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Migrants' contribution to sustainable development in Jamaica

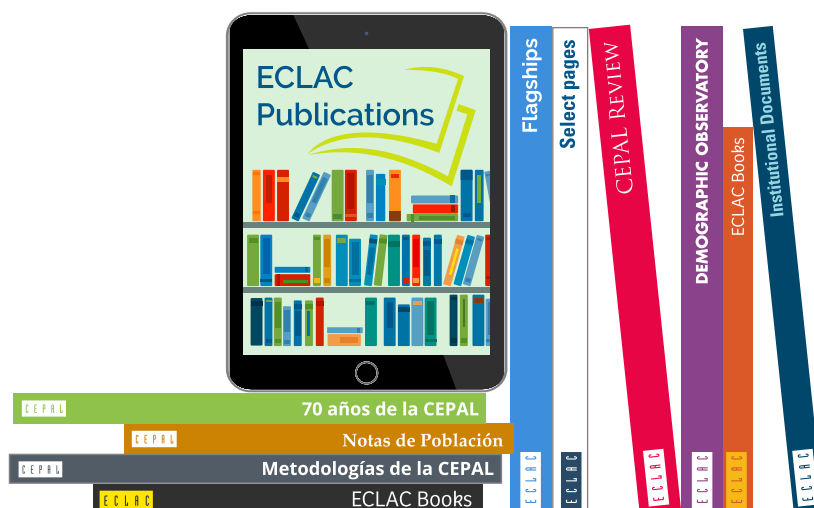
William Mejía



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Migrants' contribution to sustainable development in Jamaica

William Mejía



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Introduction

This study addresses migrants' contributions to Jamaica as part of an analysis by ECLAC of how migration contributes to sustainable development. A better understanding of how international migration contributes to sustainable development will help to foster the capacity to design and implement public policies and development plans that take into account the opportunities and challenges of international migration in countries of origin, return, transit and destination, in keeping with commitments under international agreements, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the first chapter, on recent population changes, the analysis focuses on the period between 1990 and 2020, highlighting the role of migration. The second chapter addresses the current contributions of migrants to sustainable development. The third and final chapter presents the conclusions of the study.

A. Role of migration in global social reproduction and sustainable development

Migration plays a vital role in the reproduction and transformation of global society and, in particular, in societies of origin and return, transit and destination. They are an integral part of globalization. Castles (2012) describes the process in the following way:

The flows and networks that constitute globalization take on specific forms at different spatial levels: regional, national and local. These should be understood as elements of complex and dynamic relationships, in which global forces have varying impacts according to differing structural and cultural factors and responses at the other levels [...] Historical experiences, cultural values, religious beliefs, institutions and social structures all channel and shape the effects of external forces, leading to types of change and resistance that bring about very different outcomes in specific communities or societies (2012, p. 29).

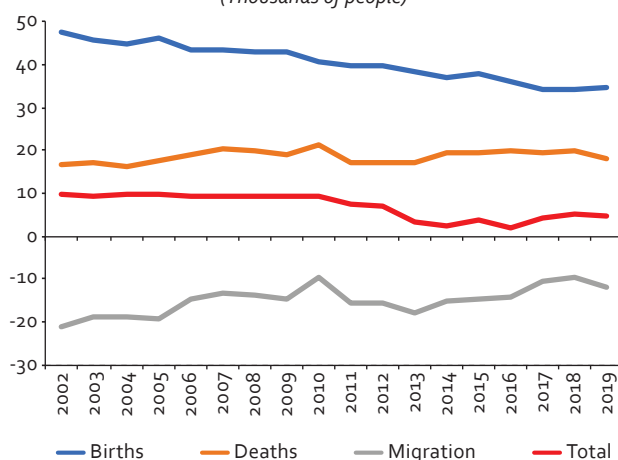
For a comprehensive understanding of migration, Canales (2015), like Castles, proposes to focus on the role of migration in the reproduction of global society in different areas, at a minimum taking into account its demographic, economic and social aspects. By consolidating the analysis of its causes, origin and destination conditions and consequences under one model, this approach seeks to provide a holistic overview.

The role of migration begins with the departure, entry and arrival, transit or settlement of migrant populations; in other words, because of the movement itself, it is then responsible for other (derivative) cross-border flows, along with or after these population groups; among them are culture, lifestyles, and remittances and other resources sent by migrants to relatives and friends. There are also goods and merchandise (including cultural products) that migrants wish to continue enjoying at the destination, which establishes ethnic markets. Special mention should be made of the businesses that facilitate logistics for these flows and support the transportation of people and goods, such as couriers, financial entities (including those that move remittances), and telephone and Internet companies, among others.

I. Recent population changes in Jamaica

With an area of 10,991 square kilometres and a population of 2,961,161 inhabitants in 2020 (see annex, table A.1), Jamaica is the third largest and most populous island in the subregion, after Cuba and Hispaniola. Between 2000 and 2020, Jamaica's population grew by just over 300,000 inhabitants, from 2.6 to 2.9 million (United Nations, 2019). The annual growth rate has been slow and declining, dropping from 9,559 persons in 2002 to 4,624 in 2019 (annex, table A.2). This trend is essentially the result of a significant decline in the number of births, negative net migration throughout the period (despite an upward trend), and a slight increase in the number of deaths (see figure 1 and table 1, which shows the average annual change by five-year period).

Figure 1
Jamaica: overall absolute annual population change, by component, 2002–2019
(Thousands of people)



Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Statistical Institute of Jamaica [online] <https://statinja.gov.jm/>; United Nations (2023), "Population databases" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/data-landing-page>.

Note: Data in figure 1 refer to statistics from administrative records reported annually by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica, which are presented in table A.2 of the annex; this information concerns the number of births, number of deaths, and entries and departures from the country. This differs from other tables and graphs, which include five-yearly estimates published by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations. Although the primary sources of data from the Population Division are the official statistics from countries, there may be some differences between them, because of the standardization processes that the United Nations must conduct when processing data, in its quest for international comparability.

Table 1
Jamaica: annual rate of change in the components of population change, 5-year averages, 2000–2020
(Per 1.000 inhabitants)

Rate	2000–2005	2005–2010	2010–2015	2015–2020
Crude birth rate	20.0	18.5	17.1	16.2
Crude mortality rate	6.8	7.1	7.5	7.6
Natural growth rate	13.2	11.4	9.6	8.7
Migration rate	-6.8	-6.3	-4.0	-3.9
Growth rate	6.3	5.1	5.7	4.8

Source: Prepared by the author, on the basis of United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2019*. New York 2019.

Demographic trends were reflected in the changing proportion of different age groups throughout the twenty-first century, with significantly fewer children and more people of working age (see table 2).

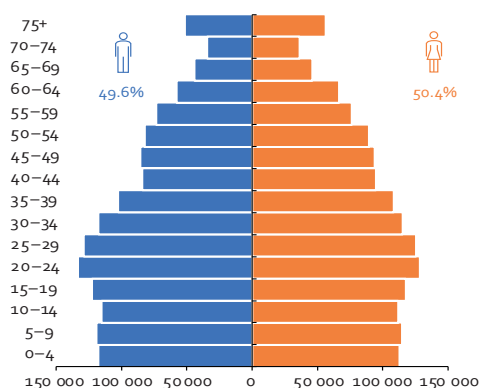
Table 2
Jamaica: percentage distribution of the population, by year and major age group, 2000–2020
(Percentages)

Age	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
0–14 years	32.1	30.1	27.0	24.6	23.4
15–64 years	57.5	59.2	61.6	63.5	63.4
65 and over	3.4	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of United Nations, "International Migrant Stock 2020" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

Based on the above, the median age (which divides the population in half) of the country's inhabitants, which was 24.9 years in 2000, reached 30.7 in 2020, and the aging index (ratio of people aged 60 and over to those under 15) increased from 32.1% to 52.8% over the same period. Women make up 50.4% of the population (United Nations, 2019). The population pyramid in figure 2 shows the structure of this population by five-year age group and sex.

Figure 2
Jamaica: distribution of the total population of inhabitants, by 5-year age group and sex, 2020
(Number of people)



Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of United Nations, "International Migrant Stock 2020" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

The data set suggests that the country is in an advanced stage of the demographic transition, with low and declining birth rates, and mortality with a slight increase associated with the decline in the proportion of the youth population. However, a higher proportion of people over 64 years of age would be expected for this stage; the cause of the current values is not clear, although there is a theory, related to what would be atypical behaviour, that it could be linked to some process of family regrouping abroad, which would include the emigration of the elderly.

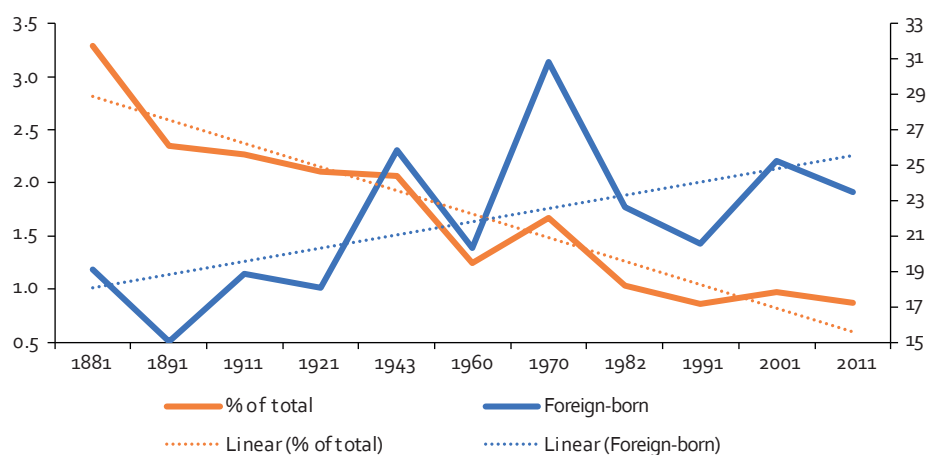
A. Immigration

Low immigration to Jamaica, approximately 20,000 persons in 2019 (United Nations, 2020), and its low relative proportion, less than 1% of the population, seems to limit quantitative information to some extent, despite the fact that the country has a good statistics system. The low relative share and small sample sizes limit the usefulness of the official surveys available which, as is often the case, do not properly represent small groups.¹ Bearing in mind the limitations of the already old 2011 census, which was the last one conducted and seemed to be the best option, it was impossible to gain access to the variables that would allow for the filtering of the immigrant population, using the available microdata.

Consequently, for some estimates we had to resort to microdata from the three previous censuses, available in the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) project of the University of Minnesota (Minnesota Population Center, 2020), generally leaving us no choice but to make assumptions. However, the results of the current census (2022) may allow for more reliable analysis.

National censuses from 1881 to 2011 (figure 3) show that the number of foreign-born persons has been trending upwards, but within a very narrow range, from 15,000 in 1891 to 30,000 in 1970. In contrast, their share of the country's total population has trended steadily downward, with values of between 3.3% and 0.9%, reaching 0.8% in 2020, a total of just 152 more foreign-born persons than the number in the 2011 census (United Nations, 2019).

Figure 3
Jamaica: foreign-born population and share of total population, according to censuses, 1881–2011
(Percentages and thousands of people)



Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of Statistical Institute of Jamaica, *Population and Housing Census 2011: Jamaica, Birthplace, Residence and Migration* vol. 5, Kingston, 2013; United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2019*, New York, 2019.

Focusing on recent decades reduces the range of change of the total population of immigrants, which was 20,475 in 1990 and 24,952 in 2000, after which a certain downward trend was observed. There are no major differences in distribution by sex, although there has been a slight upward trend in the proportion of men, who emerged as a majority in 2000 (see table 3).

¹ Within the text, there are frequent references to the results of a specific survey on migrations conducted in 2009 and financed by the Global Development Network and Institute for Public Policy Research, whose authors report national representation in the sample design (Thomas-Hope and others, 2009).

Table 3
Jamaica: cumulative number of immigrants, by sex,
5-year interval and number of women per 100 men, 1990–2020

Year	Men	Women	Total	Women per 100 men
1990	9 981	10 494	20 475	105
1995	11 242	11 471	22 713	102
2000	12 503	12 449	24 952	100
2005	12 248	12 036	24 284	98
2010	12 024	11 653	23 677	97
2015	11 765	11 400	23 165	97
2020	12 008	11 621	23 629	97

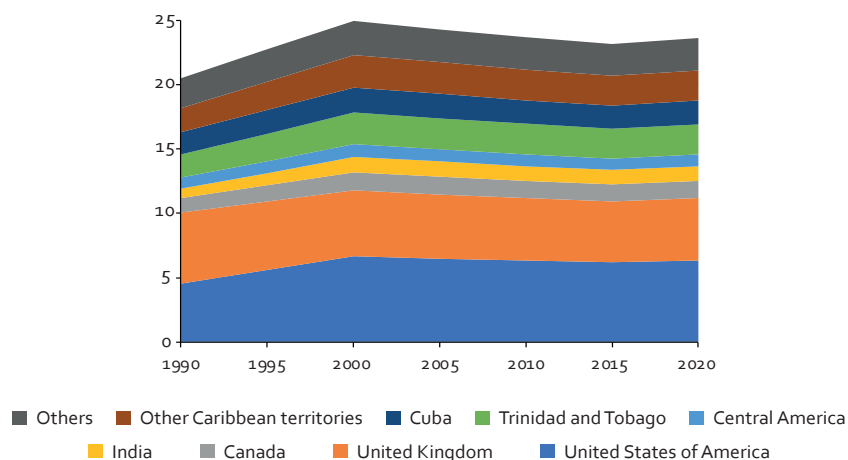
Source: Prepared by the author, on the basis of United Nations, "International Migrant Stock 2020" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

Low immigration, which has become more marked in recent years, means that it is currently unnoticed and, as a result, its contributions to Jamaican society are also invisible:

It is a bit difficult to determine what a foreigner is in the context of Jamaica given the diversity of the population. Our motto is based on this: "Out of many, one people." Most citizens are of African descent and there are percentages of descendants of the first European immigrants, from South and Southeast Asia. The numbers for South and Southeast Asians are quite substantial, and while we did notice a difference in ethnicity, I would say it's a difference that everyone has become accustomed to. [...] When we think of foreigners we think of tourists, mostly from the US and Europe, who come here on vacation [...]. For foreigners who migrate to Jamaica to live, I think the numbers are much lower and I think they go more unnoticed.²

In the total number of immigrants over the three recent decades considered, the importance of the geographic north as a place of origin or birth is notable, specifically the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, from which nearly half of them originated (figure 4). Caribbean countries have contributed about a quarter, with a slight upward trend. A noteworthy number have come from India, nearly 5% since 2000, which is consistent with the recruitment that began in the nineteenth century.

Figure 4
Jamaica: total number of immigrants by origin, 1990–2020
(Thousands of people)



Source: Prepared by the author, on the basis of United Nations, "International Migrant Stock 2020" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

² Rhea Faith Braithwaite, a Jamaican student at New York University Abu Dhabi, interviewed on 18 June 2022, hereinafter referred to as RFB (2022).

B. Emigration

Jamaican emigration is longstanding, so it is not unusual to hear about a “migratory culture” (Nwankwo, 2017; Weis, 2006). Migrants mainly leave Jamaica to seek higher income, send remittances home and find stable employment. This does not mean that their economic situation is bad in relation to the country's standards, as indicated in the results of the survey done by Thomas-Hope and others (2009),³ which showed that most persons, before migrating, were earning much more than the average non-migrant (Thomas-Hope and others, 2009).

Table 4 indicates that the number of persons born in Jamaica and residing outside of the country has been growing in recent decades, with a 90.1% increase between 1990 and 2020, when it reached more than 1.1 million. This last figure represents 27.6% of the total number of nationals of the island, both resident on the island and abroad,⁴ and is equal to 37.8% of the persons, nationals or foreigners, living in the country. This highlights that the feminization of the cumulative volume of emigrants has also grown, with 136 women for every 100 men in the most recent data. “In fact, Jamaica has a large number of emigrants, particularly when it comes to brain drain. A notable portion of the population has been migrating. We now have communities in places like New York, where Jamaican immigrants live. And, currently, many students are preparing or trying to go abroad”, were comments made in an interview. For his part, Weis (2006, p. 81) states. “The growth of the migratory culture [...] has also fed, together with the penetration of US media, the increasingly foreign (and commodified) aspirations of young Jamaicans. One farmer explained [...] “No one wants to plant crops, everyone just wants to leave the country.”

Table 4
Jamaica: total emigrants, by sex, year and number of women per 100 men, at 5-year intervals, 1990–2020

Year	Men	Women	Total	Women per 100 men
1990	267 945	320 505	588 450	120
1995	324 401	393 961	718 362	121
2000	385 488	472 377	857 865	123
2005	402 827	502 343	905 170	125
2010	427 047	562 743	989 790	132
2015	440 347	591 249	1 031 596	134
2020	475 022	643 909	1 118 931	136

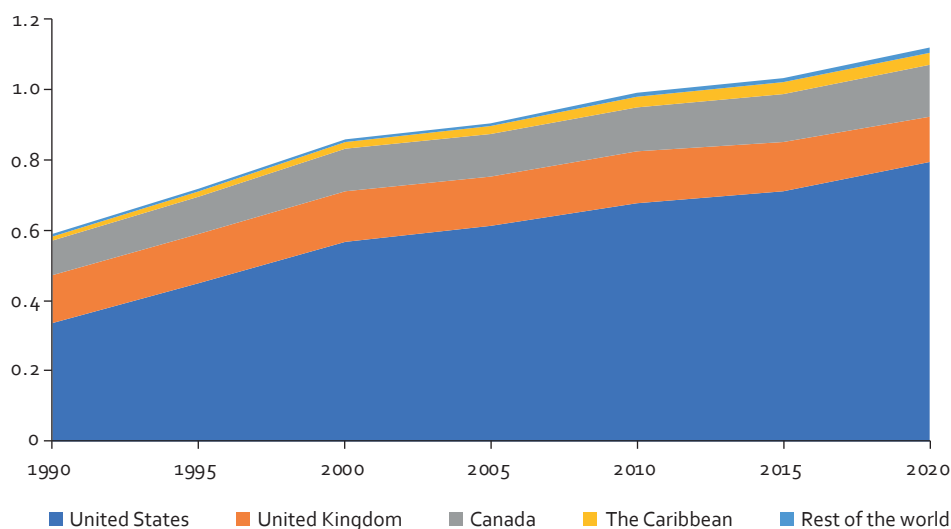
Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of United Nations, “International Migrant Stock 2020” [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

During the previous three decades, the Jamaican population abroad has been significantly concentrated in three destinations: the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, with the first being the largest and growing throughout the period (figure 5); 71% lived there in 2020, compared with only 57% in 1990. The United Kingdom saw a decline in the number of Jamaicans and it was overtaken by Canada, moving from second to third place. The other countries in the subregion, although proportionally marginal, went from hosting almost 11,000 Jamaicans to having more than 35,000.

³ Thomas-Hope and others (2009) interviewed nearly 1000 households across Jamaica and asked whether they had a migrant member. As a follow-up, a smaller set of households (486) were interviewed in greater depth to examine the impacts of migration. At both stages, this was a nationally representative exercise, which means that the results of this survey should reflect trends in Jamaica as a whole. A questionnaire of approximately 40 pages was used.

⁴ If we take into account that in 2020 the total number of residents in Jamaica, not including those born abroad, was 2,937,532 and the number of emigrants was estimated at 1,118,931, the total number of surviving nationals reached 4,056,463.

Figure 5
Jamaica: estimated cumulative volume of emigrants, by destination, 1990–2020
(Millions of people)



Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of United Nations, "International Migrant Stock 2020" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

C. Return

For the purposes of the 2011 census, the Statistical Institute of Jamaica defined a returnee as any resident (native-born or foreign-born) who, at the time of the census, had continuously lived abroad for one year or more. Using this criterion, it found 141,589 persons, with 114 males per 100 females (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2013b). Regarding this population, one respondent remarked the following:

Most emigrants establish their lives abroad and intend to stay, as life there is perceived to be more economically stable than in Jamaica. Among the wealthiest, they may return home upon retirement from their jobs abroad, but I think those numbers are much lower and more unnoticed, except in parishes where certain neighbourhoods are attractive to these returning Jamaicans.

I can't point to a specific way in which these returning Jamaicans contribute to the country, other than spending the money they have saved working abroad on the island. Most are retired and therefore not part of the workforce. They simply want to relax after spending so many years working to support themselves and their families.

If I see any of the desired changes that encourage me to return to Jamaica, I hope to return home and simply be able to work and raise my family. I think my immediate impact would be, then, being a member of the workforce. But I think maybe I can be an example, to show those around me that Jamaica is worth coming home to, and that you don't need to focus on going abroad as much as staying abroad; to show that it is possible to go to foreign countries and still return with the skills that have been learned to uplift the island (RFB 2022).

D. The role of migrants in the emergence of the distinctive Jamaican culture

In the study done by Thomas-Hope and others (2009), some interviewees felt that immigration had had at least a small impact on the racial and ethnic composition of society, with positive effects on the country's cultural diversity. In terms of business, some felt that immigrants and returnees often came with new values that affected the work culture. However, according to the same study, immigrants had filled some of the vacancies left by nationals, particularly in the areas of education and health.

For example, people who had worked temporarily in the United States brought sound systems to the island, allowing for the amplification of mento bands' recordings, which were subsequently heard at popular parties and inspired local composers to compose their own instead of copying American ones (Brodber, 1985; Saakana and Clarke, 1980). This along with the rental of sound systems, the formation of bands and the establishment of recording studios by Chinese immigrants gave migration a fundamental role in the development of Jamaican music. "It was not until the 1950s when the mento and calypso bands were drawn by the tourist trade to the North Coast and the 'sound system' introduced by contract laborers to the U.S. began to spread through the rest of Jamaica, that the voice of the Afro-cultured singer began to be widely transmitted" (Brodber, 1985, p. 59). Apart from African and European roots, mento was influenced by Pan-Caribbean traditions and American jazz, but "mento is clearly, uniquely Jamaican. And as Jamaica's original music, all other Jamaican music can trace its roots to mento" (Garnice, 2018), including reggae.

II. Contributions of migrants to sustainable development

In this section, a set of contributions associated with Caribbean migration is presented, some of them with links to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A. Food security and health

When studying food security in the country, Thomas-Hope (2017) found a certain tendency to invest part of the remittances received in food production in the countryside, which could help to strengthen food security in the long term. For its part, the survey by Thomas-Hope and others (2009) found two different situations regarding the use of remittances and their possible impact on the health of the members of the households that receive them. When respondents indicated that remittances were not used like any other source of income, 15% stated that they allocated them to medical expenses. However, when remittances were simply added to household budgets, like any other income, which was the predominant response, this increased spending on all budget items, including medical care.

Beuermann, Ruprah and Sierra (2016), have nevertheless concluded that remittances in Jamaica serve as a social security mechanism that provides protection against health-related shocks that negatively affect total household spending. But although the impacts at the household level appear positive, most persons interviewed in this regard believe that high emigration rates of health personnel, especially nurses, have put considerable pressure on the system's ability to maintain quality services (Thomas-Hope and others, 2009).

B. Quality education

Regarding remittances and education, the study by Thomas-Hope and others (2009) notes that of the households that indicated that they spent remittances differently from other sources of income, only 7% highlighted education; in some cases, migrants also send resources to schools, generally, those of which they are former students.

The survey by Thomas-Hope and others (2009) indicates that 32% of emigrants studied while living abroad, and that about half of these obtained their qualifications there, although it cautions that it is

possible that the same persons would have obtained similar qualifications had they remained in Jamaica. In addition to the above, there were learning, working or living spaces, and experiences of interacting with people from different cultures abroad. A large number of prominent Jamaican writers and artists have gone through the migration experience.⁵

Jamaica has more than twenty tertiary education institutions,⁶ several of which have specialized programmes for foreign students. For example, Northern Caribbean University boasts having students from more than 35 countries (NCU, 2020). Among the scant statistical information on this subject is that the Mona campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI), an institution that serves 17 English-speaking countries in the subregion, reports that 10% of the more than 19,000 students enrolled in the 2020–2021 academic year were immigrants, mostly from member countries (UWI 2022, p.28). Under these conditions, the estimated 2,200 foreign students in all the island's university institutions would represent 9.3% of the total resident immigrant population in 2021.

For the university and the country, the education of foreign students means revenues whose aggregate amount could exceed US\$ 55 million. These resources flow into the economy and contribute to the sustainability of the university, which, in addition to educational processes, conducts other programmes, such as research on the effects of climate change, which are key for the development of the country and the region (Ramkissoon and Kahwa, 2015). In addition, there are gains in social capital for the university and its students through the expansion of international networks, through alumni organizations and the links and personal learning that students acquire by sharing with people from different backgrounds.

C. Gender equality

1. Changing gender roles and women's empowerment

Based on the results of their field work, Thomas-Hope and others (2009) find that female migrants' economic reasons for leaving the country seem to be slightly stronger than those of male migrants and this indicates that migration promotes their economic empowerment. They also state that, according to some actors, migration has created greater opportunities and autonomy for women in Jamaica, and that remittances make them less dependent. However, they draw attention to the need to consider previous differences defined by the socioeconomic position of households, before assessing the contribution of migration in this area.

More than 20 years ago, Griffith (1985) was very critical of any positive impact of migration on the country's rural women, particularly the partners and daughters of temporary migrants. Although he acknowledged that in the absence of men, they took on the administration of small farms and the hiring of day labourers to fill this void, this only meant more work at home without any significant improvement in their economic and social situation. For the author, in the long run, this ultimately meant the conservation of peasant production techniques and relationships, which men's remittances and women's work helped to perpetuate. The end result was greater subordination of women to domestic production and reproduction processes.

For a group of Jamaican migrant women, the liberating power of changing gender roles in couples was associated with taking advantage of their movements between origin and destination sites to engage in informal trade and achieve full economic autonomy. The situation, which seems to have led to major commercial enterprises, resulted in the emergence of stereotypes.

⁵ Among those who have excelled abroad in literature are, for example, Claude McKay, Roger Mais, Andrew Salkey, Sylvia Wynter, Lindsay Barrett, Lorna Goodison, Kerry Young, Margaret Cezair-Thompson, Colin Channer, Kei Miller and Marlon James. Jamaicans in various fields of the arts and knowledge could also be mentioned.

⁶ See [online] https://www.webometrics.info/es/latin_america_es/jamaica.

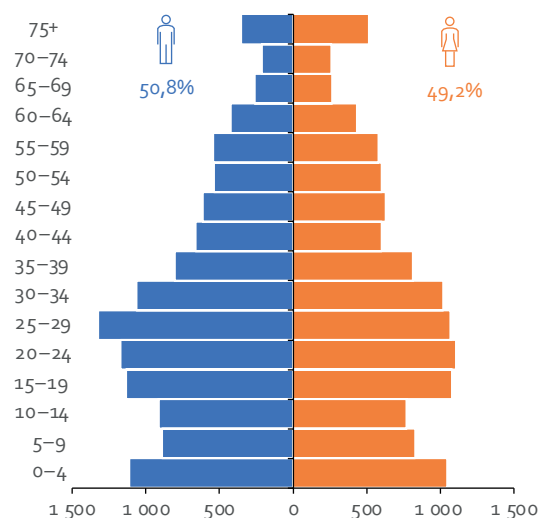
Regarding the return of women, the study by Thomas-Hope and others (2009) found: different attitudes towards traditional Jamaican class-based gender roles; seizing educational opportunities abroad; experiences interacting with persons from different cultures; and experiences and expectations. This has influenced changes in Jamaican family dynamics, especially among the middle classes.

In addition, mobility and opportunities for promotion within the workplace have increased for female returnees. Some evidence indicates that the return of professional and middle-class Jamaican women was accompanied by changing dynamics within the workplace and that several women had risen to executive-level management positions upon their return (Brown, 2006).

D. Decent work and economic growth

Although immigration is currently low, this should be considered in the context of the downward trend in the population growth rate. Its contribution is even more significant if we consider the aging of the country's population and the predominance of youth immigration, which offsets this to some extent, as shown in figure 6.

Figure 6
Jamaica: distribution of the immigrant population by 5-year age group and sex, 2020
(Number of people)



Source: Prepared by the author, on the basis of United Nations, "International Migrant Stock 2020" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

At the same time hand, it contributes to the country's work force and to the gross domestic product (GDP) through value addition. To estimate the former, United Nations (2020) data on the distribution of immigrant stocks by age group and sex were used to calculate the size of the working-age population, to which labour force participation rates for immigrants were applied. Regarding the rates, an attempt was made to approximate them by using microdata from the last census (2011), but the required variables were not available within those microdata. As an alternative, microdata from the 2001, 1991 and 1982 censuses were used, assuming possible biases of an unknown nature. The results are presented in table 5, where the total corresponds to microdata from all three censuses, which yields weighted averages. Applying these rates yields the labour force volumes shown in table 6.⁷

⁷ With the data in table 5, it was decided that the best option was to average the 1991 and 2001 results for the 1995 labour force estimates; to use the 2001 results for the 2000 estimates; and to use the total results for 2005 and subsequent years.

Table 5
Jamaica: labour force participation of foreign-born persons aged over 14 years,
estimates for the censuses of 1982, 1991 and 2001
(Percentages)

Year	Men	Women	Total
1982	64.8	42.6	53.7
1991	60.5	39.4	49.9
2001	68.2	48.8	58.7
Total	64.4	43.5	54.0

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of census data from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica and Minnesota Population Center. IPUMS International [online] <https://international.ipums.org/international/>.

Table 6
Jamaica: estimates of foreign-born persons in the labour force, by sex, at 5-year intervals, 1995–2020
(Number of people)

Year	Men	Women	Total
1995	5 408	3 913	9 321
2000	6 107	4 469	10 576
2005	5 811	3 939	9 750
2010	5 041	3 422	8 463
2015	5 322	3 580	8 902
2020	5 858	3 900	9 758

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of United Nations, "International Migrant Stock 2020" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.

For the labour force distribution of foreign-born persons by sector, which is needed to estimate their contribution to GDP, the calculation was done using data from the joint base of the 1982 to 2001 censuses (see table 7), which meant ignoring possible changes in the country's productive structure over time and in the position of the immigrant population within it (which at first glance do not seem to have been very significant).

Table 7
Jamaica: distribution estimates of the foreign-born labour force,
by sex and economic subsector of employment, 1982–2001
(Percentages)

Sector	Men	Women	Total
Agriculture, fishing and forestry	8.47	2.11	5.96
Mining and quarrying	2.03	0.72	1.51
Manufacturing	11.92	7.76	10.28
Electricity, gas, water and waste management	0.84	0.39	0.66
Construction	4.98	0.24	3.11
Wholesale and retail trade	14.53	15.18	14.79
Hotels and restaurants	4.38	3.25	3.94
Transportation, warehousing and communications	4.97	5.71	5.26

Sector	Men	Women	Total
Financial services and insurance	4.75	6.65	5.50
Public administration and defence	1.88	4.29	2.83
Services, unspecified	13.09	18.91	15.38
Business services and real estate	5.59	4.90	5.32
Health and social work	0.00	0.22	0.09
Other services	19.96	28.04	23.14
Private domestic services	2.62	1.65	2.24
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of census data from the Statistical Institute of Jamaica and Minnesota Population Center, IPUMS International [online] <https://international.ipums.org/international/>.

Note: Census data from the 1982, 1991 and 2001 censuses.

From the subsectors in table 7, based on the corresponding classification, we move to the three major sectors of the economy shown in table 8,⁸ among which the labour force from table 5 is distributed. The prominence of the service sector, which employs about 80% of immigrant workers, is noteworthy.

Table 8
Jamaica: foreign-born workers by major economic sector and sex, at 5-year intervals, 1995–2020
(Number of people)

Year	Agriculture			Industry			Services		
	M	W	Total	M	W	Total	M	W	Total
1995	458	83	540	1 069	356	1 425	3 881	3 474	7 355
2000	517	94	611	1 207	407	1 614	4 383	3 968	8 351
2005	492	83	575	1 149	359	1 507	4 170	3 497	7 668
2010	427	72	499	996	312	1 308	3 618	3 038	6 656
2015	451	76	526	1 052	326	1 378	3 819	3 179	6 998
2020	496	82	578	1 158	355	1 513	4 204	3 463	7 667

Source: Prepared by the author.

1. Contribution to reducing unemployment

The Jamaican government has administered temporary labour migration programmes for over 60 years. In 2017, it managed two with the United States and two with Canada, targeting agricultural, hospitality and low-skilled workers (Gordon, 2017). According to a report submitted by country representatives to the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families, through overseas employment programmes, the country has managed to improve social and economic development, reduce surplus labour and alleviate high unemployment, particularly in rural areas. Many families have been able to gain a stable source of income that has helped them to purchase housing, quality education, health care and other basic services, and the country has benefited significantly from the inflow of remittances (Gordon, 2017).

⁸ Agriculture corresponds to divisions 1-5 of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and includes forestry, hunting and fishing, as well as crop cultivation and animal husbandry. The term "industry" corresponds to ISIC divisions 10-45 and includes manufacturing industries (ISIC divisions 15-37). It includes value added in mining and quarrying, manufacturing (which is also reported as a separate subgroup), construction, and electricity, gas and water supply. Services (formerly non-factor services) refers to the economic production of intangible goods that can be produced, transferred and consumed at the same time (World Bank, 2023).

Using the World Bank indicators for value added per worker in each of the three major economic sectors by country and by year presented in table A.4 of the annex and the totals for migrant workers by sector from table 8, overall, table 9 indicates that the annual contribution of this population group is approximately US\$ 100 million, at constant 2015 prices, with a downward trend over time.

Table 9
Jamaica: estimate of the contribution of immigrants to GDP, by economic sector, at 5-year intervals, 1995–2019
(Millions of United States dollars at constant 2015 prices)

Year	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Total
1995	2.4	23.5	97.1	122.9
2000	2.3	28.1	101.3	131.7
2005	2.0	25.3	91.8	119.0
2010	2.0	19.0	76.8	97.7
2015	2.2	20.8	75.2	98.2
2019	2.8	19.5	73.8	96.1

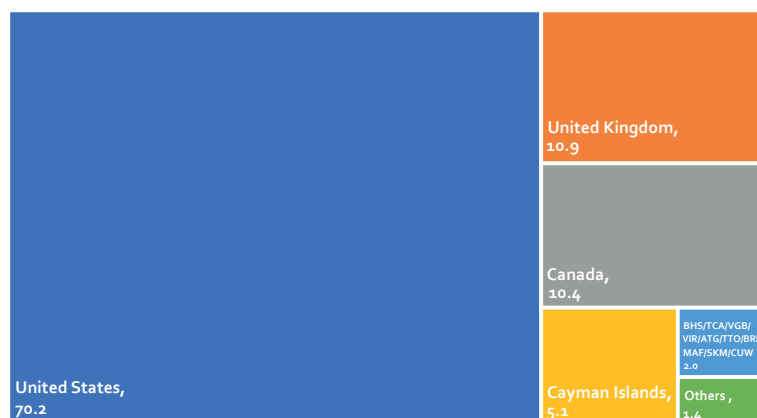
Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of World Bank, World Bank Open Data [online database] <https://data.worldbank.org/>; Statistical Institute of Jamaica, *Population and Housing Census 2011: Jamaica. Economic Activity*, vol. 8, Kingston, 2013; United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2019*, New York, 2019.

E. Contributions of remittances

For those who migrate and leave their closest relatives behind, sending remittances is often the most important reason for their departure. Remittances are an important source of income for families and of supplementary income for their countries, when income sources in their countries are structurally inadequate. In 2009, at least 15% of Jamaican households had one or more members abroad. Also, marginally, some emigrants support their communities with remittances, for example, with donations to schools and churches (Thomas-Hope and others 2009). A Jamaican interviewee perceives the situation as follows: "The contribution of these emigrants comes largely from remittances. Migration in the first place is motivated mainly by the need to support family members who remain on the island. And thus, those who are abroad will actively send money for this financial support, which means that Jamaica benefits from remittances as this money is spent within the island". (RFB, 2022).

In terms of the source of remittances (figure 7), the fact that more than 7 of every 10 dollars come from the United States is noteworthy.

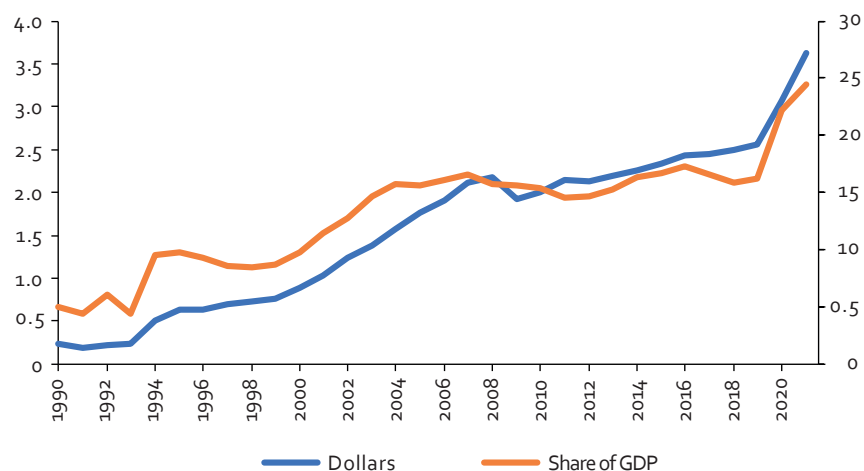
Figure 7
Jamaica: remittances by country of origin, 2021
(Percentages)



Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of data from the Bank of Jamaica.

In Jamaica, remittances are especially high and are growing in relation to the size of the economy, having equalled almost a quarter of GDP in 2021, 24.4% to be exact, with a value of US\$ 36.307 billion (see figure 8). The growth of remittances was particularly high in 2020 and 2021, contrasting with the pandemic-related economic downturn. In Jamaica, GDP fell by 20% in the first two years (World Bank, 2023).

Figure 8
Jamaica: annual remittances as a share of GDP, 1990–2020
(Billions of dollars and percentages)



Source: Prepared by the author on the basis of World Bank, Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) [online] <https://www.knomad.org/data>.

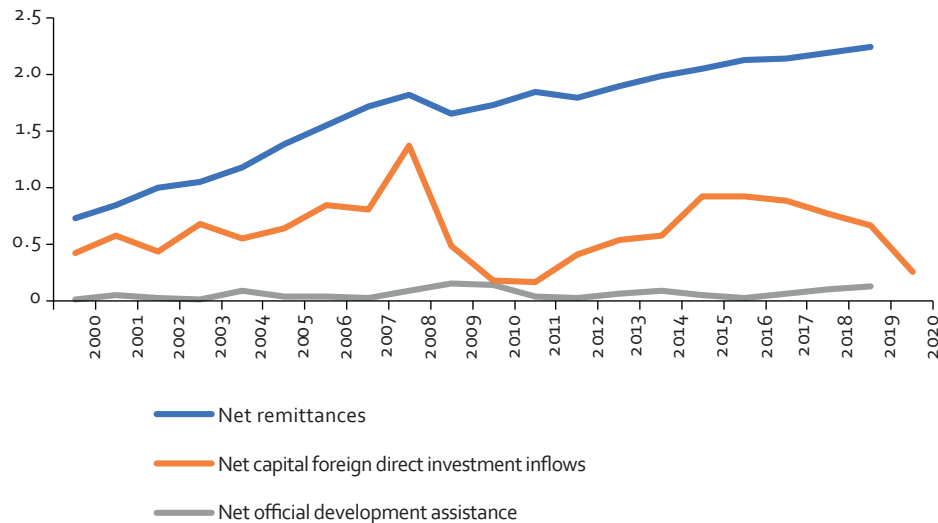
Trends such as this, where remittances grew during the pandemic, have led to the assumption that remittances may be countercyclical, the result of efforts made by migrants to alleviate the difficulties of their relatives at home and to increase remittances, which were encouraged by their digitization. Remittances helped to stabilize the foreign exchange market, provide greater savings, ensure macroeconomic stability, boost productivity through technology transfer and entrepreneurship, and reduce poverty and social inequality (Gordon, 2017).

Using data from 1975 to 2011, Deonanan and Ramkissoon (2018) found a causal relationship between remittances and GDP in Jamaica, which led them to consider the possibility that policies that promote remittances positively influence economic development. However, Das, McFarlane and Cheol (2019) found that from 1976 to 2014, GDP and remittances were “cointegrated” and positively reinforced each other.

At the same time, remittances are an important source of external financial flows and support the balance of payments. As shown in figure 9, even without the remittances sent from the country by immigrants, they are increasing and far exceed foreign direct investment (net capital inflows) and official development assistance, leading to the belief that in Jamaica, remittances may have long-lasting impacts, including by financing development (Deonanan and Ramkissoon, 2018).

At the household and individual level, data from around 2005 indicated that the frequency of support provided to Jamaicans by their U.S.-based family members was high. Of those surveyed, 47% said they sent support very frequently and another 31% said they did so quite frequently (Forsythe-Brown and others, 2017). Remittances therefore serve as replacement income for migrant families (Deonanan and Ramkissoon 2018).

Figure 9
Jamaica: net yearly remittances (received and sent) from migrants, compared to foreign direct investment and net official development assistance, at current prices, 2000–2021
(Billions of dollars)



Source: Prepared by the author, on the basis of World Bank, World Bank Open Data [online database] <https://data.worldbank.org/>.

In general, these are small sums that benefit individuals and recipient households by increasing family budgets and maintaining and possibly even raising living standards. Some 63% declared that they spent them similarly to regular wages and other income. Where use differed, the most commonly reported areas were child support and the purchase of household goods (Thomas-Hope and others, 2009), which of course impacts domestic demand, but it should not be forgotten that beneficiary households are only a fraction of the country's total.

According to the survey by Thomas-Hope and others (2009), emigration had a significant positive impact on the economic situation of migrants themselves. Seventy per cent saw a very significant increase in their standard of living once abroad and none experienced a significant decrease. These results were most notable for those who were in non-managerial and supervisory roles prior to departure, which would explain the high emigration from the country, to some extent.

In small households in Jamaica, different positive impacts of remittances have also been observed. In the Rio Grande Valley, for example, many migrants managed to improve their farms. Remittances served to meet the daily needs of households and, at the same time, to hire day labourers who filled in for the absent migrants and contributed to the sustainability of agriculture in the sector (Ishemo, Semple and Thomas-Hope, 2006). Griffith (1985), when studying the same situation twenty years earlier, recognized the same uses of remittances, but assessed their consequences differently, opining that this did not lead to the development of the agricultural system or the ability of the household to generate higher income than it had before receiving them. Apart from the differences of opinion between the authors, possibly owing to the time between studies or different ideological positions, it must be highlighted that in the case in question (Rio Grande Valley), remittances have been regarded as generating salaried agricultural employment. Persons who returned to the Rio Grande Valley after living for variable periods in the United States, Canada and Great Britain also contributed to the survival of agriculture in the Valley. Many invested in the export of agriculture, and bigger farmers provided jobs for farmers who emigrated internally (Ishemo, Semple and Thomas-Hope, 2006).

III. Conclusions

This study highlights the contributions of migrations in various aspects of sustainable development in Jamaica.

In contrast with many Caribbean countries and territories (Mejía, 2023), in Jamaica the current share of immigrants (foreign-born persons) in the population is very low: only one in every 125 persons is an immigrant. In contrast, almost 28% of persons born in the country reside abroad. This is because during the second half of the twentieth century, many Jamaicans emigrated to destinations such as Canada, the United States and Great Britain. As a result, the contributions of migrants to the development of Jamaica stems largely from an emigrant and returnee population.

The study allows us to quantify some contributions of migrants in demographic and economic terms. In particular, changes in population composition and positive impacts on labour markets, aging, dependency rates and the long-term sustainability of pension systems could be quantified. Economically, estimates of the contribution to GDP of the immigrant labour force and some indicators of the share of remittances from emigrants in the economy were obtained. Both the contributions made through remittances and the resources that returnees bring are particularly significant. The former recently approached 25% of GDP.

The State has formally recognized the importance of the emigrant population for the development of the country, especially through remittances and the possibility of managing them from abroad for its benefit. Such recognition should be extended not just to the economic contributions of immigrants and returnees, whose potential was shown here, but to all their contributions, despite the limits of statistical information.

Finally, the contributions of migration in areas related to health, education, gender equality, work and growth also have potential and can contribute to the achievement of the SDGs in the country, which, beyond a doubt, is a non-commutable, non-transferable responsibility of States.

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Annexes

Annex 1

Main databases consulted:

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Annex 2

Additional tables

Table A.1
The Caribbean: status, population and size, by country and territory, 2020

Countries or areas	Status	Population	Surface (Km ²)
Caribbean		43 532 374	234 076
Anguilla	British Overseas Territory	15 002	91
Antigua and Barbuda	Independent	97 928	442
Aruba	Constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	106 766	180
Bahamas	Independent	393 248	13 940
Barbados	Independent	287 371	431
Bonaire. St. Eustatius and Saba	Islands in the Kingdom of the Netherlands	26 221	322
British Virgin Islands	British Overseas Territory	30 237	151
Cayman Islands	British Overseas Territory	65 720	264
Cuba	Independent	11 326 616	109 884
Curacao	Constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	164 100	444
Dominica	Independent	71 991	750
Dominican Republic	Independent	10 847 904	48 671
Grenada	Independent	112 519	345
Guadeloupe	Administrative region and French overseas department	400 127	1 639
Haiti	Independent	11 402 533	27 750
Jamaica	Independent	2 961 161	10 991
Martinique	French Overseas Department	375 265	1090
Montserrat	British Overseas Territory	4 999	103
Puerto Rico	Free Associated US State	2 860 840	8 868
Saint Barthélemy	French overseas collectivity	9 885	22
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Independent	53 192	261
Saint Lucia	Independent	183 629	539
Saint Martin (French part)	French overseas collectivity	38 659	53
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Independent	110 947	389
Sint Maarten (Dutch part)	Constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands	42 882	34
Trinidad and Tobago	Independent	1 399 491	5 127
Turks and Caicos Islands	British Overseas Territory	38 718	948
US Virgin Islands	US unincorporated territory	104 423	347

Source: United Nations, "International Migrant Stock 2020" [online] <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>; and data from official websites of the respective countries.

Table A.2
Jamaica: annual population change by component, number of persons, 2002–2019

Year	Births	Deaths	Migration (immigrants– emigrants)	Total
2002	47 464	16 728	-21 177	9 559
2003	45 559	17 267	-18 789	9 503
2004	44 843	16 332	-18 959	9 552
2005	46 370	17 413	-19 436	9 521
2006	43 243	18 960	-14 873	9 410
2007	43 385	20 550	-13 470	9 365
2008	43 112	19 966	-13 741	9 405
2009	42 782	18 855	-14 515	9 412
2010	40 508	21 503	-9 718	9 287
2011	39 673	16 926	-15 480	7 267
2012	39 553	16 998	-15 516	7 039
2013	38 480	17 350	-17 947	3 183
2014	36 996	19 557	-15 252	2 187
2015	37 900	19 249	-14 926	3 725
2016	36 160	19 761	-14 296	2 103
2017	34 423	19 661	-10 647	4 115
2018	34 209	19 762	-9 474	4 973
2019	34 632	18 233	-11 775	4 624
Total	729 292	335 071	-269 991	124 230

Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica [online] <https://statinja.gov.jm/>.

Table A.3
Jamaica: total inhabitants, foreign-born population and share of total population, according to censuses, 1881-2011

Year	Inhabitants	Born abroad	Percentage of total
1881	580 804	19 106	3.3
1891	639 491	15 029	2.4
1911	831 383	18 883	2.3
1921	858 118	18 096	2.1
1943	1 246 240	25 825	2.1
1960	1 624 400	20 334	1.3
1970	1 848 508	30 852	1.7
1982	2 190 357	22 657	1.0
1991	2 380 667	20 589	0.9
2001	2 607 632	25 233	1.0
2011	2 697 983	23 477	0.9
2020	2 961 161	23 629	0.8


Source: Statistical Institute of Jamaica, *Population and Housing Census 2011: Jamaica. Economic Activity*, vol. 8, Kingston, 2013; United Nations, *World Population Prospects 2019*, New York, 2019.

Table A.4
Jamaica: value added per worker, by major economic sector and year, in constant 2015 United States dollars, 1995–2019

Year	Agriculture	Industry	Services	Total
1995	4 368	16 460	13 205	13 190
2000	3 712	17 439	12 134	12 457
2005	3 421	16 756	11 967	32 143
2010	3 966	14 497	11 540	11 550
2015	4 158	15 096	10 747	11 031
2019	4 827	12 909	9 628	9 851

Source: World Bank, "Indicators" [online database] <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>.

Note: Indicators are NV.AGR.EMPL.KD (Agriculture, forestry, and fishing), NV.IND.EMPL.KD (Industry, including construction), and NV.SRV.EMPL.KD (Services).



The study focuses on migrants' contributions to Jamaica's development from the ECLAC perspective on the contributions of international migration to sustainable development. Improving understanding of these contributions will enhance capacity to formulate and implement public policies and development plans that take into account the opportunities and challenges of international migration in countries of origin or return, transit and destination, in compliance with the commitments set forth in international and multilateral agreements, such as the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The first chapter analyses recent population trends, focusing on population changes between 1990 and 2020 and highlighting the role of migration. The second addresses the current contributions of migrants to sustainable development. Lastly, the document presents a series of conclusions drawn from the study.

