



unicef 
for every child

Country Profile

Barbados¹

Barbados is considered a high-income country² and ranked **70** out of 191 on the 2021/22 Human Development Index.³

ECONOMY

Based on tourism and financial service industries

Experiencing post-COVID recovery



Growth at around **3** per cent per annum.⁴

HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES



Drought



Storms/
hurricanes
(Beryl 2024)



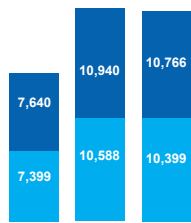
Earthquakes



Ashfall (2021)

DEMOGRAPHICS

Child Population by Gender



● Female ● Male



There are an estimated **58,000** children in a population of **282,000**, fairly evenly spread between males and females

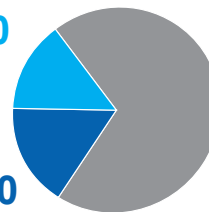
Total population



58,000



67,000



281,996



SOCIAL STATUS



Almost a **quarter** of children are living in monetary poverty. (The average for the Eastern Caribbean is **33** per cent).

4%
Health services
for children



GDP



1.3%
Child-related
social services

UNICEF IN ACTION FOR CHILDREN

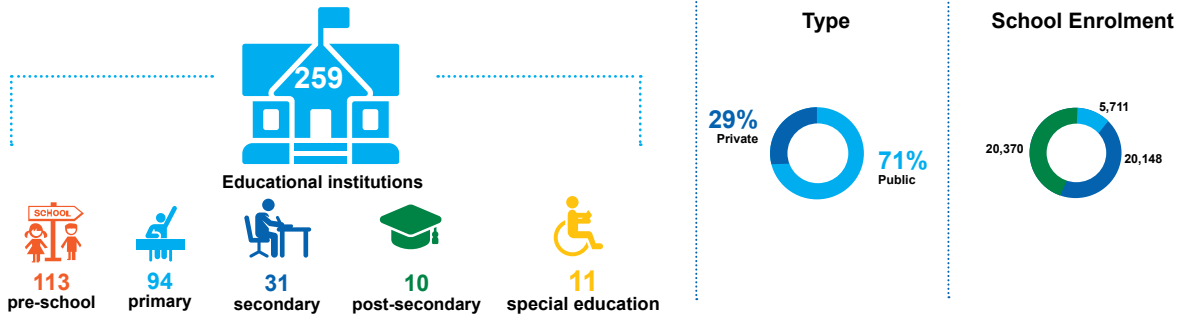
UNICEF is committed to:

- Serving all children across the Eastern Caribbean, especially the most vulnerable
- Working with country partners to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals
- Challenging deprivations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic
- Promoting targeted action to advance equity regardless of gender or disability
- Providing support for children and their families in the event of emergencies.



EDUCATION

School enrolment: There are some **260** educational institutions in Barbados. At primary and secondary level, **94** per cent of children are in school, though this drops to **78** per cent in the pre-school sector. The country spends **5.6** per cent of its GDP on education.⁵



Challenges

- Education system is perceived by many to be out-of-sync with requirements for the future world of work
- A significant number of students left behind in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Around half of students pass the CSEC English A exam and **27** per cent pass mathematics. More girls than boys sit, and therefore pass, CSEC exams.⁶

We are supporting:

- The Government's Commitment to Action on Transforming Education/ Foundational Learning
- Concrete steps to transform and reimagine the education system so it is fair, inclusive, relevant and modern
 - A collaboration with the Ministry of Education leading to the development of learning recovery initiatives, post-pandemic education policies, and reforms in early childhood development (ECD) – also supported by the Inter-American Development Bank
- The development of curriculum-based digital content and pilot school connectivity upgrades and GIGA project connectivity in select schools
- The Caribbean Safe School Initiative Recognition Programme, with its school safety training package
- The Ministry of Education to develop a customer service charter to monitor the implementation of its strategic plan.

UNICEF's commitment: Children access and complete quality education, with the skills to advance to employment or higher education.

CHILD PROTECTION



Challenges

- Fourteen per cent of respondents in a 2024 survey said they knew of an incident of child sexual abuse and **77** per cent said it was a problem
- Corporal punishment is still accepted. Only 29 per cent of respondents support a ban in homes and 46 per cent support a ban in schools
- Well over **50** per cent of children have been subjected to physical punishment
- **13** per cent of children report bullying
- Mental health issues, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, are increasingly prevalent.

We have supported:

- The development and passing of the **Child Protection Act** and **Child Justice Act** (2024)
- The rollout of the specialist Family Court to promote child-friendly judicial processes
- Investments in mental health (MH) services, such as the MyChild Helpline App and an MH workbook, reaching children and caregivers with essential psychosocial support
- Expansion of youth advocacy and engagement around MH with youth NGO Let's Unpack It. (Two focal points in Barbados)
- Working with the Child Care Board and telecom providers on child digital safety campaigns
- Raising public awareness on different forms of child abuse and how to prevent and report it.



UNICEF's commitment: Helping children grow up in a safe, secure environment, protected from all forms of violence and abuse.

SOCIAL PROTECTION



Challenges

- As stated, poverty is an issue for the children of Barbados
- Youths are almost three times as likely to be unemployed as the general population (**29** per cent and **10** per cent, respectively)
- Coverage of social protection programmes is low, and few adolescents and young people benefit.⁷

We have supported:

- The strengthening Barbados' social protection systems to ensure they are inclusive, resilient, and child-sensitive
- Collaborative efforts with the Government of Barbados, FAO, UNDP, and WFP which have led to the development of shock-responsive social protection mechanisms ensuring that children in poverty are not left behind
- Government strengthening of legislative frameworks for child protection, including the Child Protection Act and Child Justice Act (2024).



UNICEF's commitment: Working to improve the availability of more effective, comprehensive, inclusive, shock-responsive social protection systems to improve the lives of children and their families, especially the most vulnerable.

CLIMATE ACTION AND RESILIENCE



Challenges

- Barbados has experienced a number of hazards in recent years.
- Vulnerability to climate change alongside others Small Island Developing States. (Prime Minister Mia Mottley has championed the Bridgetown Initiative which seeks to reform the global financial system to focus on climate action and the SDGs).

We are supporting:

- A partnership with CDEMA that contributes to disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness and climate-smart education, with a focus on strengthening the Caribbean Safe School Initiative
- Youth-driven climate action, including the HEY Campaign and Beat the Heat Campaign, which engaged young people in climate education, adaptation, and mitigation activities
- The leadership of Prime Minister Mottley in the Green Rising initiative, advocating for climate action and financing mechanisms that prioritize youth and marginalized communities
- The Nature Heroes climate impact game which will further engage youth in sustainable environmental actions
- Promoting climate adaptation through the Beat the Heat campaign.

UNICEF's commitment: Implementing risk-informed, child-sensitive climate policies with effective participation of children, young people and communities to promote climate action and resilience.

HEALTH, IMMUNIZATION, NUTRITION AND NCDs



Challenges

- Health, nutrition and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are increasingly an issue in Barbados with **28** per cent of those aged 5 to 19 overweight.⁸

We have supported:

- Advocacy for banning sale and marketing of unhealthy food and beverages in schools
- Advocacy for front of package warning labels on foods high in fat and salt
- Health and exercise campaigns among adolescents
- Nutrition campaigns targeting parents and caregivers to promote healthy food choices
- Training for health professionals and educators on Infection Prevention and Control in schools.

CHILD PARTICIPATION/YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



We have supported:

- The strengthening of youth governance structures, including the National Students Council and Barbados Youth Parliament
- The establishment of a cohort of Youth Ambassadors
- The U-Report platform to enhance young people's participation in governance and decision making
- The 2024 Children and Youth Action Summit, developed in collaboration with the Ashley Lashley Foundation, which provided a platform for Caribbean youth to influence global policy on climate and development
- Engaging children in exploring their rights in the annual Caribbean Child Research Conference.

UNICEF's commitment: The wants and needs of young people should be firmly at the centre of the national and global rights and development agenda.

Endnotes

1 Unless otherwise stated, sources: UNICEF, UN Data Portal, Central Statistics Office, washtdata, PAHO/WHO, HOT

2 World Bank classification, 2021

3 Human Development Index, 2021-22

4 IMF and Central Bank of Barbados

5 This is in line with recommendations emerging from the 2022 Transforming Education Summit.

6 Generation Unlimited Barbados Report, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/2166/file/Generation%20Unlimited%20Barbados%20report.pdf>

7 Generation Unlimited Barbados Report, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/2166/file/Generation%20Unlimited%20Barbados%20report.pdf>

8 Childhood overweight on the rise: Is it too late to turn the tide in Latin America and the Caribbean? UNICEF 2023