

► Fiji: Country Factsheet

[Working Draft]

2024

Key Points

- Fiji has a labour force participation rate of 57.6 per cent.
- Labour rights challenges in Fiji include incorporating women in the formal economy; addressing sexual harassment in the workplace and combatting child labour.
- Fiji has ratified 31 in-force ILO conventions; ratification priorities include key occupational safety and health conventions (C161, C176 and C187); the Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29); and the Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).
- Fiji's social partners are the Fiji Trades Union Congress, Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation and the Ministry of Labour, Productivity and Industrial Relations.

► Country overview

Fiji is a country of around 18,270 km² located in the South Pacific with a population in 2022 of approximately 930,000.ⁱ It is classified as an upper middle-income country by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD.ⁱⁱ Despite the economic impacts of Tropical Cyclones Harold and Yasa in 2020, Ana in 2021 and COVID-19, Fiji's economy rebounded in 2022 with 11.6 per cent mostly driven by the rapid recovery of the tourism sector; GDP per capita is US\$4,069.ⁱⁱⁱ

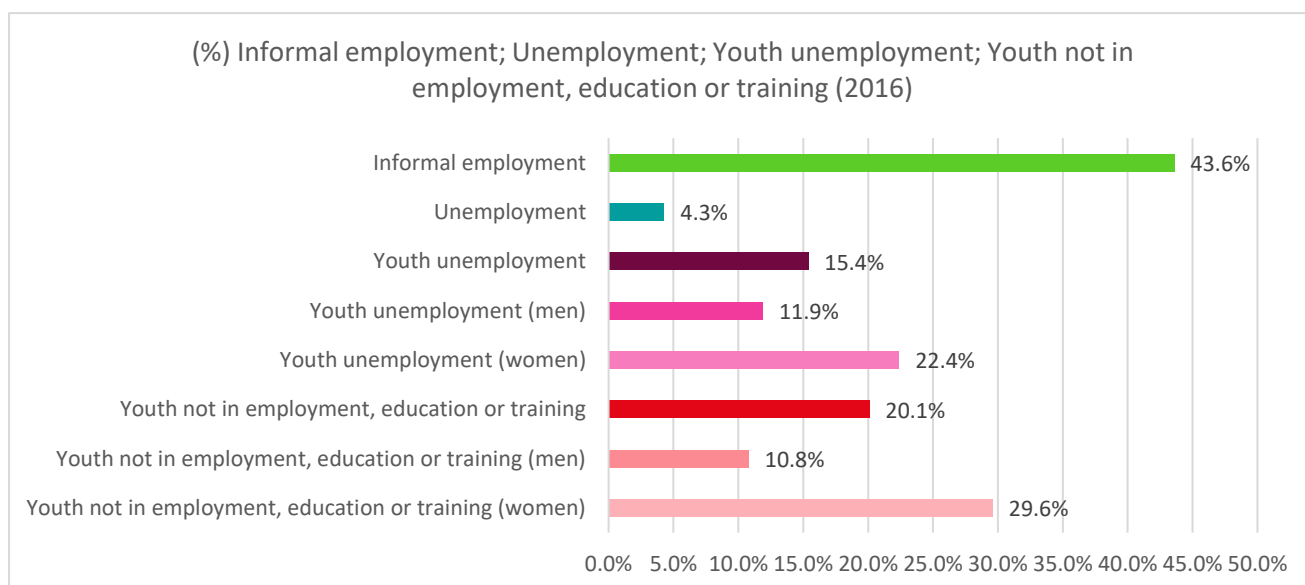
Key Data

- **Population:** 930,000
- **Working-age population:** 593,600
- **Labour force participation rate:** 57.6%

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects, Online Edition", 2022, accessed 12 April 2024; ILO, "ILO modelled estimates database", ILOSTAT, accessed 14 April 2024.

► The labour market and the labour force

At the date of Fiji's last Employment, Unemployment Survey in 2016,^{iv} the working-age population was 593,600 and the labour force participation rate was 57.6 per cent. Men had a higher labour force participation rate than women at 77 per cent to 38.5 per cent. 63.6 per cent of employed persons are in paid employment or waged work, with the remainder of 36.4 per cent being self-employed as employers, or own account workers. Around 4.3 per cent of the working population were unemployed. This rate is higher for women than men, at 5.5 per cent against 3.7 per cent. Young people have higher rates of unemployment, with 22.4 per cent of young women unemployed, contributing to almost a third of young women not in employment, education or training. Informal employment makes up 43.6 per cent of employment. The service sector is the largest sector in Fiji, making up 55.2 per cent of the labour market, with agriculture making up 30.6 per cent and industry making up 14.2 per cent. Across sectors, employment in direct (for example tour guides and travel agents) and indirect tourism (including transport, marketing and event planning) contributes to 35.3 per cent of total employment,^v and is a growth sector that attracts a lot of attention from the Government. Recent research by the Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation in collaboration with the ILO revealed that skills shortages were among the top four business challenges identified by more than 250 Fijian employers across sectors such as wholesale retail and trade, accommodation food and beverages, and manufacturing. The challenge of skills shortages was reported equally important as rising costs of goods and services.



Source: ILO, "ILO modelled estimates database", ILOSTAT, accessed 14 April 2024.

► Labour rights challenges

In the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's 2018 review,^{vi} and echoed in Fiji's 2019 Universal Periodic Review (UPR)^{vii} and in a direct request of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR),^{viii} concerns were raised that women's participation in the labour force continued to be disproportionately low; that the pay gap was the largest in the region; that women were frequently segregated into lower paid jobs in the informal economy; and that some sectors did not provide access to maternity rights. Employment in the informal economy - including in domestic work - is commonly characterized lack of structure and a lack of access to legal protection, secure benefits, welfare protection or representation. Sexual harassment and other forms of sexual assault in the workplace was also raised as a direct request by the CEACR;^{ix} to which Fiji's Government responded in part by being the second country to ratify C190 in 2020. Women continue to be compelled into sex work due to the inability to find other employment and the issues enforcing paid child maintenance. According to the Committee for the Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC) review in 2014 child labour remains a challenge in Fiji.^x

The review noted a high number of children engaged in child labour, many of them in informal work as domestic workers, labourers and farm workers and urged the Government to take every necessary measure to tackle the root causes of child labour while implementing and further strengthening its legal framework to eradicate child labour, including in the informal and private sectors.

Labour Administration System

- **Labour policy, employment promotion, and worker welfare:** Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations (MEPIR).
- **Employment services (public, private and overseas):** National Employment Centre (NEC).
- **Dispute resolution:** MEPIR mediation service; Fiji Employment Relations Tribunal adjudication.
- **Social Protection:** Fiji National Provident Fund; Accident Compensation Commission of Fiji.
- **Tripartite Boards:** The Employment Relations Advisory Board (ERAB); the National Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Board (NOHSAB); and the National Employment Centre Board (NECB).

Source: ILO, "Baseline Study of the labour administration systems in eleven Pacific Island Countries that are members of the International Labour Organization", (unpublished); ILO, "Mapping of labour administration systems in Pacific Island Countries: Tripartite bodies and social dialogue", (unpublished).

► Legal and policy framework

The main instruments of legislation are the Employment Relations Act of 2007 (No. 36 of 2007), and the recent Employment Relations (Amendment) Bill 2023. The former provides a maximum of 48 working hours per week (Art. 71(1)); a minimum 10 days paid holiday per year after one year of employment (Art. 59(1)); and provides for maternity leave and pay (Art. 101(1) and (2)). The latter provides workers in more sectors with freedom of association rights. Effective from 1 January 2023, Fiji introduced a minimum wage rate of FJ\$4, which aims to provide fair compensation to workers. The Fijian employment policy agenda is expressed through a number of high-level instruments. This includes the Twenty-Year Development Plan 2017-2036,^{xi} which includes a commitment to reducing unemployment rate to below four per cent. The Government of Fiji is conducting consultations for a new National Development Plan which will cover a 3-, 5- and 20-year plan for Fiji. The most recent employment policy is the Fiji National Employment Policy 2018, due to be replaced in 2024.

Migration dynamics

In 2020 there were 233,856 Fijians overseas and personal remittances accounted for 7.2 per cent of GDP. Two key labour mobility schemes are the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme and New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. Both of these schemes are designed to fill seasonal labour shortages, largely in agriculture and horticulture industries. Under the PALM scheme, approved Australian businesses facing local labour shortages can hire workers from Timor-Leste, and nine Pacific Island countries, including Fiji. Once approved to participate in the PALM scheme, employers can recruit workers for seasonal positions lasting up to nine months or longer-term placements ranging from one to four years. The RSE scheme allows seasonal workers to stay in New Zealand up to seven months in any 11-month period. In the 2022-2023 period 879 Fijians joining the RSE scheme and 3,970 joined the PALM scheme.

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "International Migrant Stock 2020 [Total, origin]", UNDESA dataset, accessed 14 April 2024; The World Bank, "Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) – Marshall Islands", World Bank staff estimates based on IMF balance of payments data, and World Bank and OECD GDP estimates, accessed 14 April 2024; Charlotte Bedford, "Pacific labour mobility over the last year: continued growth", DevPolicyBlog, 8 August 2023.

Ratification

Fiji has ratified 31 ILO conventions that are currently in force. In addition, Fiji has ratified a number of international treaties including the the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Fundamental

- C029 – Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- C087 – Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)
- C098 – Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)
- C100 – Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- C105 – Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- C111 – Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- C138 – Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- C155 – Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155)
- C182 – Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182)

Governance

- C081 – Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81)
- C122 – Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (N. 122)
- C129 – Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969 (No. 129)
- C144 – Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976 (No. 144)

Technical (recently ratified)

- C190 – Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)

Fiji's commitment to Alliance 8.7

Fiji is an Alliance 8.7 Pathfinder country – committed to going further and faster to achieve the target to "Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms."

Tripartism in action

Fiji's social partners are the Fiji Trades Union Congress; Fiji Commerce and Employers Federation; and Ministry of Employment, Productivity and Industrial Relations. The Government of Fiji's commitment to tripartism continues to strengthen. In 2022, Fiji reported consultation with employers over the National Minimum Wage; and Fiji has had accredited tripartite delegations for the three most recent International Labour Conferences. The reinstatement of the tripartite wages council is also a notable development, as is the re-establishment of the Tripartite Forum.

► ILO's support to Fiji centres around six key goals:

1. Maintaining a tripartite social dialogue on employment and labour issues especially that of Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining;
2. Drafting a National Employment Policy;
3. Analysing key bottlenecks to sectoral development, including current and future sectoral skills needs;
4. Continuing to address child labour;
5. Conducting a Study on Corporate Social Responsibility;
6. Providing further technical support on Occupational Safety and Health; and
7. Building the capacities of the Employers' and Workers' Organizations and their affiliates.

Due to a number of conventions becoming outdated, the ILO is committed to supporting Fiji to ratify:

- C160 - Labour Statistics Convention, 1985 (No. 160)
- C161 - Occupational Health Services Convention, 1985 (No. 161)
- C176 - Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176)
- C187 - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187)
- C185 - Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003, as amended (No. 185)
- C102 - Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)

ⁱ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, "World Population Prospects, Online Edition", 2022, accessed 12 April 2024.

ⁱⁱ OECD, "DAC List of ODAW Recipients".

ⁱⁱⁱ United Nations Trade & Development, "General profile: Fiji", UNCTADstat database, accessed 14 April 2024.

^{iv} ILO, "ILO modelled estimates database", ILOSTAT, accessed 14 April 2024.

^v ILO, *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*, 2022.

^{vi} Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Fiji, CEDAW/C/FJI/CO/5, (2018).

^{vii} UN Human Rights Council, [Matrix] Thematic List of Recommendations. UPR of Fiji (3rd cycle – 34th Session) (2019).

^{viii} ILO, Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions. 2023. Direct Request (Employment Policy Convention).

^{ix} ILO, "Direct Request (CEACR) - adopted 2023, published 112nd ILC session (2024)", NORMLEX, accessed 15 April 2024.

^x Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Fiji, CRC/C/FJI/CO/2-4, (2014).

^{xi} Ministry of Economy, *5-Year & 20-Year National Development Plan: Transforming Fiji*, 2017.

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