Data Mapping for the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean:

Migration Trends and Movement of Vulnerable Populations in the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean

Publication Date: 31 July 2024

Culinary and cultural exchange with migrant community in Trinidad © IOM Trinidad and Tobago 2024

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Objective

The goal of this report is to create an up-to-date record (after 2020) of migration and displacement-related public data in the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean. Going forward, this report will be updated periodically as new data becomes available and can be used for country-level programming, project development and more broadly for showcasing multi-country work to relevant stakeholders. For the purposes of this report no data requests were issued, and only public data is shown.

Methodology

This report is based on a data mapping exercise conducted by IOM Coordination Office for the Caribbean of publicly available sources on six themes. Only public data between 01 January 2020 and 30 June was included in this report. The following table breaks down the six themes and the sources that were relevant to each section:

Theme	Sources
Migrant stocks and demographics	National Statistics UNDESA (only for St. Lucia)
Movement of vulnerable populations[1]	UNHCR Government data Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V) Forced Returns to Haiti Dashboard
Intraregional mobility	National statistics
Regular pathways	R4V National statistics Migration Flows in Latin America and the Caribbean, IDB
Disaster displacement and environmental migration	Climate Smart Development For Internal Migration and Urbanization in Jamaica Migration, Environment, Disaster and Climate Change Data in the Eastern Caribbean: Regional Overview
Missing migrants	IOM Missing Migrant Project

Table 1: Countries included in the data mapping exercise

Sub-regional designation	Country
OECS[2]	Antigua and Barbuda
Southern Caribbean	Aruba
Eastern Caribbean	Barbados
Northern Caribbean	Belize
Southern Caribbean	Curaçao
OECS	Dominica
OECS	Grenada
Southern Caribbean	Guyana
Northern Caribbean	Jamaica
OECS	Saint Kitts and Nevis
OECS	Saint Lucia
OECS	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Southern Caribbean	Suriname
Northern Caribbean	The Bahamas
Southern Caribbean	Trinidad and Tobago
Northern Caribbean	Turks and Caicos Islands

Introduction

The Caribbean is characterized by complex and dynamic mixed migration flows that have shaped the region's identity. In a region where mobility is as much a coping strategy as an aspiration, human mobility outside the region continues to coexist alongside increased intra-Caribbean mobility.

Regional reports on migration, particularly those focusing on the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, are notably deficient in data from 2020 onwards, hampering the representation of migration trends and patterns in the region.[3] For this purpose, IOM conducted a data mapping exercise to summarise, via this report, the data that are available.

One key reason for this data vacuum, is the lack of comparable migration population statistics across countries. Due to varying methodologies and data collection timelines, these statistics are only suitable for country-specific analyses and not for regional comparisons or multi-country databases. The lack of a structured data exchange system further exacerbates the scarcity of comparable data. Ideally, this system would facilitate information flow between data-collecting governments and data-using entities like intergovernmental bodies, UN agencies, and think tanks.

Many entities, including migration directorates and statistical institutes, collect migration data for their own records, but this data is not prepared for external use. There is also a lack of resources dedicated to making this data accessible to other entities. For instance, a forthcoming study by IOM[4] on free movement data within the Caribbean Community found that a lack of guidelines limits sharing of free movement data with the Small Market Economies (CSME) countries[5]. The study underscored that the task of converting collected data into actionable information largely falls on under-resourced statistics and census institutes with multiple responsibilities. It also revealed that in CSME countries, the same individuals often serve in various ministries and committees, indicating a significant human resource constraint in executing data sharing tasks.

The data mapped by IOM in April 2024 revealed that key institutions reporting on Latin America and the Caribbean migration heavily rely on outdated 2020 data from the UN Department of Economics and Social Affairs (UNDESA).

This reliance on outdated data fails to reflect the current realities of evolving migration trends. This has repercussions on the growing information disparity, hindering a comprehensive understanding of current migration patterns in the subregion and their implications. Updated data is crucial for identifying opportunities where migration can help address issues like brain drain[6], declining birth rates, ageing populations, and rising living costs[7].

[1] For the purpose of this report, vulnerable populations in the Caribbean has been framed by looking at the mobility situation of Venezuelan, Haitian and Cuban nationals in the Caribbean. See Trends in Caribbean Migration and Mobility, IOM, 2023.

[2] Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States

[3] While the IOM Strategy for the Caribbean covers the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean region, it coordinates and works closely with Cuba, Haiti and the Dominican Republic which are covered under this strategy only when migration or other factors impact the rest of the Caribbean.

[4] Assessment on gathering and harmonizing free movement data of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) region (IOM, forthcoming)

[5] CSME countries include Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

[6] For example, 7 in every 10 highly qualified professionals from the Caribbean have emigrated to OECD countries (IDB, 2023).

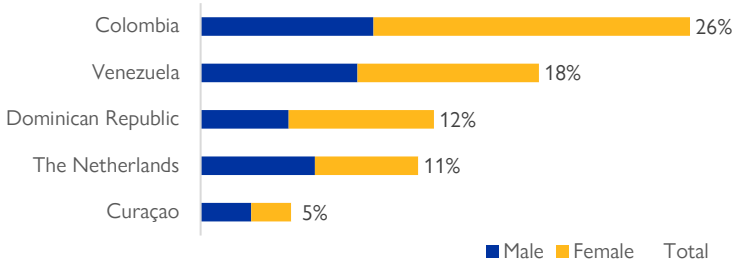
[7] Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey – May 2023 (WFP-CARICOM, 2023).

Migrant Stocks and Demographics

This section covers migrant stocks and demographics of migrant populations in the Caribbean. Where available, post-2020 public data from national statistic offices is included.

Aruba — Aruba's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), collects data on migration stocks, by measuring its **foreign-born presence**. According to latest 2021 census data, the CBS estimated that there are 39,935 foreign-born individuals in Aruba as of 2020; representing 37 per cent of the total population. Out of these, 43 per cent are male and 57 per cent female. The top countries of origin were, Colombia (10,250), The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (henceforth Venezuela) (7,085), The Dominican Republic (4,883), The Netherlands (4,558), and Curaçao (1,895).

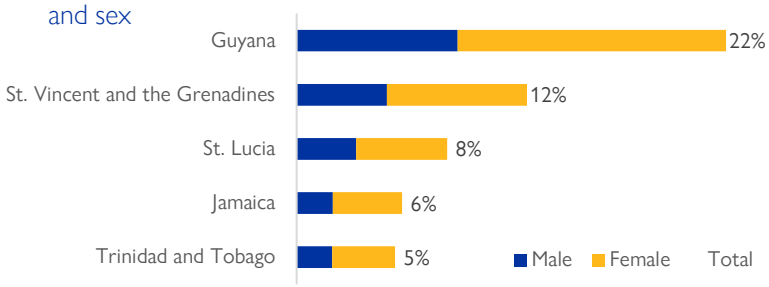
Graph 1: Foreign-born population by top countries of origin, and sex



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021

Barbados — Barbados' Statistical Service collects census data on **foreign-born presence**. In 2021 it found 11,213 foreign-born individuals; representing eight per cent of the total population. Out of these, 39 per cent male and 61 per cent female. The top countries of origin were, Guyana (2,505), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (1,344), St. Lucia (879), Jamaica (617), and Trinidad and Tobago (576).

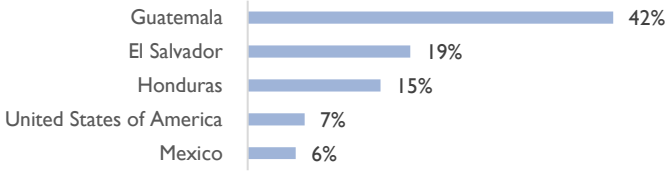
Graph 2: Foreign-born population by top countries of origin, and sex



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2021

Belize — In 2023 the Statistical Institute of Belize recorded 45,711 foreign born nationals in the country. This represents 12 per cent of the total population. Forty-two per cent were from Guatemala, 19 per cent from El Salvador, 15 per cent from Honduras, seven per cent for the United States of America, and six per cent from Mexico.

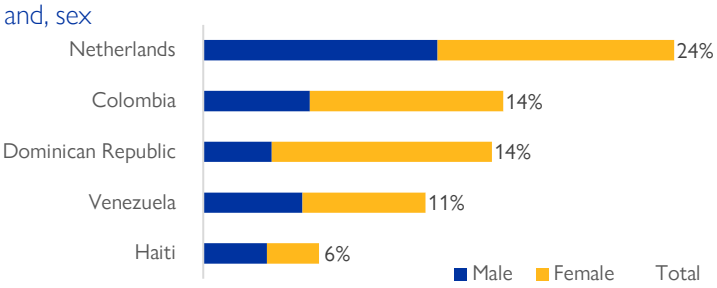
Graph 3: Foreign-born individuals by top countries of origin



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2022

Curaçao — The Central Bureau of Statistics in Curaçao identified 388,299 foreign-born nationals as of 2023; representing a 25 per cent ratio in comparison with the total population. Out of these, 41 per cent are male and 59 per cent female. The top countries of origin were The Netherlands (9,027), Colombia (5,751), The Dominican Republic (5,530), Venezuela (4,261), and Haiti (2,223)

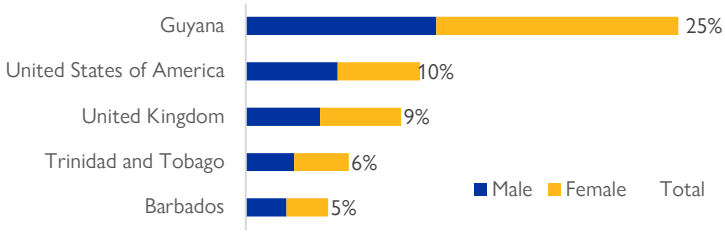
Graph 4: Foreign-born population by top countries of origin and, sex



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2023

St. Lucia — According to UNDESA data, as cited by St. Lucia's National Statistics office, as of 2020 the country had a migrant stock of 8,338 individuals; representing five per cent of the total population. Out of these, 48 per cent were male, and 52 per cent female. The top countries of origin identified were Guyana (25%), The United States of America (10%), The United Kingdom (9%), Trinidad and Tobago (6%), and Barbados (5%).

Graph 5: Migrant stock by top countries of origin, and sex

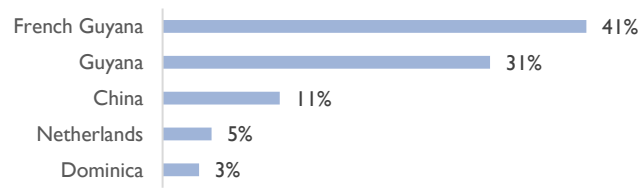


Source :UNDESA, 2020*

*St. Lucia's national population estimates and projections report for 2019 used 2017 UNDESA data on migrant stocks. Therefore, this report makes use of updated 2020 UNDESA figures for Saint Lucia..

Suriname — Based on a subnational level mapping conducted by IOM and the government in 2023, 18,156 migrants were identified at the *resort* (district) level in Suriname; representing three per cent of the total population. The top identified countries of origin were French Guyana (41%), Guyana (31%), China (11%), The Netherlands (5%), and Dominica (3%).

Graph 6: Migrant stock by top countries of origin

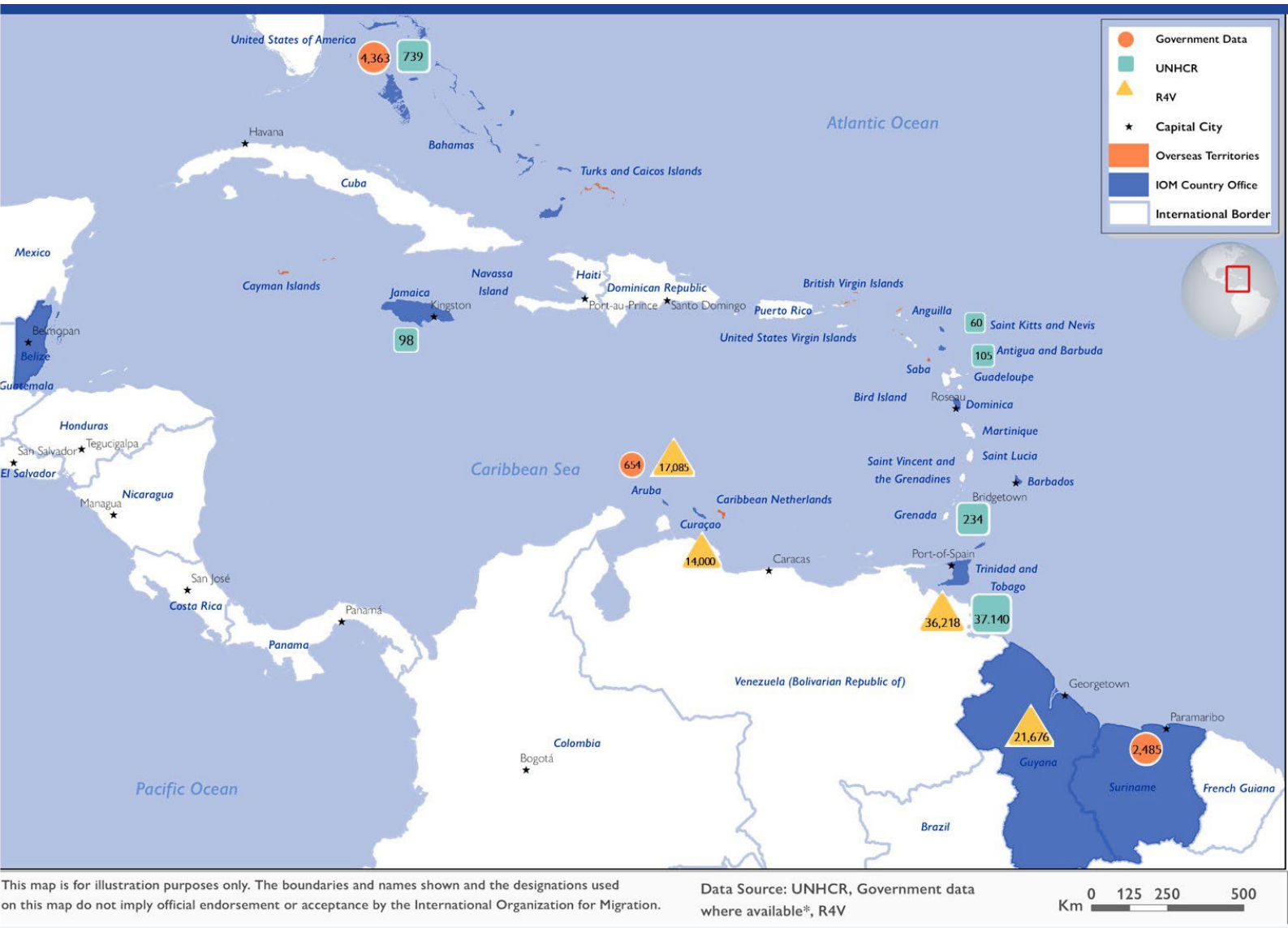


Source: Ministry of Home Affairs in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Suriname, 2023.

Movement of Vulnerable Populations

This section covers vulnerable populations on the move focusing on Venezuelan, Haitian and Cuban nationals. Data includes UNHCR, R4V[8] as well as data collected directly by IOM Haiti via the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM): 1, 2.

Map 1: Number of vulnerable populations (Cuban, Haitian, and Venezuelan nationals), in the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean



This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Data Source: UNHCR, Government data where available*, R4V

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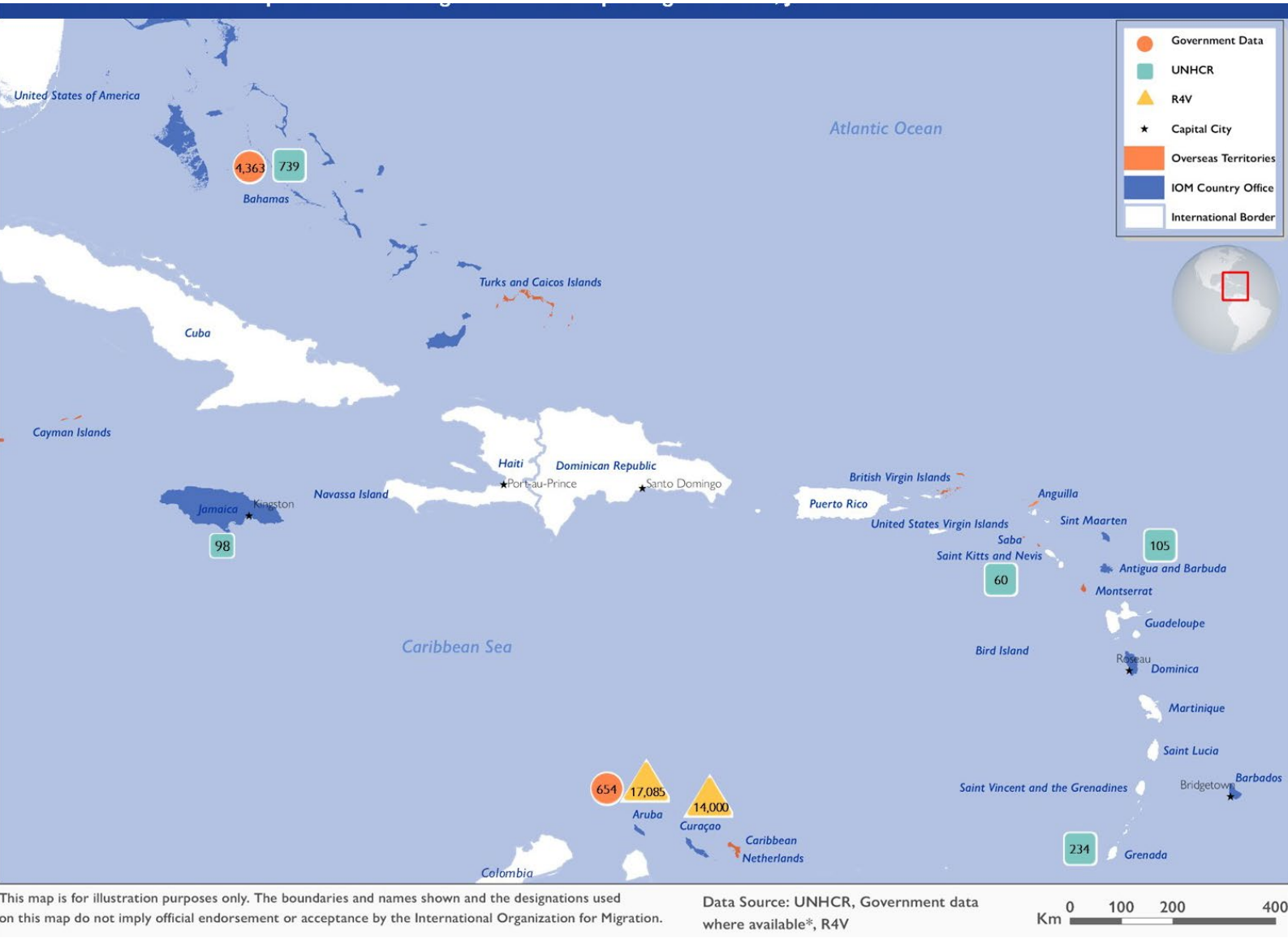
Migrants in transit and during surveys conducted by IOM in Icacos, Trinidad © IOM Trinidad and Tobago 2024

[8] R4V only documents regularized Venezuelans in each country and therefore its likely an underestimation of the total number of vulnerable populations on the move.

Map 2: Number of vulnerable populations (Cuban, Haitian, and Venezuelan nationals), in the English and Dutch speaking Caribbean



Aruba — Data by the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela (R4V), found 17,085 Venezuelan migrants living in Aruba as of August 2023.

Curaçao — Similarly, the R4V identified 14,000 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in the country as of August 2023.

Grenada — UNHCR 234 Venezuelan refugees and asylum seekers in 2023.

Guyana (see Map 1) — The R4V found 21,676 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Guyana as of August 2023

Jamaica — UNHCR data on vulnerable populations in Jamaica, indicated that in 2023 there were 98 refugees and asylum seekers in the country. Out of these, 68 per cent (n=67) are from Venezuela, and 32 per cent (n=31) from Haiti.

Saint Kitts and Nevis — UNHCR data on vulnerable populations identified 60 Venezuelan and five Cuban nationals in Saint Kitts and Nevis in 2023.

Suriname (See Map 1)— Suriname's Migrant Situation Analysis, conducted by Ministry of Home Affairs in collaboration with IOM, found 2,485 foreigners, out of which 110 came from Venezuela, 2,248 from Haiti, and 127 from Cuba.

Bahamas — According to the Bahamas Immigration Department, in 2022 there were 4,363 vulnerable populations from Venezuela (0.3%), Cuba (23%), and Haiti (77%). Sex disaggregation showcased that 61 per cent were male, 33 per cent female, and six per cent children. Additionally, UNHCR data indicated that in 2023 there were 739 vulnerable populations from Haiti (n=5), and Cuba (n=734).

Trinidad and Tobago (see map 1) — R4V data found 36,218 Venezuelan refugees and migrants in 2023. Similarly, UNHCR data found 35,314 Venezuelan asylum seekers and refugees in the same year.

[8] R4V only documents regularized Venezuelans in each country and therefore its likely an underestimation of the total number of vulnerable populations on the move.

Table 7: Number of Venezuelan, Haitian, and Cuban refugees identified in other countries in the Caribbean in 2023

Nationality	Cuba	Venezuela	Haiti	Total
Cayman Islands	142	144	78	364
St. Marteen		125		125

Source: UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, 2023

There were counts of Venezuelan, Haitian and Cuban populations identified by the UNHCR in other countries/territories in the Caribbean as of mid-year 2023. However, these are not included in the map as the findings are outside the scope of this report. These included: Cayman Islands, and St. Marteen.

Table 8: Number of refugees and asylum seekers from elsewhere in the Caribbean by country of origin in 2023

Country of origin	Refugees	Asylum seekers	Total
Jamaica	1,495	6,797	8,292
The Bahamas	1,067	1,820	2,887
Trinidad and Tobago			1,565
Guyana*	248	929	1,177
Belize*	65	481	546
Barbados	281	239	520
Dominica	15	257	272
Suriname*	26	147	173
Grenada*	51	116	167
St.Vincent and the Grenadines	101	63	164
Saint Lucia	58	68	126
Curaçao *	35	5	40
Turks and Caicos Islands	19	11	30
Antigua and Barbuda	50		

Source: UNHCR Refugee Data Finder, 2023 *Data available as of 2022

Table 9: Persons committed to the detention centre in Bahamas in 2022

Nationality	2021	2022
Dominican (Dominica)	3	11
Guyanese	0	8
Jamaican	83	141
Kittian, Nevisian	1	0
Trinidadian	0	4
Surinamese	5	0
Saint Vincentian	1	0

Source: Bahamas Immigration Annual Report, 2022

IOM Haiti

Table 10: Number of forced returns to Haiti between January 2021 and June 2024, by country of deportation and sex

Country of deportation	Male	Female	Total
Bahamas	5,959	1,575	7,534
Turks and Caicos Islands	5,673	1,397	7,070
Jamaica	55	18	73
Saint Kitts and Nevis	9	7	16
Guyana	5	9	14

Source: Forced returns to Haiti, DTM 2023

DTM Haiti collects data on the socio demographic and economic profiles, migration experiences, and migration intentions of migrants forcefully returned to Haiti through individual surveys conducted with a sample of returnees. See: Forced Returns Dashboard and DTM report: Haitians forcibly returned to Haiti, 2023.

Data collected by DTM Haiti found that between January 2021 and June 2024, 14,707 individuals have been forced to return to Haiti from the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean. Out of these, 51 per cent were deported from the Bahamas, 48 per cent from Turks and Caicos Islands, one per cent from Jamaica, and less that one per cent from Saint Kitts and Nevis (n=16), and Guyana (n=14).

Sex disaggregation showcased that 80 per cent of these deportations involved male individuals. The only country that had a higher rate of female deportations to Haiti was Guyana with 64 per cent of female and 36 per cent of male deportations reported between 2021 and June 2024.

Profiles of persons forcefully returned to Haiti by Turks and Caicos Islands — DTM Haiti found that out of the migrants forcibly returned to Haiti in 2023, 100 per cent were born in Haiti. When they departed Haiti, 44 per cent did so in a group, while 56 per cent did so Alone. In contrast, 96 per cent were retuned alone, while four per cent were returned alongside family members.

Sex disaggregation indicated that 80 per cent of the deported individuals were males, while 20 per cent were females. Out of these, three per cent were male children under 17 years of age, and one per cent were female children under 17 years old.

Ninety-two per cent indicated having left Haiti in search for better job opportunities aboard, while six per cent mentioned either access to better basic services abroad (3%), and violence/insecurity in their location of origin (3%) as their main reason for having left Haiti. Construction was the main occupational sector for returned migrants.

Profiles of persons forcefully returned to Haiti by The Bahamas — Similarly, DTM data found that amongst the migrants that had been deported back to Haiti in 2023, 100 per cent of them were born in Haiti. As was the case with Turks and Caicos Islands, 96 per cent of the migrants were returned alone, while four per cent were returned with their family members.

Sex disaggregation showcased that 79 per cent of the forced returns were male migrants and 21 per cent were female migrants. Among them, five per cent were male children between under 17 years of age, and three per cent were female children the same age cohort.

Eighty-two per cent indicated that they had left Haiti in search of better job opportunities abroad, while 15 per cent indicated doing so due to violence/insecurity in their place of origin. The remaining three per cent left Haiti in order to reunite with family Construction activities in the Bahamas was also the main occupational sector for returned Haitian migrants.

Intraregional Mobility Patterns

This section covers data on intraregional mobility using national level public sources on emigration and immigration statistics. Flows of CARICOM nationals under the "Facilitation of Travel" framework, and Skills Certificates issued to CARICOM nationals data is unavailable publicly from 2020 onwards. For the purposes of this report no data requests were issued, and only public data is shown.

Table 11: Number of Emigrants by country, and sex by latest year of full figures available

Country	Emigration	Male-Emigrants	Female-Emigrants	Year
Aruba	2,760	1,366	1,394	2023
Curaçao	4,988	2,349	2,639	2023
Suriname	2,337			2021

Table 12: Number of Immigrants by country, and sex, by latest year of full figures available

Country	Immigration	Male-Immigrants	Female-Immigrants	Year
Aruba	3,132	1,455	1,677	2023
Curaçao	4,498	2,160	2,380	2023
Suriname	2,772	1,492	1,280	2021

Aruba

Emigration — According to the **Central Bureau of Statistics and the Population Registry Office** data, the latest full year figure available is 2,760 emigrants in 2023 (49% male and 51% female). CBS also published a Q1 2024 figure which is 441 emigrants (50% male and 50% female). The top countries of birth for 2023 identified were, Aruba/Netherlands Antilles (56%), The Netherlands (15%), Colombia (9%), The Dominican Republic (4%), and Venezuela (4%). Other countries of birth within the Caribbean identified were Haiti (2%), and Suriname (1%).

Immigration — Additionally, in 2023, the CBS identified 3,132 Immigrants by country of birth (46% male and 54 female).The CBS also found 710 immigrants in Aruba in Q1 2024 (50% male and 50% female). The top countries of birth for 2023 identified were, Aruba/Netherlands Antilles (24%), Venezuela (20%), The Netherlands (17%), and Colombia (15%). Other countries of birth within the Caribbean were, The Dominican Republic (4%), Suriname (3%), and Haiti (3%).

Limitations in the data — Despite available government data on emigration and immigration, a gap remains. Migration data based on country of birth does not capture intraregional flows nor is it an accurate determinant of the countries populations are moving from.

Curaçao

Emigration — According to the **Population Registry and CBS** estimates, the latest full year figure available is for 2023, with 4,988 persons who de-registered (emigrants) (47% male and 53% female). The top countries of arrival identified in 2019 were the Netherlands (83%), Bonaire (6%), Aruba (2%), and St. Maarten (2%). Other Caribbean countries where arrivals from Curaçao were documented: The Dominican Republic (n=29), Suriname (n=19), and St. Eustatius (n=13).

Immigration — Additionally, between this period, 4,498 immigrants were registered, out of which 48 per cent were male, and 52 per cent female. The top country of departure in 2019 was the Netherlands with 59 per cent of the share of immigrants. Other countries of departure located in the Caribbean were Bonaire (n=89), Suriname (n=72), Sint Marteen (n=68), Aruba (n=67), and Jamaica (n=21).

Limitations in the data — While data on country of arrival and departure is useful to provide a preliminary snapshot on regional migration patterns, longitudinally, it fails to provide a wider picture on intraregional mobility flows. For this purpose, a more detailed following of population's intraregional migratory journeys is necessary to grasp the dynamic and complex human mobility present within the Caribbean. Additionally, data on country of departure is not available as of 2019. ,While outdated, the data is included in the reports since it is likely that the top countries of departure have not change much between 2019 and 2023.

Suriname

Emigration — According to Suriname General Statistics Office (ABS in Dutch) 2,337 emigrants were registered (54% male and 46% female). Out of these, 22 per cent were in the 0-14 age cohort, followed by those over 60 years old (13%).

Immigration — The ABS estimated its 2021 immigration figure to be 2,772, representing a 45 per cent decrease in comparison to 2019.

Limitations in the data — While the availability of sex and age disaggregation figures on immigration are useful for a national assessment. Lack of data on a macro mobility scope hampers an analysis on intra-regional migration flows in the region data. Further detail and intra-regional cooperation may serve to re-define data needs and provide a better understanding of migration trends in the Caribbean.

Regular Pathways

This section presents data on various types of regular pathways in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. It includes information from national statistics offices on regularizations (residence permits) issued, supplemented by R4V data on residence permits specifically for Venezuelan nationals. Additionally, it covers work permits issued and, in some instances, applications to the Citizenship by Investment Schemes active in certain countries.

Residence permits

Barbados — According to the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the OECD Migration Flows In Latin America And The Caribbean report, 5,127 residence permits were granted to regular migrants in Barbados in 2019.

Curaçao — According to the R4V in 2021 4,200 Venezuelan nationals were granted residence permits and regular stay in Curaçao.

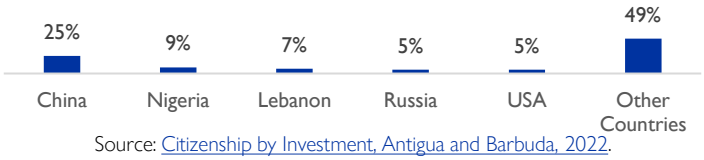
Trinidad and Tobago — R4V data indicates that as of July 2022 1,400 Venezuelan nationals have been granted residence permits and regular stay in the country.

Guyana— Data presented by the R4V, found that 2,170 residence permits had been issued to Venezuelan nationals as of June 2022.

Citizenship by investment*

Antigua and Barbuda — According to Antigua and Barbuda's Citizenship by Investment, in 2022, 3,779 citizenship applications were received. Out of these, 25 per cent of the application came from Chinese nationals, followed by individuals from Nigeria (9%), Lebanon (7%), Russia (5%), and the United States of America (5%).

Graph 7: Citizenship applications received by country of birth in 2022 (n=3,779)



Source: Citizenship by Investment, Antigua and Barbuda, 2022.

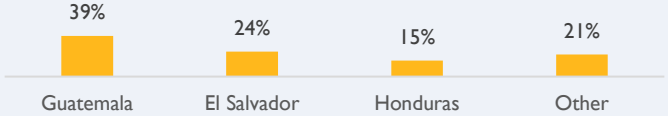
Grenada — Based on the Citizenship by Investment programme in Grenada, 2,297 applications were received in 2023.

*Other countries in the Caribbean such as, Dominica, St Kitts and Nevis, and St Lucia have Citizenship by Investment programmes. However, only Antigua and Barbuda, and Grenada have public figures as of 2020.

Work permits

Belize — Data collected by the Statistical Institute of Belize on the country's labour force, found that 29,290 work permits were issued in 2022. Thirty-nine per cent of the permits were issued to Guatemalans, 24 per cent to Salvadorians, 15 per cent to Hondurans, and 21 per cent to other nationals. Additionally, sex disaggregation indicated that 64 per cent were issued to males, and 36 per cent to female applicants.

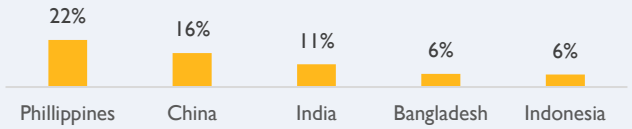
Graph 8: Work permits issued by nationality in 2022 (n=29,290)



Source: Statistical Institute of Belize, 2022.

Guyana — Data produced by the Parliament of Guyana, found that, in 2023, 4,379 work permit were issued; 22 per cent to Filipino, 16 to Chinese, 11 per cent to Indian, and 12 per cent to Bangladeshi and Indonesian nationals (6% each).

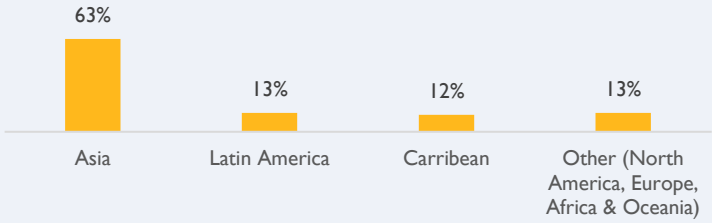
Graph 9: Work permits issued by nationality in 2023 (n=4,379)



Source: Parliament of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana, 2023.

Jamaica — The Planning Institute of Jamaica states 1,497 work permits were issued in 2021. Sixty-three per cent of these were issued to nationals of countries in Asia, 13 per cent to nationals of countries in Latin America, and 12 per cent to nationals from other countries in the Caribbean. The remaining 13 per cent of work permits were issued to nationals from other countries in North America, Europe, Africa and Oceania

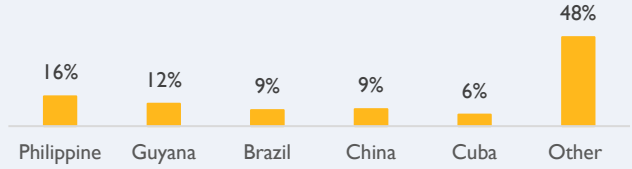
Graph 10: Work permits issued by region in 2021 (n=1,497)



Source:. Planning Institute of Jamaica, 2021

Suriname — The Suriname Migrant Situation Analysis indicated that in 2022, 580 work permits were issued. Out of these, 16 per cent were given to Filipino, 12 per cent to Guyanese, nine per cent too Brazilian, nine per cent to Chinese, and six per cent to Cuban nationals. The remaining 48 per cent were given to nationals of other countries. Additionally, sex disaggregation suggested that 71 per cent of these permits were issued to males and 29 per cent to female applicants.

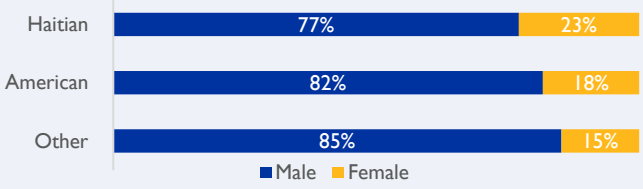
Graph 11: Work permits issued by nationality in 2022 (n=580)



Source: Ministry of Home Affairs in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Suriname, 2023.

Bahamas — In 2022, 18,028 work permits were issued in the Bahamas. Out of these, 45 per cent were issued to Haitian nationals and 21 per cent to American nationals. Sex disaggregation showcased that predominantly males were issued work permits with 81.

Graph 12: Work permits issued by nationality in 2022 (n=18,028)



Disaster Displacement and Environmental-related Migration

Caribbean Small Island Nations are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to their topology, largely coastal population and exposed locations (UNFCCC, 2023). They face rising sea levels, floods, coastal erosion, and increasingly severe storms. Recent predictions indicate an overactive 2024 hurricane season (officially running from June-November) due to the La Niña, which typically renders favourable conditions for stronger storms and hurricanes to form in the Atlantic (CSU, 2024).

The Caribbean features dynamic human mobility, with significant intraregional migration, seasonal employment, international tourism, and roles as transit and destination locations for various migratory routes. Consequently, climate change is anticipated to impact mobility patterns in the Caribbean, driven by both sudden-onset disasters and gradual processes such as droughts, desertification, and rising sea levels.

This section explores available data on disaster-affected populations in the English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean. It also outlines key challenges in the collection, aggregation and dissemination of human mobility data in the context of disasters, environmental-related migration. Furthermore, data-related challenges specific to actioning intergovernmental protocols and active efforts to address human mobility in the context of disasters and environmental migration in the region are shown.

Disaster Displacement: Recent Data and Associated Challenges

Between 2012 and 2021, the wider Caribbean region registered an estimated 5.14 million new internal displacements due to disasters (IOM, 2023; IOM 2022). However, as of 2020 there were no consolidated estimates for disaster-related displacements in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean.

This report, based on a desk review conducted in April 2024, primarily utilizes EM-DAT data[1] (EM-DAT, 2024) from 2020 onwards. However, EM-DAT compiles data on affected persons, *not* entire displaced populations and thus fails to provide longitudinal snapshots of climate-related mobility. EM-DAT is mainly aggregated and referenced by entities such as UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). Government disaster management agencies[2] publish data on this subject. However, it is not suitable for regional aggregation as assessment types (immediate post disaster, longer term needs assessments etc.) are designed with different subgroups in mind to address localized needs.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) also hosts a Disaster Assessment Portal organized by the sectoral effects of disasters using various approaches to quantify loss, damage and socio-economic impacts on different groups. Similarly, trends and statistics from 2015-2019 are recorded in a database, but the data landscape from 2020 onwards remains fragmented or is kept internal for operational reasons, complicating regional aggregation.

[1] The EM-DAT database records disasters occurrence and effects at country level worldwide from 1900 to the present. These data are compiled from various sources including UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, insurance companies, research institutes, and press agencies.

Table 8: Summary of Disasters and Affected Populations in English and Dutch Speaking Caribbean Countries (2020-2024)[3]

Country	Total Affected Population	Event Year	Hazard/Disaster Type
Barbados	179	2023	Storm Bret
	3,300	2021	Storm (Hurricane)
Belize	800	2024	Wildfire
	172,150	2022	Storm (Tropical cyclone)
	60,000	2020	Storm (Hurricane Eta)
Guyana	34,500	2021	Flood
	500	2022	Flood
Saint Lucia	5,500	2022	Floods
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	150	2023	Storm (Tropical cyclone)
	13,300	2021	Volcanic Activity (Geophysical)
	129	2021	Storm (Hurricane Elsa)
Suriname	10,100	2021	Floods
	9,000	2022	Floods
Trinidad and Tobago	100,000	2022	Floods

Key Data Challenges

- Lack of up-to-date baseline data on vulnerable populations complicates preparedness and policy decisions for sudden onset events.
- Data gaps exist in measuring climate-induced losses, and there are no robust methodologies to assess economic costs across socioeconomic groups.
- Non-uniform data collection by national immigration departments for cross-border movements and national statistics departments for internal movements, often altogether excluding climate and environmental factors hinders tracking mobility trends (IOM, 2021)
- Inconsistent post-disaster data collection methods and standards among Caribbean governments and non-governmental bodies conducting assessments impedes regional data aggregation.

Actions to Take

Consolidate regional capacities for collecting, aggregating, and disseminating human mobility data across preparedness, response, and recovery stages.

Agree on harmonized, localized data collection methodologies for tracking human mobility related to slow-onset climatic events.

[2] For example, the National Emergency Management Organization in Belize over 14,789 people (4,483 households) impacted by Hurricane Lisa (2022).

[3] Figures as of 2022 were not available for countries in the Caribbean, likely because data validation for 2023 is still ongoing.

Active Mechanisms for Addressing Human Mobility in the Context of Disasters and Environmental-related Migration and the Data Challenges

Evacuation

Mobility has a strong potential to save lives particularly through evacuations and in some cases, planned relocations although it is often a last resort option. However, if evacuation is not well managed, it can increase vulnerability and expose people to new threats. For instance, during the La Soufrière volcano eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in 2021, up to 20,000 people were residing in high-risk zones in the north of the island (IOM, 2021).

Additionally, significant data gaps and challenges exist prior, during, and after evacuations, such as defining vulnerable populations which is crucial for data collection and analysis. For example, St. Lucia identifies vulnerable people as children, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, while Dominica lists elderly and the disabled people, under this category (IOM, 2022). Moreover, national statistic offices do not collect demographic data on LGBTQ+ population (using strict privacy and personal data protection protocols) in statistical measures in the context of climate and disaster evacuations (IOM, 2022).

The Cross-Border Evacuation Protocol[4] in the Eastern Caribbean guides activities across six phases of evacuation to ensure safe border crossings for affected populations in the event of disasters. It is supported by national governments, regional and international organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders.

Data Challenges in these efforts include:

- In disaster response plans, data collected by Dominica Air and Sea Ports Authority (DASPA) on disaster victims lacks disaggregation by age, gender, or destination countries. Likewise, Discover Dominica Authority's database only captures incoming arrivals. These incomplete datasets are jointly used to analyse travel trends and environmental migration, indicating insufficient data collection infrastructure and highlighting the need for more robust systems to track human mobility effectively (IOM, 2023).
- Antigua and Barbuda have developed multi-hazard risk assessments, but integrating migration dimensions and expanding data-sharing protocols to include migration management actors remains a challenge.
- Saint Kitts and Nevis face challenges in integrating migration dimensions into their multi-hazard risk assessments, despite having a data-sharing act since 2018.

Environmental-related Migration

Due to the topology of most Caribbean countries, they are at high risk of extensive environmental degradation from both slow-onset disasters like rising sea levels and droughts, as well as sudden-onset events such as floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and storms. These environmental stresses disrupt livelihoods, particularly in agriculture, which employed 11 per cent of the Caribbean workforce in 2021 (CFR, 2023).

Intensifying weather-related disasters destroy farmlands, crop yields, and livestock, forcing nature-reliant communities to migrate in search of better opportunities. (CFR, 2023). Due to the complex multicausality and multidirectional drivers of migration, most Caribbean countries often exclude climate and environmental factors as reasons for movement. This poses data challenges such as:

- Incomplete understanding of migration drivers, undermines policy responses, misallocates resources, and neglects climate-displaced individuals' needs.
- Unreliable data, the need for comprehensive climate impact research, and the implementation of climate-smart agriculture, resilient infrastructure, and social safety nets like risk insurance for displaced farmers and vulnerable groups (IOM, 2024).
- Rural-urban migration in Jamaica lack data on whether climate change or environmental factors drive these patterns. Additionally, the absence of disaggregated temperature data for urban and rural areas impedes assessments of urban concretization's impact on temperature and residents' comfort (IOM, 2024).

[4] The Cross-border Evacuation Protocol is part of a larger project led by IOM Dominica promoting a human security approach to disaster displacement and environmental migration policies in several Eastern Caribbean countries. Country-specific assessments are available for Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, British Virgin Islands, Grenada, among others.

Missing Migrants

The Caribbean region has three main mobility routes moving from, and within the Caribbean. One extending from Cuba to the state of Florida in the United States. Another one from the Caribbean Venezuelan coast to different Caribbean islands, including Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, and Trinidad and Tobago. And a third one, across the Mona Passage, a 130 km strait between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico mostly used by Dominican, Venezuelan, Cuban and Haitian migrants.

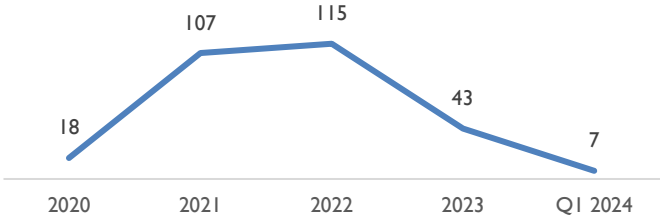
Migration on these paths remains unsafe, irregular and deadly. Migrants travelling on these routes face serious risks of death, particularly if using unseaworthy vessels that may sink or capsize in the ocean, as well as risks related to crimes including human trafficking.

In line with the dynamic human mobility displayed in the region and the multifaceted threats that migrants face in their journeys, this section looks at IOM's Missing Migrants Project (MMP) data[5] on missing/dead[6] migrants in and originating from the Caribbean, including Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, between 2020 and the first quarter of 2024.

In the first part, this report lays out MMP data on missing/dead migrants where accidents took place within the Caribbean region; in the second part it presents MMP data of missing/dead migrants who originated from the Caribbean but were recorded as dead/missing outside the region.

Missing/dead migrants in the Caribbean

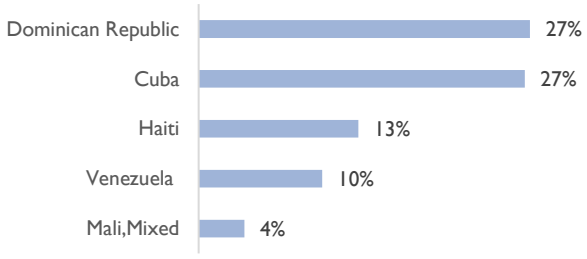
Graph 13: Minimum estimated number of incidents that resulted in death/disappearance by year (n= 1,146)



Between, 2020 and March 2024, the MMP recorded 1,146 incidents that resulted in the death/disappearance of at least one migrant.[6] Out of these, the **most recorded number of incidents was in 2022, with 31 per cent (n=115)**, followed by **2023 with 22 per cent**, and 2021 with 21 per cent of the total. It is important to highlight that while 2024 presents the lowest record with 12 per cent, this is only for the first three months of the year.

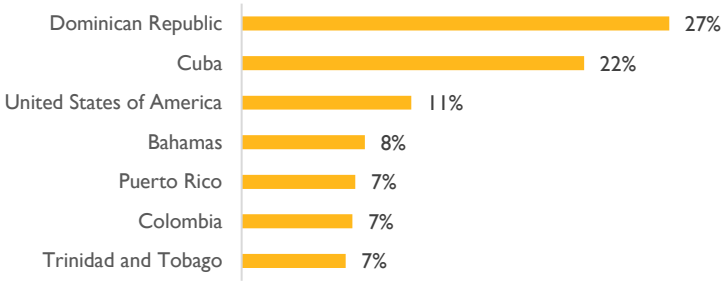
Moreover, the MPP data identified that out of the 1,146 incidents recorded, **54 per cent involved individuals from the Dominican Republic and Cuba (27% each)**, **13 per cent individuals from Haiti, 13 per cent from Venezuela**, and four per cent from Mali, or mixed origins[7]. Other countries of origin identified were, Colombia, Ecuador, Thailand, Cameroon, Guyana, the Bahamas and Jamaica.

Graph 14: Minimum estimated incidents that resulted in death/disappearance by top countries of origin (n=1,146)



Moreover, MPP data identified that out of the 1,146 incidents recorded, 27 per cent had occurred in the Dominican Republic, 22 per cent in Cuba, 11 per cent in The United States of America, and eight per cent in the Bahamas. Another 21 per cent had occurred in Puerto Rico, Colombia, and Trinidad and Tobago (7% each). To a less extent, other countries of accidents identified by the MMP were Venezuela (3%), and Turks and Caicos Islands (3%),

Graph 15: Minimum incidents that resulted in death/ disappearance by top countries of incident (n=1,146)



Where causes of death were identified (n=290), drowning remained the highest cause with for 64 per cent of the recorded incidents, followed by harsh environmental conditions/lack of adequate shelter, food, water (28%), and vehicle accident/hazardous transport (5%).

[5] Methodological note: IOM's Missing Migrants Project counts migrant fatalities only at the external borders of a state or during the process of migrating towards an international destination. The term *Missing migrant* refers to disappearances during migration in which a person is **presumed dead**.
This data collection methodology presents some limitations in terms of consistency and comparability of data as the MMP team constantly works to improve the data, as well as due to a lack of systematic reporting on the deaths of non-nationals in transit, as official data are often unavailable or incomplete.
.See: Missing Migrants Project: A decade documenting migrant deaths P. 16

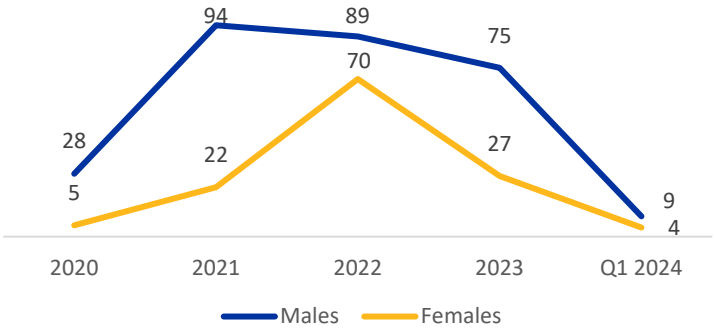
[6] Despite calls at the international level for work to address the issue of migrant deaths and disappearances, there is still a need to expand and improve data coverage and completeness in most regions of the world. As such, Missing Migrants Project data are best understood as a **minimum estimate** of the true number of lives lost during migration. See MMP Data Collection Guidelines P. 3

[7] *Mixed origins* refer to the cases where the origin of an individual cannot be determined, either because of contested regions, or inability to identify the exact location of death/disappearance.

Missing Migrants

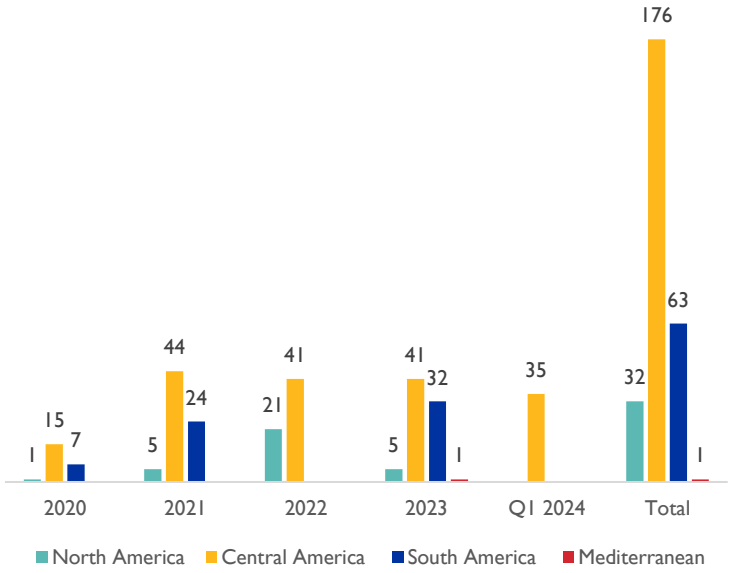
When looking at the sex disaggregation[8], MMP data revealed that out of the 423 incidents where data was available, 70 per cent included the death/disappearance of males, and 30 per cent of females. 2021 was found as the year with most male deaths/disappearances, while 2022 was the years with the highest number of missing/dead females.

Graph 16:: Sex disaggregation by year of incident (n=423)



The bulk of these incidents was recorded in 2023, with 29 per cent (n=79) of the incidents occurring in this year, followed closely by 2021 with 27 per cent (n=73). To a lower extent, 2022 saw 23 per cent of these incidents (n=62), while the first quarter of 2024 saw 13 per cent (n=35). Finally, 2020 recorded eight per cent (n=23) of the 272 incidents identified by the MMP.

Graph 17: Number of incidents that resulted in dead/missing migrants by year and region of incident (n=272)



Missing/dead migrants originating from the Caribbean

MMP data recorded 272 incidents with migrants that originated from the Caribbean but were reported missing/dead in other regions between 2020 and the first quarter of 2024. Out of these, 176 were recorded in Central America, 63 in South America, 32 in North America, and one in the Mediterranean.

Conclusion

This report presents a comprehensive overview of migration and displacement-related public data in the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean, utilizing data available up until 30 June 2023.

The data mapping exercise covered themes such as migrant stocks and demographics, movement of vulnerable populations, intraregional mobility, regular pathways, disaster displacement and environmental migration, and missing migrants. It is important to note that due to the data cutoff, the impacts of Hurricane Beryl are not reflected in the information provided on disaster displacement.

Despite these efforts, significant data gaps persist across all sections. The lack of comparable migration population statistics across countries, often due to varying methodologies and data collection timelines, limits the potential for regional comparisons or the creation of multi-country databases. Additionally, the absence of a structured data exchange system exacerbates the scarcity of comparable data, hindering the flow of information between data-collecting governments and entities such as intergovernmental bodies and research organizations.

However, these challenges also present opportunities for collaboration and data sharing:

Establish Regular Reporting Mechanisms: Implementing consistent reporting systems on migration-related data and the movement of vulnerable populations throughout the English and Dutch-speaking Caribbean can significantly enhance the quality and accessibility of information.

Create a Structured Data Exchange System: Developing a system for structured data exchange will allow countries to share methodologies and best practices, facilitating more consistent and comparable data collection across the region.

Update Census Information: Ensuring up-to-date census information on migrant and vulnerable population stocks and demographics is essential for identifying trends and challenges, such as brain drain, declining birth rates, and aging populations.

Foster Collaborative Efforts: Promoting collaboration among countries can support the development of effective policies and programs, improving the understanding of current migration patterns in the Caribbean and enabling more informed and responsive policy decisions.