

International Migration in the Caribbean

Background paper for the *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies*

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Abstract

This paper provides a broad overview of the migration phenomenon in the Caribbean based on available evidence. It first describes the migration context in the region, with a focus on key migration related facts, significant trends, and current and future challenges. It then identifies and discusses examples of policies implemented in the region, including evidence on their impact track record. Migration presents both significant challenges and opportunities for the long-term socioeconomic development of the region. The paper's main takeaways include the following. Mass emigration of working-age individuals is a significant concern for all countries in the region as skills gaps in sectors such as education, health, and information technology have emerged. Empirical evidence and theory suggest that the most effective way to address issues related to brain drain is to increase opportunities and incentives for skilled nationals to stay in the origin country. While some Caribbean countries participate in temporary migration work programs with the United States and Canada, there is scope to increase take-up and the positive impacts of such programs for migrants, origin countries, and destination countries. High remittance transfer costs remain an obstacle for migrants sending money through official channels and limit economic gains for migrants and their families. Migration policy evaluations should be conducted more systematically to enable decision makers to better promote safer and more orderly migration. Last but not least, systematic compilation and analysis of migration data are important gaps to be addressed.

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Introduction

Migration is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty and better share prosperity. Migrants' incomes typically increase three to six times when they move from lower- to higher-income countries. The majority of empirical studies suggest that destination countries and their citizens in the labor force also benefit from immigration. Due to a combination of barriers, however, most people cannot move. Currently only about 3 percent of the world's population live in a country in which they were not born (World Bank 2018).

Migration presents both significant challenges and opportunities for the long-term socioeconomic development of the Caribbean. The region is highly heterogeneous with countries differing on several important dimensions, including population size, levels of economic development, languages spoken, ethnic diversity, and land area. Caribbean countries have a long history of migration dating back before the era of European colonization. Today labor migration in the Caribbean involves two main flows: the emigration of job seekers to the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom; and smaller flows of Caribbean workers within the region. Return migration is also an important feature for the region—although information about returns is limited.

This paper aims to provide a snapshot of the migration phenomenon in the Caribbean based on the available body of evidence. It first provides an overview of the migration and development context in the region. Second, it identifies and discusses examples of migration policies implemented in the region, with a focus on their impact track record. This chapter was prepared using secondary sources, including regional and country reports, official migration datasets, and academic studies.

Systematic migration data compilation and evaluations of migration policies are important gaps to be addressed for countries in the region. Despite migration taking place on a significant scale for all countries in the Caribbean and the numerous government policies implemented in an attempt to better manage movements of people, national migration statistics are scarce. Collecting comparable data across countries in a consistent and timely manner would improve the mapping of mobility patterns and the understanding of the dynamics surrounding migration. Very few migration policies are subject to formal reviews and evaluations. Conducting policy evaluations more systematically would enable decision makers to take better measures to promote safer and more orderly migration.

The paper considers 15 countries, collectively referred to as the Caribbean region: Antigua and Barbuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Cuba and overseas territories are not included in most of the discussion due to the limited availability of comparable data.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The second section describes the characteristics of migration flows in the Caribbean and recent regional trends. The third section discusses high-skilled migration and brain drain. The fourth section focuses on three of the most important active labor migration agreements for the region. The fifth section concentrates on international remittances. The final section concludes and presents policy recommendations.

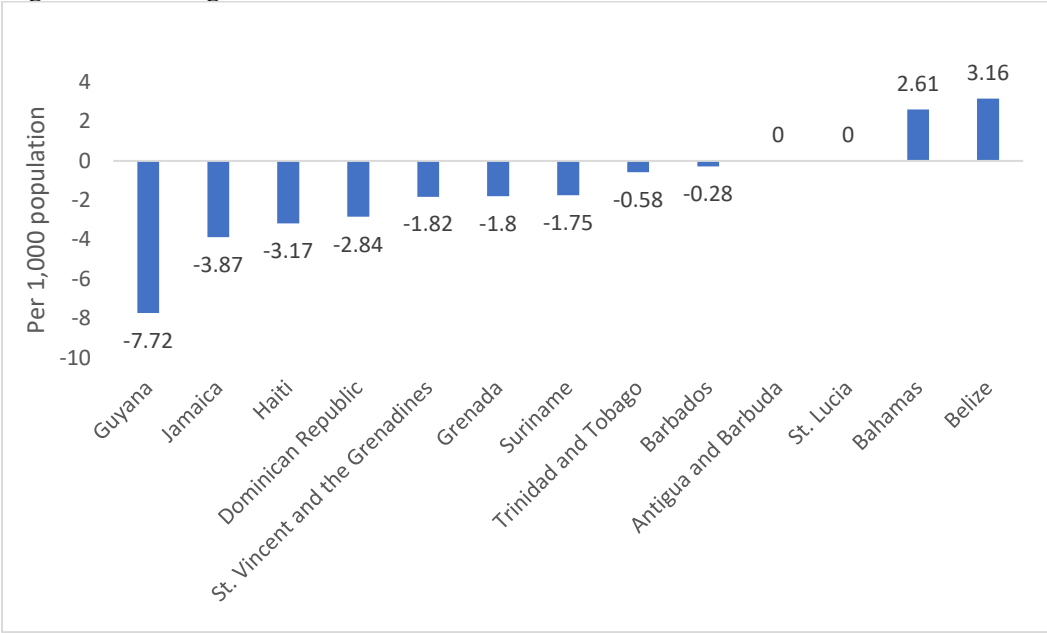
Major migration trends in the Caribbean region

This section provides a detailed look at the major migration trends characterizing the region. It provides descriptive statistics pulled from various international and official national databases to discuss the prevalence of migration in the region, identify the main destination countries for migrants, and describe the demographic characteristics of migrants. The section includes discussions of return and undocumented migration as well migrant and refugee flows Venezuela. It ends with a brief presentation of the challenges posed by climate change.

Prevalence of migration

Most Caribbean countries are net migrant-sending countries, with emigration outflows surpassing immigration inflows. In 2020, only The Bahamas and Belize had a positive net migration rate (figure 1).¹ Relatively high levels of income per capita and proximity to the United States attract migrants to The Bahamas, while Belize, because of its location, hosts relatively large numbers of Central American immigrants. All the other countries had negative migration rates in 2020, with Guyana, Jamaica, and Haiti recording the largest net outflows in relative terms.

Figure 1. Net migration rate in Caribbean countries, 2020



Source: Our World in Data, based on United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) 2020 data.

Note: No data are available for two countries: Dominica and St. Kitts and Nevis.

For all Caribbean countries, the number of emigrants represents a large share of the total population. In 6 of the 15 countries listed in table 1, the number of emigrants expressed in percentage of the in-country population is higher than 50 percent. In Dominica, the volume of emigrants is even larger than the population living in the country and the ratio stands at 109 percent. The Bahamas and Belize have the smallest numbers of emigrants in relative terms (13.7 percent and 13.3 percent, respectively). These are relatively high ratios by international standards, however. In absolute terms, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica have the largest diasporas, with well over one million emigrants worldwide each.

Although a somewhat less known phenomenon, immigration is also an important feature of population movements in the Caribbean. In six of the countries examined in table 1, immigrants represent more than

10 percent of the population. In Antigua and Barbuda, immigrants make up as much as 30 percent of the population. The majority of immigrants to the region are intraregional migrants (UN DESA 2020). The Dominican Republic has the largest number of immigrants in absolute terms and Haitians represent more than 82 percent of that volume (UN DESA 2020). More recently, countries in the southern Caribbean that are proximate to Venezuela, such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, have witnessed the arrival of Venezuelan refugees and migrants.

Table 1. Numbers and share of immigrants and emigrants in Caribbean countries

Country Name	Population (total)	Immigration (stock)	Immigration (% of population)	Emigration (stock)	Emigration (% of population)
Antigua and Barbuda	97,928	29,386	30.0	66,561	68.0
Bahamas, The	393,248	63,583	16.2	53,793	13.7
Barbados	287,371	34,869	12.1	99,611	34.7
Belize	397,621	62,043	15.6	52,756	13.3
Dominica	71,991	8,284	11.5	78,191	108.6
Dominican Republic	10,847,904	603,794	5.6	1,608,567	14.8
Grenada	112,519	7,213	6.4	62,204	55.3
Guyana	786,559	31,169	4.0	438,413	55.7
Haiti	11,402,533	18,884	0.2	1,769,671	15.5
Jamaica	2,961,161	23,629	0.8	1,118,931	37.8
St. Kitts and Nevis	53,192	7,725	14.5	50,285	94.5
St. Lucia	183,629	8,338	4.5	71,227	38.8
St. Vincent Grenadines	110,947	4,738	4.3	55,525	50.0
Suriname	586,634	47,801	8.1	273,209	46.6
Trinidad and Tobago	1,399,491	78,849	5.6	330,519	23.6

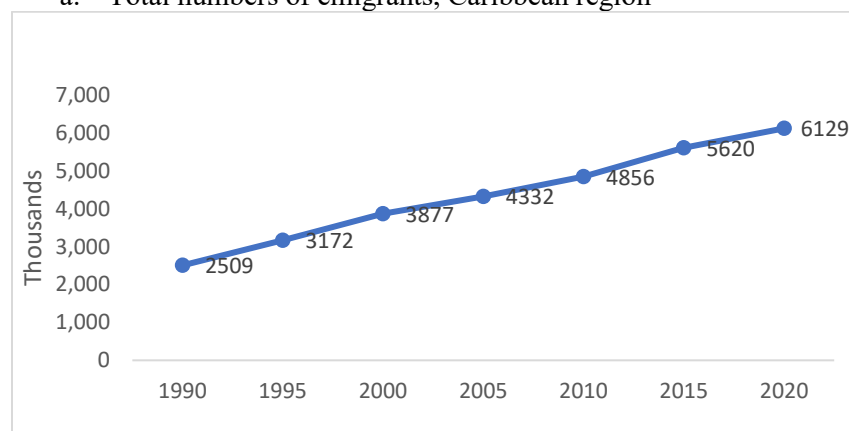
Sources: UN DESA 2020; World Bank, World Development Indicators 2022.

Note: “Stock” is the term used by UN DESA. It refers to the number (or “stock”) of international migrants.

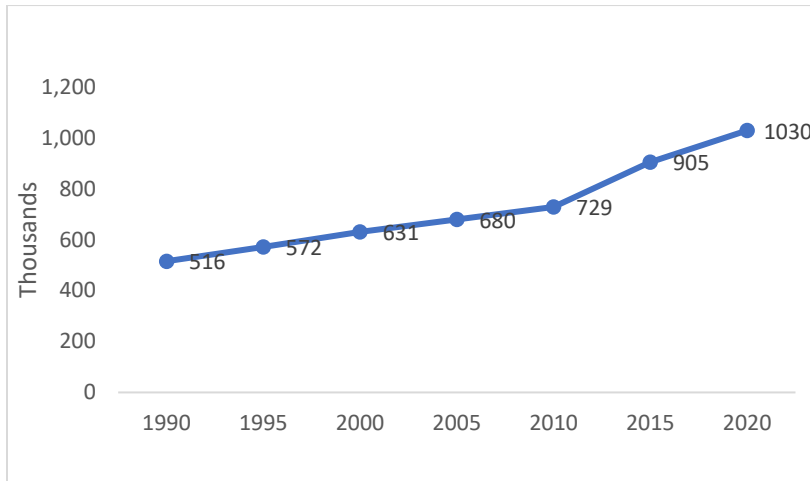
Both the number of emigrants from the region going abroad and the number of immigrants settling in the region have grown over time. In 1990, the number of Caribbean emigrants totaled more than 2.5 million individuals. In 2020, that number had more than doubled and reached 6.1 million (figure 2, panel a). Dominicans, Haitians, and Jamaicans comprise nearly 75 percent of emigrants from the region. Over the same period the number of immigrants nearly doubled and passed 1 million individuals in 2020 (figure 2, panel b). Haitians living in the Dominican Republic represent almost half of the total immigrant population of the region.

Figure 2. Trends in total numbers of emigrants and immigrants in the Caribbean region, 1990–2020

a. Total numbers of emigrants, Caribbean region



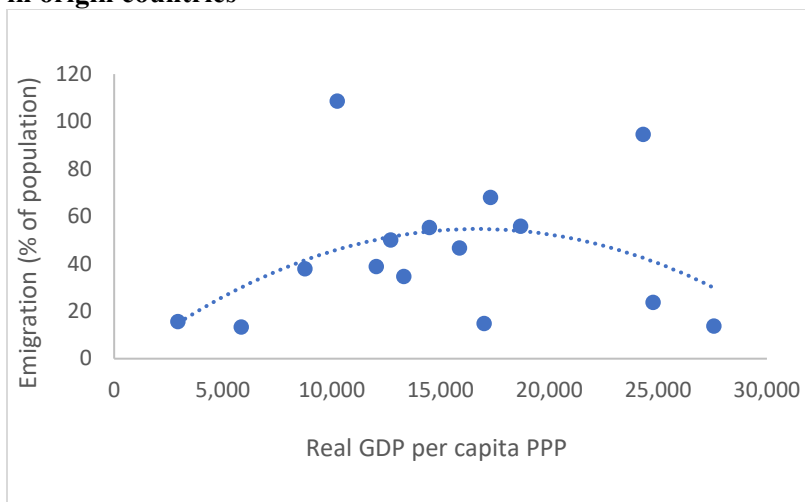
b. Total numbers of immigrants, Caribbean region



Source: UN DESA 2020.

Emigration from the Caribbean is strongly related to economic development at the origin. A myriad of factors (economic, political, social, and environmental) drive migration from the region. Economic development and living standard differentials are arguably the main drivers, however (Párraga 2021). Migration in the region increases along with rising GDP per capita levels at first and falls at much higher income levels, suggesting the existence of an *emigration life cycle* (Clemens 2020). As countries grow better off, more people can afford the migration investment costs and the skill composition of working-age populations in the origin country changes. Emigration increases with development because the proportion of college graduates in the resident population increases, and it is this group that has the highest propensity to emigrate (Dao et al. 2018). The process slows and reverses once countries have reached considerably higher living standards (figure 3). Lack of economic opportunities and high unemployment rates in the region are important push factors and are strongly correlated with the number and flow of emigrants (figure 4, panels a and b).

Figure 3. The emigration life cycle in the Caribbean region: Emigration and economic development in origin countries

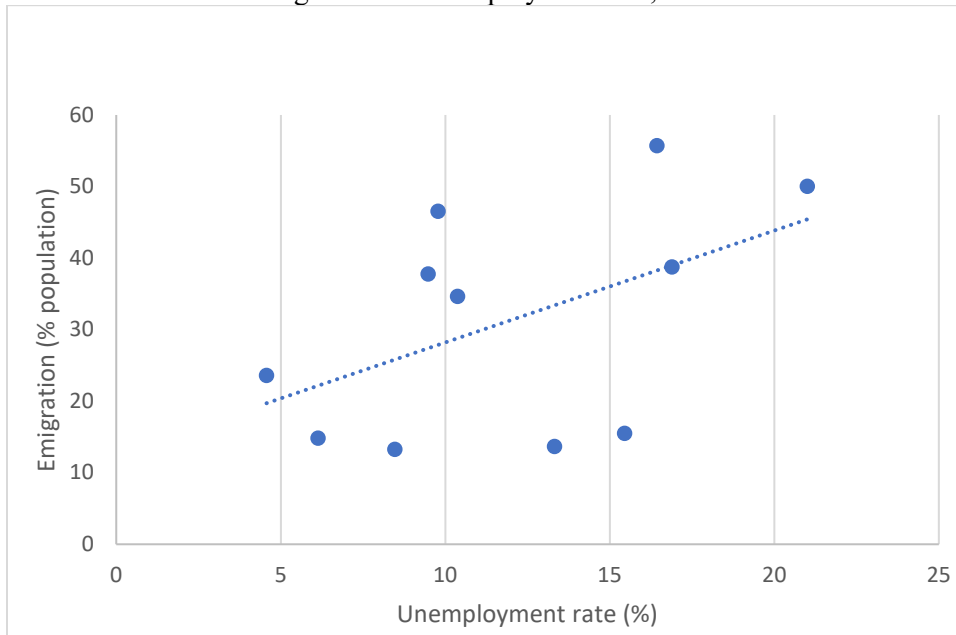


Sources: UN DESA 2020; World Bank, World Development Indicators 2022.

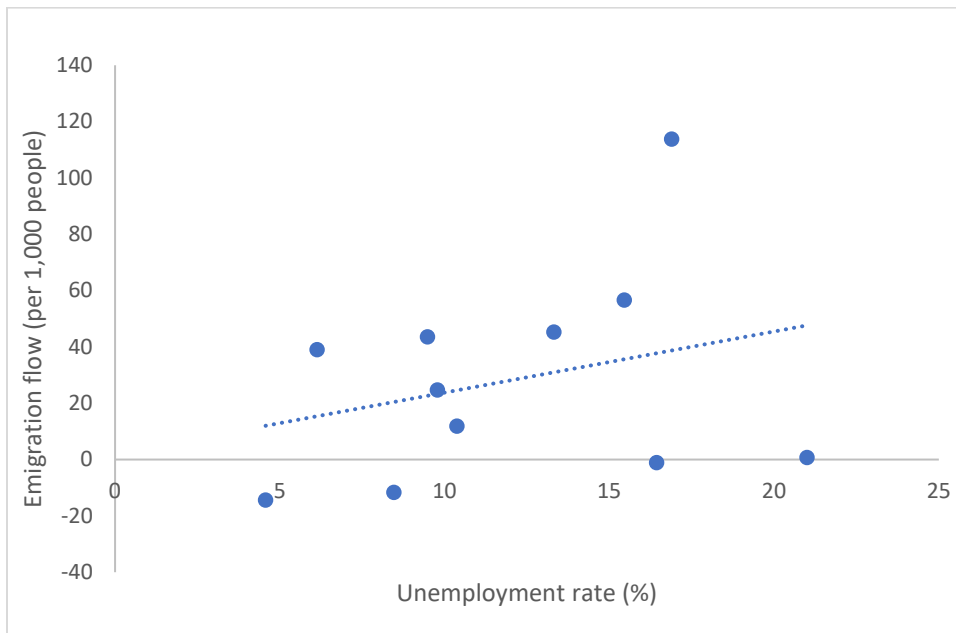
Note: The figure plots numbers of emigrants and GDP per capita for 2020. The curve displays a quadratic fit for 15 Caribbean countries. PPP = purchasing power parity.

Figure 4. Emigration and unemployment in origin countries

a. Numbers of emigrants and unemployment rate, 2020



b. Emigration flow and unemployment rate



Sources: UN DESA 2020; World Bank, World Development Indicators 2022.

Note: Panel a: The curve displays a linear fit for 11 Caribbean countries. Data are missing for 4 countries. Panel b: The curve displays a linear fit for 11 Caribbean countries, for emigration flow for 2010–20 over 2020 population. Data are missing for 4 countries.

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, international and regional migration did not cease despite the extended quarantines and land border closures implemented by the vast majority of Caribbean countries. The incidence of COVID-19 and related mortality have followed a rather different pattern in the Caribbean

compared to Latin America. Due to the measures taken by Caribbean governments, including border controls, the spread of the virus was largely controlled in 2020. During 2021, however, COVID-19 infection rates overtook those in Latin America. By mid-2022, mortality rates in both the Caribbean and Latin America had fallen to low levels. Migration flows within the region and internationally were not completely halted by the pandemic, however. Instead, migration processes have become increasingly complex, characterized by larger mixed flows (combining irregular migration, trafficking, smuggling, and asylum-seeking) and by higher vulnerability (ECLAC 2022a).

Destination countries and regions

The United States is the main destination country for migrants from the region. For the majority of Caribbean countries, more than half of emigrants settle in the United States (table 2). For The Bahamas, Belize, the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica, the figures are even higher, with 70 percent or more of emigrants choosing the United States as their destination. Within the United States, the majority of Caribbean migrants live in just two states: Florida and New York (MPI 2022).² Canada, the United Kingdom, and Europe are also important destinations for some Caribbean countries. In Europe, English-speaking Caribbean countries have established sizable diaspora communities in the United Kingdom. The Dominican Republic has a large diaspora in Spain and Italy. Nearly 90 percent of Haitians living in Europe reside in France. Migrating within the Caribbean region is a relatively common option for nationals from the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) (see discussion in the fourth section). With the exception of Belizeans moving into neighboring Mexico and Guyanese migrants moving into Brazil and Venezuela, citizens of the English-speaking Caribbean do not migrate in significant numbers to Latin America due to language and cultural differences (IDB 2021). Suriname is an outlier and displays drastically different migration patterns, with nearly 80 percent of its migrants going to Europe. Linguistic and historical factors explain why Surinamese migrants primarily settle in the Netherlands (IOM 2017; Oostindie 2009).

Table 2. Destination countries for Caribbean migrants, 2020
Percent of total numbers of emigrants by destination country

Origin country	Destination country/region					
	USA	Canada	UK	Europe	Caribbean ^a	LAC
Antigua and Barbuda	69.2	3.7	7.5	7.9	11.7	11.9
Bahamas, The	87.2	3.3	4.5	5.7	2.7	3.1
Barbados	51.9	15.2	26.7	27.4	4.6	4.9
Belize	81.5	4.1	3.2	3.6	0.9	10.7
Dominica	46.1	3.8	11.0	23.5	25.8	26.6
Dominican Republic	72.6	0.7	0.1	17.6	4.8	9.1
Grenada	40.7	17.8	20.2	21.9	18.2	18.7
Guyana	55.1	21.5	6.4	8.4	8.2	14.8
Haiti	39.9	5.7	0.0	5.4	32.1	49.1
Jamaica	70.8	13.3	11.5	12.2	3.2	3.4
Saint Kitts and Nevis	55.2	4.5	15.9	16.1	24.0	24.1
Saint Lucia	47.7	9.2	16.1	24.2	17.2	18.9
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	27.3	25.1	17.2	17.5	29.2	29.9
Suriname	7.9	0.4	0.2	79.3	1.6	12.3
Trinidad and Tobago	63.0	21.2	8.9	10.2	3.8	4.9

Source: UN DESA 2020.

Note: LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean; UK = United Kingdom; USA = United States of America.

a. “Caribbean” refers to the Caribbean region defined as the whole region: that is including all independent countries as well as overseas territories.

Caribbean migrant workers tend to concentrate in specific industries. Data from the 2019 US American Community Survey (ACS) conducted by the US Census Bureau show that about 20 percent of Caribbean migrants find work in the health and medical industry (table 3). The agriculture and extractives industries appear to not attract many migrants from the region in relative terms, but these figures do not capture migrants on temporary farm work contracts very well. Retail trade, transportation, and entertainment (restaurants, bars, sports, amusement, and culture) each employ about 10 percent of the Caribbean migrant labor force.

Table 3. US industries in which Caribbean migrants work
Percent of total migrant labor force

US industry	Origin country					
	Dominican Republic	Haiti	Jamaica	St. Lucia	Trinidad and Tobago	Guyana
Agriculture and extractives	0.4	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.3	0.4
Construction	5.4	2.7	5.3	10.0	6.5	4.8
Manufacturing	9.5	6.1	3.9	5.8	5.2	5.6
Retail trade	11.0	11.0	8.6	7.1	9.0	9.3
Transportation	10.0	8.6	7.5	5.4	8.2	10.3
Financial services	5.3	3.6	6.4	6.0	8.3	6.3
Professional services	9.7	8.8	9.2	4.5	8.7	8.6
Education	5.2	6.3	6.7	6.4	9.3	7.6
Health and medical	12.3	24.0	25.7	22.9	16.9	21.6
Entertainment	11.6	13.8	8.8	8.8	5.8	4.9
Administration	1.9	2.8	4.1	4.1	6.7	4.8
Long-term unemployment (5+ years)	1.0	1.3	0.7	3.3	1.1	1.0
Other industry	16.5	10.2	12.7	15.7	13.9	14.8

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample 2019.

Note: Origin country is determined by the migrants' place of birth. Person weights are used.

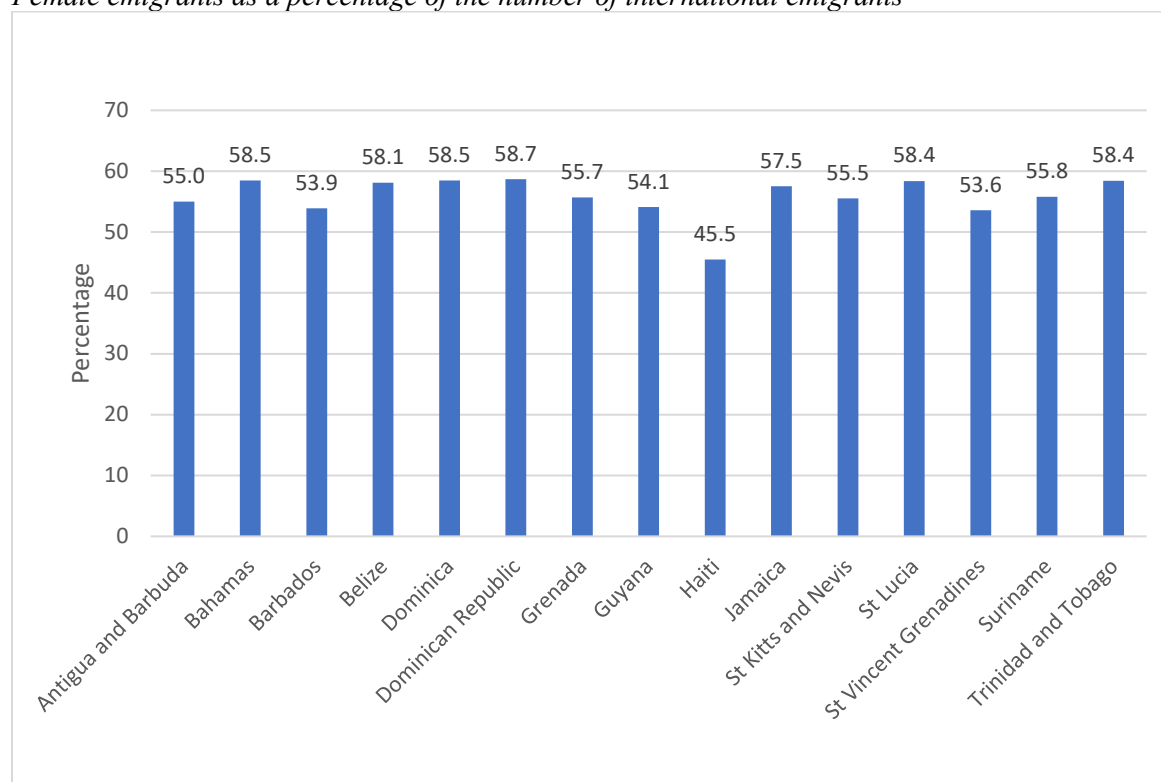
Major oil & gas discoveries in Guyana are bringing significant labor immigration opportunities to the country and could reshape regional migration patterns. Guyana is expected to become one of the top producing oil & gas economies globally by the end of the decade. Guyana's economy has been booming in recent years as a result of the development of the oil & gas sector and associated spillover effects on other industries such as manufacturing and professional services. The country's GDP grew by 43 percent in 2020 and 20 percent in 2021 (World Bank, World Development Indicators 2022). To sustain economic growth, Guyana is estimated to need at least 160,000 additional workers, representing 20 percent of its population. Labor migration is one option to close the gap between the industry's labor demand and the availability of skilled workers (ILO 2022). Sources of potential labor that could be tapped into include the Guyanese diaspora, Venezuelan migrants, and Caribbean Community (CARICOM) nationals. Despite positive economic prospects and strong labor demand resulting from the exploitation of huge oil & gas reserves, Guyana will be confronted with several challenges and risks in the short to medium term, including labor exploitation and environmental conservation (Idrovo, Grant, and Yanoff 2022).

Demographics of migrants

The majority of migrants from the region are women. In all but one Caribbean country examined, the proportion of female emigrants exceeds 50 percent (figure 5). Haiti is the exception in the region, with male-dominated emigration flows. In the rest of the Caribbean, the proportion of female emigrants ranges from 54 percent in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to 59 percent in The Bahamas, Dominica, and the Dominican Republic.

Figure 5. Female emigration from the Caribbean region, 2020

Female emigrants as a percentage of the number of international emigrants



Source: UN DESA Population Division 2020.

Caribbean migrants living in the United States are predominantly adults. Almost 40 percent of Caribbean migrants in the United States are of working and reproductive age (14–45 years old), on average. The population ages 14 and above represents 97 percent of the Caribbean migrant population in the United States (table 4). Data from the United States also indicate that the majority of Caribbean immigrants are female (56 percent, on average).

Table 4. Age and gender profile of Caribbean migrants to the United States

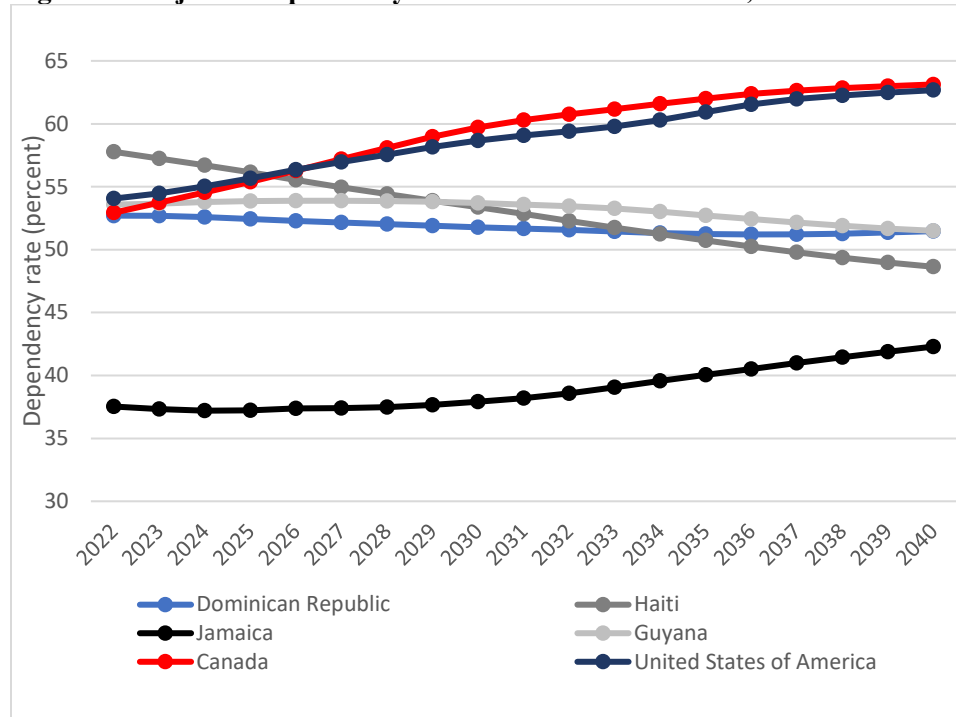
Origin country	Total US immigrants	Male (%)	Female (%)	Ages 14–45 (%)	Ages 46–99+ (%)	Ages 0–13 (%)
Antigua and Barbuda	18,490	43.3	56.7	32.9	67.0	0.1
Bahamas, The	42,665	49.7	50.3	48.8	45.3	5.9
Barbados	53,205	41.0	59.0	23.0	74.8	2.1
Dominica	38,777	42.8	57.2	52.8	45.3	2.0
Dominican Republic	1,246,154	44.7	55.3	47.7	45.8	6.5
Grenada	31,037	40.0	60.0	27.6	71.2	1.3
Haiti	733,824	47.8	52.2	44.5	50.4	5.0
Jamaica	822,551	44.0	56.0	39.1	57.4	3.5
St. Kitts-Nevis	17,296	41.6	58.4	32.0	66.7	1.3
St. Lucia	24,099	43.7	56.3	54.0	44.1	1.9
St. Vincent Grenadines	17,845	41.6	58.4	33.0	62.0	5.0
Trinidad and Tobago	224,199	42.4	57.6	33.6	65.7	0.6
Guyana	257,435	46.1	53.9	32.9	65.5	1.6

Source: US Census Bureau American Community Survey ACS 1-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample 2019.

Note: Origin country is determined by the migrants' place of birth. Person weights are used.

Migration pull factors from the United States and Canada are likely to persist for some time. Dependency ratio projections indicate that population ageing will continue in the United States and Canada over the next 20 years (figure 6). To sustain economic growth and to care for their ageing populations, these two countries will need to continue to import labor. Given living standards differentials and a Caribbean population predicted to remain young for some time, emigration from the region to North America is not expected to diminish in the short and medium term.

Figure 6. Projected dependency ratios in selected countries, 2022–40



Source: UN DESA, World Population Prospects 2022.

Note: The dependency ratio is defined as population aged 0-14 and 65 and above over the population aged 15-64. The figure displays the medium fertility variant scenario.

Population ageing is expected to occur in all countries across the region and could pose public policy challenges if coupled with continued high rates of emigration. Caribbean countries are at various stages of population ageing. For most countries, the share of persons ages 60 years and over in the total population will be higher than 20 percent by 2030. Only Haiti and the Dominican Republic have relatively low levels of population ageing, with older persons projected to account for less than 15 percent of the population by 2030. If sustained, high rates of emigration of working-age adults will likely create some important public policy challenges in several sectors, including but not limited to labor market participation, health care, and public pensions systems (ECLAC 2022b; IOM 2017).

Return migration

Return migration is believed to take place on a significant scale in the Caribbean region. While limited data are available on return migration flows, a sizable proportion of Caribbean migrants tend to return to their origin countries (IOM 2017). Retirement is one of the main reasons for returning and has gained importance in recent years with the return of a significant number of migrants who had left in the 1950s and 1960s (IOM 2017). In Saint Lucia for instance, 11 percent of the population declared having lived abroad and returned home in the Housing and Population Census of 2010. Between 2000 and 2011, more than 1 percent of the total population (15,745 individuals) returned to live in Trinidad and Tobago.³ In Jamaica, return

migrants represent more than 5 percent of the population, according to the latest Census of 2011. Half of those returnees are ages 50 years and above (table 5).

Table 5. Jamaica: Total returning overseas migrants

	Total returnees	Male returnees	Female returnees	50 years and over
All Jamaica (number)	141,589	75,450	66,139	69,690
All Jamaica (% total returnees)	100.00	53.29	46.71	49.22

Source: Jamaica Population Census 2011.

Some countries have programs and legal frameworks that facilitate return migration. For instance, Jamaica has set up the Returning Residents and Return of Talent Programs. Between 1994 and 1999, the Jamaican Return of Talent Program facilitated the return of 59 highly qualified professionals to fill vacant positions in the public sector (Thomas-Hope 1999). This was against a background of 118 requests from the public sector for filling vacancies, which suggests the program had limited efficacy. The Surinamese diaspora law allows descendants of Surinamese migrants to settle and work in Suriname without a permit. Broader evidence on the number of these programs and their effectiveness remains limited. It is believed that there is scope to create such programs in more Caribbean countries and improve those that already exist (IOM 2017). The evidence base remains extremely weak for almost all return migration policies enacted worldwide (Del Carpio et al. 2016; McKenzie and Yang 2015).

Return migration flows also comprise individuals being forcibly returned by receiving countries. These returnees are commonly sent back to their country of origin for administrative and criminal breaches. For instance, in 2020 the United States repatriated 1,835 Dominicans, 895 Haitians, and 523 Jamaicans (US ICE 2020). With a few exceptions such as Jamaica, most countries have not developed formal mechanisms and programs to provide appropriate reintegration assistance to returnees and prevent repetition of criminal behavior or future irregular migration (Aragón and El-Assar 2018).

Irregular and forced migration

The exact prevalence of undocumented migration in the region is unknown but believed to be sizable. It is difficult to estimate the total size of these migration flows given their irregular nature. There is a lack of data on irregular migration globally, and the Caribbean is no exception (Aragón and Mawby 2019). There are three major movements of undocumented migration in the Caribbean (IOM 2017). First, some Caribbean migrants enter or stay illegally in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Second, the Caribbean is a transit region for South Americans seeking to move to North America, and to an increasing extent for Africans and Asians as well. Third, irregular migration occurs within the region toward better-off countries such as The Bahamas, Barbados, and some OECS States. The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) estimates as that as of 2019, approximately 327,000 (3 percent) of the 11 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States were from the Caribbean (Lorenzi and Batalova 2022). About half of the unauthorized Caribbean immigrant population was from the Dominican Republic (table 6).

Table 6. Caribbean irregular migration in the United States

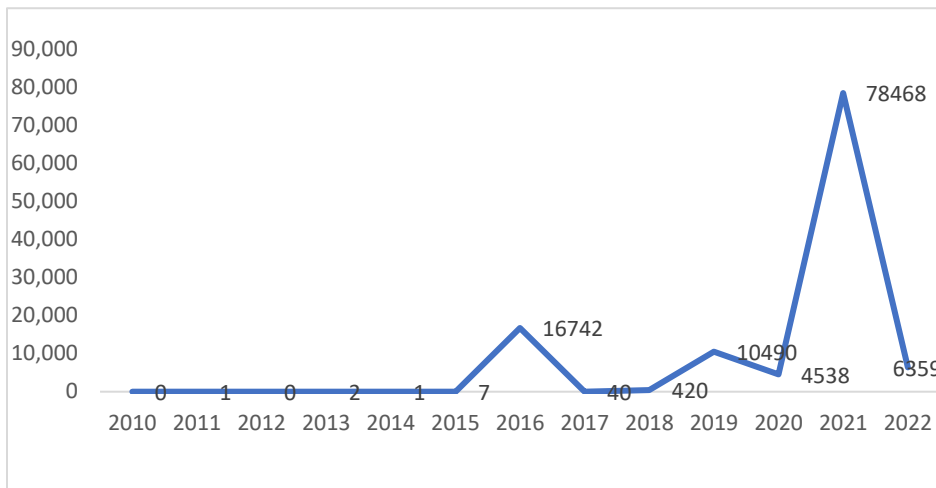
Origin country	Number of irregular migrants	Percentage of total
Dominican Republic	164,000	50.2
Haiti	77,000	23.5
Jamaica	55,000	16.8
Trinidad and Tobago	14,000	4.3
Other Caribbean	17,000	5.2
Total	327,000	100.0

Source: Migration Policy Institute 2022.

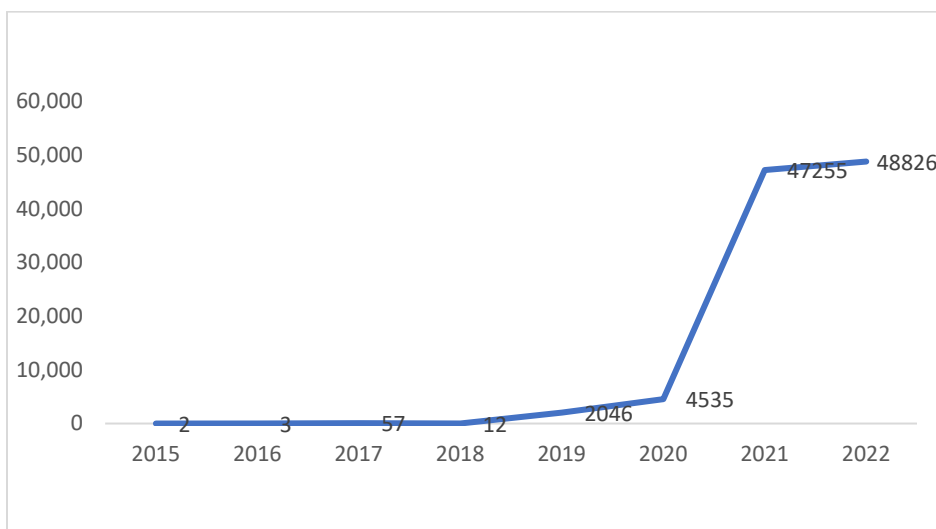
Haitian undocumented migrants now take highly complex and dangerous routes to reach the United States. In the aftermath of the devastating January 2010 earthquake, Haitians emigrated in relatively large numbers to South American countries where Haitians did not require entry permits or could obtain humanitarian visas. Brazil and Chile (and Ecuador to some extent) saw large increases in entries of Haitian nationals (IOM 2021). As economic and political conditions changed in the second half of the 2010s in Brazil and Chile, Haitians increasingly opted to leave and head toward the United States, transiting through Central America and Mexico. That perilous journey can take a few months to a few years. The most physically demanding and dangerous part of the journey is crossing the Colombia-Panama border (Yates 2021) (figure 7, panel a). Statistics from the Panama Migration Authorities and the US Customs and Border Protection show that the migration route to the United States through the Americas has become significant since the second part of the 2010s (figure 7, panel b). Due to the political crises and natural disasters of 2021 in Haiti, 2021 and 2022 have been record years for apprehensions of Haitians at the US Southwest land border.

Figure 7. Undocumented Haitian migrants apprehended in Panama and the United States

a. Irregular transit of Haitians across the Colombia-Panama border, 2010-22



b. Apprehensions of Haitian nationals at US Southwest border, FY2015-FY2022



Source: Panel a: Servicio Nacional de Migración de Panama; Panel b: US Customs and Border Protection 2022.

Note: Panel a: Data for 2021 end in November; data for 2022 end in August.

Undocumented Caribbean migrants are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Undocumented migrants enter the informal economy, which prevents governments from implementing protective measures for migrant populations, leveraging migrants' skills for national development, and levying tax revenues (Aragón and El-Assar 2018). Haitian undocumented migrants bear the brunt of discrimination in the Caribbean. Violations of Haitian migrants' human rights have been well documented in the Dominican Republic. Cases of exploitation have also been reported in Brazil and The Bahamas more recently (IOM 2017). Intra-regional irregular flows are not limited to labor migration but also include human smuggling and trafficking of persons, especially minors and women (IOM 2021).

More than 200,000 Venezuelan migrants and refugees have settled in neighboring Caribbean countries. An unprecedented number of refugees and migrants from Venezuela have left their country of origin due to continuously challenging political, socioeconomic, and human rights situations. The COVID-19 pandemic has added a layer of complexity for migrant-receiving countries facing the challenge of managing a public health crisis while also addressing the needs of displaced Venezuelans and the communities in which they live. As of October 2022, Aruba, Curaçao, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago hosted an estimated 201,200 refugees and migrants from Venezuela. Refugees and migrants from Venezuela face several obstacles in meeting their basic needs, accessing public services, and securing income-generating opportunities. Xenophobia, discrimination, and cultural and language barriers also hinder their effective integration in the Caribbean region (R4V 2023). In terms of profile, migrants and refugees settling in countries closest to Venezuela (Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, Trinidad, and Tobago) tend to be young and single, with low educational attainment, and reporting more restricted access to health services and mental-health support (Chaves-González and Echeverría-Estrada 2020).

Climate change

Climate change is expected to increasingly influence human mobility patterns in the region. The Caribbean climate is characterized by rising temperatures, increasingly frequent extreme weather events, and rising sea levels. The increased frequency and intensity of extreme climate events such as hurricanes and floods and related disasters have forced many people to move either internally or to other territories and countries within the region (Serraglio et al. 2021). For example, approximately three million people were displaced in the Caribbean in a single month during the 2017 Atlantic Hurricane season (Francis 2019). Hurricanes and tropical storms in the Caribbean correlate with an increase in regular immigration to the United States through permanent and temporary migration categories (UNHCR 2018). Global warming projections imply that the risk of climate-induced migration will rise for all countries in the region. With over half of the Caribbean population living within 2 kilometers of the coast, the effects of rising sea levels will be felt by many. Further, because many Caribbean countries are small island states, people may not be able to seek refuge in their own country in the event of large-scale disasters (IOM 2017).

There is scope to strengthen the frameworks and mechanisms in place in the region to address climate-induced migration. Caribbean national governments recognize the importance of effective climate change and mobility governance. The two Free Movement Agreements (FMAs) embedded within the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) have permitted countries to grant displaced Caribbean nationals important protection benefits after catastrophic hurricanes—even though these Free Movement Agreements have not established specific provisions to manage human mobility in the context of disasters and other significant environmental changes. For instance, during the 2017 Atlantic hurricane season, the CARICOM and OECS Free Movement Agreements provided displaced persons a right of entry in other countries, authorized travel document requirement waivers, granted indefinite stays to some persons displaced by disasters, and eased access to labor markets. Support and benefits provided to climate disaster migrants could nonetheless be strengthened by being formalized in the two Free Movement Agreements to ensure that application does not vary based on national contexts (Francis 2019). Further, a host of gaps and limitations prevail in disaster data collection and management

systems in regard to sources of information and statistics on migration, climate change, and environmental change (Serraglio, Adaawen, and Schraven 2021).

High-skilled migration, brain drain, and brain gain

This section discusses high-skilled emigration from the Caribbean region. The first part of the section describes the magnitude and characteristics of high-skilled migration in the Caribbean. The second part summarizes policy options governments around the world have implemented to attempt to manage high-skilled migration. It ends with a discussion of two policy examples from the region.

Large-scale outflows of high-skilled workers are usually portrayed negatively because they can slow down growth in origin countries through several channels. For example, the productivity of non-migrant workers may decrease because of the lower supply of educated colleagues. In addition, achieving economies of scale in skill-intensive activities may not be possible. Losing high-skilled workers trained with public resources has fiscal implications and lowers the return of public subsidized tertiary education.

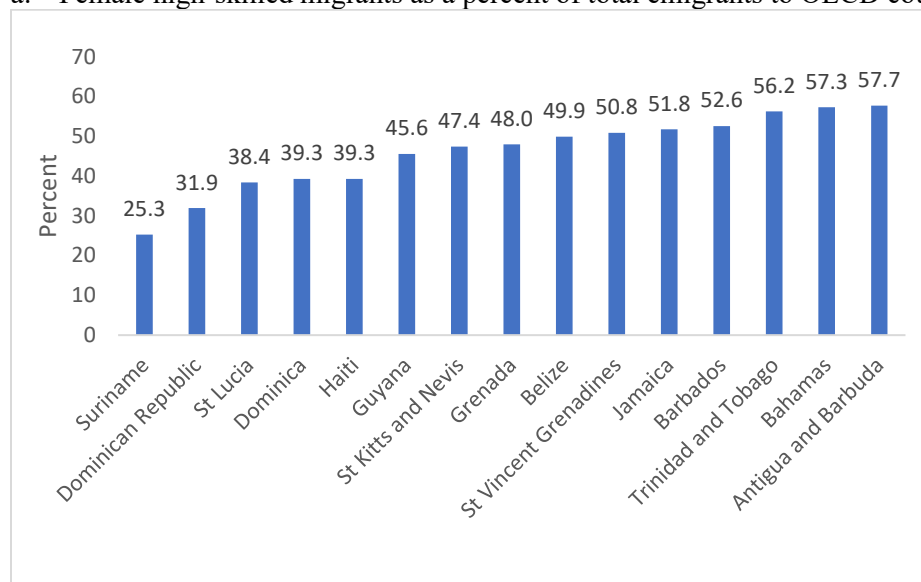
Brain drain can be turned into brain gain, however. High-skilled migrants can improve access to capital, technology, information, foreign exchange, and business networks for firms in countries of origin. Returning high-skilled migrants can also play an important role in the transfer of knowledge to origin countries (World Bank 2006b, 2018).

Magnitude of the phenomenon

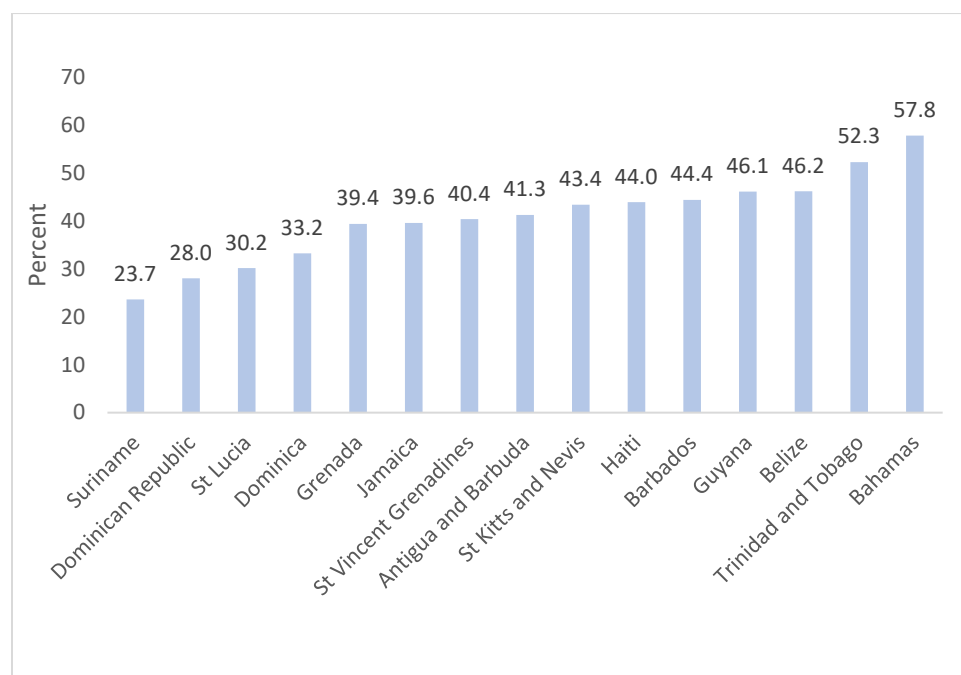
The tertiary-educated leave Caribbean countries in large numbers, putting pressure on human capital stocks available. Depending on the Caribbean origin country, between 24 percent and 58 percent of all emigrants located in OECD countries are high-skilled workers.⁴ For most countries in the region, the share of high-skilled migrant workers in the total population of emigrants is higher for women (figure 8). On average, nearly half of women emigrants are high-skilled workers (46 percent for women against 41 percent for men in 2010).⁵ The human capital stock available in Caribbean countries is put under pressure by the significant share of the high-skilled workforce lost to migration. While high-skilled people are emigrating, skills gaps in several economic sectors have appeared, including in education, health, information technology, agriculture, and construction (Aragón and El-Assar 2018).

Figure 8. Tertiary-educated migration from Caribbean countries

a. Female high-skilled migrants as a percent of total emigrants to OECD countries, 2010



b. Male high-skilled migrants as a percent of total emigrants to OECD countries, 2010



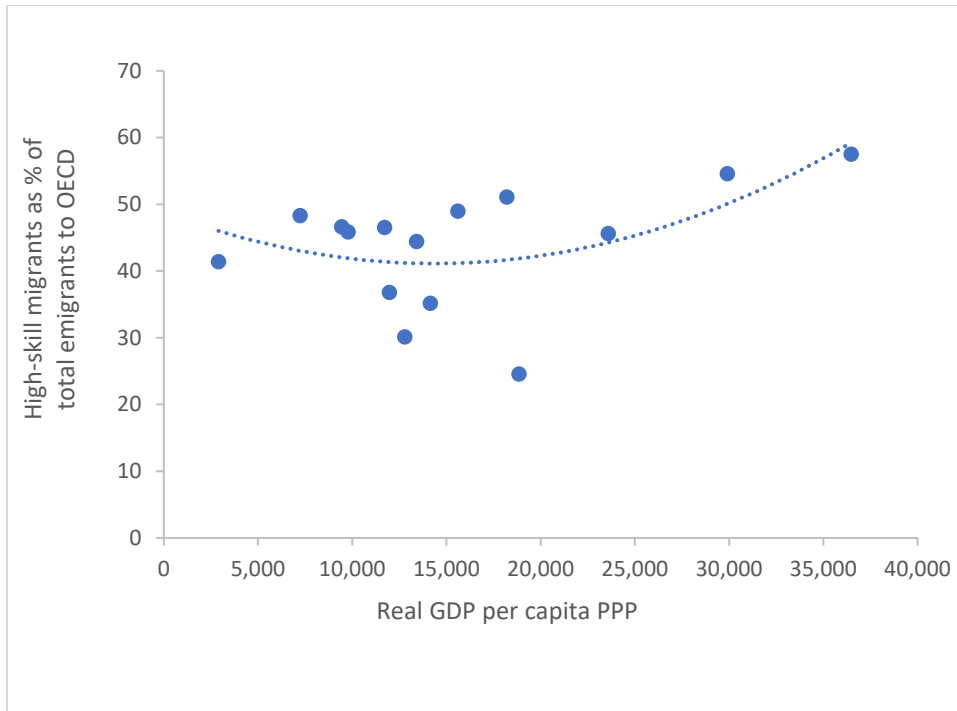
Source: Brückner, Capuano, and Marfouk 2013.

Note: OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

A U-shaped relationship can be observed in the region between economic development and the share of high-skilled emigrants in the total emigrant population. The relationship must be interpreted with caution because access to higher education and quality of education are endogenous to economic development. A number of complementary explanations can still account for the relationship seen in figure 9. In early stages of development, credit and financial constraints are binding, which restricts emigration opportunities for poorer and low-skilled individuals. As economies grow, credit constraints begin to relax, allowing more (and less-educated) individuals to migrate. With further economic development, greater access to education may stimulate migration aspirations, while selective immigration policies at destination might favor more educated migrants. At the same time, the formation of transportation and communication networks may facilitate mobility of migrants of all skill types. Remittances and information provided by social networks of settled migrants can allow more potential migrants to leave. At higher levels of economic development, wage differentials have largely disappeared and the proportion of college graduates in the resident population peaks. Having the highest propensity to emigrate abroad, the high-skilled population group dominates the skill composition of migration (Dao et al. 2018).

Few Caribbean workers migrate to the United States using temporary (H1-B) visas. The H-1B is a visa allowing US employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialty occupations requiring the application of specialized knowledge and a bachelor's degree or the equivalent of work experience. The duration of stay is three years, extendable to six years. The number of new H-1B visas that can be issued each year is capped at 65,000 (USCIS 2022b). The total number of H-1B visas issued annually for Caribbean workers has been declining over the past several years (figure 10). Jamaica is the country receiving the most H-1B visas in the Caribbean, with 126 visas issued per year on average over the 2015–21 period. Although Haiti is the most populous country in the region, Haitian citizens obtain fewer than 10 H-1B visas annually, on average. The most common US non-immigrant visas obtained by Caribbean nationals are B-1/B-2 visas issued for persons who want to enter the United States temporarily for a combination of business and tourism purposes (US Department of State 2022).

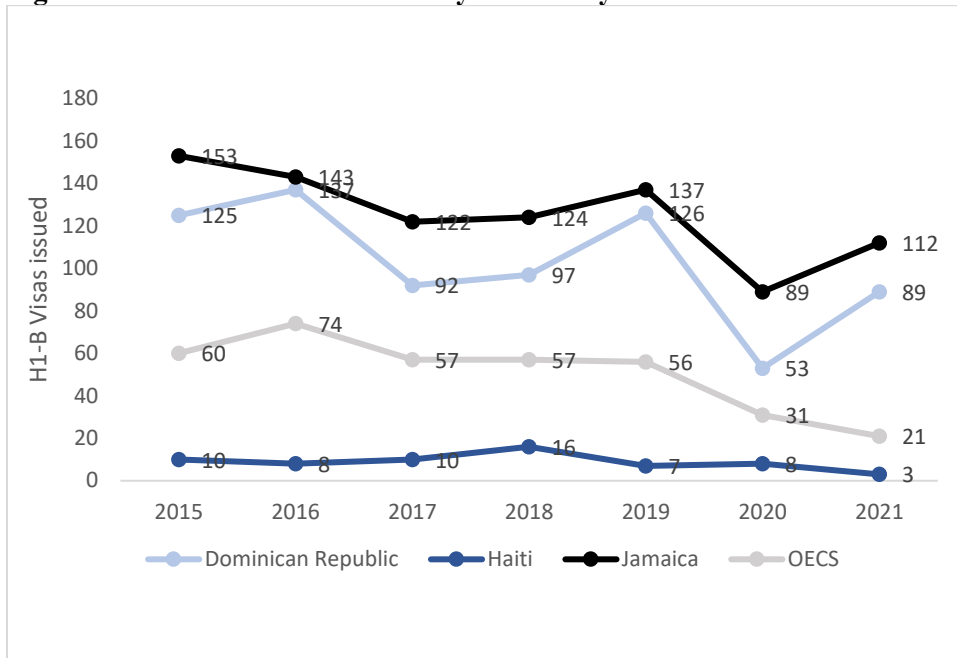
Figure 9. High-skilled migration share and economic development



Sources: Brücker, Capuano, and Marfouk 2013; World Bank, World Development Indicators 2022.

Note: The figure plots the relationship between the skill composition of migration to OECD countries and GDP per capita. The curve displays a quadratic fit for 15 Caribbean countries. OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; PPP = purchasing power parity.

Figure 10. US H1-B visa issuances by nationality for selected Caribbean countries, FY2015–FY2021



Source: US Department of State 2022.

Note: US fiscal year data.

The United States J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa is available to all Caribbean countries, but only Jamaica seems to take advantage of this regular migration pathway. J-1 visas allow temporary workers of medium and high skill levels to access temporary work-based and study-based exchange visitor programs in defined professions. There is no established cap on the maximum number of people accepted per term because accepted applications are dependent on the number of workers required by the employers participating in the program. In 2019, more than 9,000 Jamaicans obtained J-1 visas. Fewer than 500 J-1 visas were issued for all the other Caribbean countries combined in the same year (Párraga 2021).

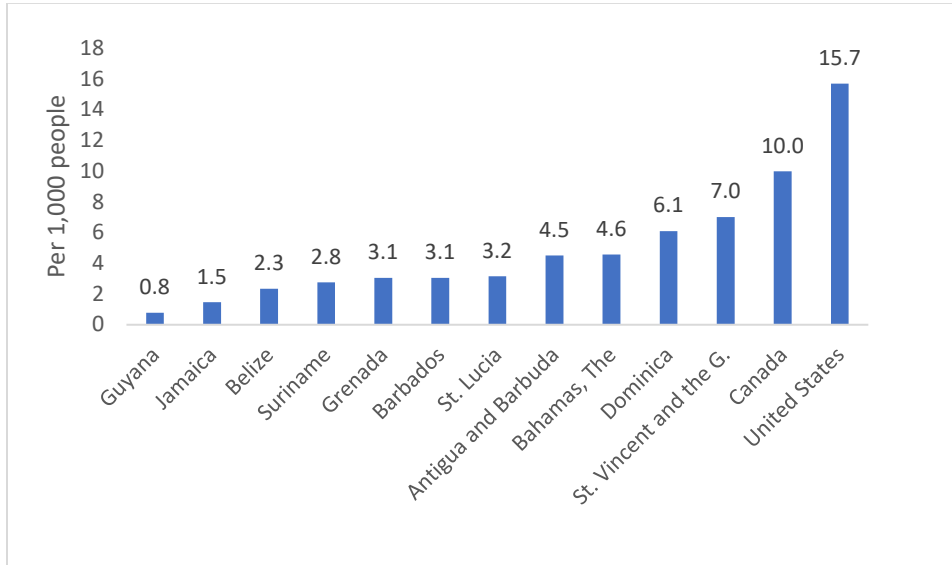
The migration of health workers is a matter of concern for most countries in the region. While Caribbean health workers emigrate in large numbers, serious shortages prevail in terms of availability of professionals in the medical sector, particularly nurses. Prime destination countries for Caribbean nurse emigrants are Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. At the end of the 2000s, it was estimated that the number of Caribbean trained nurses working in these three countries was three times as high as the number of nurses still working in origin countries (World Bank 2009). Estimates of nurse position vacancy rates in Caribbean countries range between 30 percent and 40 percent (Rolle Sands, Ingraham, and Salami 2020; World Bank 2009).⁶ Compared to Canada and the United States, the ratio of nurses per 1,000 people is quite low in the Caribbean (figure 11, panel a). The supply of physicians is more balanced across the region, with a few countries even displaying ratios higher than that of the United States (figure 11, panel b). In 2010–11, the estimated expatriation rates to OECD countries for nurses and doctors originating from the Caribbean reached 42 percent and 13 percent, respectively (OECD 2016). In addition to the impact on access to medical services and health care quality, emigration also results in large losses of resources invested in training health workers by Caribbean countries (Thompson, McConnell, and Corazzini 2017).

Access to better training, working, and economic conditions abroad are important drivers of health worker emigration. In 2018, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) conducted a series of phone surveys with Caribbean health workers residing in origin and destination countries. Analysis of the survey responses indicates that the main reasons why emigration occurs are significant differentials between origin and destination countries in terms of quality of health care and infrastructure, economic and working conditions, and training opportunities. Only about 25 percent of respondents stated that they would seriously consider returning to the Caribbean to work if salaries, working conditions, and promotional opportunities improved significantly (PAHO 2019). These results are in line with the 2008 Jamaica Nurse Labor Survey, which also highlights the importance of good education opportunities for children as another determinant of nurse migration (World Bank 2009).

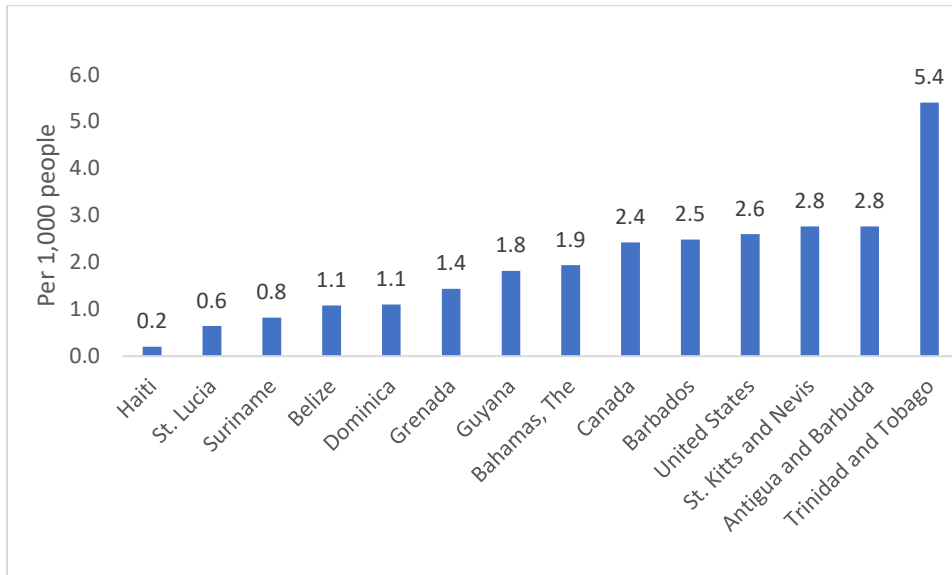
To fill gaps in nursing and medical specialties, Caribbean countries regularly recruit professionals from other countries in the region. Immigrant health care professionals often come from Cuba (World Bank 2009). In 2019, Barbados and Ghana signed an agreement for the recruitment of 120 nurses from Ghana to complement Barbados' staffing needs.⁷ Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is an exception in that it has an abundance of nurses and regularly supplies nurses throughout the OECS. Beginning in 2003 the Vincentian government embarked on an education and training initiative of nurses for employment abroad as part of a poverty alleviation strategy (Aragón and El-Assar 2018). However, due to increased demand for nurses in the United Kingdom and the United States as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will begin to bond nurse graduates for a few years, starting with the 2022 current cohorts of nursing students.⁸

Figure 11. Nurses and physicians population ratios, Caribbean countries, the United States, and Canada, 2017–18

a. Nurses and midwives, 2017-18



b. Physicians, 2017-18



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Note: Panel a: No data are available for St. Kitts and Nevis and Trinidad and Tobago. Panel b: No data are available for Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Emigration of teachers and education professionals takes place on a significant scale, as well. Data from the 2019 American Community Survey reveal that emigration of teachers to the United States is a significant drain on the education sector of Caribbean countries. Elementary and secondary school teachers account for the largest group of education industry workers living in the United States. For Jamaica,

Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, the total number of emigrants working in the US education industry represents more than 1 percent of the entire origin-country population (table 7).

Table 7. Emigration of education industry workers to the United States

US education segment	Origin country					
	Dominican Republic	Haiti	Jamaica	St. Lucia	Trinidad and Tobago	Guyana
Elementary and Secondary Schools	32,254	24,703	27,223	844	10,125	8,926
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	10,573	7,372	11,450	319	4,387	3,736
Business, Technical, Trade Schools, and Training	242	298	325	0	155	0
Other Schools and Instruction, Educational Support Services	1,679	1,106	2,569	0	1,033	1,343
Total Education	44,748	33,479	41,567	1,163	15,700	14,005
Total Education (migrants as a percent of origin population)	0.41	0.29	1.40	0.63	1.12	1.78

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) 1-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata Sample 2019.

Note: Origin country is determined by the migrants' place of birth. Person weights are used.

Policies to address high-skilled emigration

Increasing opportunities and incentives for skilled nationals to stay in the origin country are believed to be the most effective policy option to address brain drain related issues. Countries can rely on three broad types of policies to prevent large-scale high-skilled migration. The first option is to reduce emigration opportunities through quotas and by discouraging recruitment in certain industries. For instance, the United States does not allow immigration from any single country to exceed a given percentage of total immigration. The United Kingdom prevents overseas recruiting in selected high-skilled occupations. The second approach is to impose a tax or some other type of compensation to be paid by emigrants. The third policy option is to increase the incentives for skilled nationals to stay in the origin country or return from abroad (World Bank 2018). In terms of policy effectiveness, the empirical evidence available and economic theory give support to the third option. Policies that attempt to restrict emigration either directly or through tax schemes reduce the incentive to accumulate human capital in the first place and can potentially decrease overall human capital accumulation in the origin country. Moreover, they do little to resolve skill imbalances in destination countries. Instead, increasing opportunities for high-skilled workers at home can reduce incentives to emigrate without jeopardizing human capital investments (Clemens 2015; Del Carpio et al. 2016; World Bank 2018).

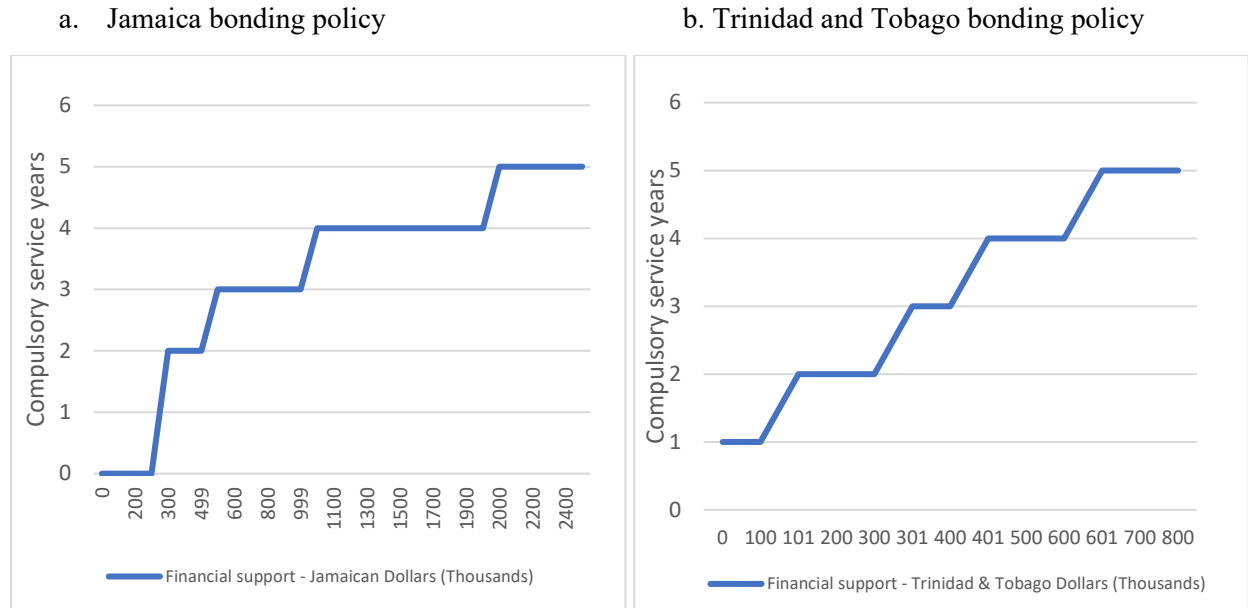
Policy example: Bonding and compulsory service in the English-speaking Caribbean

Bonding and compulsory service is the policy approach practiced by most Caribbean countries to manage the emigration of high-skilled workers. Under bonding and compulsory service, tertiary students who are receiving government scholarships or who are enrolled in courses funded by public resources are usually required to work in a local public institution for a given period during and/or on completion of their studies before they can leave for the private sector or emigrate to another country (Brissett 2018). As incentive to encourage the obligation to serve, compliance-enforcement measures can include withholding proof of qualifications, imposing large fines, or requiring early repayment of funding support and student loans (Frehywot et al. 2010). Many countries in the English-speaking Caribbean region have adopted bonding schemes (World Bank 2009).

The duration of the obligatory service is usually based on the costs of the trainings received or scholarship awarded. Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago have put in place bonding policies where the duration of service can last up to five years.⁹ Figure 12 shows the relationship between financial support received and bonding period in the two countries. While in Jamaica the bonding policy is executed by the Ministry of Finance,

the Ministry of Education is in charge in Trinidad and Tobago. In both countries, the bonding policies specify repayment requirements for the education funding received in situations where one fails to honor the obligation to serve.

Figure 12. Financial support and compulsory service period



Source: Government of Jamaica.

Source: Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Bonding arrangements have not been very successful at reducing skilled emigration and recouping public investments in higher education. Despite the bonding arrangements in place in the region, a high proportion of students emigrate without fulfilling their student loan obligations (Brissett 2018; Tomblin Murphy et al. 2016). The limited capacity of most governments to enforce repayment mechanisms implies that students can fail to fulfil their bond requirements without fear of facing consequences. A significant proportion of students studying abroad end up remaining in the countries in which they study and do not serve their compulsory service. The willingness of overseas recruiters to pay for and buy out skilled graduates’ financial obligations is another reason for the limited effectiveness of bonding schemes (Rolle Sands, Ingraham, and Salami 2020). Brissett (2018) reports that each year half the cohort of specialist nurses trained at Jamaica’s University Hospital of West Indies is recruited by overseas entities before graduation. Further, bonds tend not to reflect the true cost of training, meaning that even when emigrating students (or recruiters) pay their bonds, it still represents a net loss for countries’ public finances (Lewis 2011).

Policy example: The Managed Migration Program of the Caribbean for nurses

The Managed Migration Program of the Caribbean (MMPC) was a multilateral and cross-sector long-term strategy for developing and maintaining an adequate supply of nurses for the region. The MMPC emerged as a response to the sizable loss of Caribbean health professionals to Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It was developed by the CARICOM Regional Nursing Body in 2001 in collaboration with the Caribbean Nursing Organization and PAHO. The MMPC was a regional strategy for retaining an adequate number of competent nursing personnel to guarantee quality delivery of health programs and services. It was intended to allow governments and stakeholders to work together in developing interventions to manage and moderate the migration of health care workers. Implementation involved national and international partners from the public, private, academic, and civil society sectors (Blouin and Debnath 2011; Salmon et al. 2007).

Several activities were undertaken under the MMPC between 2001 and 2004. PAHO served as the main leader providing technical assistance, networking, coordination, tracking, and reporting for the MMPC. Several country-specific initiatives and programs were initiated by countries in the region. For instance, under the Homecoming Program, in 2003 Caribbean nurses who practiced abroad were invited back to their home countries to volunteer and share their skills with local nurses. The Jamaican Nursing Council worked on an initiative through which Jamaican nurses had the ability to practice alternately in Miami (Florida) and Jamaica. The motivation was to exploit the close proximity with the United States to permit nurses to practice there for a couple of weeks each month while working in Jamaica the remainder of the month. The government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines tried establishing bilateral agreements to obtain compensation from health care provider institutions that recruit nurses away from the country. Funds received through these agreements were to be reinvested by the government to enhance nurse training (Salmon et al. 2007; Tomblin Murphy et al. 2016).

The MMPC did not advance as much as expected during the second half of the 2000s and appears to have been discontinued. Because the MMPC did not belong to any one organization, it faced significant challenges with funding, coordination, and infrastructure. Each participating country adopted its own individual approach to the strategy. Thus, initiatives remained largely driven by individual countries or individual organizations with little significant impact. Moreover, this rather uncoordinated approach created management and ownership issues, rendering the framework difficult to evaluate (Blouin and Debnath 2011; Lewis 2011; World Bank 2009). The MMPC has not been subjected to any formal evaluation and seems to have been discontinued, as no recent references for the MMPC can be found.

Labor migration agreements

This section reviews and discusses evidence on the impacts of four of the most important agreements and mechanisms facilitating the regular movement of labor within and outside the Caribbean region.¹⁰ While labor migration agreements and mechanisms aim to provide benefits for all the parties involved (countries of origin and destination, employers, and workers), in practice benefits might not be equally distributed among all stakeholders. This section first reviews the two multilateral agreements facilitating migration within the Caribbean region. It then discusses the Canadian and US temporary farm work programs, which together attract about 15,000 Caribbean migrants each year.

CARICOM

Context

The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) is the largest organization facilitating regional integration of countries in the region. CARICOM was established by the Treaty of Chaguaramas in 1973, with the purpose of creating a cohesive, inclusive, and strong Community of Caribbean States. Currently 15 countries and one British Overseas Territory are full members of the intergovernmental organization.¹¹ The CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) was created in 2001 when the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas was signed by Member States. It became operational in 2006 to permit the free movement of goods, capital, and labor among its Member States (IOM 2017).

The CSME allows individuals who have been granted a Skills Certificate to travel and work freely in all CSME Member States. The CSME has opted for a phased approach allowing gradually more people to move freely over time. Further, CSME Member States committed through the 2019 Saint Ann's Declaration that willing States will move toward full free movement of persons by 2021. Currently, 12 specific skill categories are covered under the mobility agreement. These skill categories are university graduates; artists; musicians; media workers; athletes; teachers; nurses; those who hold associate degrees or equivalent qualifications; artisans with a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ); household domestics with a CVQ

or equivalent qualification; agricultural workers; and security guards. Each category is precisely defined by the CSME and requires a specific proof of qualification type. Skills Certificates are not tied to specific employers, and certificate holders may apply for and hold any position for which they are hired without the need for a work permit. The CSME aims to ensure equal access to employment and benefits to nationals and migrants holding a Skills Certificate. Further, spouses and dependents of individuals moving within the Skilled Certificate regime are allowed to access work, health, and education services (Aragón and Mawby 2019).

Free movement within CARICOM is also allowed under other conditions. Service providers and entrepreneurs (managerial, supervisory, and technical staff associated with businesses created) can migrate within the Community respectively under the “Provision of Services” and the “Right of Establishment.” Moreover, CARICOM citizens who do not fulfil the criteria for free movement under the CSME regime may still move and apply for a work permit, in accordance with the laws of the respective receiving Member State. The CSME has also established the right of definite entry for six months for nationals from participating Member States (Párraga 2021). The purpose of the visit under the right of six-months definite entry is irrelevant as long as the intended activity is not illegal. CARICOM citizens entering under this provision cannot work, provide services, or establish a business without permission. Definite entry was designed to facilitate movement throughout the region to allow individuals to visit friends and family, and engage in tourism and cultural exchange (Aragón and Mawby 2019).

Outcomes and challenges

Available data indicate that from 2006 until 2017, more than 2 million movements were facilitated in the region thanks to CARICOM’s six-month mobility provision. Although these flows might include labor migrants, individuals who move within this provision are not supposed to engage in work at destination. Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana are the largest sending CARICOM countries, while Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago are the countries receiving the most CARICOM nationals (Aragón and Mawby 2019). Trinidad and Tobago is thus both a major sending and receiving country.

The CSME is operational, and workers move within the region using the Skills Certificate regime. In 2017, a total of 1,165 Skills Certificates were issued for workers from the region. More than 60 percent of those certificates were issued by three countries: Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. In terms of skills categories, 71 percent of Skills Certificates issued were to university graduates, followed by holders of associate degrees (11 percent), artisans (5 percent), and nurses (5 percent). Limited information is available on the number of CARICOM nationals who rely on the Right of Establishment to migrate. In 2017, only Barbados (132 persons), Grenada (0 person), and Jamaica (60 persons) reported on persons entering under the Right of Establishment (Aragón and Mawby 2019; Párraga 2021).

There are several issues affecting the effectiveness of Skills Certificates. While they are aimed at eventually replacing long-term work permits, evidence indicates that the latter are used much more often than Skills Certificates. A total of 1,275 short-term work permits and 2,468 long-term work permits were issued in 2017. Skills Certificate *application* processes differ by country. Some Member States have created online systems for processing applications, whereas others require paper applications. Moreover, processes for the *verification* of Skills Certificates by destination countries are not standardized across CSME Member States and can take several months. For 2017, only 242 Skills Certificates were verified. Trinidad and Tobago does not verify Skills Certificates but instead prefers to issue new Certificates, which duplicates processes and creates inefficiencies (Aragón and Mawby 2019).

The implementation of the CSME has generated some degree of anxiety about the potential negative impacts of population mobility for destination countries. Migrants from Haiti, by far the most populous country in the Community, require a visa to travel to other CARICOM States because of the generalized fear of an influx of Haitians (IOM 2017). This provision applies only to Haitians. In a move of solidarity with the people of Haiti, Barbados waived the visa requirement for Haitian nationals in 2018. However,

within a year the policy was reversed due to an increase in the number of Haitian arrivals, whom the government reported did not have the financial means to cover their living expenses in Barbados (Dietrich Jones 2022). Despite being a CARICOM Member State, The Bahamas has refused to take part in the CSME due to immigration security concerns and the stated need to prioritize the employment of Bahamian nationals in its labor market (Aragón and El-Assar 2018).

There are little data and monitoring of migration flows facilitated by CARICOM and CSME. Most of the information regarding the implementation of CSME is administrative in nature or non-public data. CARICOM countries do not systematically report data to the CSME Unit, which is supposed to centralize information on labor mobility within the region. The latest year for which data on Skills Certificates issuance is available is 2017. Systematic and harmonized data compilation, publication, and analysis is an important gap to be addressed (Párraga 2021).

CSME legislation is not always implemented in a harmonized form across Member States. Agreements reached under CARICOM and CSME need national legislation to be adapted before they can be implemented domestically. In some cases, this can be a difficult and lengthy process, hampering compliance with agreed terms and coordination with partners. This is the case for provisions related to spouses and dependents' rights, for instance. Two countries (Haiti and Suriname) have not yet signed the agreement to allow the portability of social security benefits (Párraga 2021). Another example has to do with certification of skills. Of the twelve categories of skills recognized under the CSME Skills Certificate regime, only five categories have been approved for free movement by all Member States (Aragón and Mawby 2019).

CSME nationals lack awareness about their rights and obligations as migrants. Knowledge among CSME migrants about their rights, appropriate channels to apply for Skills Certificates, and present complaints is limited. With restricted access to information on the options for regular migration within the region, some CARICOM nationals use alternative and sometimes illegal migration channels to seek work abroad. Irregular stays and informal employment expose migrants to vulnerability and security risks (Aragón and Mawby 2019).

OECS Eastern Caribbean Economic Union

Context

The Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) is a subregional economic and monetary union. First established in 1981 through the Treaty of Basseterre, the OECS is comprised of seven Protocol Member States: Antigua and Barbuda; Dominica; Grenada; Montserrat; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. OECS Protocol Member States are all members of CARICOM. The Overseas Territories of Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, Martinique, and Guadeloupe are Associate Members (IOM 2017).

The OECS Eastern Caribbean Economic Union (ECEU) signed in 2010 allows for the full free movement of labor. All ECEU nationals can travel and work in any OECS Protocol Member State using their national IDs under the same conditions as nationals, thereby creating an OECS-wide labor market. No skills certifications by destination countries are required. ECEU nationals are given indefinite stay upon entry and are not required to obtain a work permit. They can access services such as education and health care in the same manner as nationals do. Furthermore, social security benefits are portable within the ECEU. In contrast, the regimes for free movement of goods and services within the union have not been fully defined and implemented yet (Aragón and Mawby 2019).

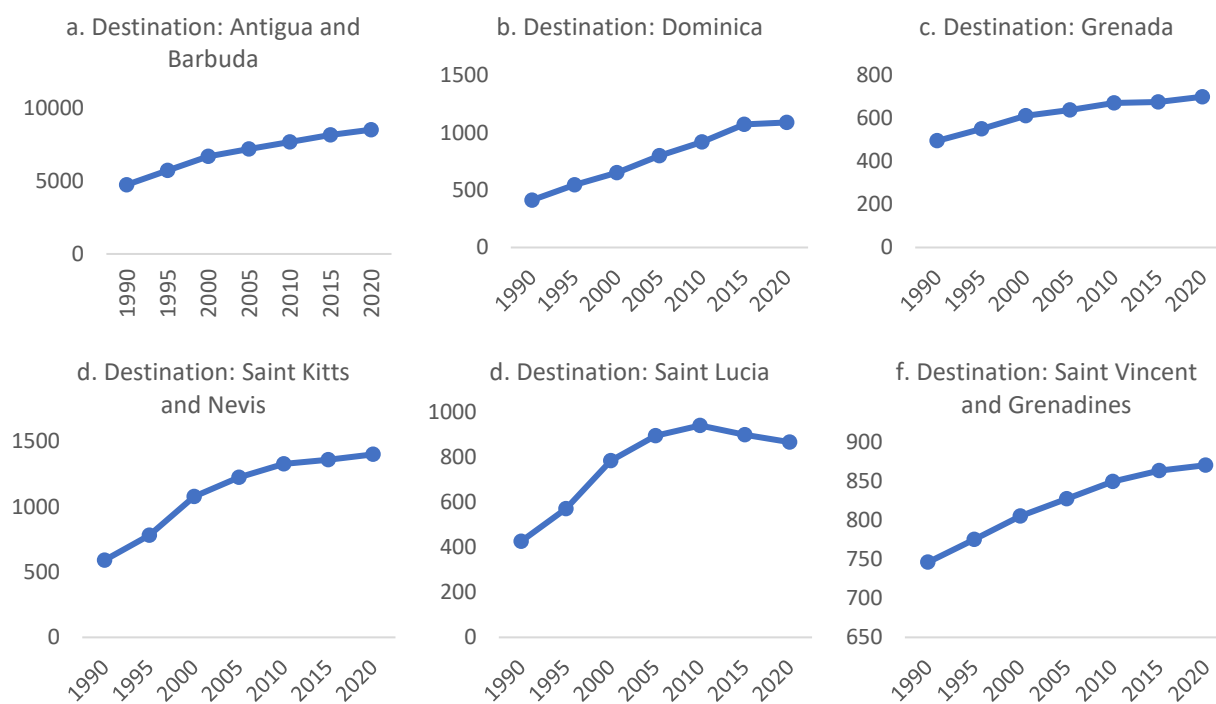
Outcomes and challenges

The OECS has achieved considerable progress toward regional integration. Within 30 years, OECS Member States have adopted common institutions with supranational authority, formed a monetary union

based on the Eastern Caribbean dollar, and established a single financial and economic space where goods, people, and capital can move freely (Aragón and Mawby 2019).

Migration within the OECS has increased over the past 30 years. The number of immigrants from the subregion has increased in all OECS Member Countries in recent years, albeit at a different rate (figure 13). In absolute numbers, Antigua and Barbuda is the main destination country for OECS migrants. Saint Kitts and Nevis has registered the fastest growth in intraregional migration during the period. The number of OECS immigrants in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has grown at a slow but steady pace. Intraregional migration does not appear to have accelerated after the ECEU was ratified in 2011, however.

Figure 13. OECS immigration within the region in Member Countries, 1990–2020



Source: UN DESA 2022.

Note: The Y-axis displays the number of migrants within the OECS region. OECS = Organization of Eastern Caribbean States.

The lack of information about ECEU mobility is a challenge. OECS nationals can move to any other OECS Protocol State indefinitely and are allowed to travel with a valid government issued photo ID. Because data on immigration within the ECEU are not collected in a systematic fashion, country authorities are unable to monitor population movement, how long OECS migrants stay in a given Member State, or what migrants do in each State. The unavailability of such data prevents analyzing migration’s impact on the regional economy and improving policies to facilitate safer and more orderly migration. It also poses security risks (Aragón and Mawby 2019). Connectivity is also a significant issue preventing the OECS from reaping all the potential gains from intraregional migration. Airline connections between islands are limited. Moreover, there is not yet a ferry system among the islands.

Canada Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and US H-2A Visa

Characteristics of the temporary work programs

This section discusses the Canada Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and the US H-2A Visa program. These two formal temporary labor migration mechanisms share several similarities. Temporary work programs are usually set up to allow employers in the destination country to hire foreign workers to fill temporary or seasonal jobs when qualified nationals are in short supply. The SAWP and US H-2A Visa program allow employers to fill short-term jobs in the agricultural sector.

The SAWP is a short-term labor migration agreement between several English-speaking Caribbean states and Canada. In addition to the seven OECS Member States, Anguilla, Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago are part of the SAWP. Mexico is the only other country outside the region participating in the program. The economic sector is restricted to agriculture and governments from migrant-sending countries negotiate worker contract terms with Canada. Departments of Labor in participating Caribbean countries receive, screen, and select applications from nationals interested in joining the program. Canadian authorities then review and process the work permits for the selected participants. On the employer side, the SAWP is based on public-private partnerships where interested private sector employers present an application to the Canadian government. Individual migrant contracts can last up to eight months per term, but the SAWP allows for the possibility of regular circular labor migration with no limits on the number of reapplications. Seasonal agricultural workers come to Canada for an average of four months employment (Government of Canada 2022; World Bank 2006a).

The US H-2A Visa Program for Temporary Agricultural Workers is currently accessible in the Caribbean region to Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Jamaica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. While various countries worldwide can participate in the program, only these five Caribbean countries could participate in it as of 2022. In the past, Belize, Dominica, and Haiti have sent few migrants via the H-2A Visa Program.¹² H-2A visas are directed toward agricultural workers and have no limit on the number that can be issued per year. Employers who want to hire workers through the program apply to the US Department of Labor for labor certification and then submit an application to the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to hire foreign workers. Prospective workers outside the United States apply for a visa and/or admission directly at a US Embassy or Consulate abroad. The maximum duration for H-2A visas is three years, including renewals. A person who has held H-2A nonimmigrant status for a total of three years must depart and remain outside the United States for an uninterrupted period of three months before seeking readmission as an H-2A nonimmigrant (USCIS 2022a). Circular migration is therefore also possible under this scheme. Table 8 summarizes key features of the two visa programs.

Table 8. Key SAWP and H-2A Visa features

Program	Participating countries (in 2022)	Sector	Duration period
Canada SAWP	OECS Member States, Anguilla, Barbados, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago.	Agriculture	Eight months maximum per term. Reapplications and circular migration possible.
US H-2A Visa	Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Vincent, and the Grenadines.	Agriculture	Maximum of three years (including renewals). Reapplications and circular migration possible.

Sources: Government of Canada 2002; USCIS 2022a.

Outcomes

Between 9,000 and 11,000 Caribbean nationals work in Canada each year on a temporary foreign work contract in the agricultural sector (table 9).¹³ The lion share of these contracts are given to Jamaican nationals. Some eligible countries such as Dominica or Saint Kitts and Nevis have not sent migrants to Canada via temporary agricultural contracts in recent years. The total number of contracts for Caribbean workers peaked in 2018 and fell thereafter before rebounding in 2021. Data from 2019 indicate that less than 1 percent of registered participants were female migrant workers (Párraga 2021).

Table 9. Canada: Temporary foreign workers in the agricultural sector by nationality

Origin country	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Barbados	174	165	163	137	119	96
Grenada	64	78	74	76	105	123
Jamaica	8,449	9,134	9,402	8,447	8,165	8,685
Saint Lucia	221	300	249	197	242	230
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	257	295	297	278	305	336
Trinidad and Tobago	767	813	826	759	514	526
Other Caribbean eligible States	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Caribbean	9,932	10,785	11,011	9,894	9,450	9,996
Total Canada (all nationalities)	43,921	53,842	56,919	53,605	55,171	61,735

Source: Statistics Canada 2022, Table 32-10-0221-01, Countries of Citizenship for Temporary Foreign Workers in the Agricultural Sector, doi: <https://doi.org/10.25318/3210022101-eng>.

Only Jamaica seems to exploit the opportunities offered by the US H-2A Visa Program. Over the past five years, more than 98 percent of the H-2A visas issued for Caribbean countries have been for Jamaican nationals (table 10). Before 2016, very few Jamaicans were considering the H-2A visa migration route. A notable change occurred in 2016, with 4,295 visas issued solely for Jamaican workers. Since 2016, between 4,300 and 5,300 Jamaicans have been issued H-2A visas each year. Barbados, Dominica, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines have not sent a single migrant via the H-2A Visa Program in recent years. The Dominican Republic does not rely much on this program despite having a large total population and high numbers of rural households living in poverty.

Table 10. US H-2A Visa issuances by nationality

Country	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21
Barbados	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Belize	20	23	19	12	11	13	13
Dominica	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dominican Republic	89	52	33	28	51	40	71
Grenada	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Haiti	50	65	64	1	0	0	0
Jamaica	2	4,295	4,845	5,251	5,030	4,659	4,872
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Caribbean	161	4,435	4,961	5,292	5,092	4,714	4,957
Total US (all nationalities)	108,144	134,368	161,583	196,409	204,801	213,394	257,898

Source: US Department of State 2022.

Despite high transaction costs and regulation complexities, these programs bring numerous benefits to American and Canadian employers and rural communities. Employers receive experienced agricultural workers from abroad and face less labor shortage uncertainty. Local communities benefit from expanded employment opportunities for national workers in upstream and downstream sectors stemming from the growth of agricultural industries staffed by skilled foreign workers. Temporary workers also stimulate local demand for goods and services. Besides, these mechanisms offer a legal route to farm jobs that would otherwise likely be filled by undocumented workers. The possibility to engage in circular migration reduces the incentives for workers to overstay and disappear in the informal economy (Basok 2007; CGD 2020; World Bank 2006a).

Impacts on migrant households

Participation in the SAWP and H-2A Visa programs offers multiple benefits for Caribbean migrant workers. The two programs provide opportunities for unemployed and underemployed workers to earn income at wage rates above those prevailing in their origin countries. Workers can return home regularly and use their

savings and remittances to increase household consumption, improve housing conditions, invest in children's human capital, and enjoy greater income security. Migrants also avoid risky journeys and high smugglers' fees. By covering at least part of the cross-border travel costs, the two programs are accessible to poor households lacking the financial resources to emigrate (Basok 2007; World Bank 2006a). About 15 percent of all foreign workers who entered Canada on a temporary permit to work in agriculture in the first half of the 2010s obtained permanent resident status in the five years following their first entry (Zhang, Ostrovsky, and Arsenault 2021).

Descriptive survey evidence suggests that migrants and their households experience important gains in well-being from the two programs. In a survey of Jamaican migrant workers having completed a work cycle in Canada in 2001 and their households, Russell (2004) finds that 35 percent of migrant remittances are spent on children's education. Migrant workers also acquire productive agriculture skills while abroad. Surveying more than 300 Caribbean workers working in Florida's cane fields under H-2A Visas, Wood, and McCoy (1985) find that remittances are primarily used for consumption purposes and housing improvements. Moreover, migrant workers who repeatedly participate in the H-2A program are more likely to own their own home. However, there is limited evidence that migrant workers use remittances and savings for productive investments in agriculture production or land purchases.

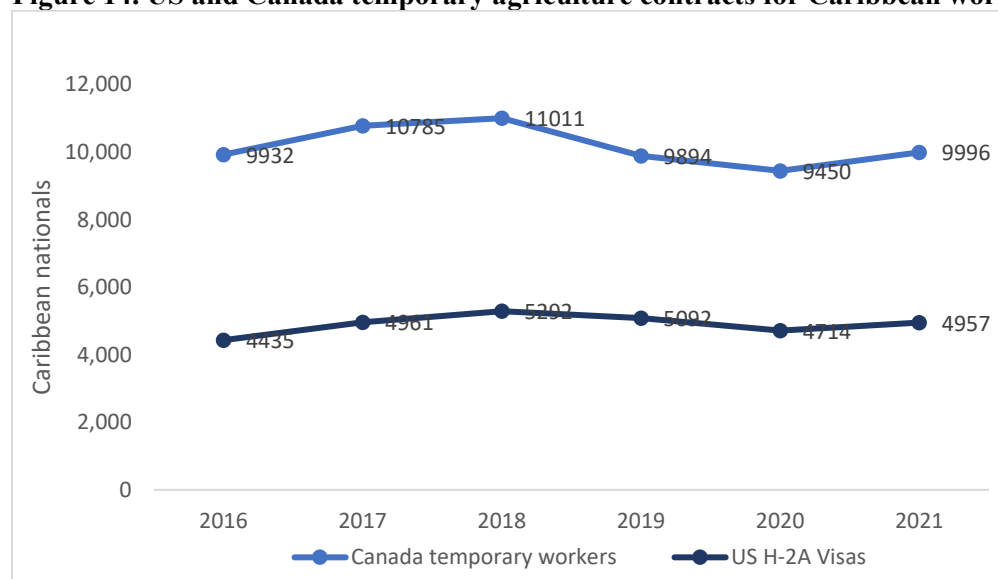
Quasi-experimental evidence from Haiti indicates that such programs have large impacts on migrant earnings and household income. In 2014, a pilot project was designed to connect poor Haitian farmworkers with US employers under H-2A Visa program conditions. Clemens and Postel (2017) rigorously evaluated the impact of this pilot by comparing migrant households to counterfactual Haitian households that were willing and prepared to work in the United States but unable to do so due to administrative issues unrelated to their individual characteristics. Temporary farm work in the United States raised the daily value of Haitian workers' labor by a factor of fifteen. Workers were able to double their families' annual average income in less than two months of work. More than 85 percent of the income earned in the United States was transferred to Haiti or brought back and spent in Haiti. In terms of qualitative impacts, return workers who had traveled mentioned having improved agricultural skills, a desire to repeat temporary US employment, and a sense of greater empowerment. Last but not least, the Haitian workers helped expand the rural farm economy in the United States because US farmers were able to expand production thanks to migrants' labor.

While the SAWP and H-2A programs generally bring benefits to migrants, they are not without problems. Exploitation and abuse have occurred under the SAWP and H-2A Visa programs. Cases of overlong working hours, underpay, poor accommodation, insufficient training, and use of inadequate safety equipment have been documented (World Bank 2006a). Migrant workers sometimes stay far from towns, limiting the possibility for socializing with other migrants, interacting with local communities, shopping, and experiencing cultural exchanges (Russell 2004). Family separation can have emotional and psychological costs for spouses on children (Basok 2007).

Systemic program challenges

The SAWP and H-2A temporary work programs are not designed to respond to changing economic conditions in Caribbean countries. These two programs are primarily catered to labor market conditions in the United States and Canada, not in sending countries. The relatively flat visa issuance figures presented in tables 9 and 10 show that these two programs are indeed not responsive to the labor market dynamics of participating Caribbean countries. Moreover, the SAWP and H-2A visa programs follow the exact same trends in terms of contract/visa numbers issued to Caribbean nationals (figure 14). The total number of visas issued fell during the 2020 pandemic year. The contribution of these programs to stabilizing labor markets in sending countries is limited.

Figure 14. US and Canada temporary agriculture contracts for Caribbean workers, 2016–21



Sources: For Canada, Government of Canada 2022; for the United States, US Department of State 2022.

Note: US data are for US fiscal years.

There is a power asymmetry between migrant workers and employers. Employers tend to have excessive control over workers' current and future labor contracts. Employers can relatively easily replace a worker complaining about unsafe and/or unacceptable working conditions. Canadian employers can request to hire the same worker every year, but they can also write a negative evaluation on a worker at the end of the contract and refuse to hire them in the future. There is also evidence that recruitment in origin countries can be influenced by local political economy considerations (Russell 2004; World Bank 2006a).

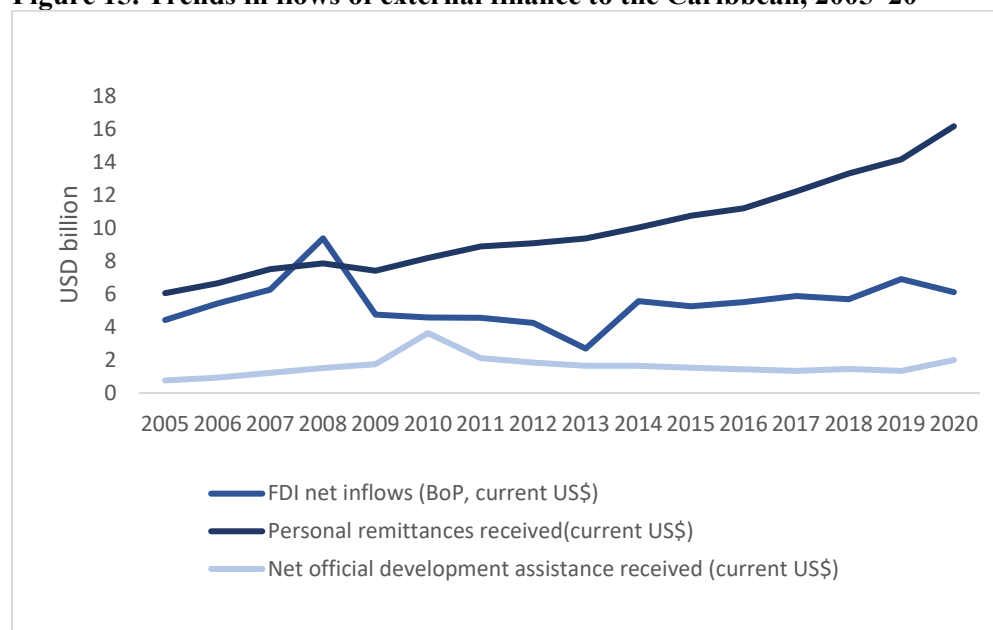
International remittances

Remittances can generate substantial welfare gains. The economic gains from remittances accrue primarily to migrants and their families. Rigorous empirical analyses of household survey data have found that remittances can be associated with declines in poverty, improved nutrition, and better schooling outcomes for children. At a more macro level, remittances can stimulate the development of the financial sector, stimulate demand for goods and services, and improve origin countries' creditworthiness for external borrowing (Clemens and McKenzie 2018; World Bank 2006b). This section first presents regional trends in remittance flows. It then summarizes the types of remittance policies available to decision makers and discusses two policy examples from the Caribbean region.

Regional trends

Remittances are a major source of external finance for the Caribbean compared to foreign direct investment (FDI) and official development assistance (ODA). Remittance annual inflows to the region have tripled over the past 15 years. Since 2011 remittances have surpassed FDI and ODA inflows combined. Further, over the past decade the gap between the three sources of external finance has kept widening (figure 15). In the global recession year 2020, remittances to the region proved resilient and remained the primary source of international financing for Caribbean countries as FDI declined and net aid flows increased modestly.

Figure 15. Trends in flows of external finance to the Caribbean, 2005–20



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2022.

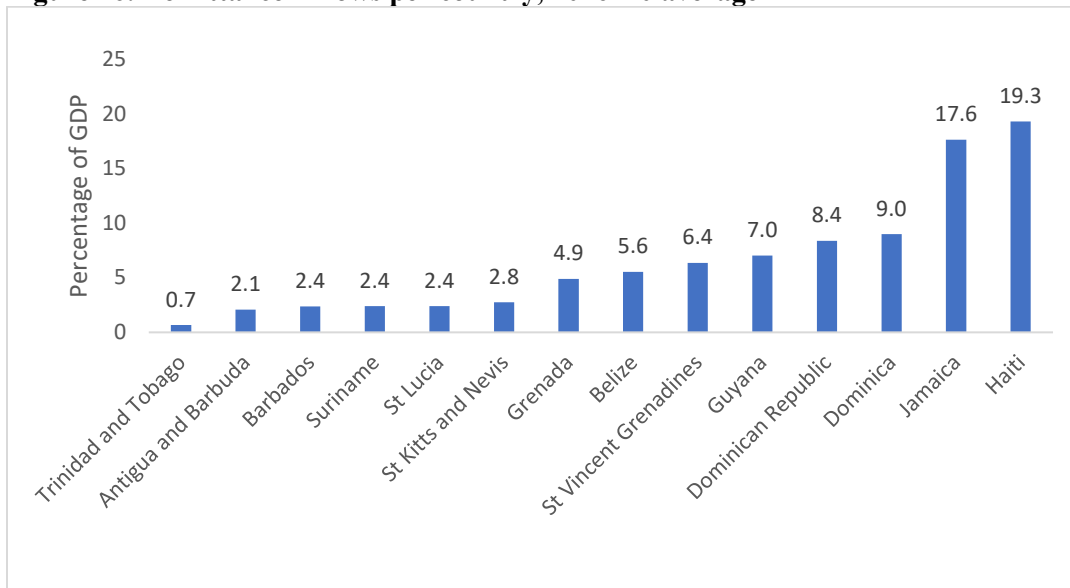
Note: BoP = balance of payments; FDI = foreign direct investment; ODA = Official Development Assistance.

Remittances represent an important source of income and hard currency for most countries of the region. Over the period 2016–20, remittances inflows in the Caribbean stood at 6 percent of GDP per year, on average. Within the region there is some variation in the extent to which countries rely on these flows. Haiti and Jamaica are the countries with the highest dependency to remittances, with inflows close to 20 percent of GDP per year on average over the period. Remittance inflows are also large in relation to the size of the economy in Dominica, the Dominican Republic, and Guyana. At the other extreme of the distribution, remittances totaled less than 1 percent of GDP in Trinidad and Tobago over the same years. The Latin American and Caribbean region on average receives less remittances (2 percent of GDP in 2016–20) than all but one Caribbean country studied (figure 16). It is believed that remittance flows toward Caribbean countries are much higher than what is reported in official statistics because many migrants send money through unofficial channels (IOM 2017).

Most countries in the region are net receivers of remittances. Antigua and Barbuda and Trinidad and Tobago are the only two countries to have sent more remittances abroad than they have received for most of the past ten years. In some years remittances outflows have also surpassed inflows in Grenada, Suriname, and Saint Kitts and Nevis. All the other countries in the region have continually been net remittance receivers over the past decade.¹⁴

The main source of remittances in the region is the United States. In line with the United States being the main destination for Caribbean migrants, it is also the main source of remittances for the region. As a consequence, remittances are highly exposed to the US economic cycle. In most years, higher US GDP growth is associated with stronger growth of remittance inflows in the Caribbean (for all source countries combined). However, official remittance inflows to the region recorded double-digit growth rates during the first COVID-19 pandemic year (2020), during which the US economy recorded a large contraction (figure 17). The fiscal stimulus program rolled out in the United States allowed migrants to send more money to their families in their origin country. In addition, more money may have been sent through official channels due to travel restrictions (Ratha et al. 2022).

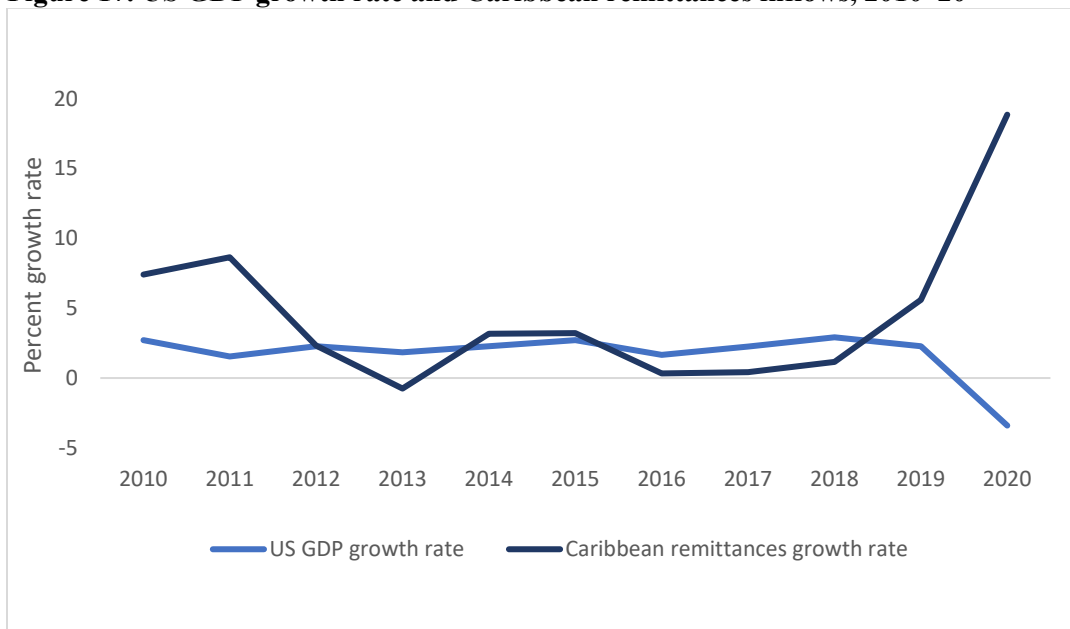
Figure 16. Remittance inflows per country, 2016–20 average



Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Note: No data are available for The Bahamas.

Figure 17. US GDP growth rate and Caribbean remittances inflows, 2010–20

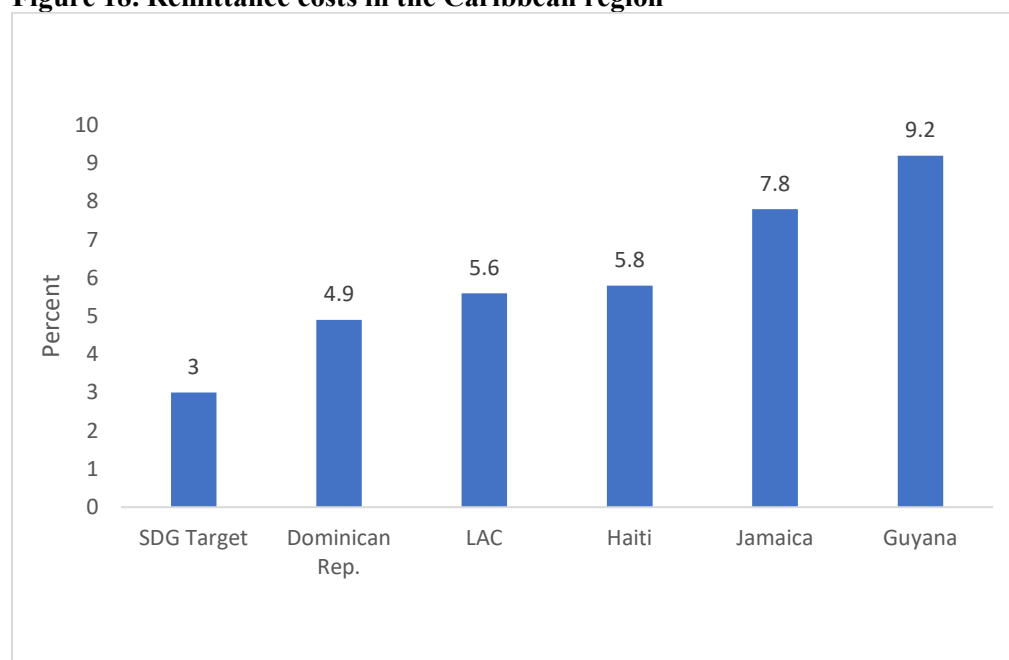


Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators 2022; KNOMAD (Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development) 2022.

High remittance transfer costs remain an obstacle for migrants sending money through official channels. In the fourth quarter of 2021, the simple average cost to remit US\$200 from the United States to Guyana and Jamaica was respectively equal to 9.2 percent and 7.8 percent of the remitted amount (figure 18). In the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the cost to remit the same amount equaled 4.9 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively (World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide 2022). This is above the Sustainable Development Goals Target 10.c.1 of 3.0 percent. The five most expensive corridors of the Latin American and Caribbean

region involve Caribbean countries: Dominican Republic to Haiti; Canada to Guyana; the United States to Cuba; the United States to Guyana; France to Haiti (Ratha et al. 2022). The cost elasticity of remittances is generally high and above 1, implying that a 1 percent decline in costs can lead to more than 1 percent increase in the volume of remittances. Lowering remittance costs in Caribbean countries could thus stimulate remittance inflows (World Bank 2006b).

Figure 18. Remittance costs in the Caribbean region



Source: World Bank Remittance Prices Worldwide database.

Note: Costs are for the fourth quarter of 2021 and are for sending US\$200 to the country. LAC = Latin American and Caribbean; SDG = Sustainable Development Goal.

Findings from econometric studies suggest that remittances do not stimulate labor force participation or business ownership in the region. Using household-level data from the Dominican Republic, Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo (2006) find that remittance inflows are associated with a reduced likelihood of business entrepreneurship. In Haiti, Jadotte, and Ramos (2016) show that in the presence of remittances, both household labor market participation and number of hours worked fall. Further, they find that the labor market response to remittances of female household heads is not as sensitive as the response of male household heads. Studying the case of Jamaica, Kim (2006) finds that remittances have a negative effect on labor supply at the extensive margin (labor force participation) but no effect at the intensive margin (hours worked).

Remittance policies

Government policy can affect the size of remittance flows and their development impacts. One approach to increase remittances is to lower transfer fees. Depending on the context, remittances costs can usually be reduced by enhancing market competition among service providers, helping service providers access new payments technology, and devising ways to encourage remitters to send larger amounts. Introducing measures to improve access of poor migrants and their families to formal financial services for sending and receiving remittances can increase the poverty-reducing impacts of these flows. Origin country governments can design tax and other types of incentives to increase remittances inflows and channel them to productive uses (Clemens and Ogden 2014; World Bank 2006b).

Policy example: The compulsory savings program for Caribbean temporary agricultural workers

Temporary farm workers from English-speaking Caribbean islands working in the United States and Canada used to be subject to a compulsory savings scheme. Under the SAWP and H-2A Visa programs,¹⁵ for decades Caribbean migrants had 23 percent of their earnings deposited in an interest-free compulsory savings account in their origin countries. Farmer employers were instructed to withhold the savings deduction from each worker's pay. Migrants could collect the savings once they had returned home in local currency, exchanged at the official rate. Migrants could also send remittances directly to their families while abroad. The mandatory savings plan served as an incentive for the worker to return to the origin country to recover the earnings. The plan was also a means by which origin country governments could capture scarce foreign currency. After many years of operation, the savings scheme was discontinued and is no longer in use (Russell 2004; Thomas-Hope 2018; Wood and McCoy 1985).

Survey evidence suggests that the compulsory savings program had positive outcomes for some Caribbean migrants. Conducting a survey of 300 Jamaican migrants participating in the SAWP, Russell (2004) reported that the majority of workers regarded the compulsory savings scheme favorably. About 90 percent of the Caribbean migrant farmworkers surveyed by Beckford (2016) in Ontario described the scheme as a worthwhile strategy. Interviewing a sample of 302 Caribbean workers employed on the sugar plantations in southern Florida, Wood, and McCoy (1985) found that the largest part of remittances sent back were transferred through the mandatory savings plan, suggesting that the plan helped migrants save and transfer resources to their origin country. Most of the Caribbean workers interviewed by Griffith (1986) used at least some of their compulsory savings for a relatively large purchase, such as house construction, livestock, farming, or repayment of debts. The savings program also gave migrants an opportunity to better hide their true income and helped avoid the financial demands of friends and kin (Griffith 1986).

The savings scheme was not without limitations. Workers who returned to their origin communities often experienced significant delays in accessing their accumulated savings. Russell (2004) reports that the average time it took for Jamaican migrants in his sample to receive savings upon their return to Jamaica was 2.4 months. The exchange rate applied to convert foreign earnings into local currency was often not advantageous from the perspective of migrants and governments derived a small financial benefit from the transaction (Thomas-Hope 2018). The savings scheme was also criticized by some migrants as high-handed and paternalistic in nature. Refraining from withholding wages of migrant workers through mandatory savings programs and compulsory deductions has emerged as best practice for temporary migration programs (Clifton 2016; Hennebry and Preibisch 2012).

Policy example: Haiti's National Fund for Education

The government of Haiti has imposed a tax on international remittances and phone calls to finance public education expenditures since 2011. Michel Martelly, former President of the Republic of Haiti (2011–16), announced in 2011 the creation of the National Fund for Education (Fonds National de l'Éducation, FNE). At the time, the objectives of the FNE were to finance a primary education program (Programme de Scolarisation Universelle, Gratuite et Obligatoire, PSUGO) providing tuition waivers for non-public schools and fee waivers for public schools, as well as school materials. The FNE was also created to finance the National School Feeding Program (Programme National de Cantines Scolaires, PNCS). Two parafiscal mechanisms were created to finance the FNE. First, a levy of US\$1.50 on all incoming or outgoing international money transfers was instituted in June 2011. Second, a tax of US\$0.05 per minute on incoming and outgoing international calls was imposed in September 2011 to fund the FNE. It was hoped that through this funding mechanism the FNE could guarantee a stable source of public financing for the government's priorities in the primary education sector (USAID 2018; World Bank 2014).

The early functioning of the FNE was affected by governance and transparency issues. In 2011, the head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) welcomed the creation of the FNE as an innovative financing mechanism to support the schooling of the most disadvantaged

children (ReliefWeb 2011). The FNE started operating in 2011, but the legal status of the FNE was not approved until 2017. Some funds were spent before the FNE's legal ratification, with little public disclosure on the use of these funds. In its early years, the FNE mechanism operated in great confusion and uncertainty, creating a fair amount of suspicion. In terms of tax revenue, as competition with applications such as WhatsApp and Skype has intensified during the last decade, international telephone traffic has not generated as much revenue as expected. In addition, the Haitian National Council for Telecommunications has charged management fees of 7 percent to 8 percent before transferring the funds collected (USAID 2018; World Bank 2014).

Conclusions and policy recommendations

Migration presents both significant challenges and opportunities for the long-term socioeconomic development of the Caribbean. Mass emigration of working-age individuals, and in particular high-skilled workers, to the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom is a significant concern for all countries in the region in light of the skills gaps that have emerged in recent years in several sectors, such as education, health, and information technology. Empirical evidence and theory suggest that the most effective way to address issues related to brain drain is to increase opportunities and incentives for skilled nationals to stay in the origin country. There is potential for Caribbean countries to set up Global Skill Partnerships with the United States or Canada for health workers and other middle-skilled/high-skilled professions in strong demand. Some Caribbean countries already participate in several temporary migration work programs with the United States and Canada. There is scope to increase take-up and the positive impacts of such programs for migrants and origin countries. High remittance transfer costs remain an obstacle for migrants who are sending money through official channels. Lowering these costs would increase remittance flows and associated benefits for migrants and their networks left behind. Some countries have programs and legal frameworks to facilitate return migration, but evidence on the number of these programs and their effectiveness remains limited. Systematic migration data compilation and analysis is an important gap to be addressed. Migration policy evaluations should be conducted more systematically to enable decision makers to better promote safer and more orderly migration.

The remainder of this section discusses policy reform entry points for maximizing the development impact of labor migration in the Caribbean region based on the preceding analysis. The policy recommendations are organized around key themes. For reforms to be successful, a coordinated approach among countries from the region is necessary.

Increasing data and information availability

- Collect comparable data across countries in a consistent and timely manner to improve the mapping of mobility patterns and understanding of the dynamics surrounding migration.
- Develop mechanisms for sharing migration data among government agencies and among countries.
- Subject migration policies to systematic evaluations.
- Better educate emigrants and Caribbean nationals about the migration mechanisms available and their rights as migrants.

Turning brain drain into brain gain

- Better analyze the causes and impacts of the emigration of tertiary-educated individuals on origin countries.
- Develop formal migration strategies consistent with national development strategies and involving coordination across ministries to manage issues related to high levels of emigration and loss of highly skilled workers.
- Identify the incentives and policies best suited to address the negative effects of human capital loss and to retain more skilled labor.

- Explore the opportunity of setting up a Global Skill Partnership for nurses and other skilled professions with the United States and/or Canada.
- Review agreements on recruitment, staff exchange and training, and recognition of skills for health workers. Adopt a harmonized approach to the recruitment of nurses and reach mutually beneficial agreements with prime destination countries.
- Measure the costs of losses in public education investments due to brain drain. Assess the effectiveness of past/current bonding schemes in place in some countries.
- Formally analyze labor market demand and create a list of occupations facing labor shortages.
- Follow up with increased investments in national skill development to address skills gaps.

Increasing return migration and invigorating diaspora engagement

- Identify incentives that could be offered for migrants and their descendants to return to their origin countries or invest in projects there.
- Improve the portability of pensions and other social security benefits.
- Develop social programs aimed at facilitating the integration of returned migrants.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the few return migration programs in place in the region.
- Establish policies and programs to support the sustainable reintegration of forcibly returned migrants.
- Establish dedicated agencies and investment channels to promote the diaspora's engagement in development efforts in the origin country.
- Develop comprehensive diaspora mappings in the main destination countries in order to acquire updated data and create formal platforms to facilitate communication with members of the diaspora.

Making more and better use of remittances

- Evaluate options to reduce costs for sending remittances.
- Diversify the supply of financial services available to migrants and their families.
- Assess the relevance of setting up optional savings schemes and repatriation plans for short-term emigrants.

Notes

¹ Net migration rate is defined as the number of immigrants (people moving into a given country) minus the number of emigrants (people moving out of the country) in the previous five years, divided by the person-years lived by the population of the receiving country over that period. It is expressed as average annual net number of migrants per 1,000 population.

² Migration Policy Institute (2022). Tabulation of data from the US Census Bureau's pooled 2015–19 American Community Survey (ACS).

³ Statistics from the 2011 Population and Housing Census of Trinidad and Tobago.

⁴ High-skilled workers are defined as individuals with higher than a high-school leaving certificate or equivalent (Brücker, Capuano, and Marfouk 2013).

⁵ Results not shown. Data source: Brücker, Capuano, and Marfouk (2013).

⁶ Nurse vacancy rates may underestimate the true shortage of nurses because vacancies are for approved positions. Countries with tight budget constraints may have higher needs than advertised positions.

⁷ <https://presidency.gov.gh/index.php/briefing-room/news-style-2/1402-ghana-barbados-sign-agreement-for-recruitment-of-120-ghanaian-nurses>.

⁸ <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/latest-news/st-vincent-govt-defends-move-to-bond-locally-trained-nurses/>.

⁹ Bonding Policy for the Government of Jamaica (2009); Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, Policy on Obligatory Service in Respect of Scholarships and Other Training Awards (2013).

¹⁰ Importance is defined here in terms of the numbers of moves facilitated. For a more exhaustive discussion of formal labor migration mechanisms relevant for the Caribbean, see Párraga (2021).

¹¹ CARICOM has 15 full Member States: Antigua and Barbuda; The Bahamas; Barbados; Belize; Dominica, Grenada; Guyana; Haiti; Jamaica; Montserrat; Saint Kitts and Nevis; Saint Lucia; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines; Suriname; Trinidad and Tobago. CARICOM also has 5 Associate Members: Anguilla; Bermuda; British Virgin Islands; Cayman Islands; Turks and Caicos Islands.

¹² The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regularly revises the lists of countries whose nationals are eligible to participate in the H-2A Visa program. DHS maintains its authority to amend the eligible countries lists at any time through publication of a

Federal Register Notice, should DHS and DOS determine that a country fails to meet the requirements for continued designation. Examples of factors that could result in the exclusion of a country or the removal of a country from the list include fraud, abuse, nonimmigrant visa overstay rates, and other forms of noncompliance with the terms and conditions of the H-2 Visa programs by nationals of that country that are contrary to US interests.

¹³ This is the total number of workers in the agricultural sector on a temporary foreign work contract, including SAWP.

¹⁴ Based on 2022 World Development Indicators. Figures not shown.

¹⁵ For a discussion of these two programs, see the fourth section.

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