



MIGRATION INFORMATION SOURCE

FRESH THOUGHT, AUTHORITATIVE DATA, GLOBAL REACH

Jamaica: From Diverse Beginning to Diaspora in the Developed World

**By Alex Glennie and Laura Chappell
Institute for Public Policy Research**

June 2010

The Caribbean has a long history as a migration hub, with many of its inhabitants having sought employment opportunities by moving either within the region or to a number of key receiving countries, including the United States, Canada, and former colonial powers such as the United Kingdom and France.

Patchy data complicates efforts to draw an accurate picture of regional migration trends, but available evidence suggests that while absolute numbers of emigrants coming from the Caribbean are low compared to other developing regions, this is a result of the small populations in Caribbean countries, rather than low levels of migration.

Indeed, some Caribbean countries have relatively high proportions of their populations living abroad. These include the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Anguilla, the Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, and the US Virgin Islands, according to the United Nations Population Division.

Jamaica, Guyana, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic have the lowest shares of their citizens abroad. However, given Jamaica's size — about 2.8 million in 2009 — it remains one of the most significant origin countries in the region.

Although many destination countries have limited labor migration, particularly in the context of the global economic downturn, migration remains important in Jamaican society. Despite its political stability, Jamaica is a poor country dependent on services, tourism, and remittances, with high unemployment generally — estimated at 14.5 percent in 2009 — and limited employment opportunities for its most skilled citizens.

Large numbers of Jamaican households have one or more members abroad in North America or the United Kingdom, while many others contain returned migrants. This has potentially significant implications for policymakers looking to maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of migration. To date, a lack of comprehensive data has prevented the emergence of a clear picture of Jamaica's migration patterns.

This profile covers Jamaica's migration history, Jamaicans in major destination countries, immigration to Jamaica, recent emigration flows, return migration, remittances, brain drain, and migration and diaspora policies. It includes work conducted by ippr (the Institute for Public Policy Research) and the University of the West Indies as a part of the Development on the Move project of ippr and the Global Development Network (GDN).

Historical Background

The Spanish settled on the island in the early 16th century and brought over African slaves. The island's original inhabitants, the Taino Indians, were eventually wiped out due to Spanish exploitation and their lack of resistance to European diseases. Jews also arrived in this period to work in sugar production, eventually moving into business and the professions after completing their indentured servitude.

When the British captured Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655, many of the African slaves (known as Maroons) escaped into the mountains, established their own culture, and fought the British use of slaves. Unable to control them, the British granted the Maroons political autonomy in 1739. Some were deported to Nova Scotia in Canada in 1796 following a subsequent war; many of those Maroons eventually went to Sierra Leone as

they had great difficulty adjusting to Canadian life.

Jamaica has experienced high levels of migration since it became a British colony. From the 17th through the mid-19th centuries, European traders relied on forced labor from Africa and later indentured labor, initially from Europe (particularly Ireland and Germany) but then from India and China, to work on Jamaican sugar plantations alongside the indigenous Taino population. The British abolished slavery in 1838 and the indentureship system in 1917.

Jamaicans followed available employment opportunities in the region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many moved to Central America to work on major construction projects such as the trans-Isthmian railway and the Panama Canal. Others moved to Cuba to provide labor for expanding sugar production there.

A few hundred Chinese migrants who had traveled from China to work on the construction of the Panama Canal ended up settling in Jamaica, establishing a migration corridor that flourished until 1931, when the Jamaican government issued a decree that limited the inflow of Chinese to students under the age of 14. These restrictions were in response to the demands of the Jamaican business community, which feared the rapid expansion of Chinese retail trade on the island (by 1930 there were around 6,000 Chinese settlers in Jamaica).

Although Jamaica is not known as a refugee destination, people from Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon fled the Middle East for a better life in Jamaica in the early 20th century. Evidence suggests that many were Christians escaping persecution at the hands of Turkish Muslims who controlled large parts of the Ottoman Empire. Although it is less clear why Jamaica was chosen as their ultimate destination, this may have been linked to the country's British connections.

When the United States and the United Kingdom needed labor during World Wars I and II, both countries recruited workers from Jamaica and other Caribbean colonies. For instance, some estimates suggest that more than 10,000 Jamaicans — a mix of skilled and unskilled laborers — were recruited for the British West Indies Regiment as part of a strategy to draw in soldiers from the colonies.

Post-World War II reconstruction in the United Kingdom also required labor, much of which came from Jamaica and Barbados. Large numbers of skilled, semiskilled, and unskilled workers were recruited for hospital services, while others gained employment in industry and transport. The 1961 census in Great Britain recorded some 200,000 West Indians in England, of which half were from Jamaica.

However, in the 1960s, changing migration policies in traditional receiving countries altered the direction of Jamaican emigration. Restrictive immigration laws in the United Kingdom coincided with the passage of legislation in the United States and Canada that made education and skills more important determinants than nationality and race. From the late 1960s onwards, the United States became the chief destination for skilled migrants from Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean.

Jamaicans in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom

The Jamaican diaspora is unusually large, with some estimates indicating that as many individuals of Jamaican descent may currently be living outside the country as within it.

As stated above, the diaspora is concentrated in three countries — the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

About 637,000 Jamaican foreign born lived in the United States in 2008, with approximately 123,500 in Canada in 2006 and 150,000 in the United Kingdom in 2008, according to official statistical bureaus in each country.

Jamaican immigrants in the United States, who live mainly in New York and Florida, are generally educated and more likely to participate in the labor force than the native born. About half of the Jamaican born age 25 and older had at least some college or an associate's degree in 2008, according to data from the US Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey. A larger share of Jamaican-born women held a bachelor's degree (24 percent) than Jamaican-born men (19 percent) although the foreign-born population overall (27 percent) and the native born (28 percent) had higher rates.

Thirty-seven percent of the Jamaican born age 16 and older reported working in educational services, and health care and social assistance. Just 2 percent were limited English proficient, meaning they reported speaking English less than "very well."

Jamaicans living in Canada are also relatively likely to be educated. The 2006 census indicated that 12.5 percent of Canadians of Jamaican origin held a university degree compared to 18 percent of all Canadian adults. However, they were more educated than in 2001, when 10 percent of Jamaican-origin adults had a university degree. Also, Canadians of Jamaican origin were more likely than those in the rest of the population to have completed a community college program.

Jamaican-born Canadian citizens are also more likely to be employed than other Canadians. In 2006, 66 percent of Jamaican-born Canadians age 15 and older were working, compared to just 62 percent of Canadian adults overall. Of those employed, around 25 percent were in sales and service occupations, while 20 percent were in business, financial, or administrative occupations.

A significant proportion of Canadians of Jamaican origin are also employed in health-related occupations. In 2006, about 9 percent of workers of Jamaican origin were employed in this field, compared with just over 5 percent of workers in the overall population.

The vast majority of Jamaican-born Canadians in 2006 were fluent in English, or bilingual in English and French; just a few hundred reported being unable to converse in either language.

According to official population statistics, there were just under 50,000 Jamaican nationals legally resident in the United Kingdom in 2008, indicating that the other two-thirds of the total Jamaican-born population hold British citizenship. However, there is also evidence to suggest some Jamaican migrants live in the United Kingdom without proper authorization, although it is very difficult to accurately estimate the numbers involved.

The majority of the Jamaican-origin population live in London, although there are considerable Jamaican populations in other parts of the country, particularly in the Midlands and the Southwest.

Among foreign-born workers in the United Kingdom, Jamaica is one of three origin countries where employment rates for female immigrants are higher than those for men. In 2008, 73.8 percent of Jamaican-born women were employed in the United Kingdom, compared to 66.1 percent of Jamaican-born men.

Recent Emigration Trends

As a result of tighter immigration controls, the official flow of Jamaican migrants to these three countries has been falling steadily over the past few decades, with the number of those emigrating to the United States declining by around a third between the 1970s and the 1990s (see Table 1).

Despite a slight uptick in migration to Canada during the 1990s — which some suggest is the result of entire families relocating — this downward trend has continued in the first few years of the 21st century and is likely to continue due to tightened requirements for labor migrants and political pressure from the recession. However, there are still concerns about the emigration of teachers and health-care workers from Jamaica, and the "brain drain" impact this may be having.

Decade	Total number of migrants	United States	Canada	United Kingdom
1970s	327,779	256,984	56,964	13,831
1980s	239,207	201,177	33,973	4,057
1990s	212,892	170,291	39,443	3,158

2000-2006	135,493	117,205	15,374	2,914
Total	915,371	745,657	145,754	23,960
% of Total	100	82.4	15	2.6

Source: Thomas-Hope 2004 (updated to 2006). Compiled from data in the Economic and Social Survey, the Planning Institute of Jamaica, Volumes for years 1970-2008.

However, while migration channels have been closing to Jamaican migrants who do not qualify under skilled-migrant programs or have immediate family members in a destination country, people are still leaving. In addition to those who are recorded as landed immigrants and therefore documented as "migrants" in the official data, many have chosen paths that the statistics do not always capture, such as those who have violated the terms of their visas, or those living and working in other countries without authorization.

Some migrants travel from Jamaica to destination countries on visitor visas or as holders of previously acquired work permits or residence status. It is believed that most of these individuals are short-term labor migrants and that many move back and forth on an annual basis.

This form of circulatory or short-term migration includes both independent movements arranged through personal networks as well as those organized by the Jamaican government. In 2009, for example, nearly 8,000 Jamaicans went to the United States on seasonal visas for farm and hotel work, according to the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics. This was more than a third of the nearly 22,000 Jamaican nationals admitted to the United States as lawful permanent residents (most of them as the immediate relatives of US citizens) in the same year.

Indeed, studies have shown that US resorts and hotels like to recruit Jamaicans for seasonal work because they speak English and they are known to work hard.

Canada also employs a number of Jamaicans through its Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) and its Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP). These programs enable employers to recruit workers from Mexico and various Caribbean countries on a temporary basis — normally for between six weeks and a maximum of eight months per year. Workers can participate in this scheme more than once, but they are usually ineligible to stay in Canada on a more permanent basis once their contracts end.

New evidence suggests that in spite of more stringent rules in major destination countries, migration remains a fact of life in Jamaica. According to the ippr/GDN national survey, 2 percent of Jamaican households contain one or more immigrants, at least 15 percent have one or more migrants currently abroad, and 28 percent have one or more return-migrant members — those who lived abroad but have returned to Jamaica.

These estimates are higher than those that previous surveys found, probably because of two issues. First, the ippr/GDN data is based on a nationally representative household survey that captures all kinds of movement, rather than official migration data that may miss many migrants — including those who migrate illegally.

Second, the ippr/GDN survey defines migration as any episode of living in another country for three months or more; the more commonly used United Nations definition uses a 12-month cut-off point. The three-month definition is particularly relevant to Jamaica, since a number of Jamaicans move to various countries for shorter periods of

About the ippr/GDN Survey

A major new household survey was designed for the ippr/GDN project, which aimed to generate reliable data on the prevalence of migration in Jamaica and the impacts migration has on development.

We interviewed nearly 1,000 households from across Jamaica in November 2007, asking them whether they had a migrant member. As a follow up, 486 households were interviewed in more depth in November and December 2007 to examine how migration was affecting them. Both samples were nationally representative, meaning the results should reflect Jamaican trends as a whole.

The second more detailed questionnaire, which was carried out as a face-to-face interview, gathered wide-ranging information both about individuals within the household (including demographic and socioeconomic information, as well as data on their migration histories) and about the household as a whole. It also gathered data on the household's opinions on migration.

time, often for work.

The Feminization of Jamaican Migration

It appears that while men dominated in the initial stages of migration from the region, improved levels of female education and changing labor markets overseas have led to greater female migration since the 1960s, especially as women have taken on greater economic responsibilities within the family and have had more freedom within the family structure to travel abroad for work.

Evidence suggests that women are frequently the first to migrate from the household, rather than just accompanying or later joining their husbands or partners. The United Kingdom does not record the sex of individual immigrants, but it does have a category that specifies whether the entrant is a "husband" or "wife." Since the 1980s, the percentage of husbands entering from Jamaica has been consistently higher than the number of wives, indicating that more husbands were joining women who had immigrated on their own.

The increasing proportion of Jamaican women migrating to the United States, as seen in Table 2, in particular reflected economic restructuring and the growth of female labor-intensive industries, notably in service, health care, microelectronics, and clothing.

Table 2. Percentages of Jamaican-Born Males and Females in the United States, Averages for each Decade, 1970s to 2000s

1970s		1980s		1990s		2000 to 2006	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
48.2	51.8	48.4	51.6	47.1	52.9	45.4	54.6

Source: Thomas-Hope 2004 (updated to 2006).

Immigration to Jamaica

Relatively little is known about immigration to Jamaica, and it does not seem to take place on a very significant scale. However, the available evidence suggests that since the 1970s, most immigrants have been professionals and their family members. As Table 3 shows, the majority of immigrants to Jamaica have come from Commonwealth countries, although the official data is not disaggregated any further than this broad category.

Immigration has partly resulted from labor shortages in specific sectors, such as the health sector, with nurses from Cuba and Nigeria, among other countries, being recruited by the Jamaican government to fill vacancies. In other cases, skilled immigrants are brought in by foreign companies that have won contracts in sectors such as construction and manufacturing.

Jamaica has also witnessed the inflow of some migrants from neighboring countries, especially Haiti, as a result of insecurity and poverty there. The devastating Haiti earthquake in January 2010 prompted the arrival of around 60 Haitian refugees. The Jamaican government has repatriated these Haitians along with a few others who had previously arrived illegally.

Table 3. Immigration to Jamaica, 1997 to 2006

Years	Commonwealth citizens	Other citizens	Total immigration
1997 to 2001*	11,984	5,430	17,414
2002 to 2006	11,882	11,104	22,986
Total immigration: 1997 to 2006	23,866	16,534	40,400
Percentage of 1997 to 2006 immigration	59	41	100

* 1997 data on Commonwealth and other citizens estimated.

Source: Thomas-Hope 2004 (updated to 2006). Compiled from data in the Economic and Social Survey, the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

Emigration from Jamaica

Data collected by the ippr/GDN survey indicates that more than half of migrants absent from Jamaica in 2007 went to the United States, while around 15 percent went to the United Kingdom and smaller numbers moved to Canada and other countries. The vast majority (more than 90 percent) have stayed in the same country since moving abroad.

It appears that migrants leave Jamaica predominantly for economic reasons. Earning more, sending remittances home, and accessing steady employment have been the main motivations cited for departure (each cited as important for around 60 percent of Jamaican migrants). So it is unsurprising that the main countries of destination for Jamaican migrants are the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, which have established Jamaican communities as well as stronger economies and higher wages than Jamaica.

However, this is not to say that emigrants were doing badly economically by Jamaican standards. According to the survey, most were earning significantly more than the average nonmigrant before departing. This is in line with findings from many previous studies.

While those migrating are, on average, relatively wealthy, this does not mean they all have very high levels of education. The survey suggests that around 7 percent of all Jamaicans have university degrees, compared with 20 percent of absent (from the household) males and 9 percent of absent females. In other words, the highly educated are disproportionately likely to migrate, but the less well-educated are moving, too.

Since the ippr/GDN research was carried out before the global financial crisis began in 2008, these results may not reflect more recent trends. Economic reasons are still likely to predominate in Jamaican migrants' decisions to move.

Return Migration

Although many migrants leave Jamaica for economic reasons, 73 percent of returnees in the ippr/GDN survey cited family as the main motivation for coming home. After family, migrants were most likely to return because they had completed an economic objective, such as finishing a job (29 percent) or earning a certain amount of money (20 percent).

A significant number (23 percent) also came back because immigration systems required them to leave. Although this may appear to support the common assumption that many returned migrants are deportees, it should be noted that this group also includes people whose work or student visas had expired.

The rate of return migration varies considerably by destination country, according to the survey. About half of all who returned came back from the United States. But half of those returning from Canada stayed six months or less while nearly half of those returning from the United Kingdom had been there 10 years or more (see Table 4).

The return-migrant population was 48 percent male and 52 percent female. Some of this cohort went abroad as children: approximately 25 percent were younger than 20. Contrary to conventional views, the majority of return migrants were under 60 and were not, therefore, retired.

The level of educational achievement of the return migrants was similar to that of the Jamaican population as a whole. Most had primary- and secondary-level schooling, with only 8.5 percent having received university or other tertiary-level education.

Meanwhile, 88 percent of the migrants who were employed abroad held jobs that were nonmanagerial or nonsupervisory, suggesting that on the whole, highly skilled individuals are not returning to Jamaica.

The global downturn may have created additional "push factors" to return home for Jamaicans working in sectors that have been particularly hard hit, such as the financial services and banking industries. If these migrants return home permanently, brain gain may become one of the unanticipated but positive impacts of the recession.

However, the limited data available on the recession and migration patterns suggests

that the overall numbers of people both emigrating and returning home have stayed the same or fallen. People working abroad appear to have been unwilling to give up jobs they already have, with no guarantees of being able to find work at home.

And for those who have returned home in the last few years, the financial crisis is not the only or even the most important reason. For example, political scientist Manuel Orozco's 2009 study of migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean living and working in the United States found that of those migrants who intended to return home, only 5 percent were planning to do so because of a lack of work in the United States.

Table 4. Jamaican Migrants' Duration of Stay and Host Countries, 2007 (Percentages)

	Migrants returned from				
	United States	Canada	United Kingdom	Elsewhere	Overall
	49.3	10.5	25.4	14.9	100
<6 months	24.2	50	5.9	30	23.1
<1 year	31.9	35.7	11.8	40	28.4
<2 years	16.6	0	5.8	15	11.9
<5 years	7.6	0	8.9	15	7.5
<10 years	6.1	14.3	20.5	0	10.4
>10 years	13.6	0	47.1	0	18.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Lucas and Chappell 2009.

Remittances

Remittances are perhaps the most obvious channel through which migration impacts households, and the amounts of money Jamaican migrants send home have been rising in recent years. Formal remittances as reported by the World Bank totaled about US\$2 billion in 2007, more than double the US\$892 million in 2000.

Due to the recession in the United States and the United Kingdom, total remittances dropped to about US\$1.8 billion in 2009, according to provisional figures from the Bank of Jamaica. However, remittances for the first three months of 2010 (US\$452.3 million) were up 10 percent over the same period a year ago.

According to the ippr/GDN survey, approximately two-thirds of migrants remit to the household they left, with approximately half of that group sending money regularly (either on a monthly basis or more frequently) and half sending it only on special occasions or in emergencies. The average annual amount migrants reported sending to their households is approximately US\$640, which constitutes a useful support to household budgets.

The ippr/GDN survey found that recipients primarily spent remittances on household goods and caring for children. A minority of households also suggest that they disproportionately allocate remittances towards education. Others report spending more on health services.

Remittances do not always have positive effects. For example, evidence suggests that receiving remittances can act as a disincentive for households to take up employment.

Brain Drain in Context

Jamaica's brain drain greatly concerns the Jamaican government, perhaps more so than any other of migration's impacts. A study by researcher Natasha Mortley suggests that brain drain affects the quality of the Jamaican educational and health systems, stretching staff and hurting morale.

As noted earlier, the government has allowed in foreign health workers and teachers, showing that migration is part of the solution as well as the problem. However, the numbers of these skilled immigrants that have been attracted to work in Jamaica are still low at present — in the tens rather than the hundreds.

Furthermore, skilled health and education workers who do return appear to have a mainly positive impact. For example, returning academics have gained valuable new experiences, which in turn have helped boost standards in Jamaican tertiary institutions.

Jamaica's Migration Policy Framework

The Government of Jamaica currently has a framework for migration that emphasizes border control while allowing for some skilled migration, short-term labor emigration, bonding to stem brain drain, and the encouragement of return migration.

Border Control and Immigration

The two principal laws governing international migration in Jamaica — the Aliens Act (1946) and the Immigration Restriction (Commonwealth Citizens) Act (1954) — focus on controlling immigration by regulating the entry of foreign nationals for the purpose of employment.

These laws, which predate Jamaica's independence, reflect British interests of that period. While the acts have provided a general framework for border management controls and security, they fail to adequately address international migration today.

In particular, making a distinction between Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth citizens may not be the most relevant way to think about immigration policy in Jamaica. Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and non-CARICOM nationals may be more relevant categories. CARICOM includes 15 Caribbean nations and dependencies that have agreed to promote economic integration and cooperation among members; the group also coordinates foreign policy.

Passed two years after independence, the Foreign Nationals and Commonwealth Citizen's (Employment) Act (1964), or Work Permit Act, was designed to allow the government to fulfill local labor market needs by recruiting foreigners; the law does not specify how these needs are identified. The majority of workers the Ministry of Labor and Social Security recruits each year belong to the category "Professionals, Senior Officials and Technicians."

Such recruitment has helped alleviate Jamaica's brain drain of health-care and other specialists. In recent years, a number of reports, including one by the Planning Institute of Jamaica, have expressed concerns that immigration may displace Jamaican workers, and the present government has acknowledged the need for tighter administration to prevent any breaches from occurring.

More recently, the government has taken steps to reduce human trafficking in Jamaica. The Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Suppression and Punishment) Act became law in 2007. The law's provisions include punishing persons involved in human trafficking with prison terms of up to 10 years.

Most trafficking victims in Jamaica are poor women and girls from rural areas who are coerced into prostitution, with some children forced to work as domestic servants. Many end up in urban or tourist areas though some are trafficked to the United States, Canada, and other Caribbean countries. The numbers being trafficked across international borders are difficult to determine.

Short-Term Labor Mobility Programs

For more than three decades, Jamaica has been a key supplier of temporary or seasonal workers to the United States and Canada. The workers who participate in programs are generally low skilled and are employed mainly in agriculture, factory, and, in recent years, service-related work.

Jamaicans are the second-largest group of migrants (after Mexicans) entering the United States on both the H-2A program for seasonal agricultural workers and the H-2B program for seasonal nonagricultural workers. It is worth noting that Jamaicans' share of the total has consistently shrunk over the last five years. In 2009, the 7,849 Jamaicans in these programs made up about 4 percent of the total while the 18,918 Jamaicans in 2007 composed 8 percent of all such workers. The drop in absolute numbers since 2007 is likely due to the recession.

In Canada, by comparison, the number of Jamaican migrants entering under the Temporary Foreign Workers Program has actually risen in recent years. In December 2009, there were 7,316 Jamaicans in Canada as foreign workers, an increase of 9 percent over the previous year's total of 6,667.

To facilitate and regulate these movements, as well as to protect its citizens, the Jamaican government has established special offices in the United States and Canada. There are three Jamaican Liaison Offices in Canada: Toronto, Leamington (Ontario), and Kelowna (British Columbia). The Ministry of Labor maintains an office in Washington, DC, that works with the US government in the placement of temporary unskilled workers by helping to match them with employers and by providing them with orientation and support when they arrive in the United States.

Indications are that developed countries may develop more short-term employment programs involving highly skilled and professional workers as a policy option for the future. Whether or not to participate in these arrangements is a key question for Jamaican policymakers to consider in coming years.

Bonding

The Jamaican government has used bonding to secure the services of those whose education the government helped finance either in Jamaica or abroad. This means that new doctors, nurses, teachers, or other professionals who accept financial assistance from the government cannot accept employment outside Jamaica until their bonding period ends.

The length of the bonding period depends on how much government money the person receives. No bond is required for grants of less than JM\$300,000 (just under US\$3,500), but up to five years of service can be required for grants of JM\$2 million (around US\$23,000) or more.

The Ministry of Finance and the Public Service oversees the bonding policy. However, different ministries, agencies, and government departments that bonded individuals work for can modify the generic policy to serve their particular institutional requirements.

As a policy instrument for securing the labor of individuals studying in Jamaica, bonding has been fairly successful. But a significant proportion of those studying abroad have remained in the countries in which they studied. Many have repaid their bond to avoid returning to Jamaica.

Therefore, a high proportion of the Jamaican population with tertiary-level education is lost to the country. If the Jamaican government wants these people to return immediately, it could consider raising the cost of the bond.

Programs for Return Migration

Two programs were introduced in the early 1990s to encourage and facilitate the return of Jamaican migrants, whether on a temporary or permanent basis.

Between 1994 and 1998, the International Organization for Migration funded a Return of Talent Program to offer several types of incentives (including allowances, insurance, and salary subsidies) to highly qualified professionals to fill vacant positions in the public sector. Individuals who participated in the program were expected to remain a minimum of two years so that they could transfer their knowledge and skills to their colleagues. However, only 60 people were recruited under the program.

Meanwhile, the Returning Residents Program, which began in 1993 and is still in operation, seeks to help Jamaican nationals return by providing a range of information on jobs and investment opportunities. Services such as the maintenance of a skills bank and linkages with prospective employers in Jamaica have also been provided.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade runs the program through its offices overseas. It is not clear, however, to what extent the program influences return.

Policies Supporting Returning Migrants

Among migrants who do return, two groups attract particular interest from Jamaican policymakers.

The first group is "returning residents," which the Jamaican government classifies as people who return voluntarily after more than three years abroad. The government considers members of this group as positive contributors because they are generally regarded as having gained skills and assets abroad that they then bring back to Jamaica.

The challenge for policymakers is to create a supportive atmosphere that helps these return migrants reintegrate and enables them to use the skills and capital they may have accumulated while abroad. This could involve career guidance and job placement services, for example, though it would be important to monitor the effectiveness of the programs, as well as the costs, keeping in mind the other potential uses of the resources.

Deportees, meaning those involuntarily returned for offenses committed abroad (most criminal and some civil), make up the second group of returned migrants that preoccupies policymakers.

This is not just a problem for Jamaica, as suggested by the recent decision of the Jamaican government to cooperate with the extradition request for Christopher Coke, a Jamaican citizen (and former US deportee) charged by a grand jury in New York with conspiracy to distribute marijuana and cocaine and to traffic in firearms between 1994 and 2007. The extradition of Coke has caused tension between the Jamaican and American governments, and in May 2010 sparked violence across certain Kingston neighborhoods in which dozens were killed and hundreds arrested.

According to official statistics, the number of deportees now far exceeds that of returning residents, a cause for some concern given the public view that deportees contribute to rising crime rates in Jamaica (see Table 5).

Years	Returning residents	Deportees	Total official return migration
1997 to 2001*	8,133	10,190	18,323
2002 to 2006	6,018	17,796	23,814
Total, 1997 to 2006	17,141	27,986	42,137
Percent of 1997–2006 official return migration	41%	59%	100%

* Incomplete returning-migrants data for 1998 to 2000.
 Source: Thomas-Hope 2004 (updated to 2006). Compiled from data in the Economic and Social Survey, the Planning Institute of Jamaica.

More recent figures from the 2009 Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica (ESSJ) state that 3,076 Jamaicans were deported in 2009, 158 fewer than the number returned to the island in 2008. Of that total, 49 percent were sent back from the United States, 20 percent from the United Kingdom, and the remainder from Canada and other countries.

To date, the government's approach to supporting and reintegrating deportees has largely been ad hoc, although various ministries, including the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Social Security and Labor, have recently made efforts to reintegrate the deportees so they can make productive contributions to Jamaican society.

In 2002, a nongovernmental organization called the Family Unification Resettlement Initiative (FURI) was established. This group — which has offices in both Jamaica and the United States — liaises with government agencies to help deportees reintegrate, including assistance to find living arrangements, seek counseling, and access vocational training.

Courting the Diaspora

The government has undertaken a number of initiatives to mobilize the diaspora, strengthen its linkages with home, and enhance its contribution to national development. This is spearheaded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, with community relations officers at missions in main destination countries to assist the diaspora in

various ways, including settling or resettling migrants, promoting rights, and helping the sick and those imprisoned abroad.

A Jamaican Diaspora Foundation was launched in 2004 and became operational in 2008, and a Jamaican Diaspora Advisory Board was created in 2005. These initiatives aim to reinforce the links and support systems between Jamaicans residing abroad and those at home.

A Jamaican Diaspora Future Leaders forum covers Jamaicans age 35 and under living outside of Jamaica. The forum's national representatives serve on the Jamaican Diaspora Advisory Board and participate in twice-yearly meetings at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade. Each country is tasked with maintaining its own Future Leaders group within the framework of educating members about the history of Jamaica and the current state of Jamaica, collecting ideas, identifying projects, and mobilizing teams to generate benefits for Jamaica and the respective diaspora locations.

The government also convenes biannual conferences for the diaspora. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade takes the lead in organizing these events.

The effectiveness of these different government initiatives has not yet been comprehensively assessed.

Looking Ahead

The brain drain will likely continue to preoccupy Jamaican policymakers. It will be vital, however, for the government to look at the role of immigration and return in filling skills gaps, as well as the emigration flows that create them. It will also be important to carefully identify the extent to which shortages of health-care workers are due to decreases in training budgets.

While numbers of criminal returnees have dropped slightly in the last year, this issue shows no signs of going away, particularly in light of recent violence in Kingston. The government's decision to execute the US extradition request suggests there may be an increased willingness going forward to tackling the problem of entrenched mafia groups in Jamaica (to which deported criminals often belong), although this will require a sustained and coherent focus on reintegration and rehabilitation policies across government and civil society.

The global economic downturn has slowed labor migration from the Caribbean region, but in the long term, flows will likely increase as Jamaicans seek out more stable employment or higher wages abroad. It is imperative that the Jamaican government grapple with how to make migration a positive choice, rather than something people feel they have to do in order to meet their life goals.

Such considerations are naturally linked to successful and sustainable national development strategies, as increased development should make migration feel less of a necessity and more of a choice. Furthermore, development at home would likely encourage skilled migrants to return.

Sources:

Bank of Jamaica. 2010. *Remittance Update: March 2010*. Kingston: BOJ. **Available online.**

BBC Caribbean. 2009. Recession hits remittances. September 7, 2009. **Available online.**

Black Culture Center for Nova Scotia. The Jamaican Maroons Arrive. **Available online.**

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2009. Canada – Foreign workers present on December 1st by source country. Facts and figures 2008 – Immigration overview: Permanent and temporary residents. **Available online.**

Headley, B. et al. 2005. *Deported, Vol 1: Entry and Exit Findings Jamaicans Returned Home from the US Between 1997 and 2003*. Kingston: Stephenson Litho Press.

Fix, Michael, Demetrios G. Papademetriou, Jeanne Batalova, Aaron Terrazas, Serena Yi-Ying Lin, and Michelle Mittelstadt. 2009. *Migration and the Global Recession*. Washington,

DC: Migration Policy Institute. [Available online](#).

Lucas, R. and Laura Chappell. 2009. *Measuring Migration's Development Impacts: Preliminary evidence from Jamaica*. Development on the Move: Working Paper 2. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Martin-Johnson, S. 2008. Involuntary and coerced migration of "deportees" coming "homeward": NGOs as actors in reintegration policy in Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. In *Freedom and Constraint in Caribbean Migration and Diaspora*, ed. Elizabeth Thomas-Hope. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.

Momsen, J. 1992. Gender selectivity in Caribbean migration. In *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries*, ed. Sylvia Chant. New York: Belhaven Press.

Mortley, Natasha. 2003. *Gender Relations within the Household and the Migration: Decisions of St. Lucian Women*. MPhil thesis. The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago.

Orozco, Manuel. 2009. *Understanding the continuing effect of the economic crisis on remittances to Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, DC: Inter-American Dialogue. [Available online](#).

Ratha, Dilip and Zhimei Xu. 2009. Jamaica. In *Migration and Remittances Factbook*, eds. Dilip Ratha and Zhimei Xu. Washington, DC: World Bank. [Available online](#).

Roberts, Arlene. 2009. *The Faces of Detention and Deportation: A Report on the Forced Repatriation of Immigrants from the English-Speaking Caribbean (and Related Policy Recommendations)*. [Available online](#).

Sassen, Saskia. 1984. Notes on the Incorporation of women into wage labor through immigration and offshore production. *International Migration Review* 18, no. 4: 1144-1167.

———. 1998. *Globalization and its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of people and Money*. New York: New Press.

Shepherd, Verene A. 1998. *Women in Caribbean History: The British-colonised Territories*. Kingston: Ian Randle.

Statistics Canada. 2006. Immigrant population by place of birth and period of immigration (2006 Census). [Available online](#).

Taylor, Marcia and Dori Finely. 2009. Three Views of "Guest Workers" in the United States. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 21, no. 2: 191-200.

Thomas-Hope, Elizabeth. 2004. *Migration situation analysis, policy and program needs for Jamaica*. The Planning Institute of Jamaica, Kingston: PIOJ and UNFPA.

———. 2006. Maximizing migration: Caribbean return movements and the organization of transnational space. In *Returning to the Source: The Final Stage of the Caribbean Migration Circuit*, eds. Frances Henry and Dwaine E. Plaza. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press.

———. 2009. Development on the Move: Measuring and Optimising Migration's Economic and Social Impacts, A Study of Migration's Impacts on Development in Jamaica and how Policy Might Respond. June. London/Delhi: Institute for Public Policy Research/Global Development Network.

Timur, S. 2000. Changing trends and major issues in international migration: An overview of UNESCO programs. *International Social Science Journal* 52, no. 165: 255-268.

Tortello, R. 2003. The Arrival Of The Chinese. *Jamaica Gleaner*. September 1, 2003. [Available online](#).

United Nations Population Division. 2006. *Migration in the Caribbean – What do we*

know?: An overview of data, policies and programs at the international and regional levels to address critical issues. UN/POP/EGM-MIG/2005/09.

———. 2009. World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision. **Available online.**

The UK National Archives. 2009. Windrush settlers arrive in Britain, 1948. **Available online.**

UK Office for National Statistics. 2008. Population by country of birth and nationality from the Annual Population Survey. **Available online.**

US Census Bureau. 2008. Jamaica Population profile. 2008 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. **Available online.**

US Department of Homeland Security. 2008. Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2007. Washington, DC: DHS. **Available online.**

———. 2009. *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics: 2008.* Washington, DC: DHS. **Available online.**

———. 2010a. Table 32: Nonimmigrant Temporary Worker Admissions (I-94 Only) by Region and Country of Citizenship: Fiscal Year 2009. **Available online.**

———. 2010b. Table 10: Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status by Broad Class of Admission and Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Year 2009. **Available online.**

Copyright © 2010 Migration Policy Institute. **All rights reserved.**
MPI • 1400 16th St. NW, Suite 300 • Washington, DC 20036
ph: (001) 202-266-1940 • fax: (001) 202-266-1900
source@migrationpolicy.org