it brought 140 mph winds, devastating the island. Most homes were destroyed or heavily damaged, leaving 11,000 out of 12,000 residents mainly homeless. Schools, hospitals, churches, the police department, government headquarters, and the central power station were also affected. The hurricane resulted in 10 deaths, 89 injuries, and over \$260 million in damages, marking it as Montserrat's costliest hurricane. The disaster disrupted essential services for weeks, leading to significant U.S. and British relief efforts.

Although most houses in Montserrat are built using concrete or blocks as construction material, in some villages, there is still a high proportion of the homes built with wood and timber, which can be more impacted by hurricanes (Table 22). It is worth noting that, except Banks, Gerald's Bottom, and Drummonds, in all other villages, over 65% of the population reside in homes constructed with concrete or blocks. However, it is also true that the use of wood/timber is still high in Salem (20%), Banks (27%), and Davy Hill (18%), which implies high risks in case of hurricanes. 19% of the total population of Montserrat lives in these three villages. The data also shows a direct link between the poverty level, expressed by the wealth Index quintile, and using concrete or blocks as primary material for house construction (Figure 29).

Finally, while Montserrat has not faced significant conflict-related issues, public health emergencies, like the COVID-19 pandemic, revealed vulnerabilities in healthcare infrastructure and emergency response capabilities. Strengthening healthcare systems, ensuring adequate medical supplies, and training personnel are vital.

5.3. Identification of groups at higher risk of being left behind.

Identifying the environmental vulnerability would require a detailed study of all the characteristics that can create risk factors from different impacts. Although no such detailed data is available, this document uses data from the Labour Force and Intercensal Survey 2018 to make a proxy index of extreme vulnerability combining three components: Age, wealth index quintile, disability, and construction material (Table 23). A person is considered highly vulnerable to environmental conditions when they simultaneously meet three criteria: is a child (0-14) or an older person (65+), is part of the first two quintiles and lives in a house not built with cement/blocks. Additionally, independently of the three variables listed above, a person identified as disabled in the question of the reason for not working the week before the survey is also included in this group.

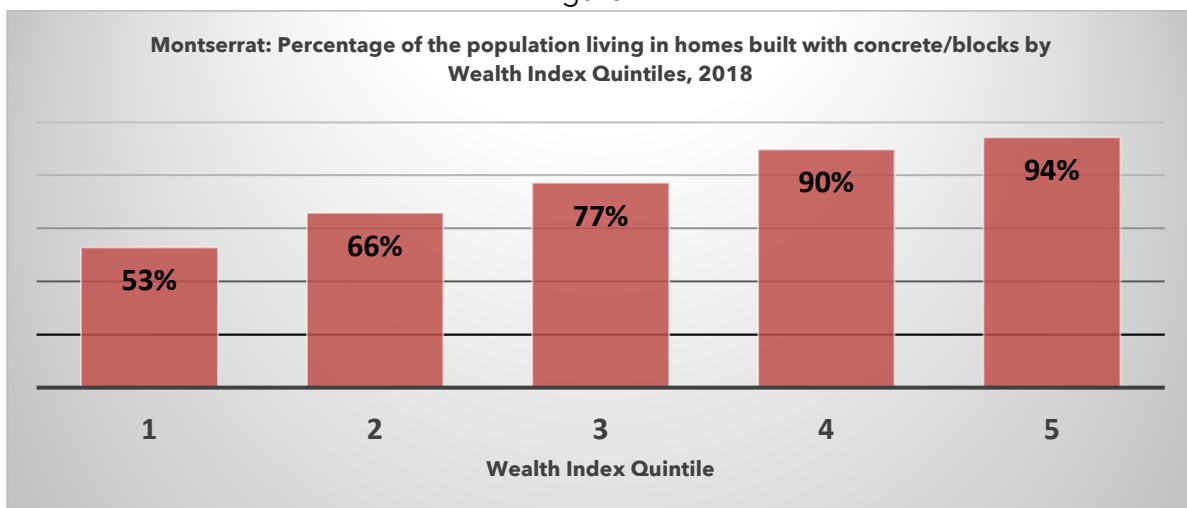
Table 22

Montserrat: Percentage of the population that lives in houses which construction material is concrete /blocks or Wood/Timber, 2018

Village	Concrete/Concrete Blocks	Wood/Timber
Isles Bay	87.5	0.0
Happy Hill	100.0	0.0
Frith/Flemming	78.0	11.6
Salem	68.4	20.0
Olde Towne	89.6	2.6
Olveston	95.0	0.0
Woodlands	94.2	2.5
St. Peter	75.8	13.4
Cudjoe Head	89.3	6.1
Banks	58.5	27.1
Brades	69.9	14.8
Baker Hill	68.2	12.8
Barzeys	89.4	1.4
Davy Hill	65.1	18.0
Geralds Bottom	64.1	7.6
St. Johns	72.8	10.6
Judy Piece	69.8	15.9
Look Out	78.3	10.1
Drummonds	64.5	13.2
Total	76.0	11.3

Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018

Figure 29



Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count, 2018

Table 23
 Montserrat: Population considered highly vulnerable to environmental risks by village, 2018.

Village	Highly Vulnerable Persons		
	Number	% by Village	% in the Total population
Isles Bay	0	0.0%	0.0%
Happy Hill	1	0.3%	6.7%
Frith/Flemming	4	1.2%	2.3%
Salem	34	10.5%	10.6%
Olde Towne	1	0.3%	1.3%
Olveston	5	1.5%	1.5%
Woodlands	1	0.3%	0.4%
St. Peter	25	7.7%	6.6%
Cudjoe Head	7	2.2%	5.3%
Banks	10	3.1%	8.5%
Brades	33	10.2%	8.4%
Baker Hill	19	5.9%	9.0%
Barzeys	6	1.9%	2.9%
Davy Hill	46	14.2%	11.2%
	13	4.0%	9.8%
St. Johns	31	9.6%	7.7%
Judy Piece	11	3.4%	5.8%
Look Out	66	20.4%	9.5%
Drummonds	11	3.4%	9.1%
Total	324	100%	7.1%

Source: Labour Force Survey and Intercensal Count 2018.

Around 55 per cent of the people identified as highly vulnerable live in Look Out, Brades, Davy Hill, and Salem. In these two last villages and in Gerald's Bottom, around 10% of their total population is considered in this category. In the whole country, about 7.1 percent of the population has been defined as highly vulnerable.

5.4. Measures to deal with humanitarian needs and reduce vulnerabilities.

Montserrat must address socio-economic disparities and access to resources to ensure no one is left behind. This involves enhancing social safety nets for the elderly, disabled and low-income families. Older people and persons with disabilities may face challenges during evacuations. Low-income families who lack resources to recover from disasters.

The recommended measures are they following:

Short-Term:

- Implement robust disaster response protocols, improve early warning systems, and conduct regular community drills.
- Enhance emergency healthcare capabilities and ensure the availability of essential services and supplies.

Medium and Long-Term:

- Focus on economic diversification to reduce reliance on a few sectors. Invest in sustainable infrastructure, particularly housing and roads, to withstand natural disasters.
- Develop educational programs focusing on disaster preparedness and resilience.
- Establish comprehensive land-use planning to avoid high-risk areas. Invest in scientific research to better understand and monitor natural hazards.
- Foster a culture of resilience and continuous learning from past disasters.
- Promote environmental sustainability to mitigate climate change impacts.
- Encourage settlement in safer areas through planned development.
- Ensure that infrastructure development keeps pace with population growth, particularly in healthcare, education, and transportation.
- Promote sustainable practices to balance population growth with environmental conservation.

In conclusion, Montserrat's approach to managing risk, vulnerability, and resilience must be multifaceted. It must address immediate disaster response needs while also building long-term sustainable and equitable growth. By focusing on these areas, Montserrat can navigate its current challenges and emerge as a stronger, more resilient community.

6. Policy Recommendations

6.1. Main findings

Montserrat is one of the most demographically fragile countries in the world today due to its very small population, very low fertility, and high emigration. Although the population will likely continue ageing, it is difficult to make predictions about how much due to the country's fertility and the significant effect that an unknown international migration could have on the population growth and age structure in coming years.

For that reason, Montserrat is called to develop and efficiently implement a National Population Policy that can break the country's demographic vulnerability cycle. Policies that leave no one behind will help strengthen economic, demographic, and environmental resilience. The leading policy suggestions focus on fertility and migration.

Regarding migration, to reverse the trend of a persistent population decline, combined with further ageing, the Government would need to invest in rights-based policy and focused interventions on international migration by increasing the number of immigrants and returning diaspora Montserratians and, at the same time creating conditions for retaining the people in the country and ensure they stay, which will require improving the country's society and economy.

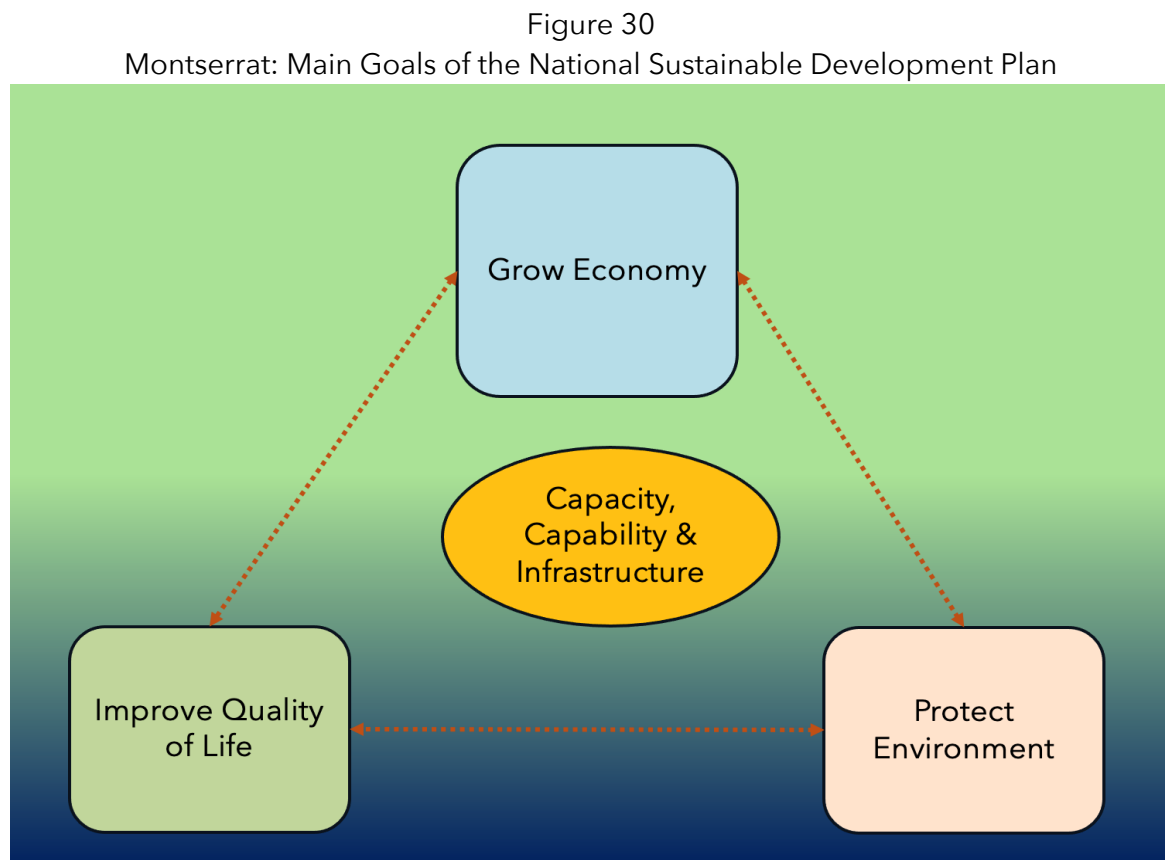
On migration, participants proposed the need to retain and integrate migrant individuals into Montserrat's society and economy. They suggest creating opportunities for the youth and establishing holistic integration systems for migrant workers and their families. The proposed policies also called for equitable access to services regardless of nationality, development of residential tourism to attract retirees, resolution of tourist banking issues, job security for long-term workers, identification of economic priorities for the island, and data collection to support these initiatives.

Regarding fertility, national stakeholders have suggested strategies that encourage childbearing by removing financial burdens and supporting new mothers. These include eliminating medical and hospital fees for childbirth, offering tax breaks for families with dependents under 18, and providing practical support such as housekeeping to assist new mothers with early childcare responsibilities.

Additionally, the Cabinet underscored the importance of ensuring a skilled and adequate workforce that supports future projects and investments, such as the Hospital and Port construction. The Cabinet also highlighted the significance of enhancing support systems, including education, healthcare, and housing, to create a conducive environment for residents and potential migrants. The Government considers engaging the diaspora a valuable resource for development, increasing knowledge exchange, and strengthening cultural ties, which are other crucial aspects of this strategy.

Young people expressed their concerns and proposals about their future and the country's future, including the need for the population to grow to allow for more diversity, interactions, and innovation challenges.

The Sustainable Social, Environmental and Economic Growth Strategy and Roadmap for Montserrat has defined four interconnected goals and twelve outcomes. The goals are shown in Figure 30:



The outcomes are as follows:

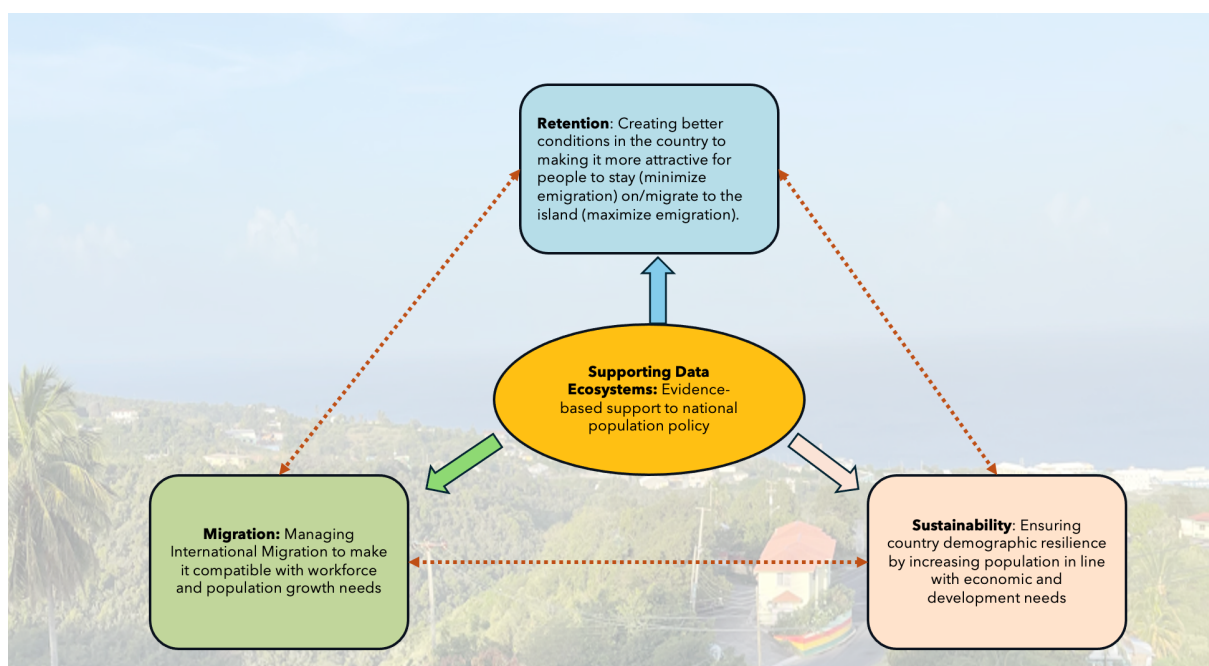
1. Achieve food sovereignty, improved nutrition, sustainable agriculture
2. Ensure healthy lives & wellbeing for all
3. Ensure education provision meets the needs of Montserrat
4. Ensure access to affordable, reliable & sustainable energy for all
5. Achieve sustainable economic growth & productive employment for all
6. Build & maintain capacity, capability & resilient infrastructure
7. Ensure access to adequate, safe & affordable housing and basic services
8. Ensure sustainable consumption & production patterns (including waste)
9. Reduced risk from & increased resilience to climate change & natural disasters
10. Conserve & sustainably use the natural environment

11. Effective & efficient government service
12. Ensure Montserrat's unique identity, community & culture evolved

6.2. Main components of a population policy

A national population policy is recommended as a government strategy to frame all activities that are considered essential to ensure population sustainability of Montserrat in line with the Government requirements for the new strategic sustainable development plan.

The proposal is based on three framing principles: Retention, Migration and Sustainability and supported by a fourth component of Supporting Data Ecosystems.



What follows is a proposal of main line of actions and interventions to be considered as an input for the elaboration of the national population policy for Montserrat, based on the findings of this report and the national consultations.

The Montserrat National Population Policy is a multifaceted proposal designed to address the island's demographic challenges through a series of strategic orientations and policy interventions across various sectors. At its core, the policy aims to retain the population by making Montserrat more attractive for current residents and potential migrants. This involves significant investments in human capital, focusing on health and wellbeing, education, and labor force development. For health and wellbeing, the policy proposes improving nutrition for children, adolescents, and mothers, developing activities to keep

all age groups active, and ensuring affordable access to reproductive health products. In education, it emphasizes adapting tertiary education to meet labor market needs, diversifying vocational education, and ensuring transparency in scholarship awards. For the labor force, the policy aims to match employment opportunities with the workforce's needs, revitalize the economy to create new jobs, and develop mentoring programs to build skills in high-demand sectors.

Another critical area of intervention is the management of international migration to align with workforce and population growth needs. The policy outlines a comprehensive approach to develop and implement a rights-based migration policy, including a ten-year plan to detail workforce needs and match them with economic plans. It proposes mechanisms to attract migrants, such as fast-track residency permits and integration services, and initiatives to engage the Montserratian diaspora, including financial incentives and development investment opportunities. The policy also focuses on promoting migrant integration by removing service fee disparities, implementing social cohesion initiatives, and designing gender-sensitive integration services to ensure successful adaptation and contribution to Montserrat's society and economy.

Sustainability and demographic resilience are also pivotal, with interventions aimed at creating a more enabling context for family formation, fertility, and reproduction. Strengthening reproductive health services, providing incentives for childbearing, and ensuring care support for new mothers and single-parent families are among the proposed measures. Additionally, the policy addresses the management of demographic changes, such as the aging population, by improving health services, promoting active participation and economic involvement post-retirement, and ensuring adequate housing and support for older adults.

Finally, supporting these strategic orientations is a commitment to building a robust data ecosystem for monitoring and implementing the population policy, including digitizing the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics system, enhancing data protection, and establishing a comprehensive population registry to support evidence-based decision-making and policy development.