

# Jamaica: Migration Profile 2017

by  
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## SUMMARY OF MAJOR TRENDS

### A. MIGRATION TRENDS

The recent Migration Profile for Jamaica shows that emigration continues to be greatly in excess of immigration.

#### **1. EMIGRATION**

Although greatly in excess of immigrants to Jamaica, nevertheless, there has been a trend of declining numbers of permanent emigrants going to the traditional destinations - USA, Canada, UK. Though most still go to the USA, numbers fell from 24,538 in 2006 to 17,362 in 2015 (ten years later).

Emigration of the tertiary-educated, professionals and students has continued, leaving significant gaps in some sectors, for example the health services. For example, there is a shortfall of 68% of nurses needed in psychiatry; a shortfall of 71% of the need for nurse anaesthetists; and a shortfall of 74% of the number of public health nurses required.

Students at different levels of secondary and tertiary education, as well as tertiary educated professionals, are a large component of this movement.

There is also high female labour migration, and linked to this is the high incidence of absentee mothers from households.

#### **2. IMMIGRATION**

Immigrants increased by approximately 11,700 in the recent five year period (2012-2016) over the previous five-years. This included both foreign-born persons and returning nationals.

Among the *foreign-born immigrants*, China was the main source country, and India in second place.

Most foreign-born immigrants (73% of the total) worked as professionals, senior officials and technicians in Jamaica the professional and highly skilled occupational categories and to some extent provide replacement skills for the losses through emigration of Jamaican nationals.

*Returning Jamaican nationals* included voluntary returnees (returning residents), and forced returnees (deportees).

The annual numbers of voluntary returnees have trended downwards over the past 10 years, while the numbers of forced returnees (deportees) have trended upwards.

Over the ten years 2007-2016, there were 10,190 voluntary returning residents recorded, compared with 24,916 forced returnees/deportees

The largest numbers of forced returnees – deportees - (46% of the total in 2007-2016) were returned from the USA.

The largest number of voluntary returnees – returning residents - (49% of the total) also returned from the USA.

### **3. TEMPORARY LABOUR MIGRATION**

Temporary (guest) Worker Programmes to the USA and Canada have expanded from farm and hospitality work to include other low-skilled employment in Canada since 2014. The overall numbers of persons on these programmes has increased over the past decade.

### **4. TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS**

Jamaica is a country of origin, transit and destination of trafficked persons. Most persons trafficked into the country are documented migrants but the activities associated with the movement are, in most cases, either illegal or exploitative, contravene the human rights of the trafficked workers or are linked to international criminal networks.

Jamaica was downgraded from a “Tier 2” to “Tier 2 Watch list” by the U.S. Department of State in 2014 on the evaluation that the Government of Jamaica had not taken adequate measures to counter the movement. Thereafter, the Government demonstrated increasing efforts and in 2016 Jamaica’s status was restored to “Tier 2”.

Despite recent efforts to identify and restrict trafficking in persons, the perpetrators and demand side have continued, and the ongoing economic, social and educational deficiencies among some sectors of the population is associated with their vulnerability to exploitation by traffickers.

### **5. JAMAICANS ABROAD**

An estimated 1.3 million Jamaican-born persons are residing abroad, amounting to at least 48% of the population (of 2.7 million) living in Jamaica.

In general, the Jamaicans permanently residing abroad are highly educated. There was an estimated 85,100 tertiary-educated Jamaican-born persons recorded in the Population Censuses of OECD countries (most West European countries, Canada and the USA) in the year 2000.

**Remittance receipts** from Jamaican emigrants have trended upwards over the years 2011-2016.

- The Bank of Jamaica estimated remittances at just under US\$ 2.3 billion in 2016, which contributed approximately 16.1% to Jamaica’s GDP.
- The USA has consistently been the country from which the largest remittance flows have come. The USA was the source of 58.4% of the remittances received in Jamaica 2007-2016.
- The UK has consistently been the source of the second largest flows of remittances and accounted for 25% of the total remittance flows.
- Canada has remained the country from which the third largest remittance flows. Amounts increased since 2010, and subsequently have never fallen below 10 per cent of the total.
- Cayman was the source of 7% of the total.

**Social remittances** were received through medical missions, voluntary contributions to institutions and home-towns in other ways. They amounted to a significant input of resources.

**Tourism** showed 7.2% of total tourist stop-overs for 2006-2015 were comprised of Jamaican nationals residing overseas.

## **6. JAMAICAN COMMUNITIES ABROAD – THE DIASPORA**

Numbers of Jamaican-born persons plus the overseas-born generations are not really known, nor is the level of their identification with Jamaica easily quantifiable.

- Estimates of the size of the diaspora range from 1.7 million to 3 million.
- The total diaspora is at least 73% the size of the population in Jamaica.
- The Jamaican diaspora is heavily concentrated in three main countries - the USA, Canada and the UK.
- There are also smaller numbers of Jamaican emigrants residing in several Caribbean countries such as the Cayman Islands, the Netherlands Antilles, Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Curacao, and other countries.
- In addition, there are small numbers of Jamaicans in Venezuela, Panama, Germany, Australia and States in the Middle East.

## **B. POLICIES**

### **Policy framework governing migration**

The most significant policy initiative that has taken place in the past five years is the formulation of a Ministry Paper: National Policy on International Migration and Development Policy (IMDP) (GOJ, 2017). The National Policy establishes the framework for migration and development management and is set within the context of *Vision 2030 Jamaica*.

A Diaspora Policy was formulated to complement the IMDP and to facilitate the development of a coordinated strategy for engagement with the Diaspora.

Jamaica's migration policy framework recognized the need for a multi-sectoral approach to achieve its objective of mainstreaming migration into development objectives. This brought together entities from a wide cross section of agencies involved in migration and development issues in Jamaica and internationally, and included Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Ministries Departments and Agencies (MDAs), private sector and International Organizations (IOs).

### **Legislative framework and governance**

The legislative framework underpinning Jamaica's policies relating to migration includes eleven statutes currently in force, which were enacted specifically to deal with migration.

There are now three inter-agency coordinating committees Convened and chaired by the Ministry of Labour and Social services: the Work Permit Committee; the Free Movement of Persons Committee

Convened and chaired by Ministry of National Security; and the National Task Force Against Trafficking in Persons.

A National Working Group on International Migration and Development (NWGIMD) was established to coordinate inter-agency and non-governmental actions in relation to migration and development.

A Trafficking in Persons Unit was established in the Ministry of Justice to address the issue of trafficking and protection of the victims of trafficking.

The Diaspora Unit which had already been established in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign trade continued to engage with and increase its activities relating to the diaspora.

### **C. CONSEQUENCES OF MIGRATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND HUMAN WELFARE IN JAMAICA**

Migration has had both positive and negative socio-economic developmental impacts, and at different levels of scale – from the individual and household at one end to the national macro-economic and societal development at the other.

There have been successes in achieving some of the Government of Jamaica’s stated objectives of migration for development. For example:

- + Large sums of money (USD 2.2 bn. in 2016) have been remitted from migrants abroad.
- + Remittances have supported many households, and the foreign exchange received by the Bank of Jamaica has been of major value, exceeding all other sources of foreign exchange inputs.

However, the remittances have not significantly contributed to **poverty alleviation**. The poorest households received the least remittances but more frequently than the other quintiles, as they were dependent on remittances to meet their daily needs.

The consequences of migration for **sustained development** are challenging. As observed in other developing countries, some of the “success” could be counterproductive in that needed reforms may have been delayed because overseas employment has continued to help to keep the economy afloat, as it had done for decades in the past.

The evidence suggests that there were negative but modest impacts on labour force participation, as the receipt of remittances has led some households to be less likely to seek employment. From the perspective of the Jamaican government, if not the households themselves, this may present a problem as it is looking to generate sustainable sources of national income, especially to harness the talents of its people through employment in domestic businesses and creative enterprises.

- + The increased number of persons obtaining short-term employment through the Foreign Workers Programmes has greatly increased low-skilled worker access to temporary work at higher wages than they would have earned at home. The unemployment rate has trended down

since 2014 after having risen significantly following the 2008 global economic crisis which greatly affected Jamaica's economic performance in the years following.

While it is acknowledged that the economy is unable to offer competitive and adequate employment options to its labour force, the option of working abroad becomes a quick recourse, in which case, **the State obliges itself to respect and protect the human rights of migrants and their families** at every stage of the migration cycle. **To carry out this obligation properly would make considerable demands on national capacity and resources.**

- + The freedom to move and gain experience internationally is beneficial to the individual and potentially beneficial to the country.

However, the high emigration of highly educated, skilled migrants, and students at various stages, has a potential negative impact on Jamaica's human resource capacity for development. The voluntary return of nationals in their working stage of their careers is at a low level and numbers of returnees have been declining.

The large number of **enforced returns of Jamaican nationals** that has been occurring makes demands on resources of different kinds for reintegration – immediately on arrival, in the short and medium-term and in the long term. The factors surrounding deportation also have a negative impact of Jamaica's profile abroad.

## **D. CONCLUSIONS**

In addition to the policy developments indicated, a number of other successes in migration management were noted as follows:

- The development of a National Migration Database has been partially achieved. Indicators and meta- data sheets have been completed and a database design is complete. However, significant work remains with data sourcing, cleaning and inputs (see data deficiencies, below).
- The capacity of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) to implement national policy on international migration has been partially achieved, and there have been capacity development workshops in Results Based Management.
- Results-based Management/Monitoring and Evaluation Training and Trafficking Sensitization workshops have been held with the members of the named National Working Group on International Migration and Development (NWGIMD). There has been evidence of an improved governance framework with the establishment of the International Migration and Development Monitoring Board, which will be used to highlight and drive actions in migration and development across MDAs.
- An indirect positive effect of the Mainstreaming Migration and Development project has been the enhanced knowledge of MDAs and other agencies about migration issues; continue the process towards coherence in the development of policies to manage migration in the context of development; and expansion of the membership of the NWGIMD.

- The government policy and programmes to engage the diaspora and to leverage international funds and cooperation from non-governmental organizations to support the effort have brought about a dynamic partnership with some of the emigrants still residing abroad together with second and third generation Jamaicans.

### **Data deficiencies**

A significant weakness that remains is the lack of consistent populating of the database with the migration and development indicators that had been identified.

There are also other data deficiencies relating to consistent collection, monitoring and verification of data relating to some of the indicators. These issues need to be addressed so that appropriate evidence-based decisions can be made in migration management.

## **POSSIBLE FUTURE TRENDS IN MIGRATION**

Based on recent trends, the following migration characteristics can be anticipated in the foreseeable future:

- **High selective migration with a continuing high rate of emigration of tertiary educated professionals and students will continue.** In the short to medium term, the opportunities for emigration, especially to the USA, can be expected to trend downwards; the movement to the UK will remain minimal; and the upward trend in the flow to Canada of this group is likely to continue.
- **The highly educated are also highly competitive in other labour markets – for example, in the Middle East. Therefore, new destinations will be sought and found as traditional ones become less available or appealing to such groups.**
- **The need for immigrants** to fill the labour force gaps in professional and also technical capacities in specific sectors can be expected to continue.
- There is likely to be an increased trend in emigration to, and immigration from, Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) member states in response to the inclusion of agreed categories in other member states, for example, Trinidad and Tobago, and of new categories of workers able to move freely in the future.
- **Trafficking in persons is likely to continue in the short and medium term.** Although there are more efforts in place to identify and assist victims and identify perpetrators, nevertheless the movement is unlikely to be reduced significantly in the short to medium term because the victims are targeted among the poor. The numbers of young persons among the poor who are lacking educational qualifications and employment prospects continue to be significant. Additionally, there is still insufficient intelligence to reduce the existing high level of impunity that occurs among the perpetrators of trafficking.
- Remittances are likely to be maintained at the recent high level in the short and medium term; **this will not necessarily be the case in the long term.**

- **Deportation will continue to be high in the short and medium term** as there is no indication of a change in policies in the main migrant destination countries. This situation points to the need to strengthen the programme for the rehabilitation and re-settlement of deported persons.
- Numbers of temporary migrants to the USA and Canada on Overseas Work Programmes are likely to continue at current rates in the near future, **but caution needs to be exercised in depending on these for absorbing low-skilled labour**. There have already been signals in the case of the programmes in Canada, that if they become too competitive in relation to domestic labour, the terms of current agreements could change and there is a risk that they could be reduced in scale.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the essential role of **reliable data** in successful migration management, other recommendations relate to the need for enhanced human resource capacity management – both relating to emigration and immigration. The adequate protection of migrants and migrant households and return migrant reintegration programmes, places major demands on financial and human resources, for which the current capacity needs to be increased.

As a general recommendation, government needs to take cognizance of the highly dynamic nature of international migration. Historically it has been observed to change significantly over time, conditioned by the complex mix of social, economic and political priorities which influence the policies of both destination and source countries of the migrants themselves. Therefore, it is recommended that national migration policies and management objectives be based not solely on the current patterns, but also guided by indications of future trends for the medium term, in order that the mainstreaming of migration for development can be sustained.

The focus needs to be on ***the development of an enabling national environment***. This is fundamental to maximizing the developmental benefits of migration by encouraging investment, discouraging permanent emigration and encouraging the voluntary return of nationals.

***Positive trends include:*** The rate of economic growth reflected positive figures to 2016; and the unemployment rate trended downwards.

However, ***personal safety*** remains a major development concern for Jamaica. The high level of crime, accompanied by high levels of perceived insecurity and fear of crime, have been major contributors to the low levels of economic growth and threats to the achievement of inclusive development goals. Within this context, security and safety have been increasingly recognized as a cross-cutting issue that has significant implications for state expenditure on areas such as health and the costs borne by both the private sector and citizens to operate businesses and ensure personal safety. It has also had direct bearings on migration trends, including voluntary return migration. The challenge is that there has to be a much greater decline in crime rates to make any significant impact on the public perception and experience of safety and security.