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**THE REMITTANCE SENDING PRACTICES OF  
HAITIANS AND JAMAICANS IN CANADA\***

Alan Simmons, Dwaine Plaza and Victor Piché

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\* The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

## Abstract

This paper examines Caribbean immigrant communities in Canada and their contributions to family welfare and development in their countries of origin through remittances of money and transfers of material gifts. Particular attention is given to two of the largest communities, Jamaicans (based primarily in Toronto) and Haitians (based primarily in Montreal). These communities in Canada are shown to have strong transnational connections to the Caribbean. Immigration from the region is relatively recent and continuing. Members travel to the region frequently and also receive visitors from the region. Telephone contact is weekly if not daily for many households. Money remitted by households in Canada to the region is generally sent in small amounts. . However, the funds are sent frequently, with the result that the overall amount of money transferred is substantial. The paper also addresses the motives of those who send remittances, the potential for a decay in flows over time, the amount sent by households according to their resources, and other matters relevant to understanding the current and potential role of transnational Caribbean communities in Canada to well-being and development in their countries of origin.

Report to CIDA – substantive 05.05.28

**The Remittance Sending Practices of  
Haitians and Jamaicans in Canada<sup>1</sup>**

A REPORT TO CIDA

By

Alan Simmons,  
Dwayne Plaza and Victor Piché<sup>2</sup>

Summary

This report examines 2005 survey findings on the amounts, frequency and transfer costs of remittances sent by Haitian immigrants in Montreal and Jamaican immigrants in Toronto to family members in their places of origin. The findings indicate that the median amount sent in a given transfer is approximately \$200.00. Most households transfer money several times a year, with the result that households typically transfer about \$1,000 to \$1,400 per year. While remitters use various channels to deliver the money, they rely overwhelmingly on money transfer agencies. Survey respondents report that they like the speed, convenience and security of money transfer agencies. At the same time they feel that transfer fees are “high” and constitute a disincentive to transfer money with the frequency they would like. The findings point to several opportunities for developing initiatives and policies that would facilitate remittance transfers and their positive impacts.

1. This report is based on a survey carried out through the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean, York University (CERLAC), Toronto, with the collaboration of the Centre D’Études Ethniques des Universités Montréalaises (CEETUM) and the Département de démographie of the Université de Montréal. Financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency for the survey is gratefully acknowledged.

2. Alan Simmons (York University, Toronto), Dwayne Plaza (Oregon State University, Corvallis) and Victor Piché (University of Montreal and Action Canada for Population and Development) are respectively the overall survey director, the field director for the Toronto survey, and the field director for the Montreal survey. The authors wish to thank Robbyn Sellers, supervisor of the Montreal fieldwork and coding, and Benjamin Cornejo, resource manager for the overall project, for their important contributions. Deep appreciation and thanks go to the members of the Haitian and Jamaican communities in Montreal and Toronto, respectively, who participated in the survey, and particularly to members of these communities who did the interviewing and to the community organisations that provided contacts with the survey participants. For further details, write: [asimmons@yorku.ca](mailto:asimmons@yorku.ca).

## A. INTRODUCTION

Remittances sent by migrants in more developed countries to family members in less developed countries have attracted the attention of international development agencies, state organisations, and the banking and financial community. The main reasons for this rising interest include the following:

- The total value of remittances is very large; for some countries it exceeds the total revenues from the nation's largest export product.
- Remittance flows for many nations are continuing to increase.
- Remittances have a significant impact on individual and household income, and on national foreign exchange reserves.
- The welfare impact of remittances on recipients includes improved quality of nutrition, clothing, housing and access to health services and schooling.
- Remittances may lead to positive national and regional social-economic development outcomes in cases where they are supported by other development policies and investments.
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At present relatively little is known about the remittance process from the perspective of those sending funds. This is particularly true for Canada where little information exists on how much is sent by different immigrant groups, to whom, for what purpose, through which transfer channels and how much is paid for transfer fees. The present report addresses these questions for the large Haitian and Jamaican communities in Montreal and Toronto, respectively.

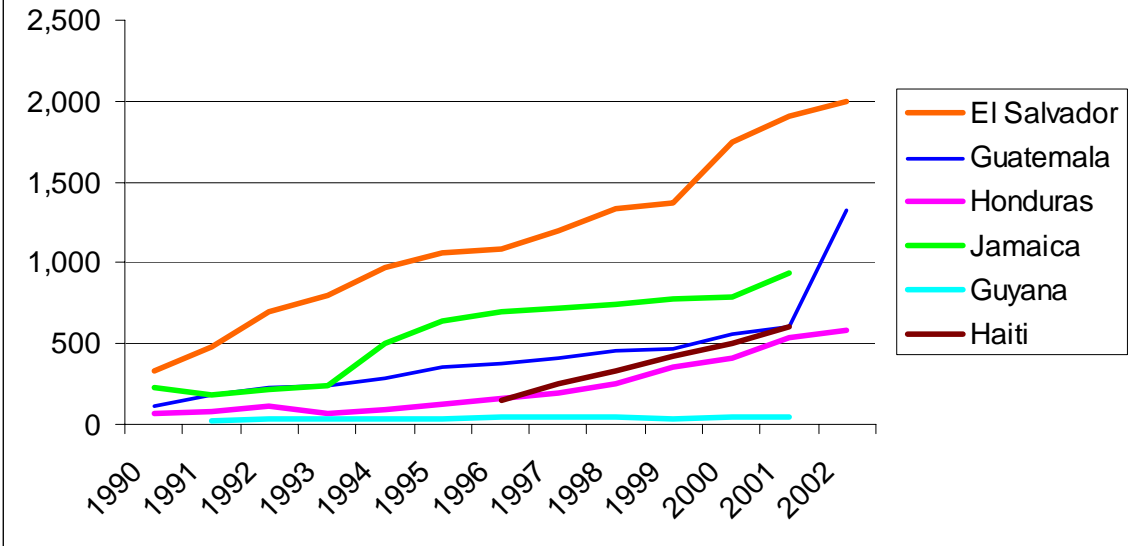
### Background: Aggregate Remittance Flows

Chart 1 shows estimates of total remittance receipts for Haiti and Jamaica, and for a few other countries in the Caribbean and Central America. Haiti and Jamaica receive large inflows of remittances, as is also true for most of the other countries shown. As well, the flows to Haiti and Jamaica are increasing over time, a trend that is also found for most of the other countries shown. One must take into account that the estimates in Chart 1 are subject to possible large distortions arising from variation in measurement procedures from one country to another.

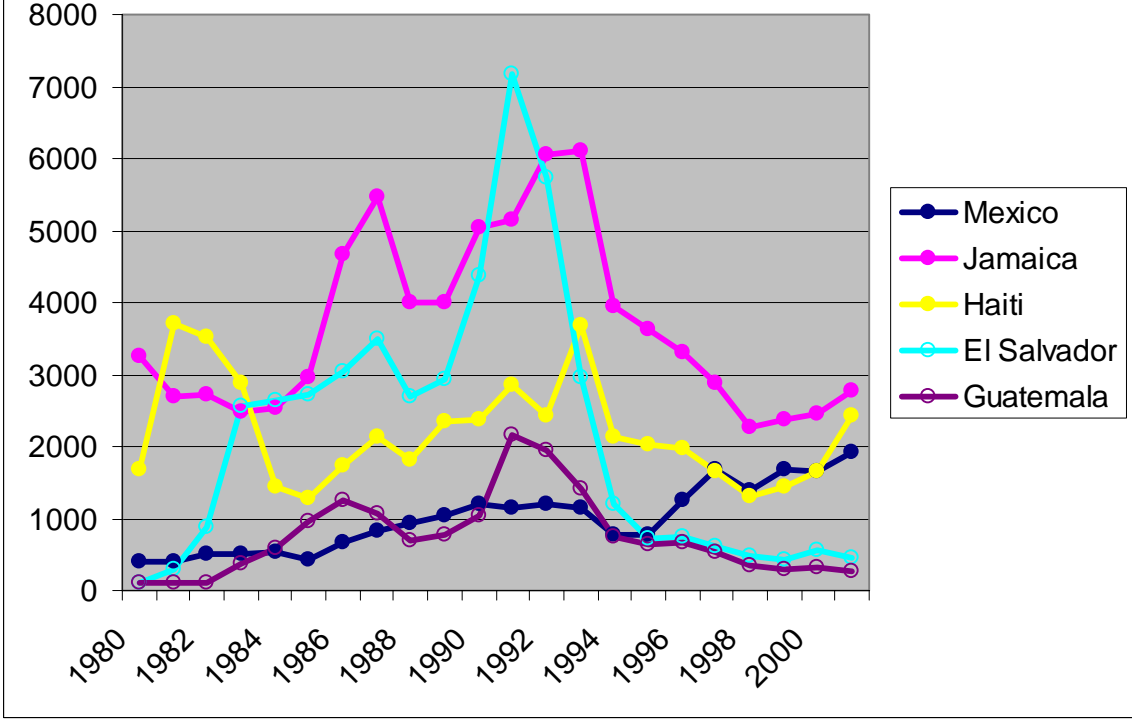
### Two Distinct Transnational Communities

There are approximately 54,000 Haitian-born immigrants in Canada, while the number of Jamaican-born immigrants in Canada is estimated at 122,000 (2001 Census). Immigration from these countries to Canada was extremely low prior to the mid-1960s, due largely to restrictive Canadian immigration policy that favoured European-origin immigrants. Immigration from Haiti and Jamaica rose rapidly in the late 1960s when these ethnocentric and implicitly racist immigration restrictions were dropped. The flows from both countries peaked in the early 1990s. Subsequently, over the period 1994-1998 the flows declined to levels observed for the early 1980s. Most recently, since 1998, the flows are rising again (particularly for Haitians). See Chart 2.

**Chart 1. Estimated Remittance Receipts  
(Figures in millions of U.S.\$)**



**Chart 2. Immigrant Landings in Canada**



Nearly all of the Haitians in Canada live in the province of Quebec, and most of those (or 46,000) live in one city, Montreal (2001 census). In contrast, about 75 per cent of Jamaicans (or 93,000) live in Toronto, Ontario. These very different settlement patterns by province are first and foremost a reflection of the French language and related cultural links between Haiti and Quebec, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the parallel English language and related cultural links between Ontario and the Anglophone Caribbean, including Jamaica. A more complete explanation of the concentration of these immigrants in two large cities would take into account the fact that the great majority of immigrants to Canada in the period since the 1960s have settled in the three largest metropolitan areas of Canada: Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

A broader analysis of differences between the Haitian and Jamaican communities in Canada would take into account the fact that the Haitians came initially as political refugees from the Duvalier dictatorships (Papa Doc and Baby Doc who were in power from 1957 through to the early 1970s). Subsequently they have come for reasons of political and economic crisis in their home country. In contrast, Jamaicans have come more frequently for employment reasons. Jamaicans began to arrive in Canada as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century as workers to help build the Halifax Citadel. In the early 20th century Jamaican women came to work as domestics, while Jamaican men came to work as railway porters and blacksmiths. A domestic worker scheme, implemented in 1955, brought in about 1,000 Jamaican women over the following decade. In 1967 with the implementation of the immigration "points" system in Canada, Jamaican workers were able to come to Canada because of their occupational skills and education, while bringing immediate family members with them.

#### Amount and Frequency of Transfers

The findings reported in this report come from a survey of 150 Haitian-origin households in Montreal and 138 Jamaican-origin households in Toronto. The survey collected information from one member of each household who was born in the country of origin. This individual had to be at least 18 years of age and sufficiently involved in household decisions to be able to report on remittances sent by the household as a whole, in addition to their own sending practices. The sampling procedures and sample characteristics are summarized in Appendix 1. Maps showing the residential distributions of Haitians and Jamaicans in Toronto and Montreal, respectively, are provided in Appendix 2. Approximately 90 per cent of all those surveyed have personally sent remittances in the past five years. For those who have transferred money, most have sent funds an average of once every two to three months. More than 80 per cent have remitted funds within the past year.

The amounts transferred over the past five years or over the past year vary from zero for some individuals and households to very large amounts for other individuals and households. An examination of amounts transferred by individuals and households reveals highly skewed distributions, with a small number of extremely large "outliers" or exceptionally large sums of money. As a result, average (or mean) transfers are much higher than median transfers.

The mean remittance by Haitian respondents in 2004 was \$965 dollars, while the median figure is only \$200. In other words half of all those sampled sent \$200 or less (this includes those who sent no funds). The upper outlier (the largest amount sent) for the Haitian respondents was \$1,830. A similar pattern is observed for individual Jamaican respondents, and for overall household remittances. The upper outlier for single household remittance payments in 2004 was \$20,679 for the Haitian community and \$19,175 for the Jamaican community.

TABLE 1. TRANSFERS OF MONEY

	<i>Haitians</i>	<i>Jamaicans</i>
<i>Remittances sent by the respondent in the past five years</i>		
Per cent of respondents who have remitted money in the past 5 years	87.9	87.8
Mean number of money transfers*	28.0	24.3
Median number of money transfers*	15.0	10.0
Upper outlier for number of money transfers*	200.0	100.0
Per cent of respondents who have remitted money in past year**	84.4	62.3
<i>Amount of money remitted by the respondent in the last transfer</i>		
Mean*	\$269.00	\$395.00
Median*	\$195.00	\$200.00
Upper outlier*	\$1,830.00	\$5,000.00
<i>Total money remitted by the respondent's household in 2004</i>		
Mean*	\$401.00	\$314.00
Median*	\$1,407.00	\$1000.00
Upper outlier*	\$20,679.00	\$19,175.00
Secondary outlier*	\$13,420.00	\$6,000.00

\* All means and medians in this table are based on responses from those who sent no remittances as well as those who did send remittances. All figures are in Canadian currency.

\*\* Sent in 2004 and the first three months of 2005 ( before March 31).

Interviewers reported that probing into the exceptionally large “outlier” payments revealed that such payments are generally for the purchase of property or the building of homes. The property purchases and home construction was largely to assist aging parents and to help relatives who had lost homes in hurricanes, although some was for land and housing that the senders were purchasing for their own possible future use in the event that they moved back to their country of origin.

### Remittance Recipients

The immigrants surveyed have been residing in Canada for at least one year and most have, over time, brought their spouses and children with them. As a result, the remittance flows are directed primarily to parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents and others still remaining in the home country. In some cases money was also sent to family and kin located in another North American or European city as a sort of transnational family safety net. In many cases, respondents could not identify a “main recipient” because their remittances are always distributed to various family members (see Table 2).

TABLE 2. RECIPIENTS OF REMITTANCES

		<i>Haitians</i>	<i>Jamaicans</i>
<i>Per cent distribution of main recipients (over past year)</i>			
	Parents	27.5	28.1
	Multiple family members	18.1	18.8
	Siblings	13.4	16.4
	No money sent and no answer	11.4	7.7
	Others	8.7	4.7
	Cousins	8.1	2.3
	Grandparents	5.4	4.7
	Aunts and uncles	4.7	6.3
	Children	2.7	8.6
	Wife or husband	0.0	0.8
	Close friends	0.0	0.8
	Nieces and nephews	0.0	2.3
<i>Purpose of remittance sent (over past 5 years)</i>			
	Food: per cent "yes"	74.7	87.1
	Rent or housing: per cent "yes"	62.0	62.5
	Health care: per cent "yes"	59.3	71.9
	School fees, etc.: per cent "yes"	59.3	53.8
	Clothing: per cent "yes"	54.7	73.2

The remittances sent are largely for a range of consumer expenditures with broad social assistance outcomes. Three quarters or more of remittance senders reported that their transfers had supported the purchase of food. Three-fifths or more of senders reported that the transfers had supported housing or other shelter needs. Half or more reported that the transferred funds had supported the purchase of clothing. Some assistance also had longer term “human capital” implications; for example, half or more of the respondents reported that money they sent in the past had gone in part to support health care and schooling expenditures.

### Transfer Channels

Channels for transferring remittances are highly developed in the remittance sending and receiving nations. Senders have various options, ranging from transfers by hand (through travellers), from bank to bank, by cheque, or through money transfer agencies. Respondents reported that they had used various channels to remit money (see Table 3). Some channels are far more widely used than others. Specifically:

- Money transfer agencies constitute the main channel. More than 80 per cent of the respondents have at some time used a money transfer agency. Roughly two thirds of respondents used an agency for their most recent transfer of funds.
- The second most important mode of transfer is “by hand,” with the funds being hand carried by a traveler (either the person sending the money, a family member or a close friend).
- Banks and credit unions are used for money transfer purposes by only a small minority of respondents.



TABLE 3. MONEY TRANSFER CHANNELS

	<i>Haitians</i>	<i>Jamaicans</i>
<i>Per cent who have ever transferred money by:</i>		
Agencies	85.0	83.3
Hand transfers	42.9	60.9
Banks	6.4	23.2
Other	5.0	4.3
Canada Post	3.6	19.6
Credit Unions	1.4	17.4
<i>Per cent who sent last transfer by:</i>		
Agency	68.8	63.8
Hand carried	17.0	8.0
No response	10.7	6.5
Bank	2.1	5.8
Multiple & Other (e.g., mail, courier)	1.4	14.5
Credit Union	0.0	1.4
<i>Per cent who feel that agency transfer costs are expensive*</i>		
	60.7	68.8
<i>Per cent who have postponed a transfer due to the transfer fees</i>		
	15.7	18.1

\* Includes those who responded “very expensive” and “somewhat expensive”

When asked about the reasons for their choice of one channel over another, respondents indicated that they faced trade-offs between various alternatives. Respondents overwhelmingly said that they wanted a transfer mechanism that was trustworthy, fast, and that would give their family member in Jamaica or Haiti the least amount of trouble when receiving the funds. Winston, a forty-five year old Pastor in a Toronto church, made this point quite clearly when he outlined why he used Western Union to send money to his parents in Spanish Town. He says:

Western Union, it is the only one around, it is the fastest way to get money to my parents. It is the only one I know of. It costs a lot more, but also it is the quickest way. They can easily pick up their money in Spanish town. They do not get too much hassle.... that the bank gives them. The banks close at 2 0'clock on Fridays. So it's hard to get the money on the weekend if I send it on Friday.... With Western Union however its there right away within hours of me sending it to them. Hassle free. It is convenient in the supermarket in the drug store you sign and it is computerized so you just press a number and everything is there and they just give you your cash right there.

For many Haitian remitters, the challenge is how to send money to relatives and friends who have no bank accounts and reside in outlying areas. Many remitters are also concerned with their safety and the security of the funds. Given the current situation of instability and insecurity in Haiti, people do not want to carry money for fear of being robbed. Certain agencies respond to these needs through home delivery. These sentiments were expressed by Haitian respondents as follows:

“I prefer Unitransfer because the money is brought directly to the beneficiaries at their home. The service is reliable, safe, and guaranteed.... Unitransfer offers other services like the transfer of food at a reasonable price.”

“I prefer CAM transfer because it’s rapid, accessible, and not too costly. The money is received the same day... I have confidence in CAM. Delivery is made to the home.”

Hand transfers. Many said that transferring funds personally or by hand through a friend or relative travelling to the region ranked very high on their preference list. The advantages were largely that the transfer was more personally meaningful when done this way. It consolidated the social and emotional relationship between sender and receiver. The reason why this mechanism is not used more is purely practical: when there is a need or desire to send funds, no one close to the sender may be travelling. For some Haitians, hand transfers also ensure that funds will reach relatives, especially those in outlying areas.

Agencies. Money transfer agencies were viewed as a mixed blessing. On the positive side, respondents reported that the agencies are convenient to both senders and receivers, fast (transfers within minutes), reliable and the sender was assured that their family member did not have to travel far to pick up the money. There was a sense of satisfaction in being able to phone the recipient shortly after the transfer and to learn that the funds had been gratefully received. On the negative side, respondents complained about transfer fees, which a majority believed to be very or somewhat “expensive.” Complaints were expressed particularly regarding the charges for amounts under \$100, given that the fee for these smaller amounts is a higher proportion of the amount sent. The high cost of agencies was a sentiment heard in many of our interviews. Glenda a thirty-two year old Jamaican-born woman in Toronto made the point that she does not have many choices for sending money back, home particularly in an emergency. She noted:

“...Western Union, that is the one thing I can count on... I use Western Union because I do not have any other choice. I use it because they are everywhere. It is very expensive, but if there is an emergency at home I have no other choice.”

Banks and credit unions. Most respondents were unaware of credit unions as a possible channel for remittances. More were aware of banks as a possible channel, but viewed these as being very slow and in some cases not readily accessible to the recipients.

Agency Transfer Fees. Respondents reported that they send small amounts of money (less than \$100) for emergencies only, as the proportional fee can be high. If a \$14 fee is charged for any transfer less than \$100, then a \$50 transfer would bear a cost of 28 per cent for the transfer service. In consequence, respondents typically send larger amounts, in the range of \$200 per transfer (median amount). This brought the proportional cost of the fee down. For example, if the fee for sending such an amount was \$18, they paid 9 per cent of the amount sent for the transfer service (see Table 4).

TABLE 4. ILLUSTRATIVE TRANSFER COSTS IN 2004 AS A PER CENT OF THE FUNDS SENT

<i>Illustrative transfer costs*</i>		<i>Haitians Urban</i>	<i>Haitians Rural</i>	<i>Jamaicans</i>
	For \$100	\$10.80	\$12.80	\$14.00
	For \$200	\$21.60	\$23.60	\$18.00
	For \$300	\$32.40	\$34.60	\$20.00
	For \$400	\$43.20	\$45.20	\$26.00
Median amount sent in most recent individual transfer by those sending money		\$200	\$200	\$200
Estimated average per cent cost of transfer		10.8	13.2	9.0

\* The illustrative fees shown for Jamaicans are approximately those charged by Western Union—the main transfer channel for Jamaicans-- in mid-2004. Those shown for Haitians are approximate amounts charged by Caribbean Air Mail Transfer (CAM)—the main transfer channel for Haitians—in 2004/05. Fees charged vary by agency and change constantly in relation to inter-agency competition. The services provided may also differ. For example, Western Union requires recipients to pick up funds from local stores that serve as agents. In contrast, CAM’s service in Haiti is entirely home-delivery, a fact that explains why transfers to rural areas cost more than those to urban areas.

Who sends remittances?

There is wide variation from individual to individual and household to household in remittance practices. Some send no remittances; others send very large amounts. There are undoubtedly many reasons for this, including the resources available to the senders, the financial needs of the receivers, the social-emotional bonds between senders and receivers, and so on. Table 6 draws attention to some of the characteristics of remittance senders.

Gender. Both men and women send remittances more or less equally (Table 5).

Age. People of all ages send remittances. However, the average amount sent rises with age (Table 5).

Income level. The amount of money remitted increases with household income to a maximum for households with income in the \$40,000 to \$49,000 range. Above that level of household income, the amount of money remitted declines (Table 5). This rising then falling pattern presumably reflects the fact that poor households have less money to send, while well-to-do households come from families that do not need financial support.

TABLE 5. WHO SENDS REMITTANCES?

		<i>Haitians</i>	<i>Jamaicans</i>
<i>Per cent of principal senders who are female</i>		56.1	52.2
Mean remittance sent last time by respondent's age:			
	Aged 18-29	\$249	\$100
	Aged 30-49	\$275	\$402
	Aged 50 and over	\$309	\$441
Mean total sent by household in 2004 by income:			
	Less than \$5,000/year	\$643	\$539
	\$5,000 to \$19,999	\$610	\$1,025
	\$20,000 to \$39,999	\$971	\$1,532
	\$40,000 to \$59,999	\$1,539	\$1,869
	\$60, and over	\$1,143	\$1,544

## Programme and Policy Implications

The preceding findings draw attention to the need to develop new remittance-enhancing initiatives in ways that are sensitive to the gender, age, and income of remittance senders and receivers. They suggest that new initiatives should build on and strengthen the existing remittance practices of men and women, adults in all age groups, and those who are not wealthy. Social incorporation programmes for immigrants are not normally considered part of international development policy, but perhaps these old policy boundaries should be questioned in a transnational world. The well being of immigrants has multiple positive benefits, including a greater capacity to support family members in less developed countries.

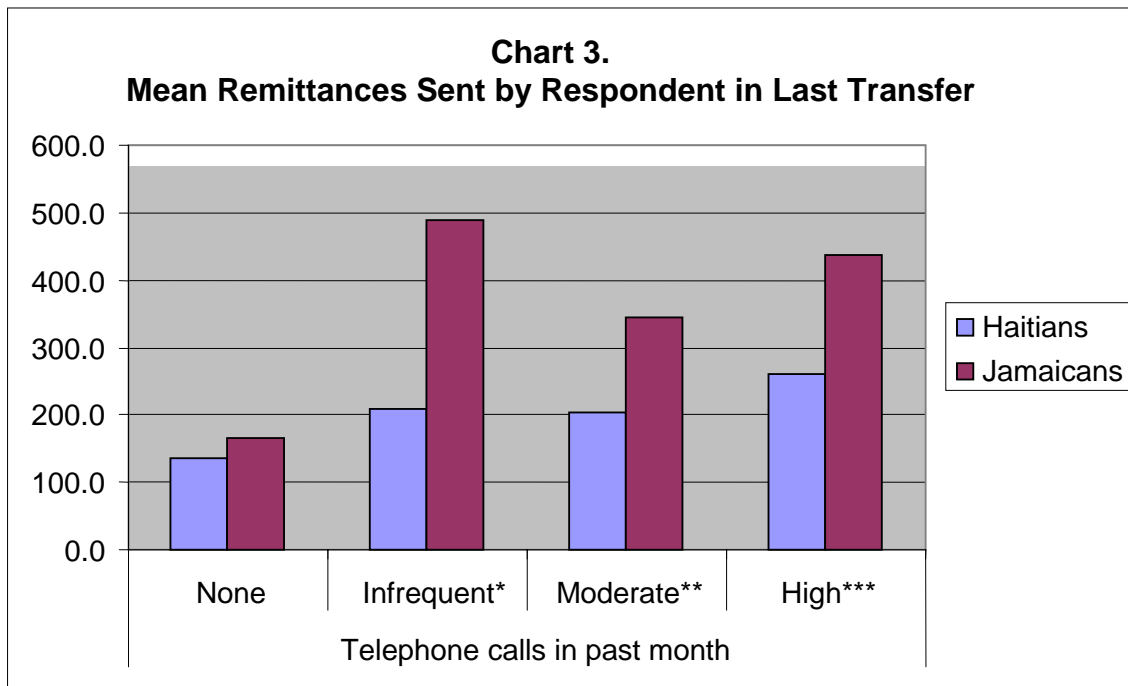
*New initiatives may be directed to the following goals:*

**Reducing costs.** The most obvious suggestion concerns reducing costs of sending and receiving remittances. This means promoting competition among remittance transfer agencies, banks, and other institutions to bring down fees, while maintaining high levels of convenience and speed. Adding other financial services for senders and recipients, such as savings, credit and investment options, could benefit everyone and promote economic development in communities with large numbers of remittance recipients.

**Promoting Communication Links.** Remittances are part of a broader set of cultural and personal commitments linking senders and receivers. Respondents reported that the personal links are sustained in part through relatively frequent telephone contact with family in the home country, supplemented by periodic visits to the home country (see Table 6). Jamaicans typically visit home once every two or three years, while Haitians do so typically once every five years. Haitians and Jamaicans typically call family members in their home country once a week or four times a month; some phone much more frequently. Competition among long-distance providers and the emergence of pre-paid telephone cards has greatly reduced calling charges. This makes the phone contact more affordable and therefore more frequent in both Haitian and Jamaican households in Canada.

TABLE 6. TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY CONTACTS

	<i>Haitians</i>	<i>Jamaicans</i>
<i>Number of visits to home community in past 5 years</i>		
Per cent "none"	44.0	23.0
Per cent "once or twice"	34.7	34.9
Per cent "three to four times"	10.0	20.4
Five or more	11.3	21.7
Mean	.89	1.4
Median	1.0	1.0
Upper outlier	13.0	20.0
<i>Number of phone calls to home community in past month</i>		
Per cent "none"	10.9	16.1
Mean	13.1	6.8
Median	4.0	4.0
Upper outlier	60.0	50.0



\* Infrequent is once or twice a month. \*\* Moderate is three to six times a month. \*\*\*High is more than six times a month.

The number of telephone calls placed by respondents to their family members in the home country is a moderately good predictor of the volume of remittances transferred to those family members (Chart 3). Respondents in Canada reported that they appreciate the extent to which long distance phone charges have fallen in recent years and that phoning was not costly. They also said that recipients in the home countries often do not have access to phones in their homes and must either rely on neighbours, telephone booths or (increasingly) on mobile phones. Mobile phones are expensive to purchase on local incomes, and are also more expensive for long distance calling (due to the fact that users must pay both for the cell-phone minutes and the long-distance minutes). Money transfer agencies and institutions could facilitate contact and the flow of remittances by providing more accessible and less expensive long distance phone services for those who receive remittances.

Strengthen Transnational Community Links. Some participants have links to their home communities through collective community improvement projects, school alumni activities, and church support activities (see Table 7). For example, thirty three per cent of Jamaicans reported that they have contributed to a church-to-church support programme or project.

The important development role that the transnational church can play in Jamaica was evident in our interviews with various Jamaican church leaders in Toronto. Pastor Mavis, a forty-eight year old Jamaican, reports to us on the important work that her Ministry has been doing since 1997. She says:

Since 1997 we have been shipping down barrels, many, many barrels. We sent new stuff, used stuff, perishable items for the less fortunate. At this time, the Jehovah Bless International Ministry has taken on a mega, major project which is also instigated by the Lord. We have now sponsored 75 less fortunate children in Jamaica, five days a week, free lunch and also in three different parishes, namely Hanover, Jericho College school and Westmorland, that's Dalistin-Bettle Primary school and Tri-Bunkers Hill Unity Primary School. We have also sponsored eight

students, seven from the high school and one from the elementary regarding their transportation fees to school...

She added,

For the first time in history of the Jericho Primary School, we have given them five computers. They will be starting the children from Grade 1 right to Grade 9, teaching them computer lessons. We also want to give educational training in sewing for the girls. That is now in process coming and for the youths that are out on the street at this time, so we want to find something to give them, a sense of direction so that they will have a hope because if a person doesn't have a hope, they will take the guns to their mama's neck and don't even care because this is what life is all about, nothing is there for me, that is it, so here we're trying to do our best so therefore we are asking, we are asking Canadians and everyone in the whole, to really link into this Ministry.

Policies and initiatives that build stronger transnational institutional links and collective projects could play an important role in the future. Such initiatives would promote development activities that benefit entire communities, not just individual remittance receivers. This is the logic of increasing development aid funds to match community collective remittances for hometown improvement projects.

TABLE 7. TRANSNATIONAL PROJECT AND CHURCH LINKS

	<i>Haitians</i>	<i>Jamaicans</i>
Per cent ever contributed to a school improvement project	7.4	13.5
Per cent ever contributed to a community project	7.7	16.0
Per cent ever contributed to church improvement project	10.7	33.1

Tax exceptions. The Canadian government is currently proposing changes to immigration policy that would allow immigrants to more easily sponsor the entry of elderly and dependent parents. The goals of such a policy are broadly humanitarian and appeal to immigrants concerned about the well being of their parents. At the same time, many immigrants may not be in a position to sponsor the entry of their parents into Canada. As well, some parents abroad will prefer to stay in their home communities. This suggests the possibility of providing tax credits to immigrants who support their parents abroad, similar to the tax credits that immigrants with dependent parents in Canada receive. Such a plan would depend on verification that the support was going to dependent parents abroad, and hence may be difficult to implement in all countries. The policy could, however, be implemented in countries in a position to sign agreements to set up procedures for verification.

Another approach would be to provide the tax credits to those immigrants that provide support to community projects for the benefit of all people, including dependent and needy relatives, in the community. Projects of this kind could be set up in collaboration with receiving community authorities and verified through state supervision. Again, such an approach may not be feasible in all countries, but could be pursued in others.

Better coordination of remittances and local development. The survey confirms that most remittances are sent to provide for basic needs (food, housing, clothing, school, and health). Few are sent explicitly for investment in productive activities, but in large part this gap may be explained by the poor context for developing productive activities in the home communities. This in turn suggests that state policies and development agency programmes have not given enough attention to the kinds of projects that would attract remittances for productive activities. The respondents also raised questions about the lack of

overall coordination between development programmes that contribute to overall poor outcomes. A leader from the Montreal Haitian community noted:

“I was in Haiti, and I encountered some Cuban doctors. They had no transportation, no medicine. OXFAM, on the other hand, had transportation and medicine. The doctors had a clinic with electricity – I asked them what will it take for you to get OXFAM to provide you with what you need to set up your clinic, where you can really help people? The reply: ours is an agricultural project....” No help with transportation was given.

## B. CONCLUSIONS

1. The survey examined possibilities for facilitating the flow of remittances and increasing their development impact. This was done by gathering and analyzing survey information and qualitative interviews on the remittance practices, goals and outcomes of members of the Haitian and Jamaican communities in Canada.
2. With respect to remittance practices, the information collected confirms what has been suspected but not examined with empirical data: Canadian residents who were born in less developed countries may have very strong attachments and commitments to members of their families who have not emigrated. Haitian and Jamaican-born residents show particularly strong transnational attachments, evident in frequent telephone contact, visits home on occasion, and particularly by transferring money several times a year to their relatives “at home.” The transfers are typically about \$200 each. Households typically transfer funds about five times a year. The result is that households typically transfer \$1,000 per year or more.
3. The information gathered found that remittance senders are largely motivated by a combination of affective attachment and family obligation to the recipients. The sending of remittances is repeated over time because the senders receive support, appreciation, and a sense that their transfers are important to recipients. These values are remarkably similar for Haitian and Jamaican remitters, suggesting that they cut across cultural values that may be different for these two transnational communities.
4. The survey determined that remitters face various barriers in sending funds. They want the funds to arrive quickly, conveniently, and securely. They also want the costs to be as low as possible, but are willing to pay what they perceive to be relatively high transfer fees in order to have the funds arrive with certainty and soon after they are sent.
5. While the survey does not directly lead to programme and policy recommendations, it provides the basis for informed reflection on actions that might be taken to facilitate the flow of remittances and to increase their development impact. The recommendations examined included: encouraging competition among remittance transfer agencies to bring down transfer fees and to expand related financial services (such as savings and credit for remittance recipients); strengthening telephone communication links by providing remittance receivers more immediate and lower cost access to long distance calling; supporting transnational community projects; and providing tax deductions to remittance senders whose funds support parents and community development ventures abroad.
6. The information examined in this report also points to questions that will require further analysis of the existing data and new studies to go beyond the current exploration. We note for example that the most well-to-do (highest income) households in the Haitian and Jamaican communities in Canada remit less than others to their families at home, presumably because such individuals came from higher income families that are less needy. We also know from some interviews in the present survey that many higher income members of the Haitian and Jamaican communities in Canada are involved in alumni associations and other organisations that send institutional development funds to their home communities. These broader social processes and their implications remain to be examined in greater detail in future analysis and research.



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## APPENDIX 1

### Survey Design and Sample Characteristics

The main source of data for the present paper is a household survey directed to individuals who were: born in Jamaica, living in Canada for at least a year, 18 years of age or over, and involved in major decisions in the household in which they lived. The survey covered various measures of the amount, frequency and purpose of remittances sent by household members. It also covered who in the household sent remittances, to whom the remittances were sent, how they were sent, the costs of sending, and rough measures of identity (Haitian/Jamaican or Canadian), perceptions of racism in Canadian society, and household income.

No universe was available to develop a random sample of the participants. The survey design therefore sought to ensure a diversity of background particularly in terms of length of residence in Canada, schooling, gender, and age/generation. The interviewers were members of the communities studied who had indicated an interest in the project. Interviewers were asked to conduct the survey in different parts of each city and to try to interview both men and women of different social-economic backgrounds. They were encouraged to use contacts with people in work places, church groups, community organisations and residential enclaves where Haitians and Jamaicans could be found in greater numbers.

Between January 15 and March 15, a total of 288 household interviews were conducted, 150 in Montreal and 138 in Toronto. The surveys primarily focus on the motivations and practices of the person who responded to the survey. In addition, some information was collected on the practices of other household members and overall household characteristics and remittance practices. The analysis in this report examines initial findings from the survey data and part of the information gathered through focus group interviews. The focus group interviews are supplementary and a rich source of information on the values and motives of remittance senders.

The research project was carried out where possible with the collaboration of Haitian and Jamaican community organisations. In the case of Toronto, the study benefited greatly from the collaboration of the JFCCO, a volunteer agency located in the Jane-Finch area of Toronto that is largely organized and run by West Indians.<sup>1</sup>

Even with the collaboration of people within the community, the Haitian and Jamaican participants in the survey were often hesitant, even resistant, to the study. Many individuals in both communities reacted to the project as a potential threat. As racialized communities with significant low-income membership, their reaction reflects a concern that the research will be used to promote more “bad press.” The interviewers—all members of the communities studied, reported that they were more successful in gathering data in residential areas and institutional contexts where they had friends and credibility as responsible members of their respective community. During the testing of the survey questions, many adjustments were made to make questions more “friendly.” For example, questions that asked about personal and household income were modified, with personal income dropped from the interview and only household income retained in a broad general question (asking which broad income category best corresponded to total household income). Even with these changes, some 5 per cent of those surveyed

<sup>1</sup> A particular note of thanks is extended to Mr. LaRose, the Director of JFCCO, for his invaluable assistance in bringing together a group of individuals who advised on the development of the survey instrument and assisted in the testing of it. The JFCCO not only provided essential substantive input to the project, but it also provided the space for meeting with interviewers and coordinating the Toronto data collection.

did not answer the household income question. The interviewers reported that the answers given to this question in particular often seemed subjectively unreliable. These data limitations are not assessed in detail in this preliminary analysis.

### Characteristics of the Respondents and Their Households

In accord with the sample design, the respondents in both communities include both women and men in roughly equal proportions (see Table A-1). They also include individuals with different levels of schooling, from those with less than high school to those with university studies. In each community there are both homeowners and home renters. Income varies widely among those sampled.

TABLE A-1. CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

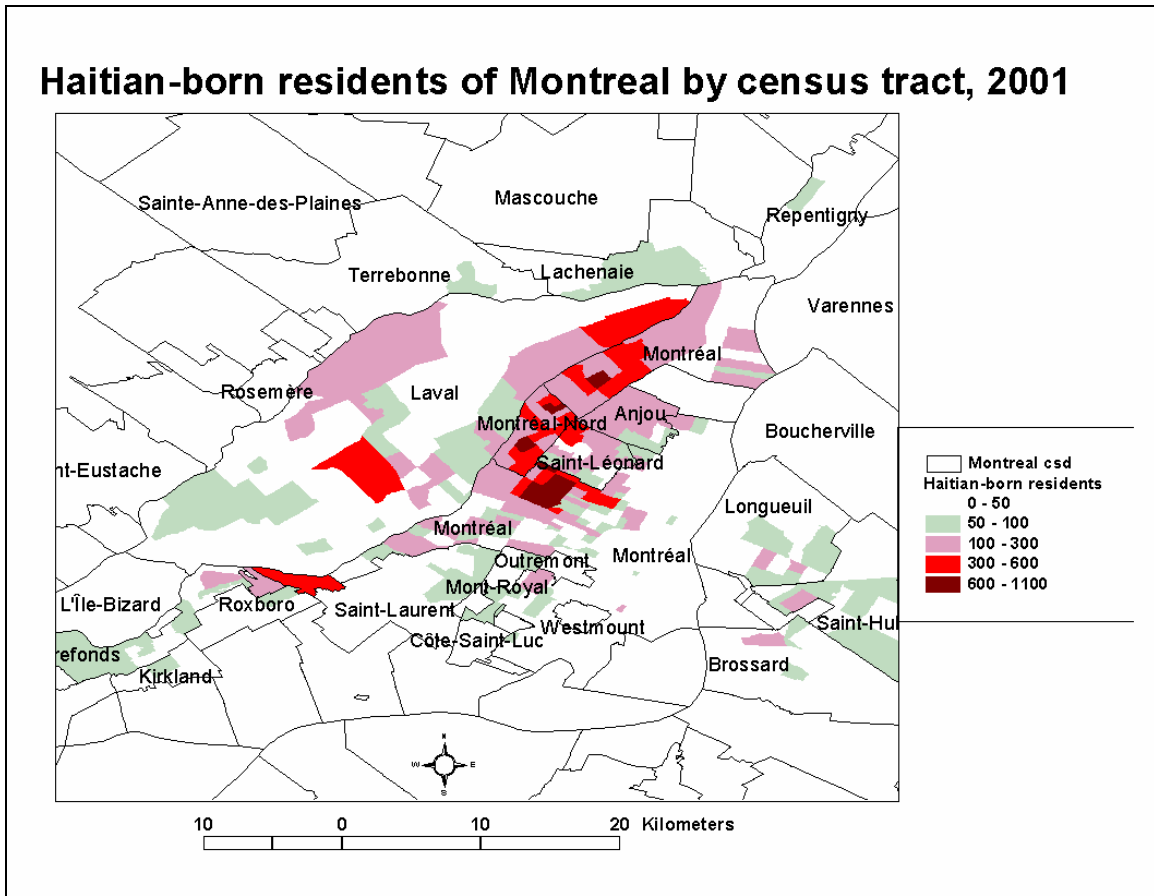
		<i>Haitians</i>		<i>Jamaicans</i>
		<i>N = 150</i>		<i>N = 138</i>
Sex of respondents	Per cent females	48.7		45.7
Age of respondents	Mean age	33.7		40.1
Schooling	Per cent with university	43.3		25.9
	Per cent with college	22.0		30.4
	Per cent high school completed	15.3		18.5
	Per cent trade school	6.7		15.6
	Less than high school	12.7		9.6
	No answer	0.7		1.5
Migration experience	Mean age at departure	21.6		20.8
	Per cent departing before age 18	39.0		35.4
	Mean years lived in Canada	11.7		20.0
	Per cent less than 10 years	56.0		16.1
Housing ownership	Per cent who rent their residence	75.3		63.0
	Per cent who own their residence	24.7		37.0
Household Income	Per cent less than \$20,000/yr	27.1		16.7
	Per cent \$20,000-\$59,000	61.0		56.1
	Per cent over \$60,000-\$99,000	10.6		20.5
	Per cent over \$100,000	0.7		6.8

The characteristics of the Haitian and Jamaican samples may reflect general differences between the two communities. Thus, the proportion with university studies is higher in the Haitian community, yet household income levels in this community are lower. However, it is also the case that these differences may reflect unplanned differences in sampling. The Haitian sample is younger than the Jamaican sample, an outcome that would not be expected on the basis of immigration flows. This may explain all or part of the differences between the two communities in household income levels. This possibility should be kept in mind in interpreting differences between Haitian and Jamaican remittance sending practices analyzed in this report.

## APPENDIX 2

### Maps

While it was not possible to sample randomly within residential areas, interviewers were instructed to seek respondents who lived in diverse areas of Toronto and Montreal. Haitians in Montreal and Jamaicans in Toronto tend to live in relatively concentrated clusters within each city, a fact that facilitated contacts and interviews spread across the two cities. These concentrations are evident in the maps below.



According to the 2001 Canadian Census, 3.5 per cent of the population of the city of Toronto is Jamaican-born. While Jamaicans live throughout the Greater Toronto area, the largest concentration of Jamaican families can be found in Etobicoke North, Scarborough and in the Jane-Finch corridor. The area around St. Clair Avenue and Bathurst Street also has a significant pocket of Jamaican immigrants and the Lawrence and Bathurst area also shows a significant presence of Jamaicans.

# Jamaican-born residents of Toronto by census tract, 2001

