Economic Letter November 2026





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Guyana is the Fastest Growing Economy in the World

Guyana is the fastest growing economy in the world and the wealthiest country in the Caribbean. The purchasing power of average incomes in Guyana is US$84,000 per year, putting the country into the ranks of the world's top 20, along with the US, European countries, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. Comparable average incomes elsewhere in the Caribbean are $32,000 for Trinidad and Tobago, $25,000 for the Dominican Republic, $22,000 for Barbados and $11,000 for Jamaica.

Despite the fact that the purchasing power of the average Guyana income is now comparable to that of advanced economies, living standards in Guyana have not improved dramatically. For one thing, much of the recent surge of income accrues to large corporations and the wealthy individuals who share ownership in these companies, as well as to the managerial, technical and highly skilled staff they employ. The majority of Guyanese would have seen more moderate increases in income, as the benefits of oil revenue percolate through the many activities that contribute to overall GDP.

It is also the case that, beyond income, the quality of people's lives depends on adequate provision of public services and utilities such as health, education, transport and communications. Ultimately the

quality of life is manifest in the health, education and longevity of the average citizen as well as their average income. In the most recent *Human Development Report* published by the United Nations Development Programme, Guyana ranks alongside the Dominican Republic in terms of their human development index scores. The DR matches Guyana's score even though average incomes are only one quarter of Guyana's thanks to its life expectancy at birth of 73.7 years compared with Guyana's 70.2 years and its 9.4 average years of schooling against Guyana's 8.7 years. The Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados and several members of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union also score higher than Guyana in the Human Development Index despite much lower average income because they have higher life expectancy and more average years of schooling.

It will take many years to translate the increase in Guyana's wealth into meaningful improvement in the living standards of the people. Health and educational facilities must be designed, built and staffed with suitably qualified persons; and roads, transport, public utilities, health and educational services must be made available across the country, including in rural communities. These upgrades must all be managed in circumstances that are complicated by rising prices, internal and international migration, and the widening disparities of income which have all now begun to appear in Guyana..

Guyana's experience shows that the exploitation of petroleum resources remains the fastest way for countries to accumulate wealth. Thanks to oil exports in just the last seven years, Guyanese average incomes have risen to 17 times what they were in 1990, when the Gross National Income per capita at purchasing power parities was just $5,000. In comparison, over the same period the purchasing power of average incomes in Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic tripled and the gains for Jamaica and Barbados were just 28% and 15%, respectively.

Guyana's wealth does not benefit the rest of CARICOM. Guyana has two official foreign asset pools: the foreign reserves of the Bank of Guyana amounting to $1 billion at June 2026 and the National Resource Fund with $5.5 billion of assets at September 30th 2026. All of that money is invested in the US. Prudent guidelines for national resource funds worldwide are for placement in assets with an Investment Grade rating. The only Caribbean country with an Investment Grade rating is Trinidad and Tobago, and the outlook associated with their latest rating announcement is negative.

The challenge for the government of Guyana is to contain rising expectations about the benefits that can be realised in the immediate future, while demonstrating tangible progress towards clearly defined long-term goals for improving the quality of life for everyone. The Government is well aware of the complexity and scope of this assignment; leaders in the public and private sectors have engaged a wide range of expertise on the management of resource-rich economies, ever since it became apparent that the exploitation of Guyana's oil resources was imminent.

The challenge for the rest of the Caribbean is to persevere on the long road to achieving an Investment Grade rating for government debt so their bonds may become eligible for funding by heritage funds. That would qualify them to attract investment not just from the Guyana Natural Resource Fund, but from similar long term investment institutions globally.

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