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# ECLAC Statistical Briefings

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## Brief overview of Caribbean countries based on standardized household surveys

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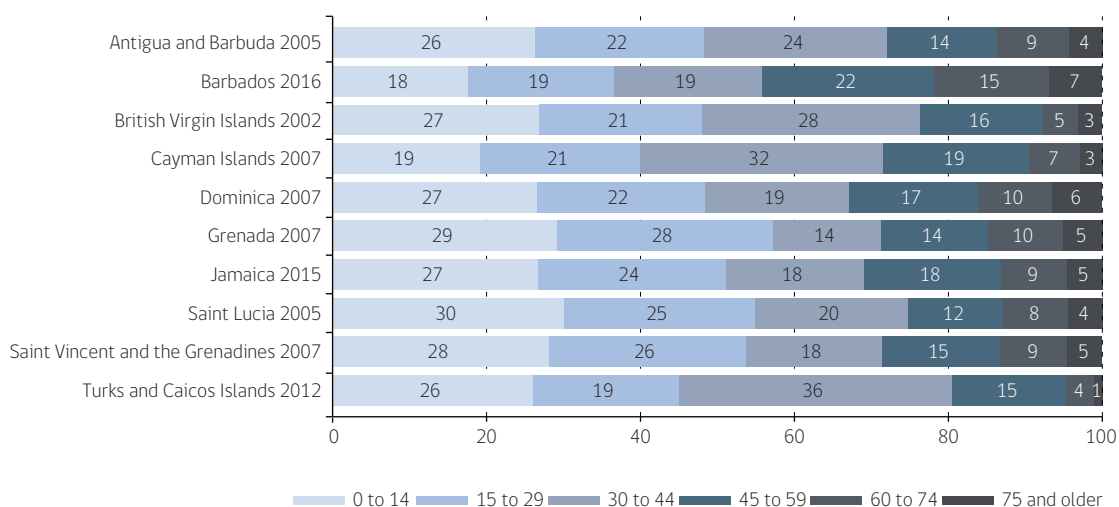
ECLAC regularly compiles and harmonizes data from household surveys for Latin American countries. The harmonization of information allows the production of comparable indicators and enables undertaking comparative analysis across countries. For this instance, ECLAC's Statistics Division has extended this work to include household surveys from Caribbean countries, with the support from ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean. This document takes advantage of the harmonization work of the surveys to present an overview of the social indicators in ten Caribbean countries or territories: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Turks and Caicos Islands. The availability of surveys varies by country: in seven countries, surveys date from the mid-2000s and more recent data is available only for three countries. Therefore, the purpose is not to assess the most up-to-date situation but to illustrate the possibilities of comparative analysis offered by the harmonization of surveys.

## 1. Population by sex and age and ethnicity

The younger age groups dominate the populations in eight of the ten countries studied. The proportion of children and youths aged 0 to 14 years lie between 26% and 30%, while the group of young persons between the ages of 15 and 29 years represents between 19% and 28% of the population in these eight countries. Only in Barbados and the territory of the Cayman Islands, the middle-aged adult population –those between 30 and 59 years– represents the largest proportion of the population (41% and 51%, respectively). Also, the largest groups of older adults –those aged 60 to 74 years and 75 years and older– are observed in Barbados, representing 15% and 7% of the population, respectively (see Figure 1).

### » Figure 1. The Caribbean (10 countries): Population by age group

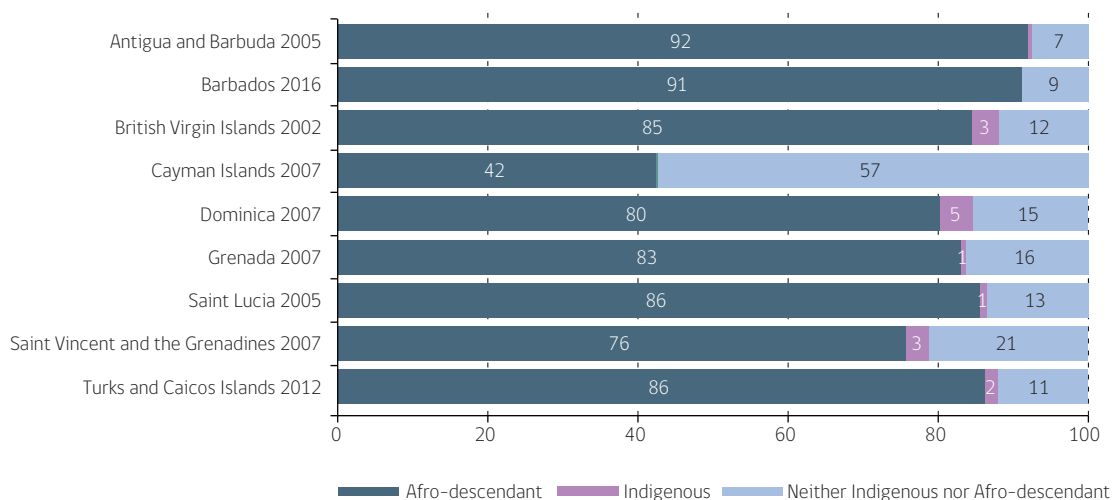
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

All the surveys except Jamaica investigate the ethnic-racial self-identification, which was standardized in three categories: Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and neither Afro-descendant nor Indigenous. Figure 2 shows that the country populations are comprised mostly of people of African descent (between 76% and 92%), except in the territory of the Cayman Islands (42%). The indigenous population is represented by a much smaller share in all countries and territories, reaching its largest proportions in Dominica (5%), the territory of the British Virgin Islands (3%), and St Vincent & the Grenadines (3%). With the exception of the already mentioned case of the territory of the Cayman Islands, the group of people who do not identify themselves as either indigenous or afro-descendant ranges from 7% in Antigua & Barbuda to 21% in St Vincent & the Grenadines.

» **Figure 2. The Caribbean (9 countries): Population by ethnic-racial identification**  
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

## 2. Educational characteristics

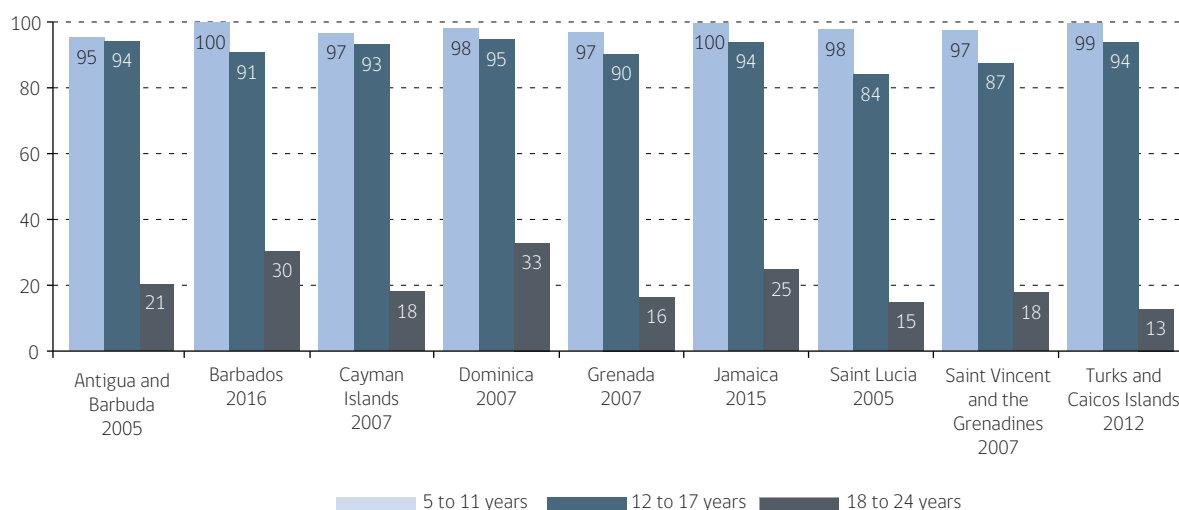
Two relevant indicators to assess the status of education in the populations are school attendance among the younger population and school achievement among adults.

The data illustrated in Figure 3 shows that the attendance rate for primary education, between the ages 5 and 11, is greater than 95% in all countries, with rates close to 100% in Barbados and Jamaica.<sup>1</sup> Attendance rates of children aged 12 to 17, which corresponds to secondary education, is between 90% and 95% in most countries and territories, except in St Lucia (84%) and St Vincent & the Grenadines (87%). Attendance rate to tertiary education is significantly lower. In four of the nine countries –Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, and Jamaica– the attendance rate of youths ages 18 to 24 is between 21% and 33%, while the other five countries show tertiary attendance rates below 20%.

<sup>1</sup> The information on school attendance is available for all countries except the territory of the British Virgin Islands.

» **Figure 3. The Caribbean (9 countries): Attendance rates by age group**

(Percentages)

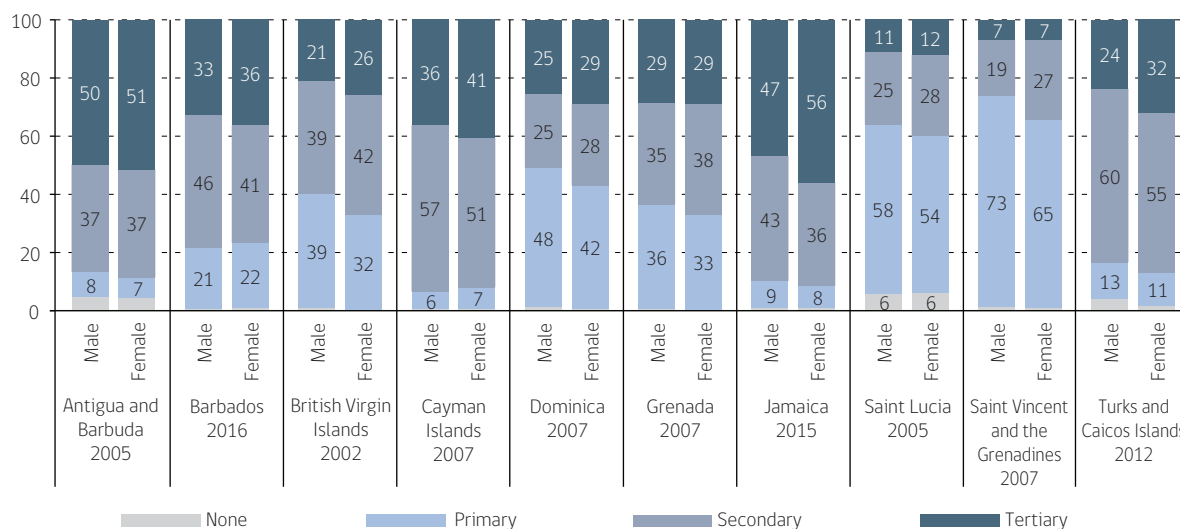


Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

To describe educational achievement among adults 25 years and older, the population is classified in four groups according to the highest level in which at least one year of education was completed: (i) none, (ii) primary, (iii) secondary, and (iv) tertiary. In three cases (Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines), the largest group corresponds to population with primary-level studies, while in other six, the largest group is population with secondary-level studies (See Figure 4).

» **Figure 4. The Caribbean (10 countries): Adult Population by highest educational level in which at least one year of education was completed, by sex**

(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

Only in Jamaica is the tertiary-level studies the largest group; nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that its survey is considerably more recent than in the rest. In addition, a larger proportion of women, compared to men, tend to reach tertiary education in all countries studied except Grenada and St Vincent & the Grenadines. The largest differences by sex are found in Jamaica (9.3 percentage points) and Turks & Caicos Islands (8.1 percentage points). This trend is being observed globally as women are more likely to be enrolled in higher levels of education than men (Global Gender Gap Report, 2021).<sup>2</sup>

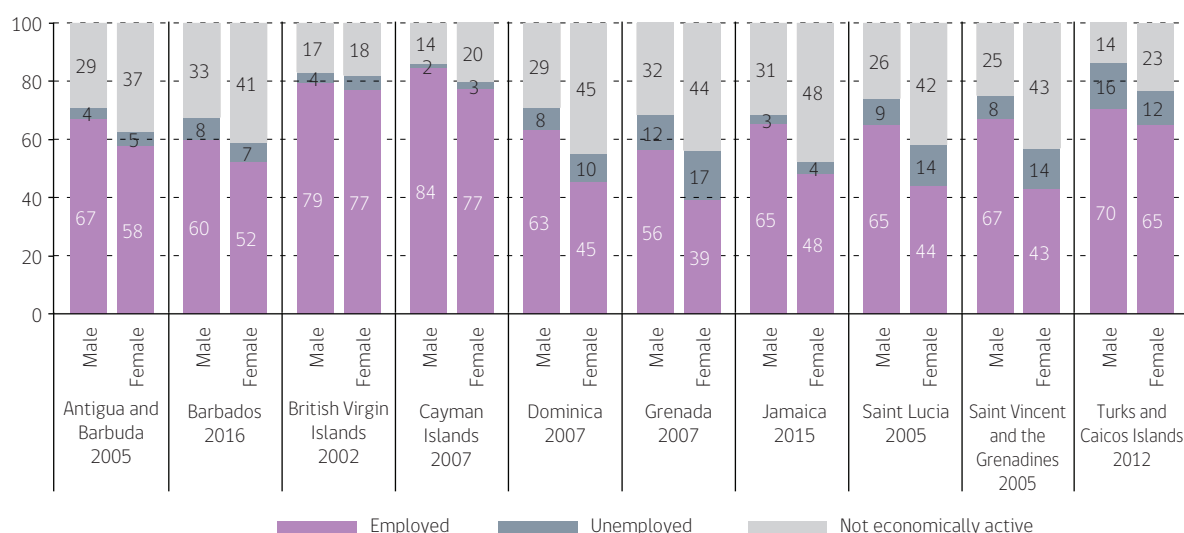
### 3. Labor market indicators

The countries' surveys collect data on different aspects related to the labour market, such as the population's labour market status, employment status, occupation, industry sector and hours worked.

More than 60% of the working age population in all countries studied are economically active (ie. either employed or unemployed), with the territories of the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands reaching an economically active population of 82% and 83%, respectively.<sup>3</sup> Figure 5 which illustrates the labour market status by sex, shows that, as in Latin American countries, the proportion of economically active men is higher than that of women in all countries. The greatest differences are observed in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with a gap of 18 percentage points, Jamaica (17 percentage points), and Saint Lucia and Dominica (each with differences of 16 percentage points). Men's participation in the labour market is at its lowest in Barbados (68%), while Jamaica reports the lowest participation rate of women (52%).

#### » Figure 5. The Caribbean (10 countries): Working age population by labour market status and sex

(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

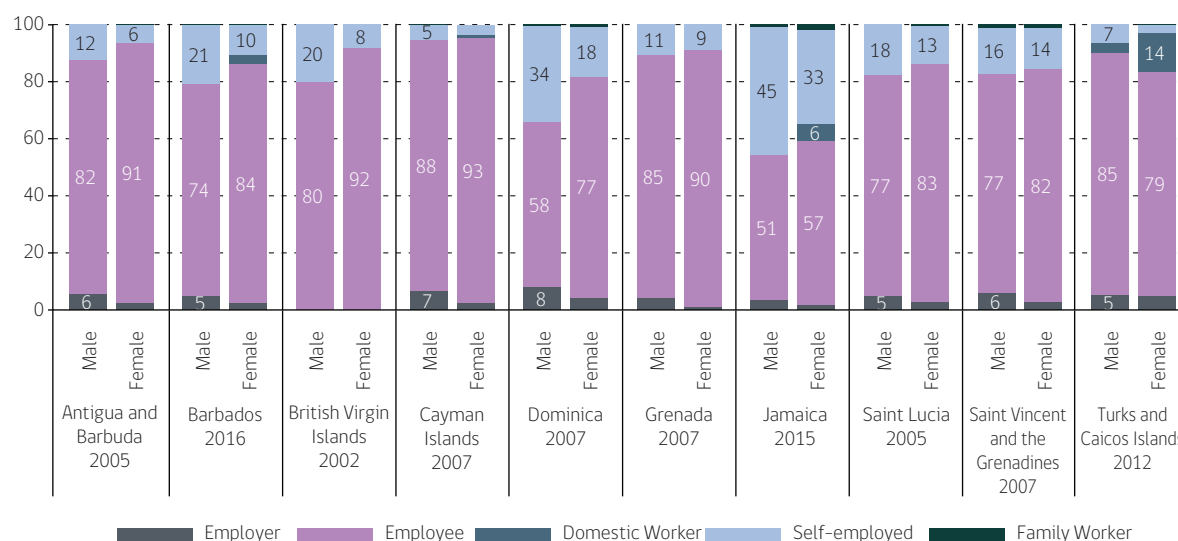
<sup>2</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, 30 March 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Employed are persons who reported doing any work for pay, profit, or gain over the last seven days or were absent from work in the last seven days, while the unemployed are persons who did not work in the past seven days but looked for work in the past month. The not economically active population is composed of persons who did not work in the last seven days and did not look for work in the past month.

Overall, most of the labour force in all countries work as employees, followed by those who are self-employed, except for the territory of the Cayman Islands, where the second largest group are employers. At least four of every five employed persons work as employees in eight of the ten countries: Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, and the territories of the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, and the Turks & Caicos Islands. Jamaica and Dominica are countries with the highest proportion of self-employed persons (39% and 27%, respectively). Also, only a small group of persons identify themselves as employers in each country. Figure 6, which presents the employment status by sex, shows that a larger group of men in all countries identify themselves as self-employed, compared to their female colleagues, while women outnumber men as employees (the latter is not the case only in the territory of the Turks & Caicos Islands). Also, men are more likely to be working as employers, than are women.

### » Figure 6. The Caribbean (10 countries): Working Population by employment status and sex

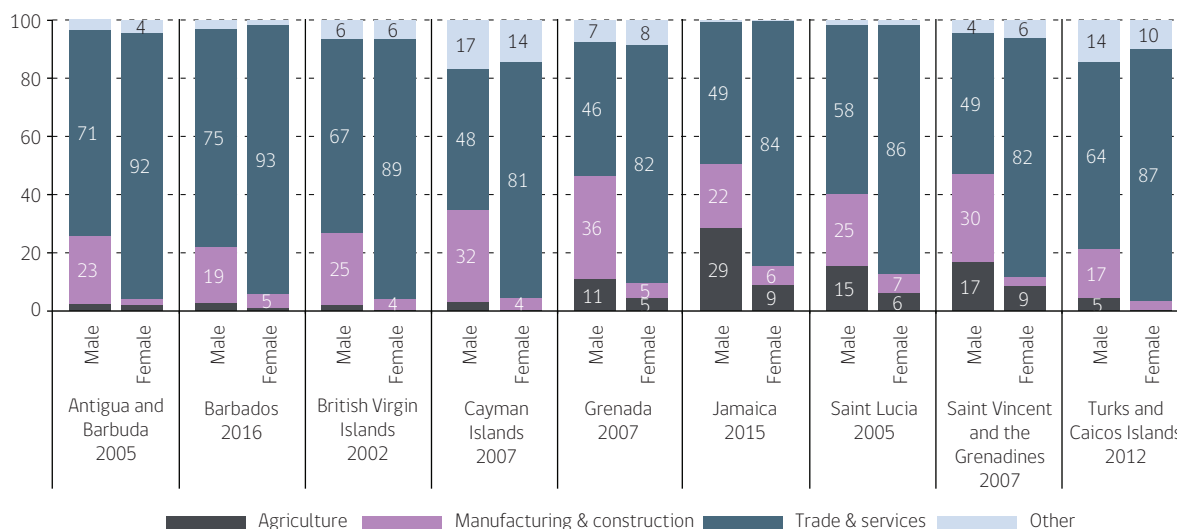
(Percentages)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

The trade and services sectors accounted for more than 60% of the employed population in all countries, with Antigua & Barbuda (82%), Barbados (84%), and the territories of the British Virgin Islands (78%) and the Turks & Caicos Islands (79%) reporting the highest proportions. The manufacturing & construction sectors concentrated between 8% (the territory of the Turks & Caicos Islands) and 21% (Grenada) of the working population, while Jamaica reported the highest proportion of workers in the agriculture sector (20%), compared to the other countries. The analysis by sex, illustrated in Figure 7, shows that women are more likely to be employed in the trade and services sectors, with more than 80% of the women working in these sectors in all countries. The greatest difference was observed in Jamaica with 49% of males, compared to 84% of females, working in these sectors. The agriculture and manufacturing & construction sectors are dominated by the men in all countries.

» Figure 7. The Caribbean (9 countries): Working population by industry sector and sex (Percentages)



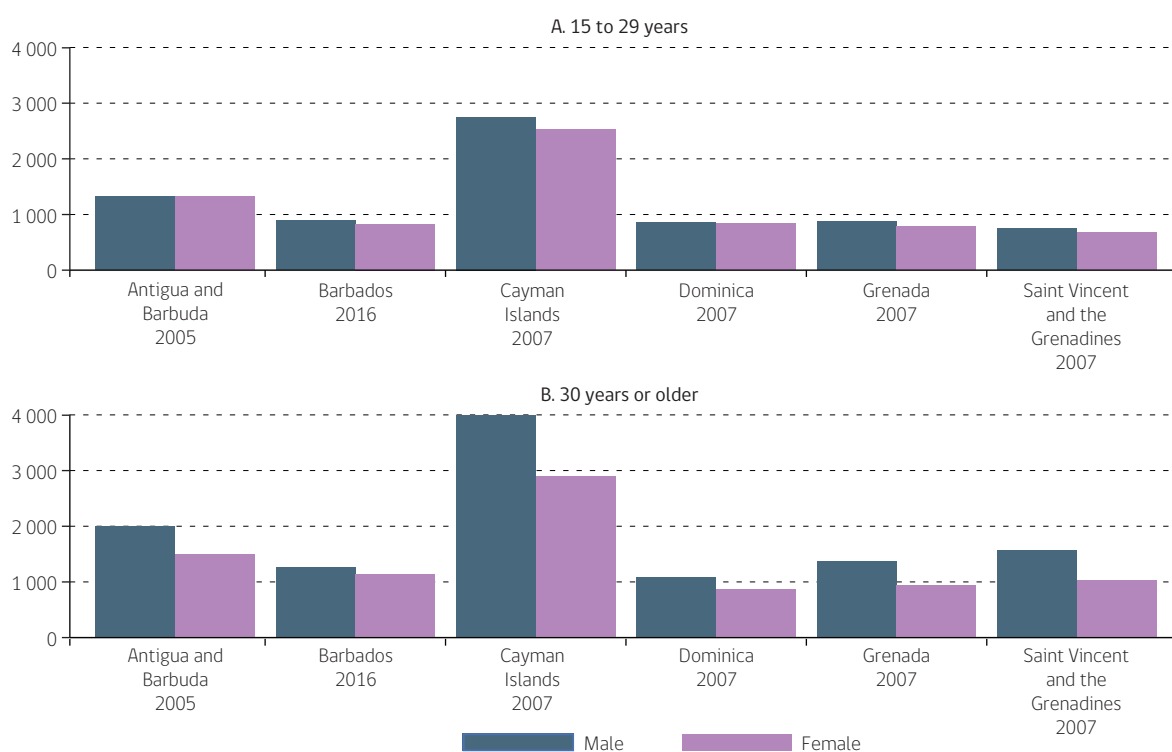
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

## 4. Employment income

Employment income is defined as any payment received in cash, kind, or services resulting from all paid-employment or self-employment jobs. The analysis of the employment income by sex and age groups reveals that men have larger earnings than women in all countries and the difference is greater in the group of 30 and more years old. Figure 8 shows that St Vincent & the Grenadines and the territory of the Turks & Caicos Islands show the greatest differences in this age group. Women tend to have smaller differences in wages in both age groups in Dominica, Grenada, and the territory of the Cayman Islands. However, the earnings among the 30+ males are more than twice the wages of the younger men in five of the six countries.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> There are four important aspects of the income data that must be considered when interpreting the analysis. First, the income data from four countries were not included in the analysis. While the territories of the British Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands report household employment income, as opposed to individual employment income, Jamaica does not report income data, and the data for Saint Lucia was not included in this analysis. Second, the data on income includes a large percentage of missing values, which were not used in the analysis. Third, very high employment income values (0.4%) were eliminated to remove any possible outliers from the analysis. Fourth, the employment income was converted to 2007 United States dollars using purchasing power parity conversion factors to eliminate the differences in price levels between countries.

» **Figure 8. The Caribbean (6 countries): Employment income by age group and sex**  
(Dollars)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

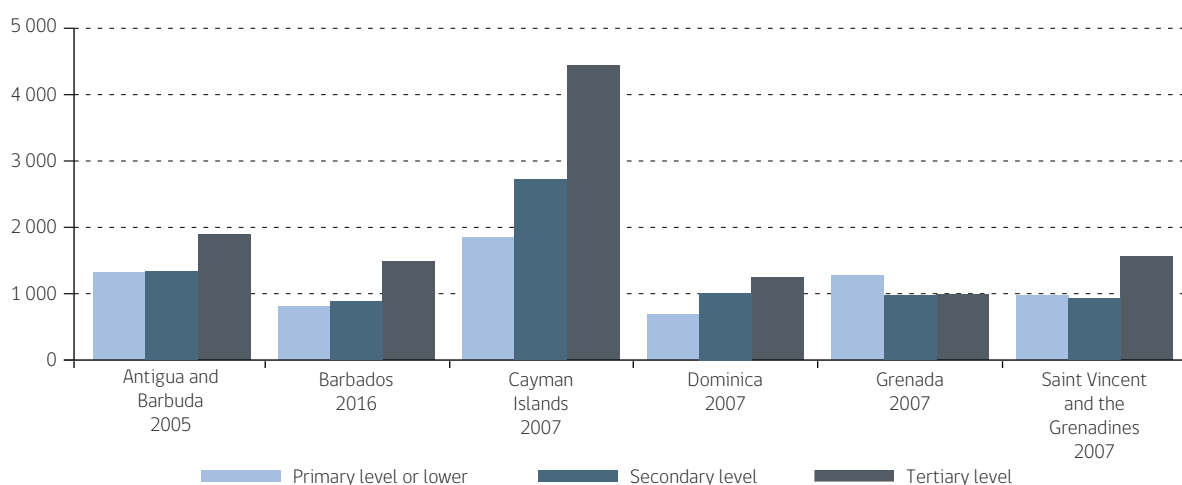
Note: Employment incomes are expressed in 2007 PPP US Dollars.

In terms of employment income by educational attainment, Figure 9 illustrates the average income in the same three education groups previously defined. In general, there is a correlation between employment income and education level: persons who have reached tertiary level education earn, on average, a higher income than those who reached a lower education level.<sup>5</sup> In Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, persons who had no education or reached primary education and those who reached secondary education earn, on average, very similar wages. Instead, the difference in average employment income is clearly observed between the less educated group and those who have reached tertiary level education. In fact, persons who reach tertiary education level in the territory of the Cayman Islands earn more than twice the wage of persons who have no education or reach primary education.

<sup>5</sup> This does not occur in Grenada, which could partially be explained by the fact that 32% of employment income data was not reported in this country and the proportion of unreported data increases with each education level (5% - none or primary, 10% - secondary, 13% tertiary).



» **Figure 9. The Caribbean (6 countries): Employment income by educational attainment**  
(Dollars)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).  
Note: Employment incomes are expressed in 2007 PPP US Dollars.

## 5. Poverty and inequality

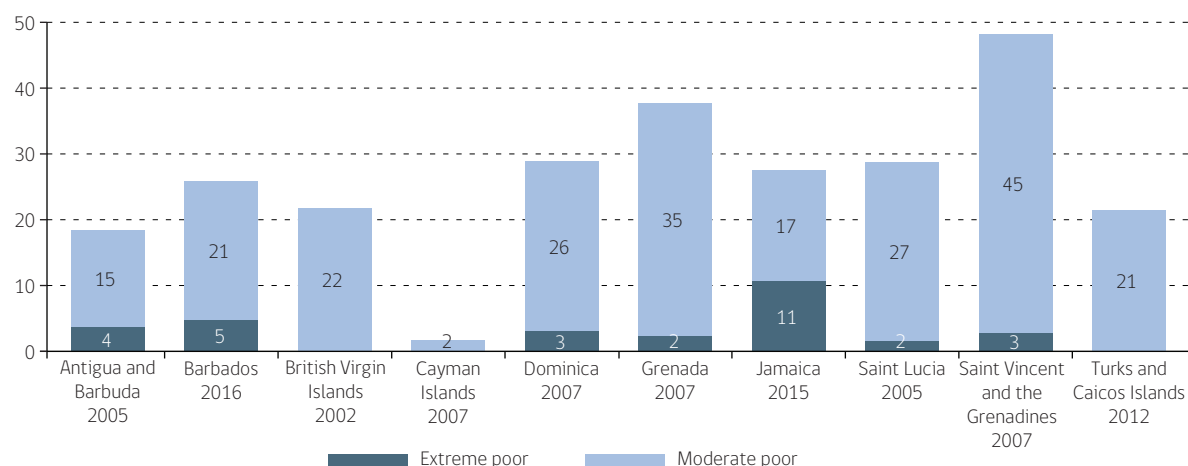
Eight of the ten Caribbean countries' household surveys collect information on the major types of household expenses, which allows for the calculation of welfare and poverty indicators. These indicators were calculated using household per capita consumption and considering only household members. The territory of the British Islands and Grenada were the only two countries that did not collect information on expenditures and were not included in the analysis. Each country's national poverty data is used to perform this analysis since ECLAC does not yet have a comparable measure of poverty for Caribbean countries. The data identified persons who are considered as moderately poor, as well as those in extreme poverty in all countries, except the territory of the Turks & Caicos Islands, where only persons living in poverty can be distinguished.

The data, which is illustrated in Figure 10, shows that with 45% of its population being in moderate poverty and 3% in extreme poverty, St Vincent & the Grenadines reports the highest poverty rate among the countries studied. Grenada follows closely behind with a poverty rate of 37%. On the other end, the territory of the Cayman Islands has the lowest poverty rate with only 2% falling below the country's poverty line. In the other seven countries, the poverty rate lies between 19% (Antigua & Barbuda) and 29% (Dominica and St Lucia).

It is also important to highlight that, compared with the other countries studied, Jamaica reports the largest group of persons living in extreme poverty (11%). Dominica, Grenada, St Lucia and St Vincent & the Grenadines report between 2% and 3% of its population living as extremely poor, while Antigua & Barbuda and Barbados have between 4% and 5% of its people being considered as extremely poor.

### » Figure 10. The Caribbean (10 countries): Poverty rates

(Percentages)



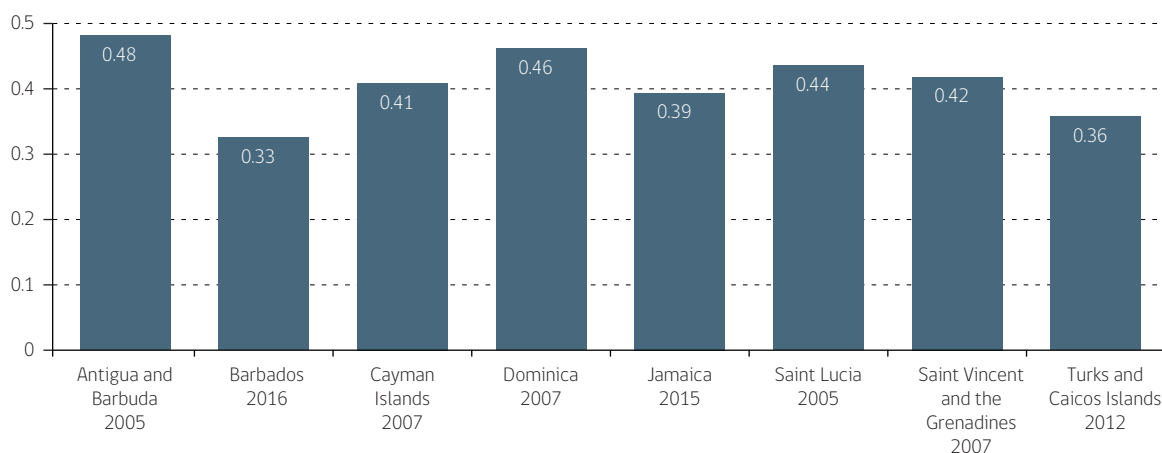
Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

Note: The territory of the Turks and Caicos Islands does not disaggregate poverty by level.

The inequality in the distribution of consumption is usually measured by the Gini coefficient, which ranges from zero (equality in consumption) to one (extreme inequality in consumption). The lowest levels of consumption inequality are found in Barbados, Jamaica, and the territory of the Turks & Caicos (Gini coefficients of 0.33, 0.39, and 0.35, respectively), while Antigua & Barbuda (0.48) and Dominica (0.46) have the highest levels of consumption inequality. These levels of inequality are lower than those observed in Latin American countries, whose average is around 0.46 by 2022. However, it should be noted that in international experience, the Gini index of consumption as measured for the Caribbean is lower than the income indices such as those calculated for Latin America.

### » Figure 11. The Caribbean (8 countries): Gini coefficients

(Values between 0 and 1)



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).

## 6. Discussion and way forward

This document presented a descriptive statistical analysis of the situation of people living in Caribbean countries. The analysis was performed using a set of available household surveys, which were standardized by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). However, some comparisons are affected by the considerable differences in the reference year of the surveys.

This type of analysis can be greatly improved with more up-to-date survey data. More recent data can help to understand the actual situation of the people in the different countries and can ensure a more precise analysis of the actual needs for the design of policies that will ensure improvements in the living situation of the Caribbean people.

With up-to-date and historical datasets for each Caribbean country, it is also possible to perform more accurate comparative and regional analyses of the situation of people in the sub-region. Hence, there is an urgent need to continue this effort with more datasets. The ECLAC is committed to carrying out this type of analysis and making it available to the countries and institutions involved in the region.

## Annex: Standardized survey databases of the Caribbean countries

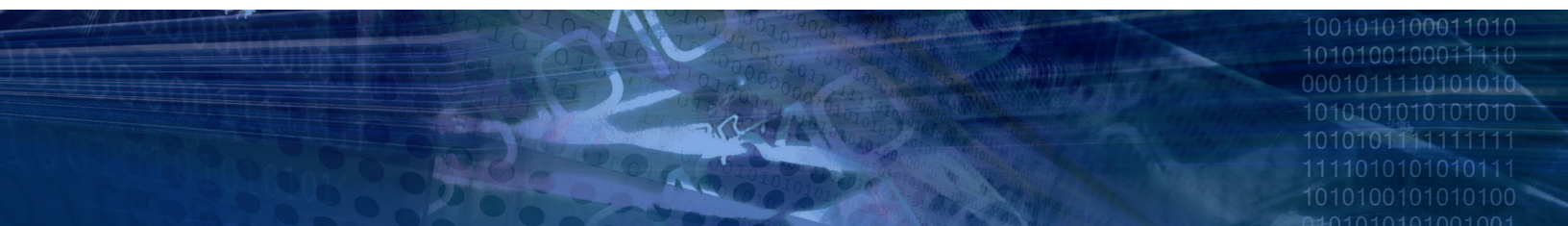
The standardization process was implemented on a set of household surveys from the Caribbean countries and territories, including surveys from Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Turks and Caicos Islands. The available surveys and its main characteristics are presented in Table A.1.

» **Table A.1. The Caribbean (10 countries): Standardized databases**

Country	Name of survey	Survey year	Geographical area covered	Sample size (households)	Sample (persons)	No of variables
Antigua and Barbuda	Survey of Living Conditions and Household Budgets	2005	Nationwide	1 024	2 795	492
Barbados	Survey of Living Conditions	2016	Nationwide	2 508	6 636	649
British Virgin Islands	Survey of Living Conditions	2002	Nationwide	664	1 932	235
Cayman Islands	Survey of Living Conditions	2007	Nationwide	1 144	3 230	456
Dominica	Survey of Living Conditions and Household Expenditure and Income	2007/2008	Nationwide	877	2 673	383
Grenada	Survey of Living Conditions and Household Expenditure and Income	2007	Nationwide	802	2 825	511
Jamaica	Survey of Living Conditions	2015	Nationwide	1 716	5 154	530

Country	Name of survey	Survey year	Geographical area covered	Sample size (households)	Sample (persons)	No of variables
Saint Lucia	Survey of Living Conditions and Household Budgets	2005	Nationwide	1 222	4 319	348
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Survey of Living Conditions and Household Expenditure and Income	2007/2008	Nationwide	1 017	3 535	404
Turks and Caicos Islands	Population and Housing Census & Household Expenditure Budget Survey	2012	Nationwide	632	1 623	532

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Household Survey Databank (BADEHOG).



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The views expressed in this document, a translation of a Spanish original which did not undergo formal editing, are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Organization or the countries it represents.

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