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# Demographic Aspects of Rural Development: The Jamaican Experience

By

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It is difficult to overstate the importance of the rural population for a country in modern times. In a sense, much of a country's characteristics are reflected in the structure and size of this component. A large proportion of the country's population in rural areas is a clear indication of its undeveloped industry, while a high proportion of the rural population engaged in or dependent on agriculture is a further index in the same direction. Despite growing urbanization in all countries today, many of the problems of development in non-industrialized societies centre around the prospects of their rural populations. The growth characteristics and prospects of this component of a population can be suitably illustrated from the experience of Jamaica.

## COMPONENTS OF POPULATION GROWTH

Of especial significance are the components of growth of the rural population. Before taking this up in detail, however, we can to advantage note the extent to which population growth in the rural areas dominated growth of the country as a whole in the past. Now the major component of population growth remains the balance between births and deaths, or the natural increase. It is clear that from the earliest period for which data are available, the large proportion of natural increase in Jamaica as a whole came from the rural areas, that is, from the parishes other than Kingston and St. Andrew. In fact, between 1881 and 1921 more than 90 per cent of the country's natural increase was contributed by rural areas. However, as we should expect, the considerable expansion in the population of the urban parishes (Kingston-St. Andrew) since 1921 has meant that these two have been contributing a rising proportion of natural increase. Thus, in the intercensal interval, 1921 to 1943, 89 per cent of the country's natural increase came from the rural parishes, and during 1943-60 the proportion was down to 75 per cent. Still, the contribution of parish populations to population growth in Jamaica at present remains considerable.

Although the excess of births over deaths provides the major component of population increment, it is often considerably modified by two other components — internal migration, that is, migration from one parish to another, and external migration, that is, movements from any part of the country to some other country, or the settlement of people from a foreign country in one of

the parishes. It is instructive to trace the movements in these components of growth of the rural population of Jamaica since 1881. As will be seen from Table 1, external migration played a fairly important part in restricting pop-

TABLE 1. EFFECTS OF EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL MIGRATION ON GROWTH OF RURAL POPULATION IN JAMAICA, 1881-1960

Period	Annual Movements in Rural Population				Annual Movement in Whole Population	
	Annual Gain (+) or Loss (-)				Natural Increase	Net Intercensal Increase
	Natural Increase	Internal Migration	External Migration	Net Intercensal Increase		
1881-91	7,900	- 1,200	- 2,100	+ 4,600	8,300	5,900
1891-1911	11,000	- 800	- 1,800	+ 8,300	11,800	9,600
1911-21	10,100	- 1,400	- 6,500	+ 2,200	10,400	2,700
1921-43	14,300	- 3,100	+ 600	+ 11,800	16,100	17,200
1943-60	25,100	- 4,900	- 8,800	+ 11,300	33,400	26,600

ulation growth during 1881-91 when the annual loss due to this factor was just over 2,000. The succeeding two decades witnessed a loss of slightly lesser magnitude. Emigration reached a high level in 1911-21 when a series of untoward events combined to result in a marked outward movement from the island. There was a succession of disastrous hurricanes which caused severe damage to banana crops. Hardships associated with the first World War constituted another disturbing element, inducing people to leave the country. Again, the influenza pandemic during 1918 led to further distress in the rural parishes. Moreover, since restrictions of entry into the United States were not in force, emigration to that country was easy. About this decade, also, heavy investment was being made by the U.S. in the Cuban sugar industry, and to obtain additional labour its plantations depended largely on Jamaican workers. All these combined to produce an annual net outflow from the rural areas to foreign countries of 6,500 per year.

The succeeding intercensal interval, 1921-1943, saw a virtual halt in emigration as the U.S. introduced its quota restrictions and Latin-American countries in general tightened their immigration policies. In fact, there was a small net inward movement from foreign countries, representing probably the return of some nationals who had previously emigrated. During the most recent intercensal period, 1943-60, there was another significant outward emigration, this time to the U.K. This constituted the largest phase of the country's emigration, the resulting loss to rural parishes amounting to 8,900 per year. In summary, it can be said that ever since 1881 emigration played a dominant role in controlling population growth rates in the rural parishes.

The second component of growth, internal migration, also has played a substantial part in controlling growth of the country's rural population. The average annual out-migration from rural parishes to the Kingston and St. Andrew Metropolitan Area increased from just over 1,000 in the period 1881-91 to 1,400 in the period 1911-21. It continued to rise and within the most recent intercensal interval, 1943-60, it amounted to 4,900 per year.

With the exception of the years 1921-43, when a small inward movement

resulted from immigration, these two components constituted conspicuous curbs on the population growth of the rural parishes. Over the 79 years following 1881, the rural population experienced a total natural increase of 1.14 million, but the actual increase registered amounted to only 0.79 million, because of net out-migration totalling 0.19 million and net emigration totalling 0.26 million. In fact, the curbing effects of these two factors on overall growth can be expressed as percentages of the total natural increase. On these terms it may be said that emigration reduced overall growth by 23 per cent, while net out-migration reduced it by 17 per cent.

Undoubtedly, external migration has played a significant part in controlling the country's overall population growth by affecting its rural component so strongly; but it would be an over-simplification of the process of population movements to consider internal migration to the Metropolitan Area purely as a loss to the rural component. The prime function of rural areas remains the recruiting ground for the urban population. The latter hardly ever replaces itself adequately and must grow largely through migration from the rural areas.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RURAL POPULATION

The concept of a rural population completely distinct from an urban sector is, of course, not tenable. Not only must we consider one to merge smoothly into another; but the rural population, as simply the population outside of the major town or towns of a country, is, again, not a very satisfactory concept. And to return to our illustration from the Jamaican experience, we must consider the so-called rural component as composed of two parts: one, the series of small towns scattered throughout the island; the second, comprising very small aggregates, which cannot be properly designated towns.

It is not possible to trace in detail the growth of small towns and the "rest of parishes" in Jamaica. But available information on the growth of these two components of the rural population between 1943 and 1960 suggests important modifications to the pattern of growth of the general population described above. In order to obtain a proper picture of the growth of population in the rural areas it is necessary to consider briefly growth in the Kingston and St. Andrew area, growth of the small towns and growth of the "rest of the parishes"; the last mentioned may, in fact, be considered as the strictly rural areas of the country. The different rates at which these three components have grown in the seventeen years following 1943 have resulted in some important changes in the areal distribution of the population.

In 1943, Kingston and St. Andrew supported just under one-fifth of the total population of 1,237 million, while about 7 per cent were in the small towns. This meant that about three-quarters of the total population were located in the strictly rural areas. By 1960, the two urban parishes were supporting one-fourth of the country's total population of 1,610 million, and the proportion residing in the small towns was up to 9 per cent; so that the propor-

tion living in the strictly rural areas was reduced considerably to 65 per cent. It is instructive to consider these movements in another way, in terms of the growth experienced by each of these populations between 1943 and 1960. While Kingston proper registered a modest growth of 12 per cent, suburban St. Andrew underwent a vast expansion of 131 per cent. More important in the present context is the very appreciable expansion of the small towns — 71 per cent, which is not very different from the expansion of the Metropolitan Area as a whole (76 per cent). By contrast the strictly rural areas experienced a very small rise of 15 per cent.

From the details of movements experienced by the small towns and the strictly rural areas of the parishes, given in Table 2, it is clear that in three parishes only minimal expansion of the rural population has taken place. These parishes are Portland, where there was actually a small loss, St. Mary and Hanover, both of which experienced increases of about 2 per cent in their rural population. At the other extreme, increases of about one-quarter occurred in the rural populations of two parishes — St. Catherine and Clarendon. In other parishes increases in rural components of their populations ranged from 13 per cent to 17 per cent. There is no obvious explanation at this stage for the virtual stability of the rural populations of St. Mary, Portland and Hanover; but it should be noted that these were parishes which experienced very heavy out-migration in the period 1943-60.

It is not only in terms of growth rates that the small towns differ from the strictly rural areas. The differential is even more clearly drawn when we consider the social characteristics of the populations. We are, therefore, not dealing with a strictly homogeneous group when we identify for study the so-called rural population, that is, the population outside of the major urban centres. Typically there is in operation a selective process whereby the best educated and those with more highly developed skills tend to be concentrated in the small towns. This can be illustrated by considering two simple indices of social status — one defining the general education level of the population and the other its occupational status. These indices, calculated from the 1960 Census data, are given for each of the small towns and for the rest of parishes in Table 2.

The general pattern is for the small town to be on a higher level than the strictly rural areas of the parishes. Indices of educational attainment for the towns range from 4.99 for Mandeville to 3.65 for Christiana.<sup>1</sup> And with the single exception of the last-named town, all show levels of educational attainment well above those for the surrounding populations. In general parishes nearest to the metropolitan centre show highest educational levels

<sup>1</sup>The indices of educational attainment are weighted averages for the population over 10 years. Weights of 1, 2, 3 . . . . 9 were applied to the 9 classes of education at the 1960 census: (1) never attended school; (2) less than 2 years primary school; (3) 2-3 years primary; (4) 4-5 years primary; (5) 6-8 years primary; (6) Jamaica Local 2nd and 3rd year; (7) attended secondary school without School Certificate; (8) secondary school with School Certificate; (9) degree. The index (weighted average) for a community could theoretically range from 1.0 if none of the population over 10 years ever attended school to 9.0 if every one over 10 years was educated to degree level.

TABLE 2. POPULATIONS OF SMALL TOWNS AND REST OF PARISHES, JAMAICA 1943-60, AND INDICES OF EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL STATUS, 1960.

Small Towns and Rest of Parish	Census Populations		% Increase 1943-60	Indices of	
	1943	1960		Educa- tional Attainment	Occupa- tional Status
<i>St. Thomas</i>					
Morant Bay	3,699	5,054	36.6	4.36	19.0
Port Morant	4,438	2,284	-48.5	3.82	11.4
Rest of Parish	52,556	61,387	16.8	3.80	8.2
<i>Portland</i>					
Port Antonio	5,482	7,830	42.8	4.52	17.9
Buff Bay	1,252	2,821	125.3	4.31	15.0
Rest of Parish	53,978	53,859	-0.2	3.84	7.2
<i>St. Mary</i>					
Annotto Bay	2,805	3,559	26.9	3.95	12.2
Port Maria	3,167	3,898	26.2	4.09	12.5
Rest of Parish	84,930	86,676	2.1	3.74	10.1
<i>St. Ann</i>					
St. Ann's Bay	3,133	5,087	62.4	4.59	17.7
Ocho Rios	[2,948]	4,570	[55.0]	4.42	11.8
Brown's Town	2,663	3,899	46.4	4.37	26.2
Rest of Parish	87,449	100,804	15.3	3.77	11.8
<i>Trelawny</i>					
Falmouth	2,561	3,727	45.5	4.81	21.1
Rest of Parish	44,974	52,353	16.4	3.42	7.2
<i>St. James</i>					
Montego Bay	11,547	23,610	104.5	4.91	19.2
Rest of Parish	51,995	59,393	14.2	3.65	9.4
<i>Hanover</i>					
Lucea	1,806	2,803	55.2	4.44	20.2
Rest of Parish	49,878	51,099	2.4	3.66	8.6
<i>Westmoreland</i>					
Sav-la-Mar	4,046	9,789	141.9	4.19	17.6
Rest of Parish	86,063	99,817	16.0	3.50	8.8
<i>St. Elizabeth</i>					
Black River	1,263	3,077	143.6	3.93	21.5
Rest of Parish	98,919	113,629	14.9	3.34	9.4
<i>Manchester</i>					
Christiana	2,825	4,404	55.8	3.65	18.3
Mandeville	2,110	8,416	298.9	4.89	30.7
Rest of Parish	87,810	98,968	12.7	3.74	11.8
<i>Clarendon</i>					
May Pen	6,038	14,085	133.3	4.13	16.2
Lionel Town	3,036	2,664	[133.3]	3.89	8.7
Chapelton		4,417	[133.3]	3.83	12.7
Rest of Parish	114,431	142,784	24.8	3.40	7.8
<i>St. Catherine</i>					
Spanish Town	12,007	14,706	22.5	4.52	21.1
Linstead	2,254	3,781	67.7	4.42	17.8
Old Harbour	1,925	4,192	117.8	4.35	17.6
Rest of Parish	104,846	130,856	24.8	3.72	8.4
Total Small Towns	81,005	138,773	71.3	-	-
Total Rest of Parish	917,829	1,051,625	14.6	-	-

Note: The index of education is constructed by applying weights (1, 2, 3 . . . 9) to the 9 classes of education at the 1960 Census. The occupation index is the percent of professional, supervisory, and clerical workers in the male work force at 1960.

in their rural population. The range is from 3.84 for Portland to 3.34 for St. Elizabeth. The same pattern emerges from the occupational indices, which represent the proportion of the total work force classified as professional, supervisory and clerical. Again, the strictly rural areas show levels lower than those of the small towns.

There are, therefore, two basic characteristics differentiating the strictly rural areas from the small towns. In the first place, the former show relatively small rates of population growth, while the small towns show considerable, and in some instances phenomenal, rates of growth. Secondly, in terms of socio-economic status, the small towns enjoy a marked advantage over the surrounding areas.

The differentials in growth rates of these two rural population components are significant. As has already been seen, the strictly rural areas remain the major recruiting sources of the country's population: the vast majority of the natural increase stemming from these areas. The movement that, apparently, dominated the country prior to 1943 was essentially a movement into the Kingston-St. Andrew area. This continues but clearly new factors are at work effecting areal distributions of the populations. Returning to the material in Table 1 we see that over the 40-year period, 1921-60, the annual increase of the rural areas, that is, the parishes exclusive of Kingston-St. Andrew, has been between 11,000 and 12,000. This suggests that the absorptive capacity of these parishes is of that order. Fortunately, within the period under review the external migration and the out-migration to the urban areas have operated to maintain this level of increase in the rural population. But with the closing of the very considerable outlet afforded by external migration, either the outflow into Kingston-St. Andrew must be greatly augmented or these parishes must begin to absorb more than they have been absorbing during the past 40 years.

#### THE DEVELOPMENT PROBLEM IN DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

To some degree the concept of development of rural areas turns on this problem: how can these areas of the country be made to absorb an increasing number of inhabitants? There seems little prospect of this being achieved by increasing the numbers engaged in agriculture. In the absence of extensive agricultural lands to be brought under cultivation, this seems impossible. Moreover, the trend in agriculture, as in all forms of industry, is toward increasing output per worker, mainly with the aid of advanced techniques of production. So that far from absorbing more workers than in the past, agriculture will certainly continue to employ fewer workers.

There is, of course, a complementary problem: that of stemming the flow of people to the major urban centre. This is often considered the cardinal element in population movements to-day. However, without denying the relevance of this, it must be pointed out that in Jamaica the evidence is that there has already been a very important modification of this pattern; and the movement into Kingston and St. Andrew has now been appreciably retarded by movements to the small towns.

On these terms, the only means of ensuring any increase in employment in these parishes seems to be the development of some non-agricultural activities. And one of the possible ways of achieving this is to have industries

established in the small towns which now have come to constitute significant foci of rural populations. Manifestly, much of the recent growth of small towns throughout Jamaica stems from industries developing in or around them. This is particularly true of tourism and bauxite.

These illustrations are drawn from the experience of Jamaica because statistical material on internal migration for this country is much more extensive than similar material for other Caribbean countries, and because the country is of sufficient size to make analysis of internal migration meaningful. But similar processes can be traced in other countries. In Trinidad and Tobago, for instance, the development of the oil industry and the presence of natural gas in the south of that island may well help to shift the centre of gravity of population southwards. At present, the major internal migratory pattern is toward the suburban areas of St. George. But modifications of this pattern are clearly underway.

So far as demographic aspects are concerned, the development of the strictly rural areas must hinge on the expansion of the non-agricultural sector, and this calls for development of the small towns which no longer constitute foci of agricultural activity, but which seem now to be forming centres in their own right, attracting rural populations to find employment in non-agricultural enterprises.