A Demographic Profile of Black Caribbean Immigrants in the United States

Kevin J.A. Thomas

A project of the Migration Policy Institute's National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy

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The Pennsylvania State University

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For more on the Young Children in Black Immigrant Families Research Initiative, please visit: www.migrationinformation.org/integration/cbi_home.cfm.

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Executive Summary

While Caribbean societies were involved in the large-scale forced migration of African slaves for centuries, the significant voluntary movement of Caribbean Blacks to the United States did not begin until around 1900. Following the immigration reforms of 1965, which placed a new priority on family-based migration, Caribbeans immigrated to the United States in larger numbers.

Today the majority of Caribbean immigrants who come as US permanent residents are admitted based on family ties. The 1.7 million Caribbean-born Black immigrants in the United States represent just over half of all Black immigrants in the country; most come from Jamaica, Haiti, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Dominican Republic. The share of immigrants who are Black varies across Caribbean-origin countries: they are the vast majority (90 percent or more) of immigrants from Haiti and most English-speaking countries, 14 percent of immigrants from the Dominican Republic, and just 3 percent from Cuba. Aside from the notable exceptions of Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, English is spoken in the vast majority of Caribbean countries. As a result, almost 80 percent of Black Caribbean immigrants are fluent in English.

Despite relatively low educational attainment, English-speaking Black Caribbean immigrants earn more in the US labor market than Black African immigrants, who are among the best-educated immigrants in the United States. This may be explained not only by these Caribbean immigrants' English-language proficiency but also by the fact that they have been in the United States for longer.

I. Introduction

Caribbean societies have long been part of international migration movements. Along with the demise of their native populations following early contact with Europeans, the demographic profile of Caribbean societies was transformed by additional immigration from Europe and the arrival of sub-Saharan African slaves[1] in the early 1500s.[2] During the period of slavery, however, there was limited migration of Black slaves from the Caribbean to the United States. According to historical evidence, some slaves were transferred to US plantations after first being acclimated to the harsh conditions of the Caribbean islands.[3] In sum, for the almost three centuries following the arrival of Africans in the Caribbean, there was little voluntary migration of Blacks between the Caribbean and the United States.

Large-scale voluntary movements started to occur almost immediately after the end of slavery in the British Caribbean during the 1830s, as former slaves explored opportunities to secure better living conditions elsewhere.[4] Initially, these movements were restricted to inside the region, and involved freed slaves moving from labor-surplus to labor-scarce Caribbean colonies.[5] Since then, successive generations have used migration as a means to improve living standards and to mitigate the economic hardships of the post-slavery period. In the process, increasingly large numbers of Caribbean Blacks migrated to destinations in Europe, primarily the United Kingdom.

1 Alejandro Portes and Ramón Grosfoguel, "Caribbean Diasporas: Migration and Ethnic Communities," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 533 (1994): 48–69.
2 Mary C. Waters, *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
3 D. Elliott Parris, "Contributions of the Caribbean Immigrant to the United States Society," *Journal of Caribbean Studies* 2 (1981): 1–13.
4 Bonham C. Richardson, "Caribbean Migrations 1838-1985" in *Modern Caribbean*, eds. F. W. Knight and C. A. Collier (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 203–28.
5 Suzanne Model, *West Indian Immigrants: A Black Success Story?* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008).

It was not until the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898 that the United States emerged as a major destination for Black international migrants from the Caribbean.[6] Among the initial wave were Caribbean natives who had been employed by US firms in the construction of the Panama Canal. Many of these immigrants settled in New York after their economic sojourn to Central America, although about one-third of them eventually returned to their homelands.[7] For much of the past two centuries, Caribbean immigration to the United States has also been influenced by America's hegemonic relationship with countries in the region, since most of them, with the important exception of Jamaica, have been under US political control at some point in their history.[8]

During the period of slavery, there was limited migration of Black slaves from the Caribbean to the United States.

Despite economic and political links between the United States and the Caribbean, immigrants from the region accounted for only a small percentage of all US immigrants until recently. Between 1820 and 1970, for example, only 2 percent of all immigrants in the United States were from the Caribbean (meanwhile, the corresponding proportion of African immigrants was even smaller, at around 0.1 percent).[9] Many Caribbean Blacks who arrived during this period were labor migrants whose services were heavily recruited by the US agricultural industry. For example, in the late 1800s workers migrated to Florida in large numbers in response to the high demand for labor among US fruit harvesting industries.[10]

II. Trends, Diversity, and Origins

While the initial Caribbean contribution to total immigration to the United States was relatively small, it grew steadily over the 20th century.[11] In particular, between 1920 and 1950 the number of Caribbean immigrants to the United States increased by more than 540 percent.[12]

Immigration reforms in 1965, which lifted national origin-country quotas and replaced them with a system based on family reunification and employment, further increased the size of the Caribbean immigrant population. A decade after the 1965 reforms, the number of Caribbean immigrant arrivals to the United States was almost equal to those from Mexico and Canada.[13] These movements were also facilitated by advanced communication and transportation links between the United States and the Caribbean.[14] As a result of these developments, migration from the Caribbean became less risky. Thus,

6 Ibid.
7 Richardson, "Caribbean Migrations 1838-1985."
8 Portes and Grosfoguel, "Caribbean Diasporas."
9 Roy Simon Bryce-Laporte, "Black Immigrants — The Experience of Invisibility and Inequality," *Journal of Black Studies* 3, No. 1 (1972): 29–56.
10 Raymond A. Mohl, "Black Immigrants: Bahamians in Early Twentieth Century Miami," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 65, No. 3 (1987): 271–97.
11 These quotas were set for nations in the Eastern Hemisphere, not the Western Hemisphere, and so did not apply to immigration from the Caribbean.
12 Portes and Grosfoguel, "Caribbean Diasporas."
13 Roy Simon Bryce-Laporte, "Introduction: New York City and the New Caribbean Immigration: A Contextual Statement," *International Migration Review* 13, No. 2 (1979): 214–34.
14 Richardson, "Caribbean Migrations 1838-1985," 203–28; Mary Mederios Kent, "Immigration and America's Black Popula-

legislative, infrastructural, and technological developments combined to dramatically increase migration flows between the Caribbean and the United States during the course of the 20th century. Consequently, between 1981 and 1990, an estimated 1.2 million Caribbean immigrants arrived in the United States; this number is about 1,000 percent larger than the number of arrivals between 1921 and 1930.[15]

The increased Caribbean migrant flows to the United States after the 1960s included a significant number of unauthorized immigrants from selected Caribbean countries. Some studies suggest that in the late 1970s, Jamaica, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic were among the top 14 countries of origin for unauthorized immigrants to the United States.[16] Estimates also indicate that in 1980, these countries, along with Cuba and Trinidad and Tobago, accounted for as much as 7.1 percent of the total unauthorized immigrant population of the United States.[17]

Despite the rapid growth in size of the Caribbean immigrant population throughout much of the 20th century, Black immigrants from the region have arrived in smaller numbers than their counterparts from Africa since the year 2000. Yet, because of their longer history of immigration to the United States, Black immigrants from the Caribbean still outnumber the Black African immigrant population. In 2008-09, for example, there were 1.7 million Black Caribbean immigrants in the United States compared to 1.1 million Black Africans (see Table 1). Likewise, the total number of Caribbean Blacks exceeded the combined total number of Black immigrants from South America, Europe, and other world regions. Collectively, Caribbean countries account for the majority of the Black immigrant population in the United States. In 2009, one in every two Black immigrants was from a Caribbean-origin country.

Table 1. Black Immigrants in the United States by Region of Origin, 2008-09

	Total Immigrant Population (thousands)	Black Immigrant Population (thousands)	Share of Blacks among All Immigrants (%)
All US Immigrants	*38,234*	*3,267*	*9*
Born in Africa	1,457	1,081	74
Born in the Caribbean	3,437	1,701	49
Born in South America	2,578	174	7
Born in Mexico or Central America	14,285	191	1
Born in Europe	5,113	58	1

Note: Black immigrants are those who responded "Black" either alone or in combination with any other race in response to the American Community Survey (ACS) in 2008-09.
Source: Migration Policy Institute (MPI) analysis of 2008 and 2009 ACS, pooled.

One distinguishing feature of the immigrant population from the Caribbean, relative to that from Africa, is that the former is more racially diverse. Estimates for 2009 indicate that about half (49 percent) of all Caribbean immigrants identified themselves as Black. (See Table 2.) Over 90 percent of immigrants from several sending countries (including the two largest — Jamaica and Haiti) identified themselves as Black. On the other hand, Black immigrants accounted for only 3, 14, and 47 percent of immigrants from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Dominica, respectively. Black immigration from these three countries has accelerated recently, further increasing the diversity of the Caribbean immigrant population. Between 1980 and 2009, the number of Black immigrants from Dominica increased by 500 percent while the

tion," *Population Bulletin* 62, No. 4 (December 2007).
15 Portes and Grosfoguel, "Caribbean Diasporas: Migration and Ethnic Communities."
16 Bryce-Laporte, "Introduction: New York City and the New Caribbean Immigration."
17 Jeffrey S. Passel and Karen A. Woodrow, "Geographic Distribution of Undocumented Immigrants: Estimates of Undocumented Aliens Counted in the 1980 Census by State," *International Migration Review* 18, No. 3 (1984): 642–71.

number from the Dominican Republic and Cuba increased by 686 percent and 183 percent, respectively.

Table 2. Black Immigrants as Share of All Immigrants in the United States from Caribbean Origins, 2008-09

	Total Immigrants (thousands)	Black Immigrants (thousands)	% Black
All US Immigrants	*38,234*	*3,267*	*9%*
Born in the Caribbean	3,437	1,701	49%
St. Kitts-Nevis	12	12	100%
Haiti	541	534	99%
Barbados	50	48	96%
Jamaica	638	612	96%
St. Lucia	19	18	95%
Antigua-Barbuda	18	17	94%
St. Vincent	18	17	94%
Grenada	31	29	94%
Bahamas	29	26	90%
Other West Indian countries	34	29	85%
Trinidad and Tobago	220	181	82%
Other Caribbean countries	23	16	70%
Dominica	34	16	47%
Dominican Republic	785	110	14%
Cuba	985	34	3%

Source: MPI analysis of 2008 and 2009 ACS, pooled.

In recent decades, Black Caribbean immigrant flows have mostly originated in English-speaking countries. The significance of these movements increased toward the end of the 1960s as Caribbean nationals from former British colonies faced restrictions on the immigration of Commonwealth nationals to Britain.[18] As a result of these restrictions, immigration from Jamaica and former English colonies in the Caribbean surged toward the end of the decade. Beginning in the 1960s, there were also notable increases in immigration from non-English speaking countries; the number of Dominican and Haitian immigrants rose substantially, accompanied by increased refugee flows from Cuba following the Cuban revolution in 1959.[19]

Immigrants from English-speaking Caribbean countries still make up the majority of Black Caribbean immigrants in the United States. Jamaica alone accounted for 36 percent in 2008-09 (see Table 3), while Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Grenada collectively accounted for 16 percent. At the same time, the size of the immigrant population from non-English Caribbean countries has accelerated rapidly in recent decades. The number of Black immigrants from Haiti increased 514 percent between 1980 and 2008-09, while the Black Dominican population grew by 686 percent. In fact, Haitians accounted for 31 percent of all Black Caribbean immigrants in 2008-09, up from 19 percent in 1980.

18 Portes and Grosfoguel, "Caribbean Diasporas."
19 Adela Pellegrino, "Trends in Latin American Skilled Migration: 'Brain Drain' or 'Brain Exchange'?" *International Migration* 39, No. 5 (2001): 115–32; Portes and Grosfoguel, "Caribbean Diasporas."

Table 3. Black Caribbean Immigrants by Country of Origin, United States, 1980 to 2008-09

	Population (thousands)				Share of Total from Region (%)				
Year	1980	2000	2006	2008-09	1980	1990	2000	2006	2008-09
Black Caribbean Immigrants	453	1,428	1,636	1,701	100	100	100	100	100
Jamaica	179	534	620	612	40	35	37	38	36
Haiti	87	414	484	534	19	24	29	30	31
Trinidad & Tobago	57	164	194	181	13	11	11	12	11
Dominican Republic	14	85	68	110	3	11	6	4	6
Barbados	27	51	51	48	6	4	4	3	3
Cuba	12	30	33	34	3	2	2	2	2
Grenada	7	26	30	29	2	2	2	2	2
Other West Indian countries	3	25	39	29	1	2	2	2	2
Bahamas	12	25	26	26	3	2	2	2	2
St. Lucia	1	13	17	18	0	1	1	1	1
Antigua-Barbuda	4	18	14	17	1	1	1	1	1
St. Vincent	3	21	20	17	1	1	1	1	1
Dominica	1	13	15	16	0	1	1	1	1
Other Caribbean countries	43	-	15	16	9	2	-	1	1
St. Kitts-Nevis	2	10	9	12	0	1	1	1	1

Note: Black immigrants are those who responded "Black" either alone or in combination with any other race to the ACS race question in 2000, 2006, 2008, and 2009. In 1980 and 1990, respondents could not report more than one race (i.e., report a multiracial identity), and so the responses for these years are for Black race only.
Source: MPI analysis of data from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 US Census of Population and Housing; 2006 ACS, and 2008-2009 ACS, pooled.

Between 2006 and 2009, however, the overall number of Black Caribbean immigrants fell by about 4 percent. This decline was possibly a response to the economic recession in the United States. Between 2006 and 2008-09, the number of Black immigrants from Trinidad and Tobago decreased by 7 percent (falling from 194,000 to 181,000), while the population of Black immigrants from Jamaica remained nearly the same.

III. Modes of Entry and Legal Status

Estimates based on data from the Pew Hispanic Center indicate that Black immigrants from the Caribbean are the least likely to be unauthorized among all Black immigrants in the United States.[20] Specifically, about 16 percent of Caribbean-born Blacks were unauthorized in 2006-08, compared with 21 percent of Black Africans and 29 percent of Black immigrants from other regions (see Figure 1). Given its larger size overall, however, the unauthorized segment of the Black Caribbean immigrant population was still larger

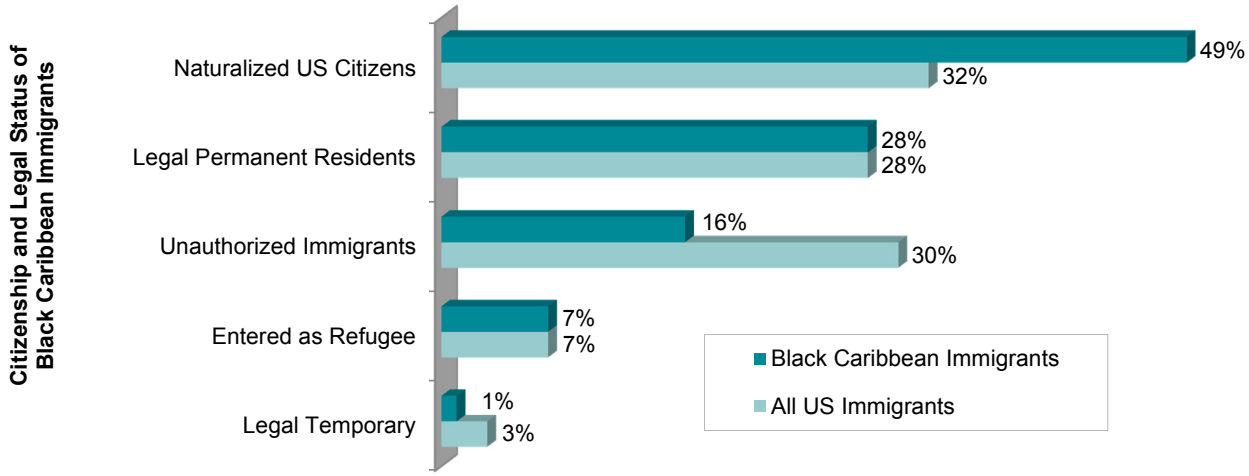
20 These estimates were calculated by the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) based on US Current Population Survey (CPS) data, augmented by legal status assignments by demographers at the Pew Hispanic Center.

in absolute terms than that of Black Africans.

In general, about half (49 percent) of all Caribbean Blacks in 2006-08 were naturalized citizens — the largest proportion among Black immigrants and a higher share than US immigrants overall (32 percent). Black Caribbean immigrants were also slightly more likely to be legal permanent residents (LPRs) (28 percent) than Black Africans (26 percent) and were equally as likely to be LPRs as immigrants overall. The relatively large proportion of naturalized citizens among Caribbean immigrants reflects the fact that, on average, they have more years of US residence than most other Black immigrants.[21] One implication of their higher levels of citizenship and permanent residence status is that, among all Black immigrants, those from the Caribbean are possibly the least likely to be disqualified from public benefit programs.

At least 7 percent of all Black Caribbean immigrants are refugees or asylees. Most are Cubans, who, since the *Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966*, are automatically granted provisional admission (and can then gain legal permanent resident status after a year of US residence).[22] Recent refugees include Cubans, admitted under the provisions of the *Cuban Migration Agreement of 1994*, as well as those from other refugee-sending countries such Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Since the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, an estimated 48,000 Haitian immigrants already in the United States have received protection from removal — and work authorization — under a blanket form of temporary humanitarian relief known as Temporary Protected Status (TPS).[23] Unlike refugees, TPS recipients are not eligible for public benefits, including public health insurance, in most states.

Figure 1. Citizenship and Legal Status of Black Caribbean Immigrants to United States, 2006-08



Source: MPI analysis of US Current Population Survey (CPS) 2006-08 data, pooled, augmented by assignments of legal status to noncitizens by Jeffrey S. Passel, Pew Hispanic Center.

Official estimates for the 2010 fiscal year, which report on nationality but not race, indicate that Caribbean immigrants of any race accounted for 13 percent of all LPRs admitted to the United States during the year

21 After becoming legal permanent residents (LPRs), immigrants must typically spend five years in this status (three years if married to a US citizen) before becoming eligible to apply for US citizenship.

22 Tracy Fujimoto, "Elian Doesn't Live Here Anymore: One Little Boy in the Maze of US Immigration and Family Law," *University of Hawai'i Law Review* 23 (2000): 249–75; Ruth Ellen Wasem, C*uban Migration and Policy Issues* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007), www.fosterquan.com/content/documents/policy_papers/CRSOnCubanMigrationIssues.pdf.

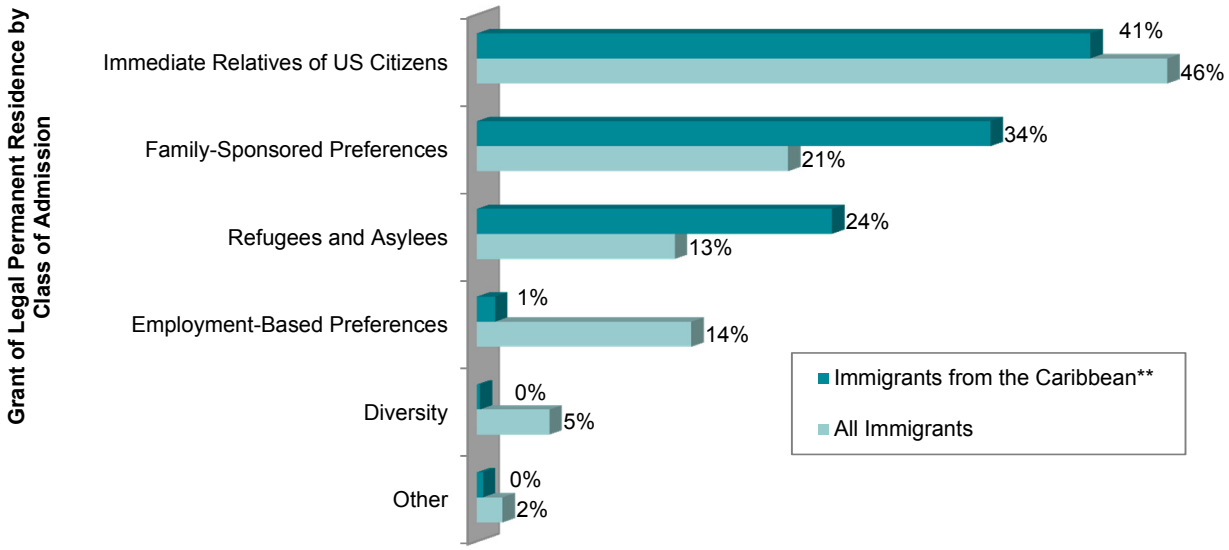
23 US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), "Secretary Napolitano Announces the Extension of Temporary Protected Status for Haiti Beneficiaries," (press release, May 17, 2011), www.dhs.gov/ynews/releases/pr_1305643820292.shtm.

— slightly more than African immigrants (10 percent).[24] Caribbean LPRs were less likely than Africans to be admitted under the diversity visa program, for employment, or through other channels. Sixty percent of Caribbean LPRs were admitted through family reunification channels compared to 48 percent of Africans.

According to demographer Mary Mederios Kent[25] more than 80 percent of recent immigrants from the Caribbean admitted under family reunification provisions were from English-speaking countries and Haiti. In 2010, 41 percent of immigrants from Caribbean origin countries and territories were legally admitted as the immediate relatives of US citizens (see Figure 2). Another third (34 percent) were admitted under other family-sponsored preferences, which are subject to annual numerical limits and have been challenged in congressional immigration reform debates.

While Caribbean immigrants who obtained LPR status in 2010 were most likely to be admitted as the immediate relatives of US citizens, refugee and asylee admissions accounted for the second largest number of persons from the Caribbean granted permanent residence. Caribbean immigrants (24 percent) were more likely to obtain permanent residence as refugees or asylees than either Africans (22 percent) or immigrants overall (13 percent). In 2010, virtually all Caribbean refugees and asylees were from Cuba (91 percent) and Haiti (9 percent).

Figure 2. Persons Granted Legal Permanent Residence by Class of Admission*, FY 2010



* These admissions include both immigrants obtaining permanent residency upon arrival in the United States as well as those who apply for and receive LPR status after substantial periods of residency in the country without such status.
** Includes Caribbean immigrants of all races; the legal admissions data disaggregate admissions by country of origin and not by race.
Source: Author's representation of data from US Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Table 10: Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status by Broad Class of Admission and Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Year 2010 (Washington, DC: *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2010,* DHS, revised March 30, 2011), www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/LPR10.shtm.

24 DHS, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2010* Revised March 30, 2011, "Table 10: Persons Obtaining Legal Permanent Resident Status by Broad Class of Admission and Region and Country of Birth: Fiscal Year 2010 (Washington, DC: DHS, 2011), www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/LPR10.shtm.
25 Kent, "Immigration and America's Black Population."

IV. Geographic Settlement Patterns

Black Caribbean immigrants are less geographically dispersed than their African counterparts. However, unlike African immigrant groups they have been very successful in using their spatial concentration in selected states to increase their economic and political influence in local communities.[26] In 2007, two-thirds of all Black Caribbean immigrants lived in two states — New York and Florida, with 38 percent and 28 percent respectively — accounting for the majority of the Black foreign-born population in these states and nearly one-fifth of both states' total Black population (18 percent and 17 percent). Along with New York and Florida, other states such as New Jersey (7 percent), Massachusetts (4 percent), Georgia (3 percent), Maryland (3 percent), and Connecticut (3 percent) are host to the largest numbers of Black immigrants from the Caribbean.

Dominicans and Jamaicans remain heavily concentrated in New York, while Florida maintains its long tradition of attracting refugees from Cuba.

Over the years, Caribbean immigrant groups have clustered in specific US states. As in the first half of the 20th century, Dominicans and Jamaicans remain heavily concentrated in New York, while Florida maintains its long tradition of attracting refugees from Cuba. There are large concentrations of Black Haitian immigrants in the Miami–Fort Lauderdale area and around south Florida, including those living in enclave communities such as Little Haiti.[27] Caribbean settlement in Florida is, however, distinct when compared with other states in the US South and Midwest. Compared to Africans and other Black immigrants, for example, Caribbean Blacks are less likely to live in states such as Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Missouri.

V. Human-Capital Characteristics

Following the immigration reforms of 1965, Caribbean immigration to the United States involved a significant degree of educational selectivity. In other words, there were differences in the educational characteristics of Caribbean nationals who chose to migrate to the United States compared to those who chose to remain in their countries of origin. This was especially true for immigrants from English-speaking Caribbean countries. For example, while Jamaican and Trinidadian immigrants were generally more highly educated than their origin-country counterparts, the opposite was true for immigrants from the Dominican Republic.[28] Furthermore, immigrants from English-speaking Caribbean countries arriving during this period were more likely to be highly educated and employed in white-collar occupations than their counterparts who arrived in earlier decades.[29]

26 Cédric Audebert, "Residential Patterns and Political Empowerment among Jamaicans and Haitians in the U.S. Metropolis: The Role of Ethnicity in New York and South Florida," *Human Architecture: Journal of Sociology and Self-knowledge* 6, No. 4 (2009): 53–68.

27 Audebert, "Residential Patterns"; James A. Dunlevy, "On the Settlement Patterns of Recent Caribbean and Latin Immigrants to the United States," *Growth and Change* 22, No. 1 (1991): 54–67.

28 Adela Pellegrino, "Trends in Latin American Skilled Migration."

29 Elizabeth Thomas-Hope, "Skilled Labour Migration from Developing Countries: Study on the Caribbean Region," (International Migration Papers 50, International Labor Office, Geneva, 2002), www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/migrant/download/imp/imp50e.pdf.

Recently, however, notable declines have occurred in educational selectivity among Caribbean immigrants. More recent Caribbean Blacks tend to have had relatively lower socioeconomic status in their countries of origin.[30] In contrast, contemporary immigrants from Africa tend to be among the more educated members of their origin countries.[31] These differences may partly explain why Caribbean Blacks are not as well educated, overall, as their immigrant counterparts from Africa.

Caribbean Blacks are also underrepresented among the highly skilled when compared to US natives, Black African immigrants, and immigrants overall.

For example, in 2005-09, Black Caribbean immigrants were generally overrepresented among less-educated groups in the United States. About one in five Caribbean Blacks ages 25 or over had less than a high school diploma compared to one in seven Black Africans (see Table 4). Compared to US natives (12 percent), Caribbean Blacks were about twice as likely to lack a high school degree (22 percent). Immigrants with less than a high school diploma or equivalent credential also accounted for a considerable proportion of Black immigrants from countries such as the Dominican Republic (36 percent), Cuba (35 percent), and Haiti (26 percent). These patterns reflect two possibilities. First, Caribbean Blacks with low levels of educational attainment may be more likely to come from non-English-speaking Caribbean countries because of their close proximity of the United States; the highly educated migrants from these countries may have more flexibility to go elsewhere. Second, contemporary immigrants from the Caribbean with comparatively low educational credentials are more likely to come from refugee-sending countries, in particular Haiti. This pattern is consistent with studies showing that recent Caribbean refugees are substantially less educated than their counterparts who arrived in the 1960s.[32]

Caribbean Blacks are also underrepresented among the highly skilled when compared to US natives, Black African immigrants, and immigrants overall. On average, Black immigrants born in the Caribbean were less likely to have a master's, doctorate, or professional degree in 2005-09 (7 percent) than US-born Blacks (10 percent) and Black African immigrants (15 percent). They were also about half as likely to have college degrees (13 percent) than Black African immigrants (23 percent). Immigrants from English-speaking Caribbean countries such as Bahamas, St. Kitts-Nevis, and Antigua and Barbuda were the most likely to have a four-year college degree, while those from the non-English speaking countries of Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Cuba were the least likely to have such a degree.

30 Douglas S. Massey, "Commentary," *Federal Reserve Board of New York Economic Policy Review* 11, No. 2 (2005): 121–2.
31 Joseph Takougang, "Contemporary African Immigration to the United States," *Irinkerindo: A Journal of African Migration* 2 (2003).
32 Portes and Grosfoguel, "Caribbean Diasporas."

Table 4. Educational Attainment for Adults (Ages 25 and Over) by Origin (%), 2005-09

	Educational Attainment				
	Less than High School	High School or GED	Some College	4-Year College (No Professional Degree)	Master's, Doctorate, or Professional Degree
US TOTAL	*15*	*29*	*28*	*17*	*10*
Native Born	12	31	30	18	10
Foreign Born	32	23	18	16	11
Black Immigrants	*20*	*28*	*27*	*16*	*9*
Black Immigrants Born in Africa	13	21	29	23	15
Black Immigrants Born in the Caribbean	22	32	27	13	7
Bahamas	12	26	32	19	10
St. Kitts-Nevis	19	32	21	18	10
Other Caribbean countries	19	30	24	15	12
Dominica	23	29	26	14	9
Other West Indian countries	16	35	26	15	8
Grenada	19	37	24	12	8
Jamaica	20	32	27	13	7
Trinidad and Tobago	14	36	29	14	7
Barbados	17	34	27	14	7
Antigua and Barbuda	20	32	25	15	7
Cuba	35	32	19	8	6
St. Vincent	20	35	25	14	6
Haiti	26	30	27	12	5
Dominican Republic	36	27	21	11	5
St. Lucia	21	39	22	12	5

Source: MPI analysis of 2005-09 ACS, pooled.

Caribbean Blacks are more likely to be English-proficient than their African counterparts (see Table 5). A smaller proportion of the former are also likely to be bilingual; in fact, close to 60 percent of Black Caribbean immigrants speak exclusively English at home. These patterns reflect the fact that the majority of Caribbean countries are former British colonies. As the estimates indicate, 90 percent of immigrants from major English-speaking Caribbean-origin countries — such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados — use English as their primary language at home. Moreover, 11 of 13 Caribbean-origin groups in Table 4 have English monolingual levels that exceed the average for all immigrants and that for Black Africans.

Table 5. English Proficiency for Immigrants Ages 5 and Over by Origin (%), 2005-09

	Speaks Another Language at Home				
	Yes, Speaks Only English	Yes, Speaks English Very Well	Yes Speaks English Well	Yes, Speaks English but Not Well	Does Not Speak English
Foreign Born, Total	*16*	*32*	*21*	*20*	*11*
Black Immigrants, Total	46	29	14	8	3
Black African Immigrants	21	49	20	8	2
Black Caribbean Immigrants	59	19	12	8	3
Grenada	97	2	0	0	0
Barbados	96	3	0	1	0
St. Vincent	96	3	1	0	0
Antigua-Barbuda	96	3	0	0	0
Trinidad	95	3	1	0	0
St. Kitts-Nevis	95	4	0	0	0
Jamaica	93	6	1	0	0
Other West Indian countries	88	9	2	1	0
Bahamas	77	20	3	1	0
Other Caribbean countries	72	22	5	1	0
Dominica	62	26	6	3	3
St. Lucia	59	34	5	2	0
Cuba	8	26	20	26	20
Haiti	7	40	30	18	5
Dominican Republic	5	31	24	26	14

Source: MPI analysis of 2005-2009 ACS, pooled.

As expected, English proficiency levels are much lower among immigrants from Spanish-speaking Cuba and from French-speaking Haiti, groups that have many poorly educated refugees. Within household contexts, fewer than 10 percent of immigrants from Haiti and Cuba use English exclusively. Both groups speak other non-English languages at home, such as French Creole and Spanish. Among these groups, limited English language skills are likely to have negative implications for their integration into society, given the positive influence of English proficiency on various socioeconomic outcomes of immigrants.[33]

33 Kevin J. Thomas, "Familial Influences on Poverty Among Young Children in Black Immigrant, U.S.-born Black, and Nonblack Immigrant Families," *Demography* 48, No. 2 (2011): 437–60.

VI. Employment and Earnings

In 2005-09, Black Caribbean immigrants were as likely to participate in the labor force as Black African immigrants (see Table 6). Among individuals between the ages of 18 and 64, the percentage employed was about 75 percent for both groups. Caribbean Blacks also had labor force participation rates that exceeded the averages for US natives and all immigrants combined. However, there were important variations in labor force participation across the Caribbean Black immigrant population. On the whole, these variations were not necessarily driven by systematic differences in labor force participation among immigrants from English and non-English Caribbean countries. For example, while Cuban Blacks had the lowest percentage employed (64 percent), Haitian Blacks had an employment rate (76 percent) that was consistent with the average for all Caribbean Blacks (75 percent).

Caribbean Blacks also had labor force participation rates that exceeded the averages for US natives and all immigrants combined.

There are pronounced gender disparities in labor force participation among both Black African and Caribbean immigrants. Female employment rates were as much as 13, 11, and 9 percentage points lower than those of males among immigrants from St. Vincent, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, respectively. Still, on average, Black Caribbean women (73 percent) were more likely to participate in the labor force than Black African-born (68 percent) and all US-born (68 percent) females. This was partly due to the higher employment rates of female immigrants from countries such as Jamaica, Grenada, and St. Kitts. In absolute numbers, there were more employed Black Caribbean women than men (536,000 versus 469,000), a pattern also seen in two of the leading sending countries: Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago.

Table 6. US Civilian Employment Rates for Adults (Ages 18 to 64)* by Origin and Gender, 2005-09

	Population (Thousands)			Employment Rate		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
All US Adults Ages 18 to 64	*187,610*	*93,114*	*94,496*	*71*	*76*	*67*
Native-Born Adults	157,467	77,617	79,850	72	75	68
Immigrant Adults	30,143	15,497	14,645	71	82	60
Black Immigrants	*2,556*	*1,247*	*1,309*	*75*	*78*	*71*
Black African Immigrants	*847*	*459*	*388*	*75*	*80*	*68*
Black Caribbean Immigrants	*1,338*	*608*	*730*	*75*	*77*	*73*
St. Kitts-Nevis	9	4	5	80	83	78
Grenada	24	10	14	78	77	78
Jamaica	484	213	270	77	77	77
Other West Indian countries	27	12	15	77	77	77
Haiti	414	198	216	76	79	72
Barbados	38	18	21	76	78	75
St. Vincent	15	6	9	74	80	70
Antigua-Barbuda	15	6	9	74	75	74
Other Caribbean countries	13	6	7	74	83	67
Trinidad and Tobago	153	66	88	73	76	70
Dominica	14	6	8	73	76	70
Dominican Republic	72	34	38	70	74	66
Bahamas	22	10	12	69	68	69
St. Lucia	16	6	9	69	66	71
Cuba	22	13	8	64	66	61

Notes: * Employment rates are for the civilian population only. Adults in the armed forces are excluded from the denominator. Population totals for men and women may not add up exactly due to rounding.
Source: MPI analysis of 2005-09 ACS, pooled.

Collectively, Caribbean Blacks had higher median earnings than all immigrants, the overall Black immigrant population, Black Africans, and Blacks from Central America (see Table 7). Caribbean Blacks had higher median earnings. The Caribbean advantage relative to Black Africans is particularly surprising. Higher levels of schooling tend to be associated with higher earnings, and Caribbean Blacks had lower average schooling levels than Black Africans. Despite this schooling disparity, the median earnings of Caribbean Blacks were about 11 percent higher than those of their Black African counterparts, suggesting that economic returns to schooling are higher among the former than the latter. These results are also striking given the fact that Caribbean immigrant workers are more likely to be women than Africans.

Four factors may explain these earnings differences. First, compared to Caribbean Blacks, Black Africans with non-US university degrees receive lower financial returns from their schooling.[34] Second, since immigrant earnings are positively associated with language proficiency, so higher levels of English proficiency among Caribbean than African Blacks may contribute to income differences. Third, Caribbean immigrants have on average been in the United States longer than African immigrants, and those from Jamaica, Trinidad, and other English-speaking West Indian countries are the most established. Fourth, the average age of Caribbean immigrants is higher than for Africans, with a larger share in the prime earning years of 45 to 54.

Table 7. Median Annual Earnings for US Civilian Workers (Ages 16 and Over),* by Origin, 2005-09

	Total (thousands)	Median Annual Earnings (US $)
All US Workers ages 16 and Over	*141,295*	*$32,000*
Native-Born Workers	119,095	$33,000
Immigrant Workers	22,200	$26,000
Black Immigrants	**1,962**	**$29,000**
Black African Immigrants	639	$27,000
Black Caribbean Immigrants	1,044	$30,000
Barbados	31	$36,000
Other West Indian countries	22	$35,000
Other Caribbean countries	10	$35,000
Antigua-Barbuda	11	$35,000
Grenada	19	$33,000
Jamaica	390	$32,000
Trinidad and Tobago	115	$32,000
St. Vincent	12	$32,000
St. Kitts-Nevis	8	$31,000
Bahamas	16	$30,000
Dominica	11	$30,000
St. Lucia	11	$27,000
Haiti	322	$25,000
Cuba	15	$24,000
Dominican Republic	52	$22,000

* Median annual earnings are for employed civilian workers with nonzero earnings only. Adults in the armed forces and those with negative or zero earnings are excluded.
Source: MPI analysis of 2005-2009 ACS, pooled.

34 F. Nii-Amoo Dodoo, "Assimilation Differences among Africans in America," Social Forces 76, No. 2 (1997): 527–46.

VII. Demographic Characteristics: Age and Sex Distribution

The majority of Caribbean immigrants to the United States have traditionally been women.[35] In 2009, Caribbean Blacks were predominantly female (55 percent), unlike Black immigrants from Africa and US natives. This female dominance is particularly notable among immigrants from Antigua and Barbuda, St. Lucia, and Grenada. The exception to this pattern is found among Cubans, at least 55 percent of whom were male.

Table 8. Age Distribution of Black Immigrants, 2005-09

	Age Distribution (%)							
	< Age 11	Age 11-17	Age 18 -24	Age 25-34	Age 35-44	Age 45-54	Age 55-64	Age 65 +
Total US Population	*15*	*10*	*10*	*13*	*14*	*15*	*11*	*13*
Total Native-Born Population	16	10	10	12	13	14	11	13
Total Foreign-Born Population	3	4	9	20	22	18	12	12
Black Immigrants	*3*	*5*	*12*	*19*	*22*	*20*	*12*	*9*
Black Immigrants Born in Africa	5	7	9	23	24	18	8	3
Black Immigrants Born in the Caribbean	2	4	8	17	21	22	15	13

Source: MPI analysis of 2005-2009 ACS, pooled.

Black Caribbeans were more likely to be in their older working years (ages 45-64) and to be elderly than Black African immigrants. At the same time, the proportion of Africans between the young adult ages of 18 and 34 exceeded that found among US natives and immigrants from the Caribbean.

The percentage of Caribbean immigrants who are children below age 10 is less than half that of the US-born population (6 versus 16 percent). Both the African and Caribbean immigrant populations are less likely to consist of children than US natives. This is generally true for immigrants as most children in immigrant families are US-born. African and Caribbean immigrants are both less likely to be adolescents or young adults than US natives. It is important to note that Black immigrants born in Africa and the Caribbean are more likely than US natives to be in their child-bearing years and that the US-born children of immigrants face many of the same integration challenges as the young foreign-born.

Among Black immigrants, Caribbean Blacks have the smallest share in young childhood. Less than 1 percent of immigrants from Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Bahamas, and St. Kitts-Nevis are children below age 10. Compared to Black immigrants overall and Black Africans, Black Caribbeans have the lowest percentage of children below age 18. These age-distribution patterns are consistent with evidence suggesting that children in the Caribbean Black population are highly involved in return migration flows, as many Caribbean immigrant families in the United States send their children back to their origin countries to allow them to experience their teenage socialization processes back home.[36] Furthermore,

35 Harriette Pipes MacAdoo, Sinead Younge, and Solomon Getahun, "Marriage and Family Socialization among Black Americans and Caribbean and African Immigrants," in *The Other African-Americans: Contemporary African and Caribbean Immigrants in the United States*, eds. Yoku Shaw-Taylor and Steven A. Tuch (Lanham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers): 93–116.

36 Marjorie Faulstich Orellana, Barrie Thorne, Anna Chee, and Wan Shun Eva Lam, "Transnational Childhoods: The Participation of Children in Processes of Family Migration," *Social Problems* 48, No. 4 (2001): 572–91.

return migration among Caribbean children is sometimes driven by their parents' desire to have them complete part of their education in their origin countries.[37] In general, these children are usually allowed to migrate back to the United States and to be reunited with their families during their late adolescence.

VIII. Family Structure

For the most part, Black immigrants live in family contexts that are quite different from those of US natives and other immigrant populations. Research suggests that the children of Black immigrants are the least likely among children of immigrants to live in two-parent households.[38] As Table 9 indicates, the percentage of household heads (with or without children) who are single is higher among Black immigrants than among immigrants on average.

Table 9. Family Structure among Black Immigrants of Caribbean Origin, 2005-09

	Family Structure (%)				
	Single: No Children under 18	Married: No Children under 18	Single with Children under 18	Married with Children under 18	Extended
Total US population	40	27	9	20	4
Native Born	41	28	9	19	4
Foreign Born	32	21	10	29	7
Black Immigrants	40	14	16	22	8
Black Immigrants Born in Africa	41	11	15	28	5
Black Immigrants Born in the Caribbean	40	15	17	18	10

Notes: Analysis limited to household heads ages 16 and older. Married individuals are defined as those who are married with a spouse present.
Source: MPI analysis of 2005-2009 ACS, pooled.

A decomposition of single-parent households into those with and without children under 18 sheds additional light on the family structure of Black immigrants. In terms of single-parent households without children, Africans (41 percent) and Caribbean Blacks (40 percent) are broadly similar. However, more than half of Cuban household heads live in such households.

The higher percentage of single-parent households with children among Black immigrants than among immigrants overall or among US natives is of particular policy concern. Black immigrants are disadvantaged in this regard because single-parent households are associated with various socioeconomic vulnerabilities, including high levels of poverty, limited parental supervision, and poor schooling outcomes.[39] Studies show, for example, that Black Caribbean children in single-parent households have lower test scores than their counterparts in two-parent families.[40] Beyond their exposure to the

37 Dwaine Plaza, "Transnational Return Migration to the English-speaking Caribbean," *Revue européenne des migrations internationales* 24, no.1 (2008): 115-137.
38 Peter David Brandon, "The Living Arrangements of Children in Immigrant Families in the United States, *International Migration Review* 36 (2002): 416-36.
39 Nancy Landale, Kevin J.A. Thomas, and Jennifer Van Hook, "The Living Arrangements of the Children of Immigrants," *Future of Children* 21, No. 1 (2011): 43–70.
40 Philip Kasinitz, Juan Battle, and Inés Miyares, "Fade to Black? The Children of West Indian Immigrants in South Florida," in

disadvantages of racial minority status, therefore, Black immigrants face additional vulnerabilities associated with the structural characteristics of the households in which they live.

For both African and Caribbean Blacks, the percentage of single-parent households with children is about twice that of the US average. Caribbean Black households are slightly more likely to be single-parent households with children (17 percent) than Black African households (15 percent). Some studies suggest that the prevalence of such households among Caribbean immigrants reflects the fact that such households are also highly prevalent in Caribbean-origin countries.[41] Among Africans, single-parent households are more common among Cape Verdeans, Guineans, and immigrants from refugee-sending countries such as Somalia and Liberia. Among Caribbean-origin countries, immigrants from the Dominican Republic and St. Lucia are most likely to live in a single-parent household with children.

Although more than one-fourth of US households overall involved married couples with no children under 18, such families are generally uncommon among Black immigrants. Rather, as observed among all immigrants, married-couple households among African and Caribbean immigrants are more likely to have children under 18 than no children under 18 present in the household. The larger proportion of married households with children among Black immigrants is likely a product of family reunification processes and a higher rate of births to immigrant than native women in the years immediately following their arrival in the United States. In general, however, African immigrants are more likely to live in married households with children (28 percent) than Black immigrants from the Caribbean (18 percent).

For both African and Caribbean Blacks, the percentage of single-parent households with children is about twice that of the US average.

At the same time, extended family arrangements are more common among Black immigrants than among US natives. Extended households serve an instrumental purpose in meeting the short-term needs of immigrants by allowing them to pool resources and providing child care, although their long-term benefits remain unclear.[42] Table 9 suggests that the short-term benefits of extended households are more common among the Caribbean immigrant population (10 percent) than among Africans (5 percent). A likely explanation for this disparity is the comparatively lower costs of migration between the United States and the Caribbean, which allows Caribbean immigrants to bring more members of their extended family to the country than their African immigrant counterparts. Furthermore, since Caribbean immigrants have a longer history of migration than African immigrants, they are also likely to have a larger proportion of family members who immigrate to the United States using non-marriage immigration channels.

Ethnicities: Children of Immigrants in America, eds. Rubén Rumbaut and Alejandro Portes, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 267–300.

41 Ibid.

42 Landale, Thomas, and Van Hook, "The Living Arrangements of the Children of Immigrants."

IX. Conclusions

Black Caribbean immigration to the United States is rooted in strong historical, cultural, and economic linkages between the two regions. Future immigration flows are likely to be influenced by the dynamics of America's social and political relationships with Caribbean countries and the ways in which these dynamics affect immigration policy. Continued refugee migration from Cuba, for example, is likely to be determined by the changing dynamics of US-Cuban relations. At the same time, the United States and Caribbean countries are still very much connected by strong familial relationships between Caribbean immigrants in the United States and their relatives back home. If current laws persist, such connections will provide an important basis for the continuation of legal Caribbean immigration to the United States in the coming decades.

Changes in the family preference categories in US immigration law could strongly affect future flows from the Caribbean, as the majority of the current legal permanent resident flow from the Caribbean comes through these channels. The Temporary Protected Status program has been important for Haitian immigration in recent years, and whether this program is extended or maintained will have an impact on the numbers of Haitians living in the United States as well as their legal status composition.

While Black Caribbean immigrants are overrepresented among the less educated and underrepresented among the highly educated, they report strong English language skills, become US citizens at high rates, and exhibit high levels of labor force participation.

Regardless of how legal migration flows are affected by immigration reforms, however, the proximity of the Caribbean to the United States suggests that Caribbean countries will continue to play a role in illegal migration to the United States. Recent trends also underscore the fact that Black Caribbean immigration may be more responsive to changes in the US economy than Black African immigration. While immigration flows from several Caribbean countries declined during the recent economic recession, the immigration of Black Africans increased during this period. The determinants of these trends are difficult to identify using available data. However, it is reasonable to believe that once the recession ends, Black Caribbean immigration will return to its prerecession levels.

While Black Caribbean immigrants are overrepresented among the less educated and underrepresented among the highly educated, they report strong English language skills, become US citizens at high rates, and exhibit high levels of labor force participation. Notably, Black Caribbean immigrants report higher earnings than their African counterparts, despite the fact that Black African immigrants are among the best-educated immigrant groups in the United States.

The geographic concentration of Black Caribbean immigrants in states such as New York and Florida, long destinations for Caribbean immigrants, may lend integration advantages to the population, in part because of their potential influence over politics and public policy. Yet compared to immigrants and natives, Black Caribbean immigrants are particularly likely to live in single-parent families with children under 18, a living arrangement that complicates family socioeconomic status and child well-being.

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