

Country Profile

Montserrat¹

Montserrat, a United Kingdom Overseas Territory, has had its social and environmental landscape dramatically disrupted by the eruptions of the Soufriere Hills Volcano (1995-97).



- Some **60** per cent of land in the south became uninhabitable
- Almost half the population left the island²
- Depletion of agricultural land has led to subsequent food insecurity³
- The economy remains small and vulnerable to external shocks and natural emergencies.

ECONOMY

Based on tourism and financial service industries



Experiencing post-COVID recovery

HUMANITARIAN CHALLENGES



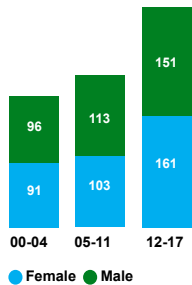
Volcanic activity



Storms

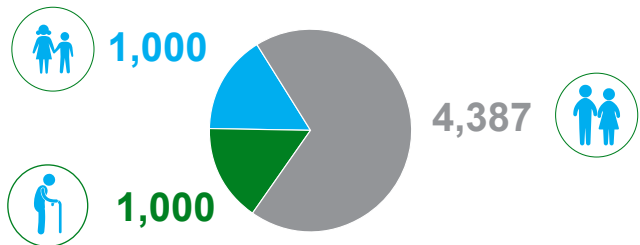
DEMOGRAPHICS

Child Population by Gender



There are an estimated **1,000** children in an overall population of **4,387**, with a balance between girls and boys.

Total Population



SOCIAL STATUS



Almost **50** per cent of children are living in monetary poverty. The subregional average is **33** per cent.

However, more than 13 per cent of GDP is spent on health services.⁴



The country is not on track to reach the Sustainable Development Goals and has met fewer than 10 of 48 child-related targets.⁵

UNICEF IN ACTION FOR CHILDREN

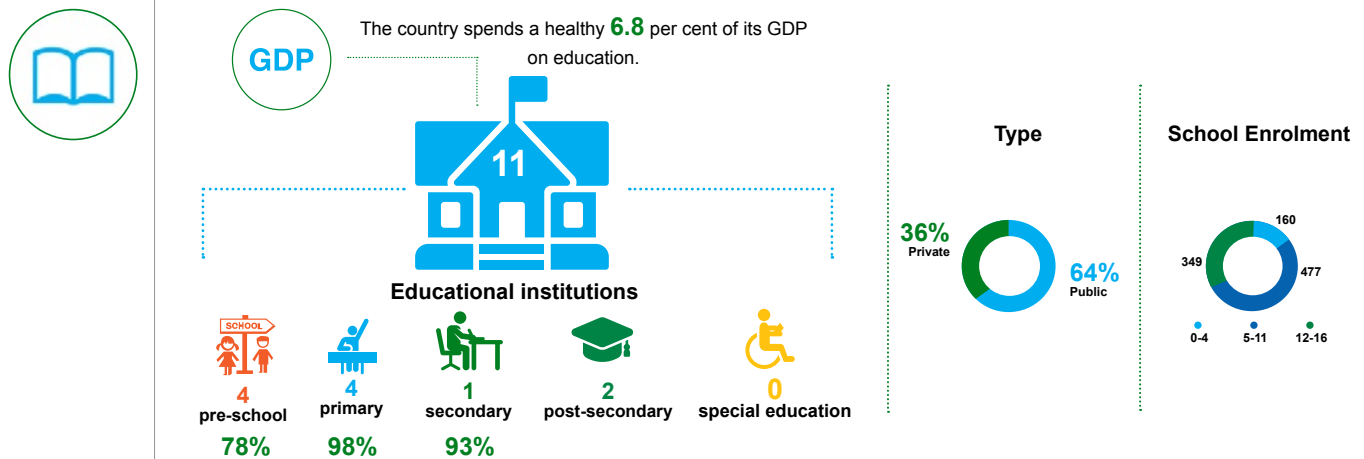
UNICEF is committed to:

- 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

Schools: There are some **11** educational institutions



Challenges

- The education system is perceived by many to be out-of-sync with requirements for the future world of work
- A significant number of students have been left behind in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers is problematic.⁶

We have supported:

- The Government's Commitment to Action on Transforming Education/Foundational Learning
- Enhancing educators' knowledge and skills to help students understand positive approaches to discipline
- A special education diagnostic clinic to identify learning and developmental support needs⁷
- Enhancing students' skills in meaningful participation in school governance
- Capacity development to strengthen knowledge/skills of parents, caregivers and teachers to support children's holistic development, including those with disabilities and developmental delays.

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

CHILD PROTECTION



Challenges

- Gender-based violence is an issue: for example, across the Latin America and Caribbean region, **40** per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 have experienced partner violence⁸
- Corporal punishment across various settings is accepted in Montserrat
- Nearly **35** per cent of young people have experienced child-on-child violence. (School violence is seen as a "constant"⁹)
- Mental health issues, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic, are increasingly prevalent.

We have supported:

- Increased knowledge/skills on positive parenting and discipline through media campaigns, community engagement and capacity-building sessions with parents, teachers and coaches
- Enhancing knowledge/skills to reduce violence in schools
- Launch of region's first ever child/youth mental health resources website
- Expansion of youth advocacy and engagement around mental health (with youth NGO Let's Unpack It)¹⁰
- There are now two national youth mental health focal points.



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

SOCIAL PROTECTION



Challenges

- Montserrat has one of the highest child poverty rates in the subregion: much higher than the rate for adults
- As a result of the pandemic the unemployment rate rose dramatically¹¹
- Children living in households led by female single parents are especially vulnerable¹²
- The social protection system needs to be more shock-responsive.

UNICEF is supporting:

- A partnership with the British Red Cross to develop a cash programme linked to psychosocial support services that can be deployed in response to shocks. This would encompass affected populations not otherwise covered by the national system.

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

As suggested, Montserrat is vulnerable to volcanic activity and storms and there have been seven such events since 1980.

UNICEF is:

- Continuing to work with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency on such initiatives as the Safe School Working Group and disaster risk management which benefit Montserrat
- 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 NCDs are increasingly problematic with **28** per cent of young people aged 5 to 19 overweight.¹³

UNICEF has 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:

- Training a contingent of young Montserratian activists in youth advocacy to prepare them to spread advocacy messages among their peers
- Strong youth advocate organizations to rally youth to have a voice in such forums as the 4th International SIDS Conference via the Children and Youth Action Summit
- 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, washdata, PAHO/WHO, HOT

2 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Reliefweb: <https://reliefweb.int/country/mnr>)

3 Ibid

4 This is high for the subregion

5 [SDG Progress on Children's Well-Being-Centring-child-rights-in-the-2030-Agenda-For-every-child-a-sustainable-future-web.pdf](#)

6 Situation analysis of children in Montserrat. UNICEF 2016 <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1356/file/Montserrat-SitAN-2016-WEB.pdf>

7 In partnership with the Ministry of Education and the University of the West Indies

8 UNICEF, LACRO, 2020

9 Situation analysis of children in Montserrat. UNICEF 2016 <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1356/file/Montserrat-SitAN-2016-WEB.pdf>

10 There are now two national mental health focal points in a regional network.

11 Montserrat: Overseas Territory Profile (as of May 2022), referencing the Caribbean Development Bank. <https://reliefweb.int/report/montserrat/montserrat-overseas-territory-profile-may-2022>

12 Situation analysis of children in Montserrat. UNICEF 2016 <https://www.unicef.org/easterncaribbean/media/1356/file/Montserrat-SitAN-2016-WEB.pdf>

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