

10 Things to Know about



Brain Gain

1



Jamaica has a general labour shortage and a shortage of specific skills, driven by employment growth of 14 percent between 2015 and 2023, which is seven times the growth between 2006-2014.

3



In 2021, only 14 or 0.3 percent of the 4,500 Jamaican work permit applications (new and renewals) were refused.

2



A Jamaican work permit costs J\$48,875 (US\$315) for every three-month period, equivalent to one-third of the basic annual minimum wage in 2023.

4



Despite Haiti's full CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) membership, the country is incapable of fulfilling its obligations under the arrangement, and thus, Haitian citizens do not benefit from the CSME free movement of skilled workers regime and must obtain work permits to work in Jamaica.

5



Emigration has always been a feature of Jamaican society and the number of emigrants far exceeds that of immigrants: in 2020, there were 1,100,000 Jamaicans emigrated versus 24,000 foreign nationals that immigrated to Jamaica.

8



Immigration of high-skilled workers attracts foreign direct investment (FDI), and helps firms find investment opportunities abroad: a US study showed that doubling the number of immigrants from a given origin country in a US state increases the probability that at least one firm from that US state engages in FDI with that origin country by 4 percentage points.

6



Immigrants generally have a positive impact on economic growth and productivity: a case study on advanced economies shows that a 1 percent increase in the number of immigrants resulted in an increase in GDP per capita and labour productivity of approximately 2 percent.

9



Venezuelan migrant workers in Trinidad and Tobago have increased the labour force participation rate from 59 percent to 63 percent since they began to arrive in 2017.

7



Immigrants tend to be entrepreneurial: a UK study found that that over 17 percent of immigrants started a firm, compared to 10 percent of natives.

10



Jamaica should reduce barriers to immigration in three ways: (i) eliminate requirements tying employees to specific employers, (ii) remove the need for an employer to prove that they cannot find locals to do the job, and (iii) eliminate work permit fees except for the minimum cost of processing the application.