



## Elements to understand the challenges of migration

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# Migration in Barbados: What do we know?

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### Abstract

*This paper discusses the experience of Barbados, a small island developing state in the (English-speaking) Caribbean, with migration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Drawing on analyses of the pre- and post-emancipation periods, the paper demonstrates that inward and outward migration has historically shaped the development trajectory of Barbados. While inward migration has helped to address deficits in the labour market in sectors such as agriculture, construction, care work, and hospitality, outward migration has contributed to high rates of emigration of skilled migrants. In terms of the latter, there is a lack of consensus regarding the impact of remittances on development. Moreover, high rates of emigration have compounded declining fertility and an increase in the aging population. While various government policies acknowledge the importance of migration to development, there is need for a cohesive vision for migration and development. The paper, therefore, emphasizes the importance of data collection, analysis, and reporting to support the development of evidence-based migration policy. By presenting an analysis of contemporary migration policy and trends over the past two decades, the paper contributes to the literature regarding the state of migration in Barbados, as well as the wider Caribbean.*

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## 1. Introduction

This paper discusses migration to and from Barbados, focusing on the 21st century. It provides a succinct, though comprehensive, review of the landscape of migration trends and policy. Several regional reports provide data on elements of migration policy in Barbados and other countries situated in the English-speaking (and Dutch) Caribbean (see for example Kari Consultants Ltd., 2013; Aragón & El-Assar, 2018; International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2010; IOM 2014; IOM, 2017; IOM, 2019; IOM, 2021a; IOM, 2021b). This document is the first consolidated report that focuses on Barbados. It is a timely intervention, which considers policy initiatives undertaken by the Government of Barbados with respect to migration, and more broadly, sustainable development.

Like other Caribbean nations, migration has shaped the small island developing state of Barbados for centuries. The importance of migration is reflected in several statistics. It has one of the highest rates of emigration globally. Notwithstanding, it has transitioned from a country of negative net migration to one marked by a positive net migration rate. Many migrants to Barbados originate from the Caribbean, with the majority from Guyana. Immigrants have supported the services sector and contributed significantly to national development, addressing deficits in the labour sector. Tensions around ‘unacceptably high rates of migration’, have prompted policy responses designed to curtail undocumented migration. Barbados has, however, sought to attract high-net-worth individuals through a special residence permit. During COVID-19, it introduced a ‘Welcome Stamp’ for remote workers.

Migration management has therefore featured prominently in policy responses. Yet, Barbados’ heavy reliance on migration across various sectors of its economy calls for greater understanding of the government’s policy approach. This paper was informed by the following research questions: What has been the policy towards migrants, and has it changed over time? Is it solely ‘on paper’, or has it been implemented? What do we know about the results of the government’s response to migration? What do we know about the effect of immigrants on society and the country’s economy? What are the most urgent policy challenges to respond adequately to the arrival of migrants?

There were not ready answers to these questions due to a deficit of studies and analysis regarding migration in the Caribbean. While there is ample discussion of the cultural significance of migration for the region, as well as its impact on development, there are no detailed country analyses. The lack of readily available migration data (Kari Consultants Ltd., 2013; IOM, 2014) due to fragmented data collection and/or limited data collection and reporting capacity, may explain in part the absence of such studies. In addition, migration is a highly sensitive issue. In Barbados, discussions around the need for better management of migration have informed election campaigns. They have also heightened since the implementation of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Single Market and Economy (Niles, 2006; Brathwaite, 2014; Cumberbatch, 2016).

The paper therefore sheds light on a cultural phenomenon of significance to Barbados. Moreover, a discussion on the policy response provides insight into intra-regional dynamics impacting migration, such as the implementation of freedom of movement within the context of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the use of amnesties to manage undocumented migration. The main finding of the paper is that there is evidence to support that migration has been mainstreamed into development. Despite the absence of a migration and/or diaspora engagement policy, migration is considered to varying degrees in development policy. However, in keeping with the discussion above, there is need for timely collection, analysis and reporting of disaggregated migration data to support evidence-based policy development.

Following this introduction are three sections. The first section presents selected political and economic indicators for Barbados before discussing the migration context, including recent migration trends in Barbados (Section 2). The second section outlines the policy landscape in Barbados, including an analysis of the impact of the government's response to migration and lessons learned (Section 3). The paper concludes with a reflection on future developments that may shape migration policy in Barbados (Section 4).

## 2. Migration context

Barbados is a source, transit and destination country, of mixed migratory flows. Inward migration includes undocumented (intra-regional) migrants, highly skilled migrants and individuals who have been trafficked (IOM, 2017; IOM, 2013). More recently, it has been a recipient of displaced persons, following climate-related disasters in Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda (IOM, 2019). However, it has minimal experience with asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2012; 2017). Emigration has become an important pathway to social mobility for both Barbadian men and women.

Migration has played an important role in Barbados' national development since its settlement by the British. Its significance in pre- and post-emancipation Barbados has been discussed in several studies (Brown, 2005; Roberts, 1955; Lowenthal, 1957; Ebanks et al., 1975). This section provides a brief overview of some factors that have historically influenced migration policy. Despite the country's social, economic and political evolution, some enduring structural issues continue to shape the articulation of migration policy. This section also outlines the legal framework for the governance of migration in Barbados.<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1. Country overview

Barbados is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) in the Eastern Caribbean, whose shores are washed by both the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. Today, with a population of 269,806 (Barbados Statistical Service, 2022), it remains one of the most densely populated islands in the world (World Bank, 2021). The country has maintained a stable parliamentary democracy since its independence in 1966. On 30 November 2021, Barbados transitioned to a Republic, when it removed the Queen of England as the Head of State. The change will transform nearly 400 years of colonial ties with the United Kingdom (Faulconbridge & Ellsworth, 2021).

The colonization by the British shaped Barbados' economic trajectory, which was until the 1960s grounded in the export of sugar. Today, the economy is more diversified, but heavily dependent on tourism (Downes, 2001; International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2019). Significant investment in social protection, health and education has yielded benefits for human development (Downes, 2001; Inter-American Development Bank [IDB], 2010a). Barbados is consistently ranked among the countries with high human development and, in 2019, was ranked 58 of 189 countries, on the Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2020). Its life expectancy at birth is higher than most countries in the region at 77.6 (UNDP, 2022). Thus, a high percentage of its population is aged, with an estimated 12.9 percent of its population over the age of 65 years old; 8 of the top 10 causes of death are attributable to non-communicable diseases (World Health Organization [WHO] 2018). Among Barbados' unemployed, 28 percent are youth, though they make up 14 percent of the population in Barbados (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States [OECS] Commission and United Nations Children's Fund, 2020).

A high-income country, Barbados' economy is also currently characterized by substantial debt—the public debt was as high as 142.1 percent of GDP in 2021, per IMF statistics. The 2008–2009 recession exacerbated previous

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix A1 summarizes the methodology and sources of data used for this policy document.

years of marginal growth, stifling recovery and leading to high fiscal deficits (Deyal et al., 2019; Anthony et al., 2020). For the first time, in 2018 and 2019, Barbados was forced to restructure its domestic and external debts, respectively (Wigglesworth, 2018). To improve its economic performance, the Government of Barbados entered an arrangement for an Extended Fund Facility with the IMF. At present, economic indicators suggest positive developments with an increase in the international reserves, reduction of the fiscal deficit and introduction of key structural reforms, although the COVID-19 pandemic significantly slowed economic recovery due to its negative impact on the tourism industry (IMF, 2021).

An ageing population (with an average life expectancy at birth of 79.2 in 2019) and high rate of unemployment (at 14.1 percent in 2021) are two key demographic issues facing Barbados. These are further complicated by the economic challenges of high debt and fiscal constraints. Together these contribute to the factors influencing outward migration from Barbados, despite substantial social investment by the government in health care and education. In addition, emigration (and immigration) is taking place during a context of high environmental vulnerability for Barbados, due to the impact of COVID-19, as well as disasters in the form of tropical storms and volcanic ash (IMF, 2021).

## 2.2. Brief history of migration

Historically, migration policy has largely been devised in response to the over or under supply of labour. Outward and inward migration have had a significant impact on population, labour productivity and other key dimensions of the socio-economy. Between 1950 and 1970, Barbados experienced a wave of emigration, which had devastating effects on fertility, reducing the size and rate of growth of its population (Ebanks et al., 1975).

In the immediate post-emancipation era, migration was deterred by colonial authorities to ensure a ready supply of labour for sugar plantations. These were, however, eventually eased in the late 19th century (Brown, 2005; Duany, 1994). Increases in poverty and widespread drought were factors contributing to emigration to St. Croix, Antigua and Guyana (Brown, 2005; Brown et al., 2010; James, 1995). By the 1880s, 29,000 Barbadians, only 7000 of them women, had emigrated. The emigration of men resulted in the greater integration of women in the productive sector locally (Massiah, 1993).

During the early 20th century, the government encouraged recruitment of contract labour for the Panama Canal. The reserve supply of labour, and reported strong work ethic of Barbadians, was sufficient to enable the Canal Commission to undertake recruitment almost exclusively from Barbados (Lowenthal, 1957). In addition to Central America, Brazil was also a popular destination among Barbadians during this period (Putnam, 2013; Chamberlain, 2005).

Between 1955 and 1971, 27,000 Barbadians emigrated to the UK. Several factors encouraged emigration including a major storm (1955), local advertisements about job opportunities in the UK, and overpopulation and under-employment in Barbados. In the UK, Barbadians (and other Caribbean emigrants) contributed to the development of the London Transport as conductors and drivers and to the National Health Service as nurses, enabling reconstruction of post-war Britain. Emigration followed extensive work on the part of the government to secure placements for Barbadian nationals in the UK (Chamberlain, 2005).

In North America, Barbadians emigrated to the USA, primarily to cities such as New York and Massachusetts (Putnam, 2013) and in the early 20th century were the most populous group of West Indians. However, the introduction of the 1924 Immigration Act, and later the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act, slowed emigration from the region

(Chamberlain, 2005). In 1980 and 1990, there were 26,478 and 43,105 Barbadians, living in the USA, representing 0.5 percent and 0.6 percent of the US population, respectively (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America [UNECLAC], 2001).

Between 1968 and 1987, over 11,000 Barbadians emigrated to Canada, 40 percent of them between 1968 and 1972 (Carney & Dutt, 2004). While this wave of emigration was in response to overpopulation in Barbados (Carney & Dutt, 2004), it continued a pattern of migration that began with sponsored emigration of (male) carpenters and mechanics to Nova Scotia in the late 19th century (Flynn, 2013). In the 1950s, women—including secretaries, teachers and nurses—emigrated to participate in a scheme for domestic workers (Walker, 1984). Many used the opportunity for social mobility and to launch careers in professional fields (Taylor, 2014).

In terms of intra-regional migration, current patterns mimic historical flows, in particular migration (to and from Guyana, as well as the Eastern Caribbean (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UN DESA], 2021; Brown et al., 2010). Circa 1990, Barbados was the third most popular destination in the region, after Trinidad and Tobago and the US Virgin Islands. The largest share of emigrants originated from St. Vincent and the Grenadines (28 percent), St. Lucia (25 percent) and Guyana (20 percent) (UNECLAC, 2001 citing Mills, 1997; see also Table 3).

The above indicates that geo-physical, demographic and geo-political events have historically shaped government policy on emigration. In the post-emancipation period, the primary policy response has been the encouragement of emigration, including government endorsement of recruitment of Barbadians and the issuance of loans to support relocation (Chamberlain, 2005). Dependence on migrant labour for support of key sectors has at times resulted in an open migration policy. For example, labour was recruited from neighbouring islands such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines to support cultivation of sugar. Between 1967 and 1981, approximately 8200 workers were recruited by the Barbados Sugar Producers' Association (Marshall 1984, p. 66, Table 1; see also United States Department of Labor, 1971). It does appear, however, that Barbados is not always receptive to low skilled immigration (Mazza & Sohnen, 2011). For example, for four years after 1975, the government did not allow the importation of migrants in the sugar sector (Marshall, 1984). It is also reported to have instituted measures to manage undocumented migration, due to its high population density around the same period (United Nations, 1982).

Section 2.d provides details on migration trends that have characterized Barbados since 2000. This overview is, however, prefaced by a discussion of the international, regional, and national legal contexts. The section highlights (non-)ratification of key international treaties, freedom of movement provisions to which Barbados is obligated as signatory to the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas and regulations regarding citizenship, residence and stay, and entry into Barbados.

## 2.3. Legal context

### International

Insight into government policy on migration can be observed through the country's ratification of international (and regional) treaties, adherence to the principles enshrined in these treaties, as well as the introduction and implementation of legislation at the national level. Of the five main international agreements (IOM, 2019) that govern migration, Barbados has not ratified three. Non-ratification of these treaties is explained by a variety of factors including weak capacity to fulfil reporting requirements, as well as the pace of ratification regionally and

globally (Dietrich Jones, 2021). In terms of the latter, like most countries in the English-speaking Caribbean, it has not ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (1990).<sup>3</sup>

Although it succeeded to the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons in 1972, Barbados has not ratified the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. In addition, it is one of the few countries in the sub-region that has not ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (Addy, 2003; Dietrich Jones, 2020). In the absence of local frameworks or legislation regarding asylum, the government cooperates with the UNHCR, who undertakes refugee status determination (UNHCR, 2017; 2012). In 2014, Barbados ratified the 2000 Protocols Relating to the Trafficking in Persons and the Prevention of the Smuggling of Migrants. It is the most recent signatory to the Protocols among the CARICOM member states (Dietrich Jones, 2014).

Barbados regularly participates in the Caribbean Migration Consultations (CMC), a consultative forum on mobility issues coordinated by the International Organization for Migration and other UN agencies. In 2014, it endorsed the Brazil Declaration, during a meeting to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the (non-binding) Cartagena Declaration (UNHCR, 2017). It also voted for the adoption of the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in 2018 (United Nations Digital Library, 2018).

The above suggests that there is limited entrenchment of a rights-based approach to migration, due to the non-ratification of key international instruments on migration. While non-ratification ultimately impacts the domestication of treaties and thus the legislative and policy landscape, it does not preclude the Barbadian State's responsibility to protect refugees and migrants. Barbados is party to several (binding) international instruments with provisions governing the protection of (vulnerable) migrants. These include the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN Treaties Database, 2022; United Nations, 2012).

## Regional

At the regional level, Barbados is a member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), an organization designed to improve functional cooperation between its members. CARICOM was established in 1973 with the signature of the Treaty of Chaguaramas. The Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas expanded the areas of cooperation between CARICOM states and made provision for freedom of movement of community nationals (RTC, 2001).<sup>4</sup> The CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) was envisioned to improve movement of factors of production to enhance the competitiveness of member states (CARICOM Secretariat, n.d.).

The CSME offers CARICOM migrants several mobility opportunities including definite entry/stay of six months (facilitation of travel), indefinite stay or free movement for specific categories of skilled nationals (CARICOM Skilled Nationals/CSNs), and rights of establishment (RoE) for persons offering services or wishing to establish businesses (CARICOM Secretariat, 2017). Ten categories—university graduates; artistes; musicians; sportspersons; media workers; nurses; teachers; artisans with a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ); holders of associate degrees or comparable qualification; and household domestics with a Caribbean Vocational Qualification (CVQ) or equivalent qualification—are designated CSNs within the context of the CSME (CARICOM Secretariat, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> Barbados has, however, ratified 8 of 11 fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022).

<sup>4</sup> Through the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, the Community has aimed to deepen integration in the region, with the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. The CSME was devised as the mechanism to facilitate movement of these factors of production.

## National

At the national level, migration is governed by several pieces of legislation: The Constitution of Barbados, the Barbados Citizenship Act (Cap. 186), the Barbados Immigration Act (Cap. 190) and the Caribbean Community (Movement of Skilled Nationals) Act. The Minister with responsibility for Immigration holds discretionary powers to make decisions on matters such as citizenship, work permits and extensions of stay. Gaps in legislation have resulted in frequent use of the discretionary powers by the minister (Ministry of Labour and Immigration, 2009).

The Constitution is the principal instrument governing the acquisition of Barbadian citizenship. Citizenship is conferred by birth, descent, registration and naturalization (Innis, 1991) as per Sections 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of the Constitution. In the case of registration, while Barbadian men may pass on citizenship to their wives, there is no corresponding right for the husband of a Barbadian woman. Barbados is one of the few countries in the region with inherent discrimination in relation to the citizenship rights conferred by women (World Bank 2015; Platanova & Gény, 2017).

Section 5 of the Immigration Act (as a complement to Section 3 and 6 of the Constitution) addresses permanent residence of non-Barbadians. Non-nationals may apply for residence after an (uninterrupted) five-year stay. This period should not include a period of confinement, imprisonment, deportation or expulsion (Immigration Act, Cap. 190).

Individuals desirous of working in Barbados must hold a permit. The website of the Barbados Immigration Department indicates that, “All non-nationals desirous of working in Barbados are required to register with immigration prior to commencing employment” (“Work permits,” 2011). The website further distinguishes between short-term and long-term work permits; the former is valid for up to 11 months and the latter for up to three years. In both instances, employers make applications on behalf of the prospective employee. Employers must conduct a labour market needs test and provide proof that no local employee can or is willing to do the position being filled (“Work permit,” 2011).

As part of its tourism product marketability, visas are not required for most nationalities entering Barbados. Single and multiple entry visas for non-exempt nationalities are processed by Barbadian Embassies and Consulates ahead of arrival (“Visa requirement,” 2011). Visa requirements appear to be linked to security concerns in origin states, and reciprocity of entry requirements for Barbadian nationals.<sup>5</sup> Requests for extensions of stay may be submitted to the Immigration Department for a fee (“Visa requirement,” 2011). All individuals must be able to prove that they will not be a charge on public funds. In addition, the Immigration Act contains a list of prohibited persons, for whom entry into Barbados is proscribed.<sup>6</sup> In 2019, visa requirements for several countries spread across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East were waived. The lifting of restrictions is part of a strategy to deepen engagement with the African continent to boost trade and tourism (Pilé, 2019).

With respect to entry into Barbados, there are therefore two policy regimes: (1) The CSME regime, which addresses the free movement of CARICOM nationals; and (2) the national policy regime, which governs entry (and exit) of third-country nationals and non-exempt CARICOM nationals (Haitians). Table 1 below summarizes both frameworks.

5 See list available here: [www.foreign.gov.bb/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Updated-visa-list-August-2022.pdf](http://www.foreign.gov.bb/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Updated-visa-list-August-2022.pdf). Based on a review of the list, tourists may remain in Barbados between 28 and 90 days, depending on the country of origin.

6 [www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b50828.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b50828.html)

**Table 1.** National and regional regimes governing migration in Barbados

	REGIONAL (CSME)		NATIONAL
TYPE OF REGIME	Freedom of movement	Facilitation of travel	Discretionary migration
CONDITIONS FOR MOBILITY	Skills/service provider certification (CSN or RoE)	CARICOM/CSME member state national passport	Work permit required for non-certified CARICOM nationals and all third-party nationals  Visa for non-exempt countries (specific to member states)
DURATION OF STAY	Indefinite stay	Definite entry	Tied to duration of work permit/visa
LEGISLATION	Caribbean Community (Movement of Skilled Nationals) Act  Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas	Caribbean Community (Movement of Skilled Nationals) Act  Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas  Grande Anse Declaration	Immigration Act, Cap. 190

Source: Adapted from Dietrich Jones (2022).

It is not clear the degree to which the policy landscape has shaped inward migration to and outward migration from Barbados. Studies have suggested that non-nationals' and returning nationals' decision to travel to Barbados relates to issues such as patriotism, quality of life, proximity to origin country, job opportunities and level of economic development relative to other islands in the (sub-)region (Gmelch & Gmelch, 1995; Dietrich Jones, 2014). Lack of understanding of the regulations governing entry have also had an impact on migrants' mobility decisions within the context of the CSME (Wickham et al., 2004; Dietrich Jones, 2014). The upcoming section discusses immigration and emigration, providing key statistics about the major trends that characterize the island.

## 2.4. Immigration trends: 2000–2020

**Table 2.** Foreign-born population in Barbados (2010), select countries

	AGE GROUP							Total all ages
	0–19 years	20–24 years	25–34 years	35–44 years	45–54 years	55–64 years	65 and over	
Total Foreign Countries	6,018	1,800	5,297	6,349	5,718	4,232	3,861	33,275
Male	3,146	882	2,468	2,853	2,409	1,575	1,500	14,833
Female	2,872	918	2,829	3,496	3,309	2,207	2,361	179,992
Total CARICOM Countries	1,312	772	2,948	3,276	2,816	1,920	1,762	14,806
Male	625	372	1,356	1,434	1,088	728	619	6,222
Female	687	400	1,592	1,842	1,728	1,192	1,143	8,584
United Kingdom	314	73	202	703	667	233	197	2,389
Male	162	37	68	302	294	93	84	1,040
Female	52	36	134	401	373	140	113	1,349
United States	552	59	97	79	58	54	86	985
Male	294	25	38	28	16	19	34	454
Female	258	34	59	51	42	35	52	531
Canada	167	38	104	144	81	69	53	656
Male	90	19	42	64	33	27	14	289
Female	77	19	62	80	48	52	39	367
India	24	11	83	86	76	83	78	441
Male	9	3	42	46	40	38	37	215
Female	15	8	41	40	36	45	41	226
Other LAC Countries (exc. Cuba)	32	13	44	43	30	38	55	255
Male	10	7	21	12	6	14	12	82
Female	22	6	23	31	24	24	43	173

Source: Barbados Statistical Services, 2013.

**Table 3.** CARICOM nationals resident in Barbados, by country of birth

COUNTRY	1990	2000	2010*	% Change, 1990–2000	% Change, 2000–2010
Bahamas	54	53	47	–2	–12
Dominica	446	410	321	–8	–27
Grenada	559	504	371	–10	–35
Guyana	2,529	4,349	6,277	58	69
Jamaica	615	844	947	27	21
St. Lucia	3,279	2,805	2,073	–16	–35
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	3,635	3,791	2,964	4	–27
Trinidad and Tobago	1,829	1,730	1,419	–5	–21
Other CARICOM	641	605	387	–6	–56

Source: Author's calculations based on Barbados Statistical Service (1990; 2013) and CCDP (2009).

## Work and study permits

Relocation for the purposes of family and work under the CSME are the two primary categories of entry for permanent migrants to Barbados (OAS, 2017).<sup>7</sup> In 2015, these two categories represented over 80 percent of entrants. For temporary migrants, study migration is the primary category. Among temporary migrants to Barbados, 43 percent have travelled for the purpose of study (OAS, 2017). Study migration is an important part of the migration landscape in Barbados due to the location of one of the regional campuses of the University of the West Indies, as well as other institutions of higher learning (UNECLAC, 2001). Between 2015 and 2019, an average of 750 student permits per year were issued, and 1,300 were issued in 2019 (IDB, 2021). These annual averages far eclipse the total number of permits issued to CARICOM skilled nationals over the same five-year period. Overall, 566 permits were issued to CARICOM Skilled Nationals (CSNs), and 56 were issued for persons seeking Rights of Establishment (RoE). Most of these permits were issued to women (IDB, 2021).

Relative to its population, Barbados has a high rate of issuance of work permits, compared to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean; only a marginal percentage of permits allows for permanent residence. Figures available do not distinguish between short-term and long-term work permits; however, 5127 work permits were issued in 2019. This represents an average of 17.53 percent of the population. However, only 2 percent of these were issued for CSNs or RoE (IDB, 2021). Notwithstanding, in 2017, 33 percent of persons moving under facilitation of travel within the context of the CSME arrived in Barbados (IOM, 2019). In 2017 the top five categories of work permits were issued to carpenters, agricultural workers, masons, technicians and engineers (Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Development, 2018).

**Table 4.** Work permits issued, 2015–2019

Work permits	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total	5,268	5,082	5,669	4,005	5,127
Extra-regional migrants	2,561	2,429	2,819	1,992	2,898
LAC migrants	2,707	2,653	2,850	2,013	229
CSNs/RoE*	113	98	214	179	104

\*Figure includes dependents.  
Source: IDB, 2021.

Although migrants require CARICOM skilled certificates or work permits to work in Barbados, the practice of overstay has resulted in a population of undocumented migrants from the CARICOM region (Dietrich Jones, 2014). In 2009 the government declared levels of undocumented migration ‘unacceptably high’ (Thompson, 2009) but did not provide statistics regarding the undocumented population. However, earlier estimates suggested that about half of the Guyanese population living in Barbados was undocumented (“Guyanese, British and Americans among illegal immigrants,” 2005). These migrants work primarily in the care, construction and hospitality sectors (Dietrich Jones, 2014; Dietrich Jones, 2020). Some are educated up to the secondary level or hold certification in vocational skills or in areas such as teaching (Dietrich Jones, 2014).

There is also a cadre of highly skilled nationals attributable to the presence of regional (and international) organizations, and transnational corporations in the financial, telecommunications and tourism sectors. While

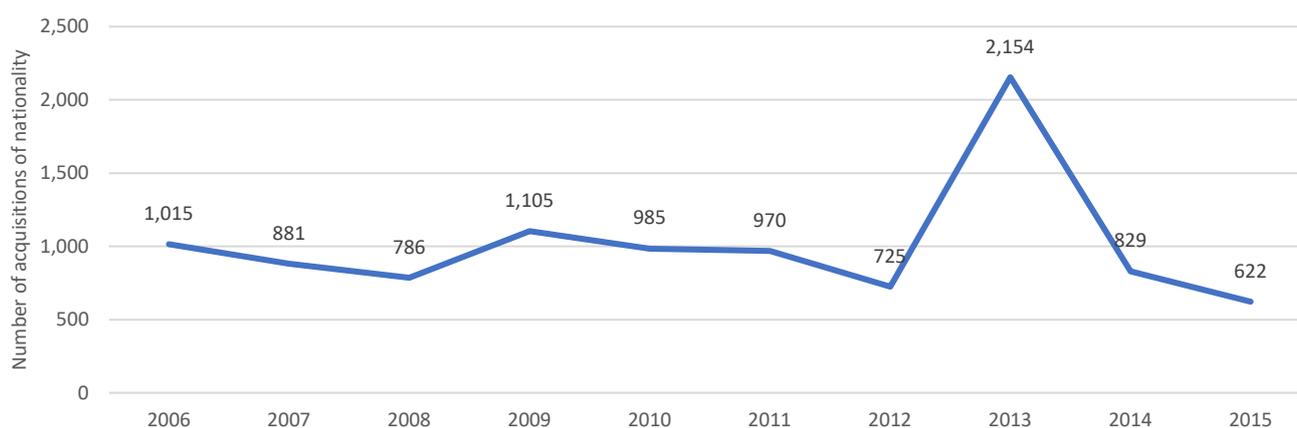
<sup>7</sup> Permanent migrants are defined as those who have been granted citizenship or who have relocated to Barbados for the purposes of work under the CSME.

foreign direct investment (FDI) in these sectors have contributed to local employment, management of FDI enterprises originates from third countries (De Groot & Ludeña, 2014; UNECLAC, 2001). In Barbados, there is a higher proportion of immigrants in higher end positions than locals in similar positions (Fraser & Uche, 2010).<sup>8</sup> This is consistent with previous decades, although the data indicate that most permits were issued to men (Pienkos, 2006). Current data indicates that most permits are issued to women (IDB, 2021). The emigration of skilled nationals (discussed in the upcoming section), as well as the shortage of certain categories of professionals due to the island's small population, explain this reality (cf. Banik & Bhaumik, 2006).

### Acquisition of nationality

Acquisitions of nationality have fluctuated in Barbados for the period under study. In 2006, 1015 individuals were awarded citizenship. Figures peaked to 2154 in 2013 and declined to 622 in 2015. Individuals born in the United States and the United Kingdom have consistently made up almost half of the acquisitions (OAS, 2017).

**Figure 1.** Acquisitions of nationality, 2006–2015



Source: OAS, 2017.

### Returning nationals

Recent data on returning nationals is not available. Estimates suggested that between 1966 and 1988, approximately 7300 returned to Barbados from the United Kingdom (Peach, 1991). According to Gmelch (2004), Barbados received more returnees than neighbouring islands due to its level of socio-economic development. The 2000 census reported 11,049 returning residents. Approximately 67 percent had returned from the United Kingdom (44.24 percent) and the United States (23.14 percent). Between 1990 and 2000, on average, 469 persons returned to Barbados annually. The majority, approximately 62 percent, were over the age of 55 (CCDP, 2009). This pattern of return migration is consistent with return of labour migrants upon retirement, across the region, a phenomenon that characterized the 1980s and 1990s (Byron & Condon, 1996). The cohort of returnees is also constituted by second-generation migrants (Potter, 2005; King & Christou, 2010), as well as individuals in the pre-retirement age seeking opportunities for entrepreneurship or employment (Byron, 2000; Potter, 2005). Among returnees in the pre-retirement age, men are more successful at obtaining jobs locally than women (Gmelch & Gmelch, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> This trend is peculiar to Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago; in Barbados, however, there is a higher proportion of immigrants than local born population across legal, professional and technical sectors (Fraser & Uche, 2010).

There is consensus in the literature that migrants face several obstacles to their resettlement in Barbados, including socio-cultural integration and adjustment to high cost of living (Potter, 2005; Phillips & Potter, 2009; Byron, 2000; Byron & Condon, 1996; Gmelch, 2004). Byron and Condon (1996) highlight preparedness for return, including purchase of land and strong social networks, as necessary for easing the integration process for return migrants. Negative perceptions regarding returnees (Gmelch, 2004; Potter, 2005) also highlight local tensions regarding migration. Migrants therefore express dissatisfaction upon their return home, although the rate of dissatisfaction appears to be inversely correlated to the duration of return (Gmelch, 2004). Local non-governmental organizations have been established to assist migrants with (re)integrating, including British Overseas Resettlement Association (BORA), the Northern Group for Returning Nationals, the National Resettlement and Development Council, the Association of Barbadian Resettlers from Britain and the Barbados Ex-Overseas and Friends Association (Potter, 2005; Byron 2000).

### Brain gains and economic development

Returnees have contributed to the economy through entrepreneurship and the introduction of innovative processes (Gmelch, 2004; Byron, 2000). For example, returnees have established small businesses including nursing homes, furniture factories and bookstores, creating employment (Byron 2000). While there are several studies that have documented the phenomenon of return migration, they are qualitative and not representative of the sample population. It is therefore difficult to quantify and specify the (economic) value of the contribution of returning migrants. Thus, for example, there is not readily available data on the economic value of pension inflows. Based on data from the UK Pensions and Overseas Benefits Directorate, Byron (2000) reported that £5,828,614 was transferred to 3083 pensioners in 1997. The figure represents only state pensions and would therefore not reflect private transfers. Notwithstanding, Byron notes that “the incomes of retired returnees make a significant and currently rising contribution to the local economies of Caribbean receiver countries” (2000, p. 168), especially with respect to the stability of foreign exchange reserves. However, current data would be required to determine whether return migration is on an upward or downward trend in Barbados, and thus the potential impact on pension flows. This data would also be useful for long-term social protection planning due to Barbados’ significant ageing population. At the time of writing there are ongoing debates in Barbados regarding the sustainability of the National Insurance Scheme (Gill, 2022).

Non-nationals have also contributed to the economic development of Barbados. As discussed below, the main sectors of economy include agriculture and services. Migrant labour was critical for the agricultural production of sugar (destined for export), up to the 1980s. In the contemporary era, migrant labour contributes to local food security in Barbados, which is heavily import dependent. Guyanese nationals have provided critical support to the sector (Niles, 2006; “Guyanese ill-treatment” 2016); this was recognized in the Comprehensive Review, and a proposal was made to formalize a temporary labour programme for agricultural workers (Ministry of Labour and Immigration, 2009).

Several projects of key importance to national development, have been undertaken with significant contributions from migrant labour. These include upgrades to the Grantley Adams International Airport and construction of the Kensington Oval. A construction boom, related to these large-scale infrastructural projects and residential and hotel developments, had resulted in shortages of skilled artisans such as masons and carpenters. Migrant labour, especially from Guyana and the Eastern Caribbean has helped to fill gaps in this sector, as well as in the garment industry (Dietrich Jones, 2014).

## Housing sector

There has been ongoing debate in Barbados regarding the impact of foreign ownership on the local housing market.<sup>9</sup> In 1998, a Special Select Committee of Parliament concluded that “foreign ownership neither harmed the economy nor dispossessed Barbadians” (Maynard, 2003, p.31). A decision was therefore taken not to restrict ownership of lands by non-nationals. However, there has been exponential increases in the cost of land between 1995 and 2005, in part because of purchases from returning residents and overseas buyers (World Bank, 2016). In 2021, a member of the government opposition issued calls for regulations regarding investment in lands by foreign nationals and corporations (“Keep more land for Bajans” 2021).

However, the impact is not solely negative. Byron (2000) indicates that remittances transformed the housing sector in Barbados, enabling purchase of land and the construction of homes for returning migrants. Greenidge and Moore (2009) suggest that the introduction of a policy to support return migration may have influenced remittances for investments in the real estate sector.

## Involuntarily returned migrants

Approximately 800 persons have been deported from the United States for administrative and criminal offences between 2000 and 2019 (US Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2022; 2011; United States Immigration and Naturalization Services, 2002). The figures are low relative to other Eastern Caribbean States and other countries in the region, such as Jamaica. Except for 2019, there was a noticeable reduction in the number of deportations from the US after 2013 (see Table 5). Earlier research indicates that while involuntarily returned migrants may participate in criminal activity once deported to Barbados, there is no evidence of systematic criminal activity (Griffin, 2000). Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime indicates that 13 percent of the involuntarily returned were subsequently charged with criminal offences between 1994 and 2000 (UNODC, 2007). The Immigration Department (and the Police Department) maintain a register of deportations (IOM, 2017).

**Table 5.** Administrative and criminal returns from the United States

YEAR	# of involuntarily returned migrants	YEAR	# of involuntarily returned migrants
1995–2000*	241	2010	44
2000	58	2011	41
2001	48	2012	50
2002	56	2013	26
2003	61	2014	12
2004	75	2015	12
2005	65	2016	14†
2006	46	2017	23
2007	40	2018	18
2008	44	2019	34
2009	48	Total (2000–2019)	819

Source: \* Griffin, 2000; United States Department of Homeland Security, 2022; 2011; United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, 2002.

† True figure not reported – ‘data withheld to limit disclosure’.

<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that this debate occurs in a historical context of dispossession of the majority of the Barbadian population and the geographical reality of high population density.

## Local perception of migrants

Empirical literature and documented cases in the media point to exclusion of non-nationals in Barbadian society (Wickham et al., 2004; Potter, 2005; Niles, 2006; Dietrich Jones, 2014). While this exclusion impacts migrants' daily lived experiences, travel to Barbados is also fraught due to the harsh treatment meted out to CARICOM nationals, in particular Jamaican and Guyanese nationals ("Guyanese ill-treatment," 2016). This includes summary detention and repatriation on arrival at the airport (Dietrich Jones, 2014). The Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) ruling on the Shanique Myrie case may have improved the job practice of immigration officials; however, media reports suggest discriminatory treatment of CARICOM Community nationals still occurs (Freedom House, 2016).

Polls conducted in the mid- to late-2000s signal local perceptions regarding the governments' management of migration, especially undocumented migration. In 2005, approximately 59 percent of individuals surveyed indicated that they did not support the (then) Prime Minister's tolerance towards undocumented migration (The Nation and Caribbean Development Research Services [CADRES], 2006). Following a change in government, another poll was conducted in 2009. In this instance, 70 percent of the population supported the government's (restrictive) stance on migration (The Nation and CADRES, 2009).

Immigration to Barbados is thus primarily characterized by inward migration from regional destinations and constituted by individuals of working age, the majority of whom are women. While policy has largely been receptive to migrants, restrictive approaches have been utilized to manage (undocumented) migration. Limited research and media reports suggest that there is xenophobia, especially against Guyanese migrants (Niles, 2006; Dietrich Jones, 2014). There are parallels between immigration and emigration—flows are constituted by labour migrants, more than 50 percent being women; however, emigration is outward looking, rather than intra-regional. The section below briefly discusses patterns in emigration, with an emphasis on the demographic and social challenges that arise from the high rate of skilled emigration.

## 2.5. Emigration trends: 2000–2020

Barbados is now characterized by a positive net migration rate of 2 percent (UNICEF, 2014). However, higher rates of inward migration are a feature of this century. Net migration between 1950 and 1989 is reflected in Table 6. Between 1985 and 1990, and 1990 and 2000, the migration rate was –3 percent and –1 percent respectively. The crude net migration rate is projected to remain positive into 2050 (UNICEF, 2014).

**Table 6.** Net migration, 1959–1989

Decade	Migration balance
1950–1959	–20.2
1960–1969	–38.2
1970–1979	–14.7
1989–1989	–10.7

Source: UNECLAC, 1998, p. 23.

Data on migrant stock indicate that emigration increased between 2000 and 2019. During this period, there was an 18 percent change in the number of emigrants. A higher percentage of women (on average 53 percent) emigrate (UN DESA, 2021). In 2013, Barbados was one of the countries with the highest emigration rates in the world, relative to its population, as well as due to the percentage of its skilled population among the emigrated. Earlier research indicates that the migration rate of the educated is highest among the tertiary educated. Although there was a marginal decline in brain drain between 1990 and 2000, 61 percent of the tertiary educated resided overseas (Docquier & Marfouk, 2004), while in 2013, this figure rose to 66 percent (World Bank, 2016). Similarly, in 2019, Barbados had one of the highest rates of emigration relative to its population. The rate is, however, lower than its regional counterparts, such as St. Kitts and Nevis, Suriname, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines (IOM, 2020, p.27).

**Table 7.** Emigration rates by educational attainment, 2000

	Migration rate (%)			
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	All
Antigua and Barbuda	6.0	35.9	70.9	36.7
Bahamas	1.5	12.1	36.4	12.2
Barbados	9.9	24.3	61.4	27.8
Dominica	8.0	60.6	58.9	32.1
Grenada	9.9	69.5	66.7	40.1
Haiti	2.5	27.5	81.6	10.2
Jamaica	8.3	30.0	82.5	29.0
St. Kitts and Nevis	10.3	37.1	71.8	38.5
St. Lucia	2.6	32.1	36.0	14.0
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	6.3	53.4	56.8	28.0
Trinidad and Tobago	6.1	20.6	78.4	23.7
Caribbean	<b>5.1</b>	<b>17.8</b>	<b>40.9</b>	<b>13.9</b>

Source: Docquier & Marfouk, 2004, p. 16.

Traditional migrant destinations of the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada remain the primary destinations of choice for Barbadian emigrants (Table 8). Barbados is among the top 10 countries with the highest emigration rates to Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) States (OECD & UN DESA, 2013). Approximately 5 percent of those emigrating travel to other countries in the region. Between 1990 and 2019 migrant stock increased in all three destination countries. However, there was a steep decline in migrant stock in Trinidad and Tobago, the main Caribbean destination between 1990 and 2015. The labour participation rate among Barbadian emigrants exceeds 80 percent for both men and women (OAS, 2017).

**Table 8.** Stock of Barbadians residents overseas and % change

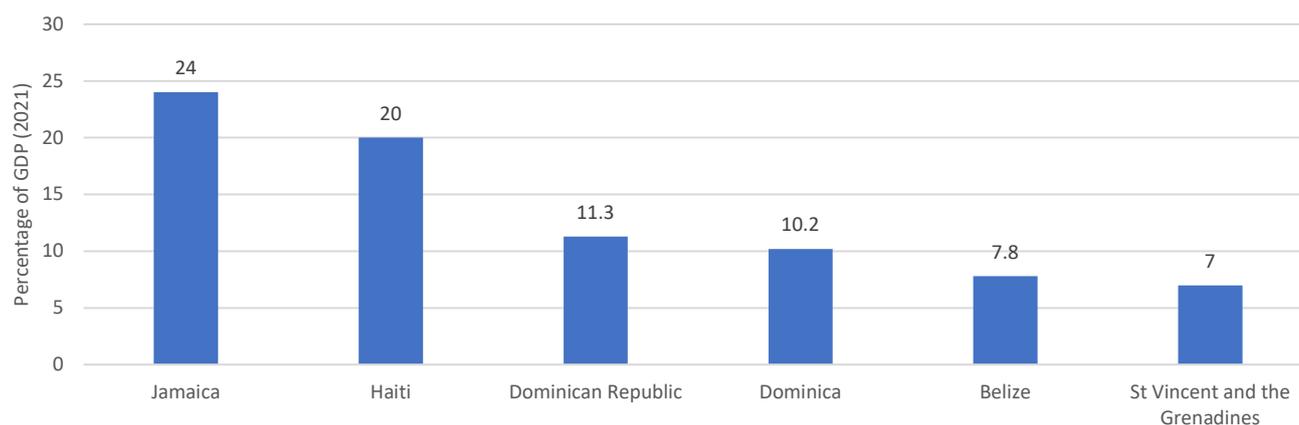
Region/Country	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	1990–2020 % change	2015–2020 % change
World	84,766	89,921	94,998	92,975	96,193	101,879	99,611	17.5	-2.3
Caribbean	4,544	4,657	4,464	4,654	4,225	4,354	4,578	0.7	5.1
United States	43,015	48,230	53,496	53,672	55,303	58,480	63,152	46.8	8.0
United Kingdom	21,736	21,135	20,891	18,665	19,706	25,586	26,622	22.5	4.0
Canada	14,225	14,373	14,862	14,688	15,460	14,008	15,011	5.5	7.2
Trinidad and Tobago	2,411	2,188	1,573	1,688	1,029	1,066	1,417	(58.8)	32.9

Source: UN DESA, 2021, rate of growth calculated by author.

## Remittances

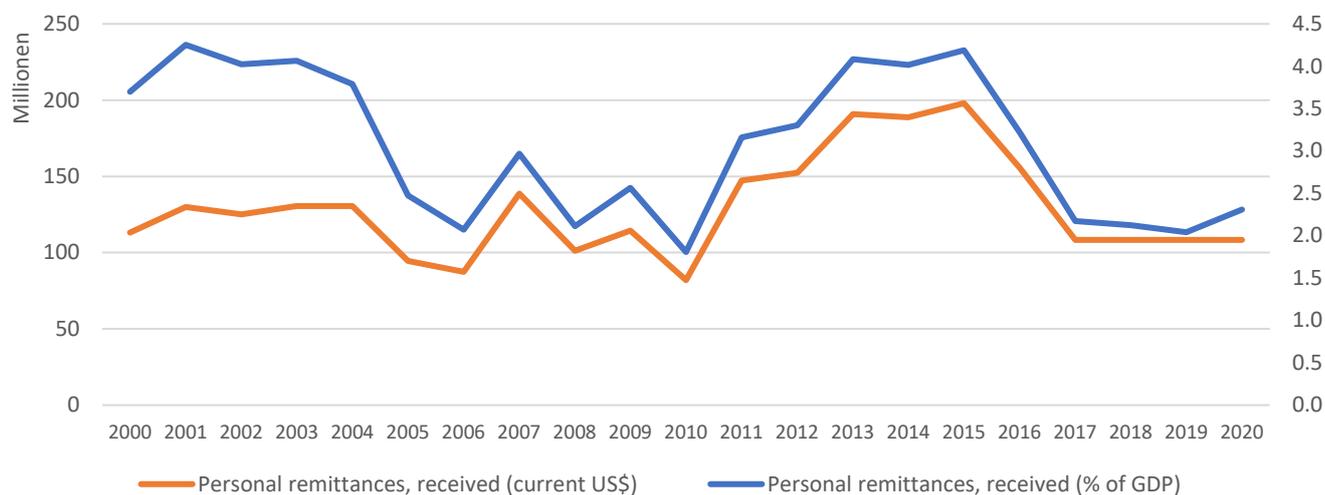
Between 1990 and 2019, remittances averaged approximately 3 percent of GDP (World Bank, 2021a). Compared with the rest of the Caribbean (see Figure 2), the level of remittances in Barbados is marginal (IDB, 2006). However, in the past, Barbados has had the second highest per capita remittances in the Latin American and Caribbean region, after Jamaica (Fajnzylbert & López, 2008). It is, however, important to note that remittances, although trending upwards, have fluctuated as demonstrated in Figure 3. Economic recession has impacted the outflow of remittances from abroad, affirming studies that demonstrate the cyclical nature of remittances with respect to the US market (see for example, Jackman, 2014). After the 2008 financial crisis, remittances fell by 33 percent (Lim & Simmons, 2015).

**Figure 2.** Top recipients of remittances in the Caribbean (2021)



Source: Adapted from World Bank (2022, p. 42).

**Figure 3.** Remittances to Barbados, 2000–2020



Source: World Bank (2021a).

Remittances have been a boost to external accounts in periods of decline of the real sector in Barbados. They have also assisted with financing of the fiscal deficit (World Bank, 2016; ECLAC, 2017; Campbell 2006). Remittances receipts have been more robust than FDI flows to Barbados, remaining stable or increasing during times of recession (UNCTAD, 2020). Notwithstanding the importance of these remittances, the government has not crafted policy to mobilize migrant remittances (Kirton & McLeod, 2006). There have, however, been steps taken to encourage remittances through compulsory deductions from salaries of seasonal agricultural workers, for example (Campbell, 2006).<sup>10</sup> Remittances originate primarily from the traditional migrant destinations. It has been estimated that about 50 percent of remittances to Barbados is from the United States, with less than 20 percent from the United Kingdom (Wood & Watson 2015). Research undertaken during the early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic indicates that 60 percent of remittances were received from the United States, 16 percent from the United Kingdom and 13 percent from Canada (IDB, 2020).

However, the relationship between remittances and GDP is not well established, due to limited studies. Campbell (2006) indicates that there is a positive relationship between remittances and real and foreign income, the real exchange rate and real unemployment. In a more recent study, Deonanan & Ramkisson (2018) argue that there is not a clear relationship between remittances and economic development in the long run. One study suggests that there is a negative and significant relationship between remittances and GDP growth. Remitters to Barbados are therefore responsive to falls in real GDP in the short term (Jackman, 2014). Mishra (2006) argues that emigration loss outweighs remittances.<sup>11</sup> Finally, Benhamou and Cassin (2018) indicate that low return on migration (remittances) encourages investment in physical expenditure rather than human capital. Further studies are required to explore the relationship between remittances and development/growth, as well as shifts in remittance flows from sending countries.

<sup>10</sup> The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations has criticized the mandatory 25 percent deduction, 5 percent of which is utilized by the government to cover administrative costs related to recruitment (Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations, 2019, p. 4).

<sup>11</sup> Emigration loss is defined as net welfare reduction due to changes in domestic supply of labour and wages induced by emigration.

In Barbados, remittances contribute to household income, supporting consumption, such as purchasing food and payment of utility bills (Wood & Watson, 2015), and other familial support, such as care to the elderly (Banik & Bhaumik 2006; Quashie & Zimmer, 2013). Remittances also support non-consumption activities such as investment in education, health and housing construction (Wood & Watson, 2015).

## Demographic challenges

Emigration has resulted in interlinked socio-economic challenges in Barbados, which have had implications for the design of immigration policy. Barbados is currently characterized by low rates of fertility. In 2009, 15 percent of the Barbadian population was over the age of 60 (UN, 2010 cited in Quashie & Zimmer, 2013; see also Banik & Bhaumik, 2006). The increase in the ageing population and low birth rate has raised concerns among policy makers regarding the potential economic burdens related to financing pensions for retired individuals, as well as ensuring ample supply of labour (King, 2020a). These are important considerations due to the current fiscal challenges. The government has therefore proposed reforms to the Immigration (and Citizenship) Act, including offering citizenship to second- and third-generation Barbadians and ensuring a more seamless transition for citizenship of CARICOM nationals (Rawlins-Bentham, 2020).

## Nurse and teacher migration

While this section focuses on nurse and teacher migration, it is important to highlight other employment categories that constitute skilled emigrants from Barbados. The data show that nurses and teachers make up a small percentage of emigrants when compared to other categories such as legislators, senior officials and managers, artisans, and technicians (see Table 9). There is also evidence of underemployment since 40 percent of the highly educated were employed in low- and medium-skilled jobs in 2006 in the OECD. Finally, the data also show that there are more women than men among the highly educated employed (OECD, 2012).

**Table 9.** Distribution of employment by occupation among Barbadians living in the OECD

	2000			2005/06		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Highly educated in low- and medium-skilled jobs (%)	35.6	33.7	34.5	38.8	41.7	40.6
Highly education employed (000)	7.2	10.3	17.5	8.6	13.1	21.7
<b>Distribution of employment by occupation (%), population 15+ years</b>						
Legislators, senior officials and managers	10.5	6.4	8.4	20.2	9.1	14.2
Professionals	11.3	13.9	12.6	15.7	10.0	12.6
Life science and health professionals	0.7	0.4	0.5	0.2	0.1	0.1
Teaching professionals	2.8	4.2	3.5	0.1	0.2	0.2
Technicians and associate professionals	11.6	22.0	16.8	11.6	16.7	14.3
Clerks	8.5	24.7	16.5	6.3	30.4	19.2
Service, shop and market sales workers	9.7	20.7	15.2	10.4	11.0	10.7
Skilled agricultural workers	0.6	0.0	0.3	1.3	14.0	8.2
Craft and related trades workers	17.2	0.7	9.0	10.6	1.9	6.0
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	15.0	3.2	9.1	12.9	1.7	6.9
Elementary occupations	15.5	8.4	12.0	7.4	5.2	6.2

Source: OECD, 2012, p. 101.

These figures are significant based on estimated costs to replace these workers. Barnett (1989) estimated that the overall cost to the government to replace skilled emigrants was US\$ 33 million, based on the emigration stock for the period 1976 to 1986. In terms of the financial and social costs of emigration, there has been much discourse around nurse and teacher migration among governments in the region and in the development community (Lewis, 2011). The World Bank (2009) estimated attrition rates among nurses to be about 8 percent with outward migration the primary explanatory factor. Three times as many nurses work overseas than in the English-speaking Caribbean (World Bank, 2009).

Although the nursing density in Barbados is high relative to other States in the region (PAHO, 2019), there is a shortage of nurses in Barbados. In a context of high disease burden—Barbados has a high rate of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)<sup>12</sup>—shortages can cripple the health sector resulting in poor health outcomes for vulnerable members of the population. It also has implications for the development of the medical tourism sector, a crucial element of Barbados’ economic diversification strategy.<sup>13</sup>

Nurses and other medical personnel have emigrated due to low wages and limited opportunities for career advancement (Buchan & Dovlo, 2004; Henry, 2022). In 2000, for example, 78 percent of Barbadian nurses worked overseas (OECD, 2007). However, nurse emigration has been a long-standing problem as agencies have been recruiting nurses well before independence. There were discussions to bond nurses to recover the investment in their education, but this did not materialize in policy (Lorde, 2007). In addition, nurse shortage is an issue impacting the wider CARICOM region (Hackett, 2018b; Salmon, 2007). St. Vincent and the Grenadines, for example, recently announced plans to bond nurse graduates to prevent emigration (“St Vincent Gov’t defends move to bond,” 2022).

In the past, under the auspices of the PAHO/WHO, Barbados contributed to the development of a managed migration programme to respond to the high rate of emigration across the region. It has, for example, sought to leverage the knowledge of Barbadian overseas nurses by facilitating short teaching visits (Salmon, 2007). In addition, to address the human resource constraint, especially for specialist and critical care nurses, the government has recruited labour from neighbouring countries, such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which has trained nurses to enable the exportation of their services (Aragón & El-Assar, 2018). In 2019 and 2021, the Government of Barbados collaborated with the Government of Ghana for an exchange of nurses to fill the shortage, which became acute during COVID-19. This initiative was intended to ensure adequate nurse-to-patient ratio, especially for nurses dedicated to treatment of NCDs (Mounsey, 2019; Gilkes, 2019; Smith, 2021a). Cuban intensive care nurses have also supported the response to COVID-19 (King, 2022; Springer, 2020).

Like nurse migration, teacher migration is not a recent phenomenon (see Taylor, 2014). The loss of teachers to the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom had an impact on the education sector in Barbados in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In the past, there were attempts at the national level to manage the emigration of nurses through human resource policy initiatives, as well as signature of memoranda of understanding with recruiting institutions. These measures included strict conditions related to the participation of nurses in recruitment programmes. At the multi-lateral level, Barbados collaborated with other Commonwealth nations to formulate a protocol on the recruitment of teachers (Rudder, 2012). There is no clear evidence that this remains a significant challenge as does nurse migration.

In summary, migration has yielded positive gains, as well as resulted in negative effects for Barbados. Positive outcomes relate to migrants’ contribution to national development through participation in the labour market

<sup>12</sup> Overall, 83 percent of deaths are due to NCDs (PAHO, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> Scarce human resources for the local health sector stretches capacity. It also has the potential to create health inequity by creating parallel systems of health care (Synder, Crooks & Johnson et al., 2013; Snyder, Crooks & Turner et al., 2015).

to support critical sectors, such as tourism and construction. The primary disadvantage has been the negative demographic effects of outward migration. High emigration of the skilled and tertiary educated has defined Barbados in the contemporary era, with significant impact on its demography. In addition to the increase in old-age dependency, emigration has exacerbated a deficit of skilled labour in sectors such as health care. The latter has significant implications within the context of the high rate of NCDs.

The government has crafted policy to address some of these development issues. In the following section, an overview is provided of these policy initiatives. The discussion bridges Section 2, by mapping the governments' policy agenda with key moments in Barbados' migration trajectory, and amendments to the legislative and policy framework. The mapping of the policy agenda is based on data submitted by the Barbadian government as part of the World Population Policies Survey. The survey is a tool used by UN DESA to monitor national governments' views on population policies and has been administered bi-annually by the Population Division of the UN DESA since 1963. Although there is some variation in the reporting formats for the surveys, the primary concern for this section is with data reported on the government's view of migration, as well as its policy approaches for the management of immigration and emigration.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Migration policy development and evolution

In the contemporary era, Barbados has a defined policy approach, which has been articulated to address high rates of skilled emigration, undocumented (inward) migration, human rights of migrant workers, and the attraction of high-net-worth individuals. Migration policy in post-independence Barbados has been characterized by a combination of restrictive and liberal regimes with respect to immigration (Dietrich Jones, 2014; 2022). Results of the World Population Policies survey provide a snapshot of the government's perspective on emigration and immigration, as well as steps taken to encourage or control mobility over the past 20 years. The policy approach has shifted from one of maintenance of immigration, to policy directed at lowering immigration. The latter, which has defined the approach (since 2011), also needs to be considered with the government's view that highly skilled migration be encouraged. On the other hand, the main view is that emigration has been too high (see Table 10).<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See [esa.un.org/poppolicy/about\\_database.aspx](https://esa.un.org/poppolicy/about_database.aspx)). Definitions of the variables that constitute the survey can be found at [https://population.un.org/poppolicy/img/Definitions\\_Policy\\_Variables.pdf](https://population.un.org/poppolicy/img/Definitions_Policy_Variables.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> For a copy of the survey, see [esa.un.org/PopPolicy/inquiry/en/UN%2012th%20Inquiry%20Module%20III%20International%20Migration.pdf](https://esa.un.org/PopPolicy/inquiry/en/UN%2012th%20Inquiry%20Module%20III%20International%20Migration.pdf).

**Table 10.** Barbados' response to United Nations inquiry among Governments on Population and Development (International Migration)

Year of survey	Immigration			Emigration		
	View on immigration	Policy on immigration	Policy on temporary workers	Highly skilled migration	View on emigration	Policy on emigration
2001	Satisfactory	Lower	n.d.	-	Satisfactory	No intervention
2003	Satisfactory	No intervention	n.d.	-	Satisfactory	No intervention
2005	Satisfactory	Maintain	Maintain	Raise	Satisfactory	No intervention
2007	Satisfactory	Maintain	Maintain	Raise	Too high	No intervention
2009	Satisfactory	Maintain	Maintain	Raise	Too high	No intervention
2011	Too high	Lower	Maintain	Raise	Too high	Lower
2013	*	Lower	-	Raise	*	Lower
2015	*	Lower (to meet labour demands in certain sectors of the economy and to safeguard employment opportunities for nationals)	-	Raise	*	Lower
2017	*	Lower (to meet labour demands in certain sectors of the economy and to safeguard employment opportunities for nationals)	-	-	*	Lower

n.d.= no data available. \*Data on the variable 'view on emigration' and 'view on immigration' not available for participating countries in the reports for 2013–2017.  
Source: Population Division, UN DESA, 2001–2017.

The Barbadian government drafted legislation to regulate the recruitment of workers for overseas employment. In the Emigration Act, 1904, (the possibility of) prohibitions against emigration were included. Despite high rates of skilled emigration, migration controls have not been introduced recently. One justification is the anticipated remittances to be repatriated by emigrants (DFID Resource Health Centre, 2004 citing draft Nursing Strategy for Barbados; Lorde, 2007). This suggests that while remittances are low relative to other jurisdictions, the flows are an important resource for left-behind members of emigrant households. In addition, the government has actively encouraged emigration to address unemployment among vulnerable populations through bilateral initiatives for seasonal employment.

Overall, the policy response to immigration is slow. For example, the Special Residence and Entry Permit was introduced in 2013, approximately three years after an articulation in the Comprehensive Review of Immigration Policy and Proposals for Legislative Reform, and after several years of the government's reporting a desire to increase the level of skilled immigration. The pace of change is influenced by the time required for introduction of new legislation or amendments, as well the nature of the political process—the dominant political parties have generally taken opposed stances on migration (Girvan, 2013).

Several policy initiatives have been undertaken within the last decade. The policy response, which seeks to better manage migration whilst maximizing its benefits, is commensurate with steps being taken by other states globally. It is also in keeping with several realities that have confronted Barbados as a post-colonial Caribbean SIDS. The upcoming section discusses key legislative changes and some distinctive and emergent issues.

**Figure 4.** Timeline of major legislative and policy initiatives

2001	Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas (Ratification)
2004	Cartagena Declaration (Endorsement)
2006	Implementation of the CSME
2009	Comprehensive Review of Immigration Policy
2009	Extraordinary amnesty
2010	Inaugural Diaspora Conference
2011	Establishment of the CSME Accreditation Council
2013	Special Entry and Residence Permit
2014	Palermo Protocols (Ratification)
2014	CARICOM Agreement on Social Security (Ratification)
2015	Migrant Labour Protocol
2016	Anti-Trafficking Legislation
2018	Immigration (Reform) Bill
2018	Haitian visa requirement waived
2019	CSME Protocol on Contingent Rights (Ratification)
2019	Haitian visa policy reversed
2020	Year of the Diaspora/‘We Gatherin’ campaign’
2020	Welcome Stamp/Digital Nomad Visa

### 3.1. National policy agenda

#### Revisions to the Immigration Act (Cap. 190)

The Immigration Act (Cap 190) is a feature of Barbados’ pre-independence political experience, as it was promulgated in 1953 (Immigration Act, Cap 190). Since that time there have been several revisions, including since 2000. These include the 2014 amendment to provide for (more severe) penalties for breaches of the Immigration Act (Immigration (Amendment) Bill, 2014); the 2016 amendment to make fuller provision for the prevention of smuggling of persons, through criminalization of the offence (Immigration (Amendment) Bill, 2016); and the 2018 amendments, which revised the list of Prohibited Persons (Immigration (Amendment) Bill, 2018). The amendments suggest securitization of migration management as a policy approach (cf. Brathwaite, 2014). They are consistent with other amendments to allow for submission and receipt of advance passenger information and the operation of automated passport kiosks.

### Special Entry and Residence Permit (2013)

Consistent with the aspiration to attract high net worth individuals and highly skilled migrants, the government introduced the Special Entry and Residence Permit (SERP) in 2013 (also one of the proposals included in the Comprehensive Review). Permits are awarded for five-year intervals to persons who fall in four categories: (i) individuals with investment in Barbados of at least US\$ 2,000,000 (and with a net worth in excess of US\$ 5,000,000); (ii) owners of property in Barbados valued at least US\$ 300,000; (iii) persons in possession of special skills critical to the development of Barbados; and (iv) parents or grandparents of citizens of Barbados. Through SERP, permit holders are granted definite residence (indefinite for persons over the age of 60), rather than citizenship (Dentons 2020).

As a programme enabling residence in Barbados for non-nationals, the SERP is distinct from the Citizenship by Investment Programmes offered by neighbouring countries of the Organization of the Eastern Caribbean States (OECs). Barbados is one of few Eastern Caribbean countries (the other being St. Vincent and the Grenadines) that does not offer Citizenship by Investment (CIP). It is unlikely that CIP may be pursued as a policy option by Barbados due to recent steps, which have accelerated in response to the war in Ukraine, to implement legislation in Europe and the United States. Proposed legislation would have punitive effects for countries that offer CIP (Dempsey, 2022).

### Migrant Labour Protocol (2015)

Barbados does not have an explicit policy to address migrant integration (UN DESA, 2017). This is probably due to the low level of fractionalization in the society (Prasad et. al, 2013), as well as low numbers of asylum seekers, who would (ordinarily) require tailored interventions.<sup>16</sup> However, the Constitution of Barbados provides for equal treatment of non-nationals, protection of their fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as protection from forced labour and discrimination (Lorde, 2007).

In 1967, Barbados ratified ILO Convention 97 (Migration for Employment (Revised), 1949). Despite Barbados being a signatory to the Convention, migrants have faced discrimination in the labour market, including unfair remuneration and withholding of identity documents (International Trade Union Confederation, 2008; Foster, 2018). Thus, in 2015, the government finalized a Migrant Labour Protocol informed by the decent work agenda, to address discrimination and abuse of migrant workers' rights. The Protocol was developed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development, in consultation with public and private sector stakeholders. The document is a compilation of all relevant labour laws in operation in Barbados and is to serve as a guide to employers and employees. In 2017 the government initiated a sensitization campaign, to improve public awareness of the Protocol (Foster, 2018; Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development, 2019; Carrington, 2017).

### Anti-trafficking legislation and policy (2016)

For the past three years Barbados has been ranked as Tier 2 Watch List in the United States Department of State Trafficking in Persons reports (United States Department of State, 2021).<sup>17</sup> Like other countries in the region, it is a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking (Haynes 2019; Durbin & St. George, 2013). Its porous borders and limited resources make it difficult to manage human trafficking and other types of undocumented

<sup>16</sup> In 2017 the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reported four refugees in Barbados (UNHCR, 2017). In 2019, there was one reported case in the media of a Haitian national seeking asylum (Wedderburn, 2019).

<sup>17</sup> Barbados avoided demotion to Tier 3, which is automatic after two years consistent ranking at Tier 2 Watch List, on the basis of anti-trafficking efforts (United States Department of State, 2021).

migration (Khonje, 2015). Young women, in particular migrants from Guyana, Jamaica, Haiti and Venezuela, are vulnerable to human trafficking (United States Department of State, 2021; Haynes, 2019). Individuals have been trafficked for commercial sex, as well as for work in the construction, garment, domestic and agricultural sectors (IOM, 2010). Despite enacting legislation to prevent trafficking in persons in 2016, there have been no prosecutions (United States Department of State, 2021).

Legislation against Trafficking in Persons has been enshrined in local laws with the 2016 Trafficking in Persons Prevention Act (UNHCR, 2017). This is in keeping with international best practices to introduce discrete legislation that criminalizes the crime of human trafficking and to domesticize ratification of the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. A National Anti-trafficking Action Plan was approved by the Cabinet in March 2021 (United States Department of State, 2021; Carrington, 2021).

### **Immigration Reform Bill (2018)**

In 2009, the government published a Green Paper entitled ‘The Comprehensive Review of Immigration Policy and Proposals for Legislative Reform’, hereafter Comprehensive Review. The preamble acknowledged the importance of immigration to national development and was framed within the context of “current and emerging developments resulting from globalisation and the turbulent international environment” (Ministry of Labour and Immigration, 2009, p. 1). The Comprehensive Review was drafted during a period of intense debate regarding the management of undocumented migration and the elaboration of a response to its management (see later discussion on the management of undocumented migration).

The Comprehensive Review included a suite of proposals for legislative reforms, including to the Constitution (on matters of citizenship through marriage, birth and descent) and the Immigration Act (the (revocation of) rights of persons with reside and work status). Town Hall meetings were organized to obtain feedback on the Green Paper in the first quarter of 2010 (“Immigration Green Paper,” 2010). In 2019, the Cabinet approved the framework for a Comprehensive Review (Forde-Craig, 2019), paving the way for a new Immigration Reform Bill.

A new Immigration Bill was first mooted by the incumbent government in June 2018, following the conclusion of the elections in May 2018. The Bill was part of sweeping reforms intended to further modernize Barbados, which included the transition to a Republican system of government. However, a shift in government attention to the impact of sudden onset disasters (such as flooding) and COVID-19 has produced delays in finalization of the draft bill (Younge, 2021). The draft Bill is currently being reviewed by the Cabinet and is therefore not available publicly.

## **3.2. Emergent issues**

### **Freedom of movement of CARICOM nationals**

Barbados was an implementing member of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) in 2006 (Brown et al., 2010) and has supported integration efforts through its leadership of the CSME since its inception (Girvan, 2013). It was one of the first three countries to establish an accreditation council to facilitate vetting and accreditation of qualifications of CSNs (Williams, 2011). Barbados was also one of nine host countries participating in the Single Domestic Space (SDS), during the hosting of 2007 Cricket World Cup. The CARICOM SDS allowed full freedom of movement for all CARICOM nationals (Carrington, 2007). In 2018, during the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting, current Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, suggested a return to the SDS to ensure hassle free travel for CARICOM nationals (Hackett, 2018a).

Notwithstanding its lead role in the CSME, there has historically been divergence with the regional framework facilitating the movement of CARICOM nationals and border practices at the national level (Dietrich Jones, 2022). Several studies (Wickham et al., 2004; Brown et al., 2010; Kari Consultants Ltd., 2013; IOM, 2014) have pointed to the practice among local Immigration officials of granting definite stay to CARICOM nations for periods of less than the required six months. The treatment of intra-regional migrants became subject to scrutiny following a case brought by a Jamaican national to the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ)—Shanique Myrie v. Barbados (Caribbean Court of Justice, 2013a).<sup>18</sup>

In addition, the government has not domesticized several CSME provisions in national legislation including the right to six months entry for CARICOM nationals and the right to move with their spouse for persons seeking RoE. Barbados also does not currently facilitate free movement of the following categories of skilled nationals: (i) holders of associate degrees, (ii) artisans with a CVQ, (iii) nurses, (iv) teachers and (iv) household domestics (IOM, 2019).

In a move of solidarity with the people of Haiti, Barbados had waived the visa requirement for Haitian nationals in 2018 (Nurse, 2018).<sup>19</sup> Barbados was the first country within CARICOM to remove the requirement for visas, which is in place despite Haiti's participation in the CSME ("Haiti-Migration," 2013). However, within a year the policy was reversed due to an increase in the number of Haitian arrivals, whom the government reported did not have the financial means to cover their living expenses in Barbados (Lashley, 2019).<sup>20</sup>

## Social protection

A key part of Barbados' social protection system is the availability of free education and health care. Non-national children require student visas to attend school; however, undocumented migrant children may face barriers to education due to the requirement for student visas (Dietrich Jones, 2014). In addition, government awarded scholarships are not available to non-nationals based on a 2015 amendment to the Education Act (Aragón & El-Assar, 2018; UNHCR, 2017). Like most islands in the (sub-)region, a national identification card (held by citizens and permanent residents) is required to access health services; however, Barbados has waived this requirement for the treatment of chronic diseases, such as HIV and tuberculosis (Aragón & El-Assar, 2018). In February 2021, the government passed an act to provide for establishment, maintenance and regulation of a National Identity Management System. Registration, under the Act, will include persons resident in Barbados for more than six months (United States Department of State, 2021).

Migrant workers are not excluded from social protection benefits under the National Insurance Scheme, which includes maternity benefit, sickness, unemployment, old age and invalidity. Challenges emerge in circumstances where employers fail to register the employee and pay the required contributions to the government, even whilst collecting contributions from workers (Williams, 2008; Lorde, 2007). This issue has especially affected undocumented migrants working in the informal sector (Dietrich Jones, 2014; Dietrich Jones, 2020).

In 2014, Barbados became signatory to the CARICOM Agreement on Social Security (CASS). There is therefore portability of social security benefits (pension) for nationals of CARICOM member states (Williams, 2008; Aragón

<sup>18</sup> Ms Myrie was detained and summarily repatriated to Jamaica after making untruthful statements to immigration officers. Ms Myrie alleged that she was discriminated against on the basis of her Jamaican nationality and that her human rights were abused since she was subjected to a cavity search. While the court did not find that Ms Myrie was able to substantiate claims of discrimination and did not make a judgement in respect of violation of her human rights, the CCJ awarded damages to Ms Myrie on the basis that her right to free movement under Article 45 of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas had been breached (Caribbean Court of Justice, 2013b).

<sup>19</sup> Haitian nationals require visas to travel within the Community despite being a signatory to the CSME (CARICOM, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> At the time of writing of this paper, controversy has emerged surrounding the treatment of Haitian nationals, who have been held in Barbados while in transit to Guyana. It is unclear whether this is a case of human smuggling, given a similar event in 2018 (Smith, 2022).

& El-Assar, 2018), as well as through bilateral agreements with the United States and Canada (Aragón & El-Assar, 2018). In 2019, all CARICOM member states had signed onto the CARICOM Protocol on Contingent Rights (2018), which would grant social and economic rights to CARICOM nationals and immediate members of their family, contingent on their right to freedom of movement within the CSME. However, only Barbados (and St. Vincent and the Grenadines) has begun the process of ratification of the Protocol on Contingent Rights (World Food Programme [WFP], 2021; “Protocol on Contingent Rights,” n.d.).

### Management of undocumented migration

Raids, detention and deportation have been employed by the state to manage undocumented migration in Barbados, most notably during 2009 and 2010 (Brathwaite, 2014; Dietrich Jones, 2014). An extraordinary amnesty was also implemented in 2009. The amnesty was intended for undocumented migrants to regularize their status, and available for those who met the following criteria: (i) resident in Barbados for at least eight years prior to 1 December 2005; (ii) gainfully employed; and (iii) no record of criminal activity. There are no publicly available reports on the number of individuals that regularized their stay under this arrangement. The introduction of the amnesty drew heavy criticism from regional counterparts, who alleged its discriminatory application towards CARICOM nationals, in particular Guyanese nationals. The policy approach was also the subject of discussion at the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting that year (“Migration headache,” 2009).

Rather than apply for amnesty, many Guyanese opted to leave Barbados due to the threat of detention and deportation (Dietrich Jones, 2014; “Barbadian first,” 2009). It should be noted that during that year, other Caribbean countries were using amnesties to manage undocumented migration (“Caribbean tackles immigration,” 2009). The government has not recently utilized ad hoc amnesties, although other neighbouring islands, such as Antigua and Barbuda, have sought to regularize undocumented migrants through the introduction of amnesties (Thomas, 2022).

The stringent conditions of the amnesty contrasts with the more liberal policy regime, which had governed migration management prior to 2009. Before the change in political administration in 2008, undocumented persons who had resided in Barbados for a minimum period of five years, were able to apply for permission to work and reside in Barbados (Comissiong, 2009). There is lack of consensus whether this policy had been in place since the 1970s (Symmonds, 2008) or mid-1990s (Comissiong, 2009). However, the approach coincides with ongoing border management practices, which include detention and summary repatriation of ‘suspect’ nationals at the Grantley Adams Airport (Wickham et al., 2004; Dietrich Jones, 2014).

### Diaspora diplomacy

Through its visa and diaspora diplomacy, Barbados engages with non-nationals and Barbadians residing overseas to attract visitors, as well as investment.

The most visible policy response is the implementation of processes to support re-integration of returning migrants. The civic engagement of the diaspora is limited, however; only Barbadian nationals and Commonwealth citizens residents in Barbados for at least three years are eligible to vote in national elections (Williams, 2018; Tittel-Mosser, 2020). Voting eligibility of Commonwealth citizens was affirmed after a ruling by the Caribbean Court of Justice in 2018 in keeping with the Representation of the People Act (Williams, 2018; Jamaica Gleaner, 2018).

In 1996, the Government of Barbados launched the Facilitation Unit for Returning Nationals, which was rebranded as the Barbados Network Unit in 2010 (Tittel-Mosser, 2020; IOM, 2014). The establishment of the facilitation unit made Barbados the second country in the region (after Jamaica), to introduce a structure for the management of returning citizens and residents (Goulbourne, 1999). The Unit assists with resettlement of diaspora to Barbados and collects data on returning nationals. Returning residents who have lived abroad for 10 years are eligible for tax concessions for the importation of motor vehicles and personal effects (“Returning to reside,” 2020).

In addition, the first diaspora conference ‘Strengthening the bonds that unite us’ was held in 2010 (Trotz & Mullings, 2013). In an active campaign to leverage the reach of the Barbados diaspora, the Barbados government designated 2020 as the ‘Year of the Diaspora’. An important part of the initiative was the registration of members of the diaspora through the ‘We Gatherin’ campaign (Orozco, 2020; Younge, 2021). However, COVID-19 has also delayed this mapping exercise (Younge, 2021). The pandemic has not completely stalled diaspora engagement. The government has held monthly meetings with diaspora organizations and members of the diaspora since the onset of COVID-19 (IOM, 2021b), underscoring the significance of diaspora populations during times of disaster (Wong, 2017).

In 2018, a media exposé documented the experiences of Caribbean migrants, including Barbadian nationals, who had been being incorrectly classified as undocumented migrants in the UK, and in some instances deported following the introduction of the ‘hostile environment policy’. There was widescale public outcry since many of the victims were elderly and had spent most of their adult lives contributing to the development of the UK in various spheres. (“It’s inhumane’;”, Gentleman, 2018a).<sup>21</sup> The phenomenon, which became known as the ‘Windrush scandal’, while still ongoing, was partially addressed through diplomatic interventions. This included engagement by Caribbean High Commissioners and Heads of Government, with the UK Prime Minister and Minister of Home Affairs (Gentleman, 2018b). The Barbados High Commissioner is credited with leading a coalition, which generated sustained media attention around the issue, and which put pressure on the UK government to apologize and seek to bring redress to victims (“Hewitt’s reflections,” 2021). A compensation scheme was established to settle claims of victims. It is not clear how many persons who had originally travelled to the UK from Barbados were affected by the hostile environment policy, how many of those victims subsequently sought claims through the compensation scheme, and how many have successfully processed claims. It would not be the first time that emigrants from Barbados (and the region) were impacted by mass deportation campaigns. Caribbean migrants were deported from Cuba in the 1920s due to racialized political agendas (Carr, 1998). This unfortunate incident underscores the significance of diaspora diplomacy, especially as it concerns vulnerable populations residing overseas.

### Seasonal work programmes

In the post-independence era, emigration has become an important safety valve for the unemployed, including participation in programmes for recruited labour (United States Department of Labour, 1971). Overseas employment for skilled, semi-skilled and non-skilled workers in the United States and Canada are accommodated through the Commonwealth Canada Seasonal Agricultural Programme (SAWP), the Temporary Foreign Workers Programme (TFWP) and ‘HSB1’, ‘HSB2’ and ‘J’ visa programmes. The TFWP recruits workers for the hospitality and care sectors (Barbados Audit Office, 2020).

In 1967, an MOU was signed with Canada to inaugurate Barbados’ participation in the SAWP. Between 1967 and 1985, 11,802 Barbadians participated in the programme. Unlike participants from the OECS states who were

<sup>21</sup> The ‘hostile environment policy’ refers to measures aimed at limiting migrants’ access to work, housing, health care and banking, in order to deter immigration and to identify and reduce the number of migrants in the UK without leave to remain (House of Lords, 2018).

usually educated to the primary level, Barbadians were educated to the secondary level. In the early stages of the programme, SAWP participants travelled to Canada to work on tobacco farms (Downes & Odle-Worrell, 2009; André, 1990).

Since that time, Barbados' participation has declined dramatically. Between 2014 and 2020, an average of 162 persons participated in the programme, with 159 workers participating in SAWP in 2019. An audit of the Liaison Offices responsible for recruitment and placement activities overseas has highlighted several challenges including mechanization of farming, shifts in market requirements and competition from other SAWP member states as factors contributing to Barbados' reduced participation. Quotas, programme suspensions and limited availability of jobs affect take-up in the other programmes (Barbados Audit Office, 2020).

The Government of Barbados has expanded opportunities to work in farming overseas in a pilot programme in the United Kingdom. The UK pilot programme was intended to offset the decline of work opportunities in Canada ("Farm labour programme," 2017; "Barbados looks to Jamaica," 2011). Fifty Barbadians were placed to work in the edible horticulture sector in the UK in 2020. Barbados is the only English-speaking Caribbean country participating in the exchange (Joseph, 2021; "UK job opportunity," 2020). Some beneficiaries of the programme, however, have complained about low wages and living conditions since their arrival. This supports the findings of previous academic research (see Beckford, 2016). However, others have highlighted the importance of remittances for support of their families, which is significant in a context of high unemployment. There is a possibility that the programme will be expanded in subsequent years (Joseph, 2021; Smith, 2021b).

## Displaced persons

Although Barbados has not domesticized definite stay for CARICOM nationals, flexibility in the six-month limit for entry under the CSME has been exercised for individuals and their families from Dominica and Barbuda affected by natural disasters.<sup>22</sup> For example, there was a significant increase in the arrivals of Dominicans (13.5 percent) following the passage of Hurricane Irma in 2017 (IOM, 2019). There are no publicly available statistics regarding departure of these individuals and how many have remained in Barbados.

Ad hoc reception of CARICOM nationals displaced by disaster embraces the spirit of the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas. The approach is not, however, unique to Barbados; other countries across the region have also been receptive to the displaced (Francis, 2019; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ], 2019). In 2021, Prime Minister Mottley advocated for a regional plan to respond to migration after the occurrence of a disaster (Bennett, 2021). There is no evidence that there is a national strategy to address human mobility within the context of disasters in Barbados. The local emergency committee does, however, include representatives from the Immigration Department (Aragón & El-Assar, 2018; WFP, 2021).

## COVID-19

COVID-19 significantly impacted the Barbadian economy, resulting in a 65 percent decline in the tourism sector in 2020. Reduced productivity in tourism and other sectors resulted in a widened fiscal deficit of 14.8 percent of GDP and a rise in unemployment to 13.1 percent (UN ECLAC, 2021). At the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the government opted not to close its borders. This was to facilitate movement of goods and ensure stability in

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<sup>22</sup> Devastation from hydro-meteorological events in Dominica in 2014 and 2017, as well as Antigua and Barbuda in 2017, resulted in displacement of sizeable portions of the population in these countries. Though there appears to be an increase in reception of displaced migrants, it is difficult to confirm in the absence of official statistics (IOM, 2019; Aragón & El-Assar, 2018).

the economy. However, the suspension of activities by commercial airlines meant that entry into and exit from Barbados was affected. As part of its response under the National Preparedness Plan, quarantine restrictions were imposed on visitors when commercial flights resumed. This included 14-day quarantines for individuals with negative COVID-19 tests in government designated quarantine facilities. Nationals from countries in the Eastern Caribbean were not required to quarantine. At present, fully vaccinated individuals do not need to spend time in a quarantine facility (King, 2020b; Austin, 2020; Herrmann, 2020; McLeod, 2020). Migrant workers could travel to and from Barbados, provided they observed health protocols (United States Department of State, 2021).

In June 2020 the government introduced a digital nomad visa to enable remote work for non-nationals for at least a year. Dubbed the ‘Welcome Stamp’, the innovation is intended to help boost tourism and consumer spending in Barbados during the pandemic. A Remote Employment Bill was proposed to ensure sustainability of the initiative, and to outline the benefits of the programme for applicants. The Act was passed in July 2021 (Forde-Craig, 2021a; 2021b). The Welcome Stamp initiative has helped revitalize the tourism sector, which had been severely impacted with the onset of COVID-19. More than 2500 individuals have applied since the programme’s launch in 2020. In August 2021, 1987 applications were approved, equivalent to 67 percent of submissions. The most common countries of origin of applicants are the US, UK, Canada and Nigeria (Forde-Craig, 2021b).

The foregoing discussion indicates that there are multiple avenues, including policy, legislation, extraordinary measures and advocacy, through which migration policy is advanced in Barbados. However, the government has not developed a cohesive policy document in respect of migration or diaspora engagement, which is best practice within the context of mainstreaming migration into development. This is not unusual for SIDS in the region (Orozco, 2020), though some Caribbean SIDS have made progress in this regard. Jamaica has developed a National Policy and Plan of Action on International Migration and Development<sup>23</sup> and the National Diaspora Policy.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has developed a Diaspora Policy.<sup>25</sup> The development of a policy document could encourage a cohesive migration policy agenda, which is responsive to the current and future needs of Barbados.

The above also suggests that migration has been partially mainstreamed into development in some principal areas including, inter alia, migrant rights, inclusive health care, preparedness for disasters, and diaspora engagement (cf. United Nations Joint Migration and Development Initiative, 2017). However, there remains room for improvement. For example, within the context of migrant rights there is scope for an enhanced framework for the reception and integration of asylum seekers. A first step could be ratification of the relevant Convention and Protocol, as has been recommended during the Universal Periodic Review (UNHCR, 2012; UNHCR 2017). An enhanced framework for asylum seekers would be in keeping with Barbados’ endorsement of the Cartagena Declaration. Based on the migration context in Barbados this may not be deemed as a priority area. However, the recent experience of the region with the immigration of Venezuelans in the Southern Caribbean suggests that it is important to have an adequately developed social protection framework for asylum seekers, refugees and other vulnerable migrants, in the case on unexpected (and large) inflows of migrants. Another area of improvement is inclusive education and the removal of barriers to education of vulnerable (undocumented) migrant children.

<sup>23</sup> [www.pioj.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/National-Policy-and-Plan-of-Action-on-International-Migration-and-Development-April-2017.pdf](http://www.pioj.gov.jm/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/National-Policy-and-Plan-of-Action-on-International-Migration-and-Development-April-2017.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> [mfaft.gov.jm/jm/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/National-Diaspora-Policy.pdf](http://mfaft.gov.jm/jm/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/National-Diaspora-Policy.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> [wa.embassy.gov.vc/washington/images/pdf/govt\\_of\\_svg\\_diaspora\\_policy\\_2013.pdf](http://wa.embassy.gov.vc/washington/images/pdf/govt_of_svg_diaspora_policy_2013.pdf)

## 4. Conclusion

Barbados' experience as a source, transit and destination country of mixed migratory flows in many ways echoes the experience of other Caribbean SIDS. However, Barbados is distinguished by the relatively low level of remittances, despite its high level of skilled emigration. Contrarily, migrants' contribution to Barbadian society is readily evident in the economy, though this has not been quantified. A fragmented and at times ad hoc approach defines the migration policy landscape in Barbados. The current Immigration Reform process presents an opportunity for a multi-stakeholder coordinated and cohesive policy agenda to be developed. Data and evidence are critical components that would support such policy elaboration.

Barbados' commitment to participate in the sharing of data related to labour migration trends as part of the CARICOM Labour Market Information System Project (Aragón & El-Assar, 2018) is a step in the right direction. However, current statistical and qualitative data were not readily available during the preparation of this report. In addition to timely collection, analysis and reporting of disaggregated migration data, it would also be useful to investigate the impact of key developments in the socio-economy and their relationship with migration. Emerging trends, such as increase in the ageing population (especially within the context of return migration) and an increase in cross-border movements of displaced populations are two areas deserving of dedicated research. In addition, economic recovery is likely to attract migrants from other CARICOM states, particularly the Eastern Caribbean. While this may offset the negative consequences of emigration through development gain, it may complicate other issues such as the high rate of youth unemployment. Research into future patterns of migration from this sub-region would therefore also assist with demographic policy and planning. Another important consideration is the development of the oil and gas sector in Guyana, and the extent to which it may become a country of destination for migrants from Barbados, further encouraging outward migration.

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## APPENDIX

### A.1. Methodology

The analysis for this paper was informed by an extensive review of a range of secondary sources including reports of the Government of Barbados, grey literature published by international organizations, national and UN agency reports prepared for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR),<sup>26</sup> empirical studies and online media reports.

Empirical studies were primarily available on return migration and remittances. The former, however, related to return migration in the early 2000s. In addition, the studies are not representative of the wider population as they were not based on representative sampling techniques. Research on remittances predominantly relied on econometric techniques to assess the relationship between remittances and growth, as well as other factors such as the development of human capacity. However, there is lack of consensus in findings. There were also limited analyses of the impact of the emigration of skilled nationals and several descriptive studies on emigration during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The paucity of empirical studies on migration resulted in greater reliance on publicly available grey literature and government reports. The use of secondary data thus poses limitations to this undertaking. It has meant, in some cases, dependence on dated statistics. For example, the national census is currently underway, therefore the analysis is based on census information from 2000 and 2010, as well as reports produced by the Population Division of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. In addition, in some instances, it is not always possible to compare data, since various methodologies were used to collect and report statistics on migration flows, and other pertinent data (such as remittances). Given the timeframe of the study, it does not include interviews with policymakers regarding the objectives of migration policy. Such engagement could be a valuable source to complement the information.

The desk review also entailed policy analysis. The most thorough discussion of the government's vision for migration is encapsulated in the Comprehensive Review of Immigration Policy and Proposals for Legislative Reform (2009). cursory references to migration are also found in other key policy documents, such as the Growth and Development Strategy of Barbados (Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, 2013) and the National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2006–2025 (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Development, 2007). Several sector specific plans, the 2013 National Agricultural Policy (Ministry of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Water Resource Management and The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture, 2013), and the National Employment Policy of Barbados also mention migration (Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Human Resource Development, n.d.). These documents were all assessed to determine whether a (cohesive) policy agenda on migration exists and to identify the relevant components of this migration policy.<sup>27</sup>

Finally, although emphasis is placed on the years 2000 to 2020, reference is made to historical events which provide context to the period of study. The paper also focuses on external migration. Limited availability of studies on internal migration (see Thomas-Hope, 2002 as one exception) precludes analysis of this subject.

<sup>26</sup> Since 2006, Barbados has undergone three cycles of review for the UPR in 2008, 2013 and 2018. (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/bb-index>)

<sup>27</sup> There is a draft Nursing Strategy for Barbados (PAHO, 2016), but this is not publicly available. It was therefore excluded from the analysis.

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