IDB

**Restoring Paradise in the Caribbean:
Combatting Violence with Numbers**
Executive Summary

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Although the challenge is great, the Caribbean can restore paradise by combatting violence intelligently and strategically.

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UNDERSTANDING CRIME AND VIOLENCE IN THE CARIBBEAN

Crime is undoubtedly an area of concern for policy makers and citizens in the Caribbean[1] . An average of 40 percent of the Caribbean population identifies crime and security-related issues as the main problem facing their country, even above poverty, the economy, or inequality. In counterflux to international trends—which show that crime is decreasing or stabilizing in many countries around the world—in several Caribbean countries, crime has increased since 2000. The Bahamas, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago are afflicted with particularly high homicide rates (comparable to countries in armed conflict; more than 30 per 100,000 inhabitants). However, some countries in the subregion, such as Barbados and Suriname, have followed a different path; homicide in these countries remains relatively low and stable overtime.

NEW VICTIMIZATION SURVEY DATA

This publication fills an important gap by analysing data from victimization surveys of individuals (in 5 Caribbean countries; C5)[2] and businesses (in 13 Caribbean countries; C13)[3] conducted in in 2014/15. Most existing studies on crime and violence in the region have relied upon police data. However, we find that only 53 percent of crimes measured in our Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey (CCVS) were reported to the police. This highlights the fact that police data can show an incomplete view of the problem. The crimes that are most prevalent in the Caribbean (assaults and threats) were precisely the least likely to be reported; and women, youth, and single individuals were all less likely to report violent crimes.

VICTIMIZATION IN THE CARIBBEAN

Fifteen percent of Caribbean adults in capital city metropolitan areas (C5) were victims of one of five types of crime in a 12-month period—vehicle theft, theft, robbery, burglary, or assaults and threats (Figure 1). One in every three victims (33 percent) was victimized two or three times. More than one in seven (15 percent) was victimized four times or more in one year. The relatively high number of repeat victimizations is worthy of attention. This suggests that a small percentage of the population is disproportionately the target of crime in the region.

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1   In this publication, we focus predominantly on the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean countries that are members of the Inter-American Development Bank: The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

2   The Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey module was developed by the IDB on the basis of the International Crime Victimization Surveys (ICVS), added to the Latin American Public Opinion Poll (LAPOP) questionnaire. The Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey was implemented in the following countries: The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. The survey methodology note can be found in Appendix 1.3 of the full report.

3   Countries include Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, The Bahamas, and Trinidad and Tobago. The survey methodology can be found at
   http://competecaribbean.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Technical_note_PROTEqIN_and_LACES-final.pdf
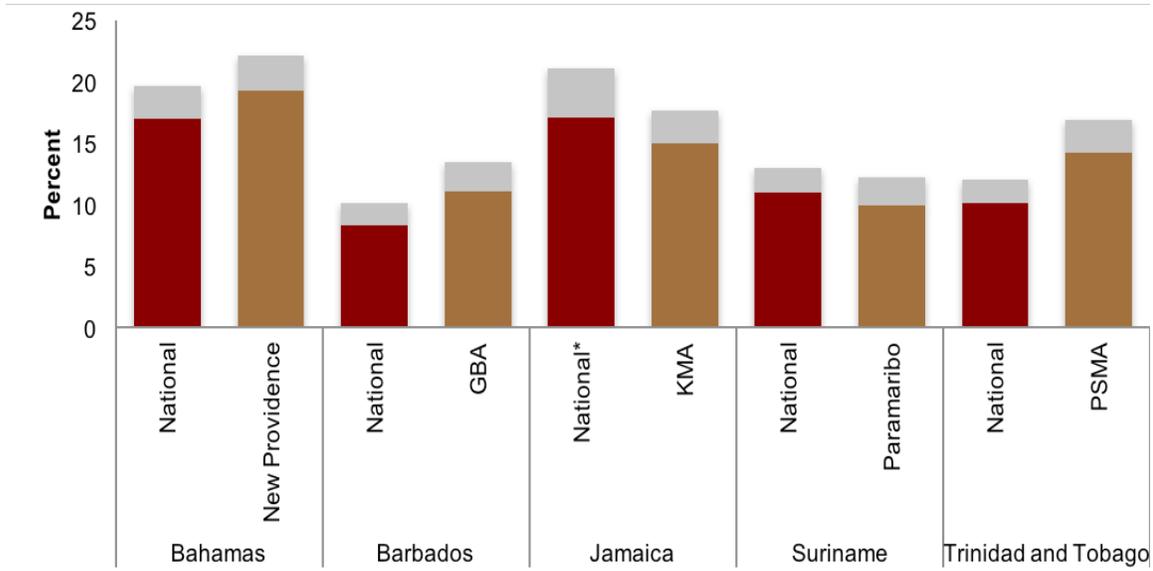
Figure 1: One-Year Victimization Prevalence Rate for at Least One of Five Types of Crime in Five Caribbean Countries and Capital City Metropolitan Areas (percent)

Source: Prepared by the authors using data from the IDB Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey module attached to the 2014/15 Latin American Public Opinion Project Survey.

Note: The five capital cities listed are New Providence, The Bahamas; GBA: Greater Bridgetown Area, Barbados; KMA: Kingston Metropolitan Area, Jamaica; Paramaribo, Suriname; and PSMA: Port of Spain Metropolitan Area, Trinidad and Tobago. The five types of crime are car theft, burglary, robbery, personal theft, and assaults and threats of assaults.

Despite interregional variation, the defining characteristic of crime in the Caribbean is the uniquely high level of violent crime. Nearly one in three respondents in capital cities (31.3 percent) reported having lost someone close to violence in his or her lifetime (Figure 2). The percentage of the population victimized by assault and threat (6.8 percent) is higher in the Caribbean than in any other region, according to calculations from the International Crime Victimization Survey (ICVS) database (Figure 3). New Providence and Kingston stand out with the highest levels of assault and threat (8 and 8.3 percent). In New Providence and Port of Spain, the level of robbery is comparatively high (4.0 and 3.5 percent versus the ICVS average of 2.9 percent), as is the number of victims seeking medical care after experiencing robbery or assault. Levels of violent crime are lowest in Paramaribo and Bridgetown, but assault and threat were still medium-high by international comparison.
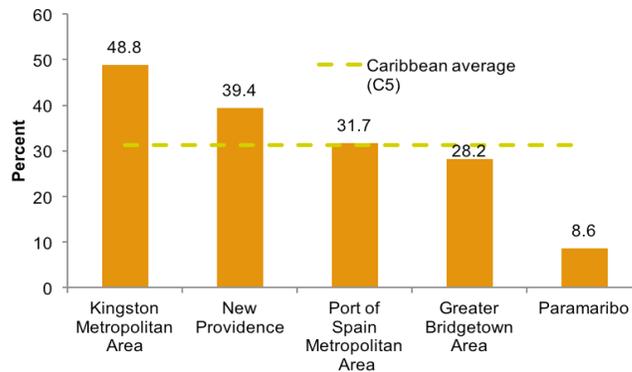

Figure 2: Lifetime Prevalence of Losing Someone Close to Violence, Five Caribbean Capital City Metropolitan Areas (percent)

Source: Prepared by the authors using data from the IDB Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey module attached to the 2014/15 Latin American Public Opinion Project Survey.
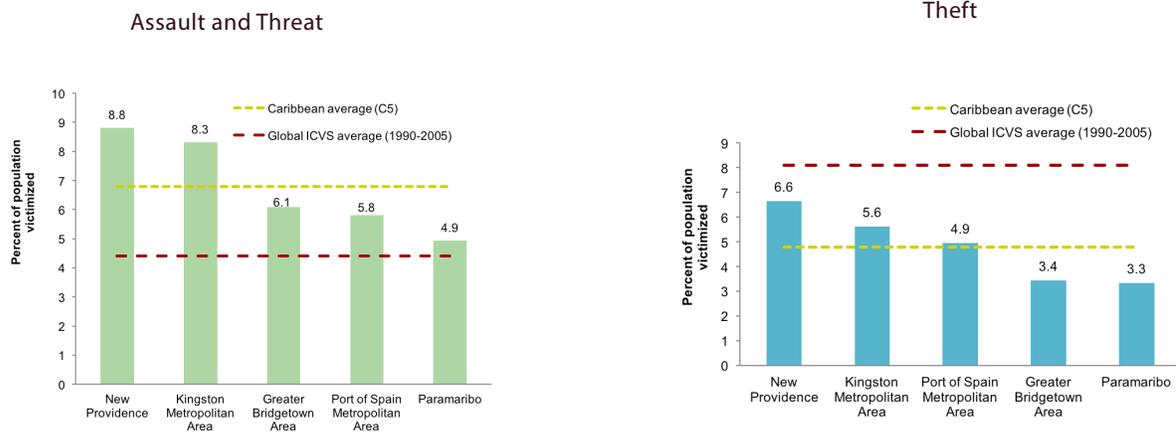
Assault and Threat

Theft

Figure 3: One-Year Prevalence of Victimization in Five Caribbean City Metropolitan Areas (percent)

Source: Prepared by the authors using data from the IDB Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey module

attached to the 2014/15 Latin American Public Opinion Project Survey.

On the other hand, the region experiences medium-to-low rates of victimization by property crime. Prevalence of property crime such as burglary is remarkably similar between the countries of the region and aligned with the international average (4.5 percent of households). Self-reported theft (Figure 3), without the use of force or threat, was notably far lower in the Caribbean (4.8 percent of the population)than the international average (8.1 percent of the population) and averages for other regions. Car theft was high in New Providence (4.7 percent) and Port of Spain (2.5 percent); however, this partly reflects the higher levels of car ownership in these cities.

Overall, most violent crimes were committed in victims' neighbourhoods or homes (66 percent of assaults and 62 percent of robberies). Residents are more likely to be attacked or threatened by someone they know than to be robbed by a stranger.

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?

Burglary rates are household crimes and therefore evenly distributed across gender and age and appear to have a curvilinear relation with income (higher in lower- and upper-income quintiles). Victimization by other property crimes, such as theft, shows little differentiation across various income, age, and gender groups. Given that the risk of being assaulted or threatened is uniquely high in the Caribbean, it is of interest to understand who is at the highest risk. Multivariate regression shows that this risk is most elevated among young (18–24-year-old), low-income males. The profile of the victims mirrors that of the offenders and is in line with global findings. In Trinidad and Tobago, Afro-Trinidadians have a significantly higher likelihood of experiencing violent crimes than do other ethnic groups. The underrepresentation of women among the victims is caused by the survey's purposeful exclusion of domestic and sexual violence, which are better measured through other dedicated instruments.

2

WHAT ARE THE KEY AREAS FOR INTERVENTION?

Violence against Women and Children

Beyond being a violation of the fundamental human rights of women and children, experiencing or witnessing violence in the home at an early age has been established as a strong risk factor linked to later perpetration of violence and delinquency. Women and children are more likely to be victimized by family or intimate partner violence, which is not well captured in police statistics or crime victimization surveys. This study finds that one in three (34 percent) Caribbean adults approve or understand wife beating if she is unfaithful, which is significantly higher than the Latin American average or the United States. The majority (66%) of Caribbean respondents also say that it is necessary to physically discipline a child who misbehaves. Although data on violence against women and children is poor in the region, higher tolerance has been linked to higher levels of actual violence in societies.

Youth Violence

Victimization data, data from the police and prisons show that youth (ages 18–24) and young adults (ages 25–30) are overrepresented among victims and those arrested and imprisoned for crime, when compared with their proportion of the population. Youth are also in a unique period of their lives when early problem behaviours can become established patterns, affecting perpetration of violence and delinquency in later life. This places youth in a particularly important position as a key target group for focused preventative interventions. Adolescents under 18 years old are a small percentage of victims and perpetrators of serious violent crimes (i.e., homicide); however, early problem behaviours are often linked to later perpetration of violence and offending. The prevalence of five problem behaviours—early sexual intercourse, drinking, drug use, fighting, and getting in trouble after drinking—among adolescents ages 13–17 were found to be generally higher in Caribbean countries than in Latin American countries. Engaged parenting appears to be one of the most important and significant protective factors for both reducing early problem behaviours and victimization from bullying among youth in the Caribbean.

Neighbourhoods and Geographic Concentration of Crime

Victims of crime in the Caribbean were statistically more likely to report their neighbourhoods as having higher physical disorder (e.g., graffiti, trash, abandoned buildings) and lower social cohesion (e.g., trust among neighbours). Even when controlling for other individual sociodemographic factors (e.g., age, sex, wealth level), social cohesion seems to function as a protective factor against victimization by violent crime and burglary. Finally, as illustrated by the example of Port of Spain, crime is also highly concentrated in certain street segments within neighbourhoods. Only 26 percent of street segments in Port of Spain had registered crimes in 2014, and 3 percent of street segments concentrated 50 percent of all crimes.

Gangs

Even though their prevalence and power vary by country, gangs are responsible for much of the crime and violence in the Caribbean. Of the Caribbean Crime Victimization Survey (CCVS)respondents in capital city metropolitan areas, 28 percent reported a gang presence in their neighbourhood. Gang presence was highest in the capital metro areas of the countries with the highest rates of violent crime (homicide and assault and threat): Port of Spain (49 percent), New Providence (39 percent), and Kingston (32 percent). Among respondents with gangs in their neighbourhood, more than half said that gangs interfere with everyday activities. Victims of crime were about 1.6 times as likely to report a gang presence in their neighbourhood (42 percent) compared with nonvictims (26 percent). Having a gang presence in one's neighbourhood was a significant predictor of victimization even after controlling for other individual and neighbourhood characteristics. Gang neighbourhoods are also associated with statically lower levels of social cohesion (trust among neighbours) and higher levels of physical disorder. Although the direction of causality is unclear, it is likely that gang presence both exacerbates and is fuelled by these neighbourhood characteristics.

Guns

The rise of crime and violence in some Caribbean countries has been characterized, among other things, by an increased use of guns. Firearms are involved in the majority of homicides, including in The Bahamas (82.4 percent), Jamaica (73.4 percent), and Trinidad and Tobago (72.6 percent). However, the use of knives in homicides has been more or equally as common in Barbados and Suriname, where homicide is lower. Guns are also used about twice as often in robbery and three times as often in assault in the Caribbean compared with the global average. Handgun ownership is relatively high (on par with the average for Latin America and below the average for Africa, but above all other regions). The most common reason reported for owning a gun is for protection (52.2 percent). The best predictor of gun ownership is the belief that having a gun makes one safer, over and above experiences of actual household burglary (in the past five years), fear (being afraid to walk alone in one's neighbourhood), neighbourhood conditions, and lack of trust in the police, none of which were significant predictors.

Police and Criminal Justice System

The police-to-population ratios in the Caribbean are relatively high by international comparison, but police capacity to respond quickly to citizens and investigate and identify perpetrators of the most severe violent crimes is low. A cursory look at the prison population reveals that most offenders are imprisoned for nonviolent crimes, specifically drug offences and theft. One in four Caribbean residents considered police harassment to be a problem, with significant interregional variation and greater concern expressed in neighbourhoods with a gang presence. About 7 percent of individuals reported being asked by police to pay a bribe in the past year, which is low compared with Latin America, but high compared with Canada, Chile, the United States, and Uruguay. Caribbean residents' trust in the police varies widely by country, with high levels of trust in The Bahamas and Suriname and low levels in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. Trust in the police in the Caribbean is, on average, higher than in Latin America and Eastern Europe but lower than in Canada, the United States, and Western Europe. One hypothesis is that higher victimization is responsible for low levels of trust in the police. However, we find through multiple regression analysis, that the factor most strongly associated with trust in the police is the perception of the competence of the police to control crime. Thus, increasing police effectiveness and efficiency, while maintaining integrity and respect for citizens' rights, is the best way to increase trust in the police.

Limited data were available regarding the functioning and capacity of the judicial and corrections systems. The partial view of these institutions presented suggests that they suffer from severe constraints that have led to long case backlogs, large numbers of pretrial detentions, and prison overcrowding. Trust in the courts to provide a fair trial is low. However, this view is incomplete and insufficient for determining the specific bottlenecks that impede a well-functioning system.

3

WHAT ARE THE COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CRIME?

The cost of crime for the region is high. Applying the accounting method, this volume estimates that crime costs the region 3 percent of GDP, with Barbados being the country least affected and The Bahamas being the most affected. . To contextualize the cost, 3 percent of GDP is about on par with the average for Latin America and the Caribbean and is roughly equal to the income of the poorest 30 percent of the population in the region. In other words, if crime were to be extinguished completely, the income of the poorest 30 percent of individuals could be doubled.

A breakdown of government expenditure shows that, compared with 17 countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region, Caribbean countries have responded to crime with some of the lowest expenditure on the administration of justice and the highest expenditure on the police.
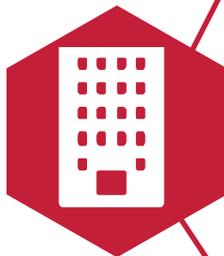
Crime also takes a toll on the private sector, where 23 percent of firms have experienced losses as a result of crime and nearly 70 percent spend money on private security measures (2013/14). Although a large percentage of firms spend on private security, this spending is not associated with a reduction in being victimized by crime.

Finally, this volume also shows that increased homicide rates over time are correlated with lower economic growth and lower tourism arrivals. Being a victim of violence or witnessing violence is associated with lower life satisfaction and higher intentions to emigrate.

4

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

This volume reviews current legislation in the Caribbean and programmes/initiatives in each of the topic areas mentioned and compares them to the evidence of what has proven to reduce violence and crime in other contexts around the world. Although the Caribbean has many promising programmes, there is little documentation of their implementation and evaluation of their impact. Too little research has been conducted using rigorous evaluation methods, and much available research is descriptive and qualitative, based on untested assertions, and lacking an experimental component. As a result, the policymaking process in the region has not been adequately informed by data from methodologically sound programme evaluations. However, the region need not wait for more research before acting. As a starting point, it is worth examining what has been effective in other regions. If a certain programme has not been effective elsewhere, policymakers should think twice about replicating or continuing it in the Caribbean. Conversely, if a programme demonstrates efficacy elsewhere, there should be clear reasons for not piloting it in the region. Existing Caribbean initiatives that are in line with the evidence of what works are good candidates for sound testing and evaluation.

BROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

1 BALANCE PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Although some perpetrators cannot be safely integrated into society, and some crimes are rightfully responded to with detention, suppression must be applied thoughtfully and strategically to avoid making matters worse. An impoverished youth, jailed for years with violent adults and for a more minor infraction, is at high risk for serious victimization while detained and reentering society as a greater threat than when he was imprisoned. A balanced approach is required that includes both smart prevention and smart crime control. Current prevention programmes are understaffed and underresourced, while law enforcement continues to dominate national budgets for public safety. Therefore, achieving a balance in the Caribbean effectively means politically, administratively, and financially bolstering prevention programmes and recognizing them as a proven means to effectively reduce violence.

2 TARGET INTERVENTIONS TO KEY INDIVIDUALS AND/OR GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS

Crime is not random, and it is not everywhere: a small number of high-risk individuals perpetrate the majority of crimes in concentrated geographic areas. Scarce resources should be invested where they may make the most difference—in high-crime areas and with those who are most at risk.

3 USE EVIDENCE-BASED AND TESTED INTERVENTIONS

Current and future initiatives aimed at reducing crime should consider what has been proven to work and proven not to work in similar contexts. They should also be subject to rigorous evaluation to establish effectiveness. This will require (1) improved data collection, sharing, and transparency; (2) funding and support for evaluations, and (3) mechanisms designed to help marry research with policy.

4 MONITOR KEY INDICATORS OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AS A WHOLE

(POLICE,COURTS, AND PRISONS)

Ministries of national security and related agencies should develop a dashboard of key metrics to be frequently monitored. These metrics should include indicators that give policymakers the big picture of how the system functions overall: who is being arrested (or not) and for what types of crime (violent, property, drug offences); the percentage of arrests that were made on the spot or involved investigation; the percentage of arrests that resulted in court cases, and whether those cases had enough evidence to go to trial; the amount of cases that resulted in conviction; and a breakdown of the prison population by type of crime and pretrial versus convicted detainees, numbers of prisoners involved in rehabilitation programmes, numbers of prisoners released, and recidivism rates. Such a monitoring system would allow policymakers to understand where the system is breaking down, who is being arrested and incarcerated, and why.

Framed by these key aforementioned recommendations, national strategies can then focus on incorporating the detailed recommendations by topic that are most relevant to their country context.

Violence against Women and Children

- Adapt legislation where needed to incorporate an inclusive scope of types of abuse and categories of victims.
- Invest in robust nationally representative studies to better understand the prevalence and risk and protective factors of violence against women and children.
- Include a line item in national budgets specifically for victim support services of violence against women and children.
- Focus on changing societal acceptance of violence against women and children, including through small-group/community participatory workshops, interventions in schools, and educational entertainment campaigns.
- Implement and evaluate parenting programmes and family visits from nurses and/or social workers trained in identifying signs of abuse and connecting people to support services.

Youth Violence

- Provide individuals identified as most at risk, and their families, with access to best practices for reducing victimization and delinquency while strengthening protective factors.
- Develop and implement risk-assessment tools to determine the risk level and risk/protective factors for program beneficiaries.
- Avoid what doesn't work: international evidence shows that military-style boot camps, "scared straight" tactics, and drug resistance classes taught by police do not have a positive effect on youth offending.
- Strengthen family counselling and parenting programmes, especially in areas with high levels of violence.
- Improve the evidence base for skills/job training and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) approaches in the Caribbean. In addition to job training, these approaches can target risk factors of impulsivity, anger, low empathy, and low self-control. Many existing job training and therapy initiatives may or may not be making any contribution to reducing offending.

Neighbourhoods and Geographic Concentration of Crime

- Use Geographic Information Systems to map crime and community assets.
- Identify areas with a surplus or deficit of social cohesion (trust among neighbours). Where deficits exist, design interventions to increase residents' willingness to do something about community problems, increase the sense of trust and shared community ownership, reduce incivilities, increase satisfaction with local public service, and reduce fear.
- Develop community led problem-solving interventions to reduce physical disorder in specific locations, which can increase community cohesion and reduce fear.

Private Sector

- Policymakers can take actions to encourage private sector involvement in reducing crime, and businesses can take the initiative themselves in crime prevention public–private partnerships (PPPs). Firms can donate resources (money, space, equipment, or services) for projects executed by the public sector, by nongovernmental organizations, or by a group of firms. Firms can also directly manage activities, such as job or training courses (for at-risk youth or former prisoners), help to evaluate projects, and/or participate in community meetings on crime and violence prevention.

Gangs

- Continue to develop a better understanding of the scope and nature of the problem. Because the nature of gang violence and gang affiliation in each country is unique, solutions should pay close attention to the local dynamics of gangs.
- Prevent gang membership. Many of the aforementioned recommendations on reducing violence in the home, reducing risk and increasing protective factors for youth, and strengthening communities may discourage youth from joining gangs. However, it is important to also understand specific drivers in the Caribbean that are correlated with joining a gang (such as a sense of identity, belonging, and for protection).
- Intervene to reduce gang violence and help members exit gangs. The use of street outreach workers and counselling to help individuals exit gangs has shown promise in reducing gang violence in some contexts. In addition, mediators (sometimes called violence interrupters) can be helpful in deescalating potentially explosive conflicts between gangs.
- Implement strategic and planned suppression/deterrence of gang violence.

Guns

- Continue efforts to understand and stem the illegal flow of firearms to and from the region.
- Assess gaps in legislation and/or gaps in implementation of legislation.
- Use directed police patrols to reduce gun violence in specific geographic areas.
- Reduce diversion of firearms from State stockpiles by destroying seized weapons regularly and securely storing weapons of law enforcement and defence forces.
- While gun buybacks have shown no statistical evidence of reducing gun violence, they can be combined with the public destruction of weapons and have a symbolic value in mobilizing the population against gun violence (which could have a positive effect on community cohesion).

Police and Criminal Justice System

- Smart, accountable policing: Caribbean governments should focus on reorienting and retooling police forces to be less reactive and more proactive. Police efforts should be directed to where crime is concentrated making use of problem-oriented policing strategies. Focused policing efforts on hot spots, repeat offenders (focused deterrence strategies), and directed patrols for gun violence are proactive ways of preventing future crime.
- Invest in alternatives to incarceration that reduce reoffending: Diverting minor crimes away from the courts and corrections system and toward alternative sentences or treatment programmes (drug, alcohol, trauma, or mental health) can save resources and reduce reoffending. However, these alternatives need to be well structured and resourced.
- Smarter, stronger courts: Courts in many Caribbean countries are underresourced and have low management capacity in the face of increasing criminal caseloads. Caribbean countries should develop and implement judicial management systems to minimize delays through (1) improved witness management, (2) better case preparation, and (3) reduced double booking by lawyers.
- Smarter corrections and rehabilitation: the strongest evidence for reducing recidivism is through cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT), which targets thought processes and aims to change decision making related to crime.

CONCLUSION

The size of the violence problem in the Caribbean merits an equally robust response, and from other sectors beyond criminal justice alone. These measures require financial and political support in the face of restricted budgets. However, in many cases we do not clearly understand how existing budgets actually contribute to violence reduction. By focusing on select evidence-based, targeted, and evaluated initiatives, governments can more easily determine what is working and where scarce resources should continue to be allocated. Although the challenge is great, the Caribbean can restore paradise by combatting violence intelligently and strategically.

Formatting by Gabrielle Patterson