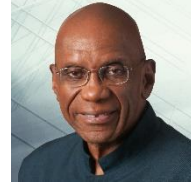


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Commentary



Economic Maps
of the
Caribbean and Central America



Economic Maps of the Caribbean and Central America

Figure 1. Central America and the Caribbean Mapped by Economic Size (\$b)

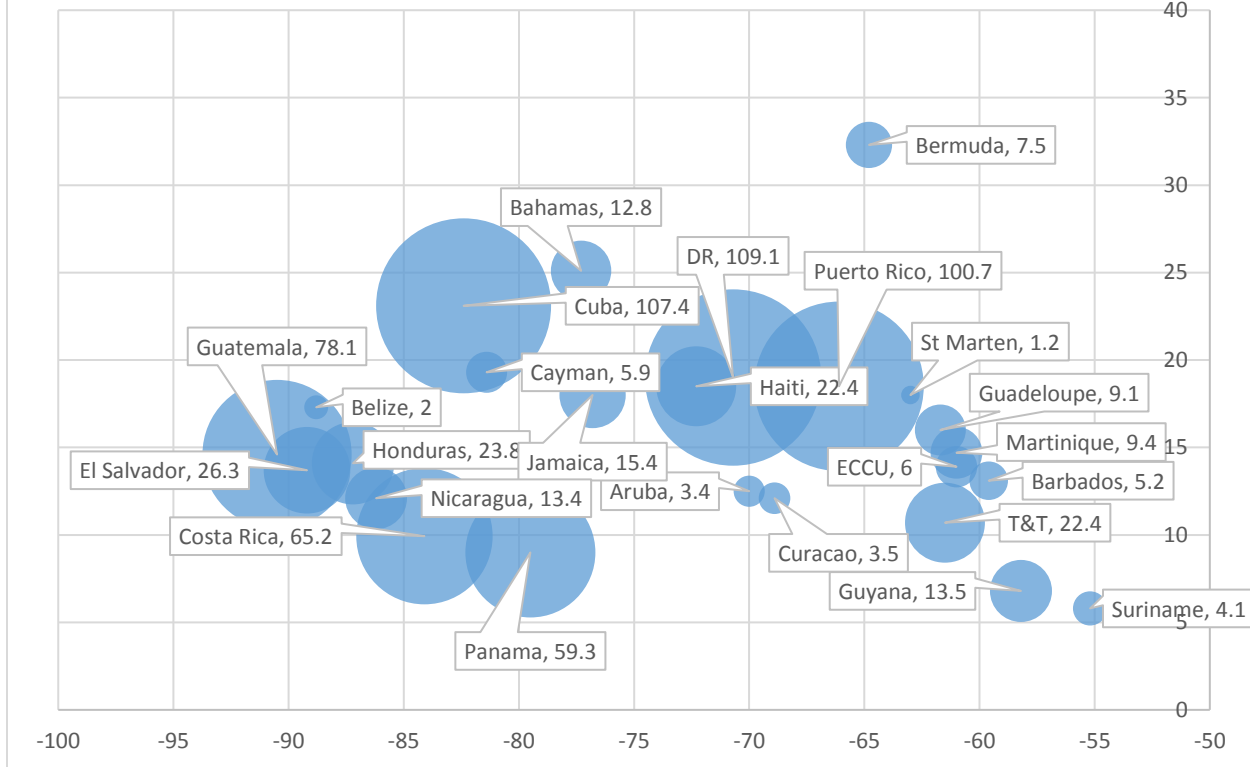
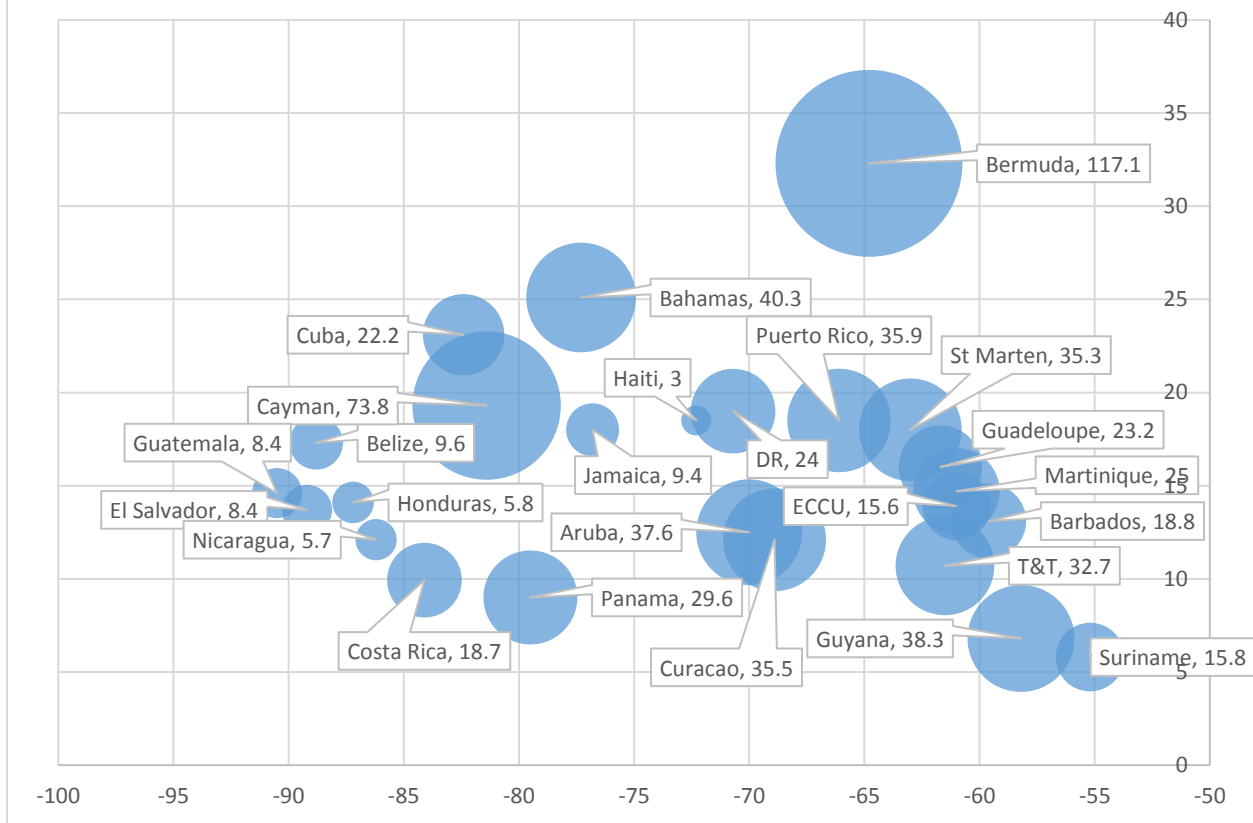


Figure 1 shows the countries of Central America and the Caribbean as circles whose size is proportional to their GDP in billions of US dollars. The largest economy in the region is that of the Dominican Republic, at \$109 billion, about the same size as Cuba (\$107 billion), and slightly larger than Puerto Rico, at \$101 billion. The economies of Guatemala (\$78 billion), Costa Rica (\$65 billion) and Panama (\$59 billion) are much larger than other Central American countries. The largest English-speaking economy is Trinidad-Tobago (\$22 billion), almost 50 percent larger than Jamaica, the second largest. Thanks to an estimated 75 percent increase in GDP over the two year period 2020-2021¹, Guyana now has the third largest economy in the English-speaking Caribbean, ahead of the Bahamas. Of the remainder, Bermuda is the largest (\$7.5 billion), bigger than the total for the Eastern Caribbean Union. The French-speaking islands, Guadeloupe and Martinique, both have much larger economies than their neighbours in the Eastern Caribbean. Each has a GDP of \$9 billion, larger than the ECCU and Barbados by 50 percent and 80 percent, respectively.

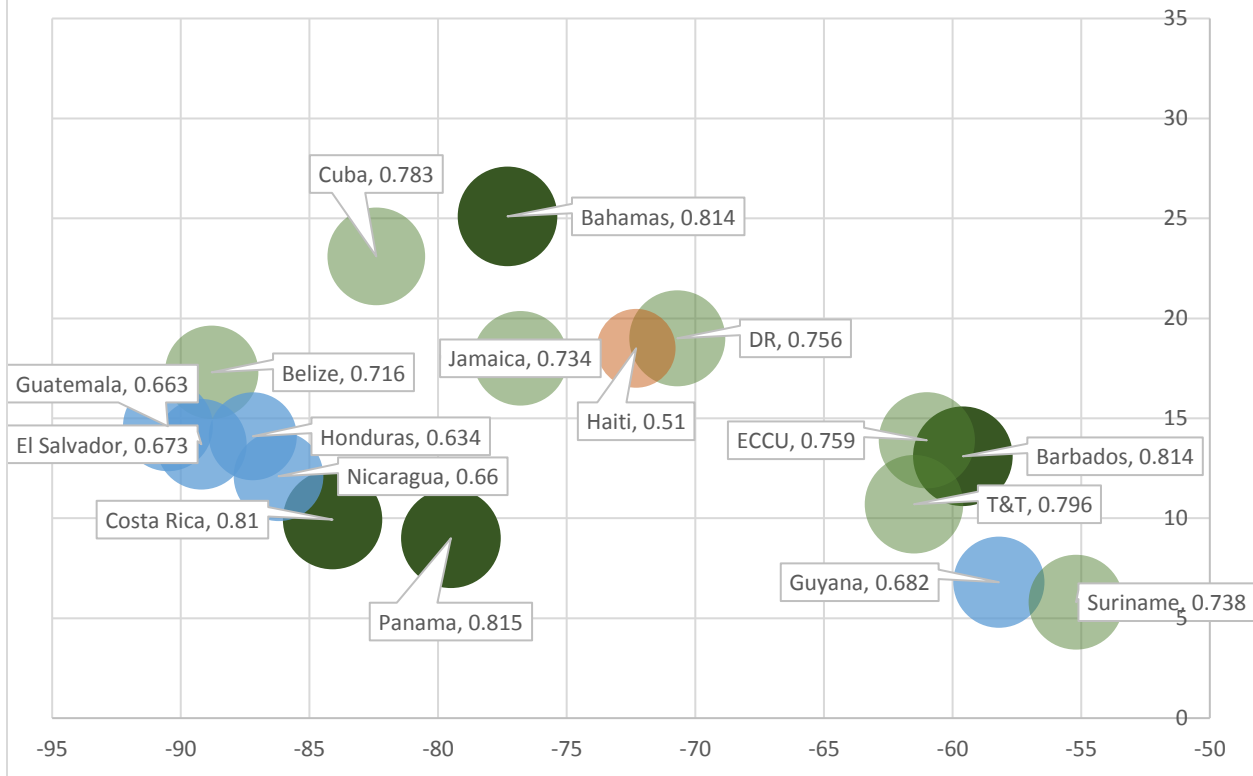
¹ World Bank, "Guyana", *Macro Poverty Outlook*, April 2021, page 119.

Figure 2. Central America and the Caribbean, GDPpcPPP, \$000



The circles in Figure 2 are proportional to the GDP per head for each country, adjusted for the fact that the same US dollar buys more in some countries than in others. The adjustment produces the GDP per head at purchasing power parities (GDPpcPPP), in US dollars. Bermudians are by far the most affluent in the region, with average incomes which provide them with purchasing power per year of \$117,100, followed by Caymanians, with average purchasing power of \$73,800 each year. There is a cluster of countries with purchasing power averaging \$35,000 to \$40,000 per year: Aruba, the Bahamas, Curaçao, Guyana, Puerto Rico and Sint Maarten. Trinidad-Tobago (\$32,700) and Panama (\$29,600, the highest in Central America) are not far behind. Cubans' average \$22,200 is comparable with the average purchasing power of incomes of the French-speaking islands of the eastern Caribbean, and ahead of the English-speaking islands, which are all below \$20,000 per year. Barbados' average of \$18,800 in the same as Costa Rica's. Average purchasing power in Jamaica is below \$10,000, as is the case for Central America except for Panama and Costa Rica.

Figure 3. Central America and the Caribbean - Human Development



In Figure 3 the circles are proportional to the level of human development of the population of each country for which we have data from the UNDP's *Human Development Report 2020*. The countries with the highest levels, comparable with those in advanced economies, are the Bahamas, Barbados, Costa Rica and Panama. There is a second tier of countries with human development levels that are not far below the top group; in this group are Belize, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, Suriname and Trinidad-Tobago. The remaining countries, except Haiti, all have human development scores that put them above the mid-point in the global rankings of human development for all countries.

DeLisle Worrell

July 15, 2022