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BARBADOS, WEST INDIES

POLICY BRIEF

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DEPARTMENT OF
GOVERNMENT, SOCIOLOGY,
SOCIAL WORK
AND PSYCHOLOGY



FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES
CAVE HILL CAMPUS



ABOUT US

Established in 1976, the then Department of Government and Sociology delivered teaching in Political Science, Sociology and Psychology. Today the Department offers programmes at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in International Relations, Labour and Employment Relations, Political Science, Public Policy, Sociology, Social Work and Psychology.

RESEARCH AIM

The aim of the Department of Government, Sociology, Social Work and Psychology is to produce innovative research that addresses the topical issues facing the Caribbean and world today. The Department carries out research in the areas of democracy and electoral politics, survey design and analysis, social policy, gender and youth development inter alia.

The Department's academic staff possess an extensive list of publications, in the form of books, peer-reviewed articles, peer-reviewed journals, newspaper articles and other non-fiction texts. In addition to its theoretical output, the researchers collaborate with organisations and agencies at the global, regional and national levels.

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The policy brief is a publication of the Department of Government, Sociology, Social Work and Psychology of the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill Campus. The views expressed in the publication, however, are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Department or the University on any of the issues dealt with by the contributing authors.

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Government, Sociology, Social Work and Psychology at the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill) continues to take pleasure in compiling and disseminating policy relevant research and reflections. This issue appraises matters of political concern by presenting the work of two of the Department's Graduates: Mr. Devaron Bruce and Ms. Alexandra Tillett, the latter of whom is currently pursuing an MPhil in Political Science and is the Department's Research Assistant. Although both pieces appraise political matters, Mr. Bruce's work examines party fortunes in Barbadian elections, focussing on the country's two main political parties while, Ms. Tillett's work examines an issue of concern in the region (and the wider world), this is the devilish matter of corruption by focusing on perceptions of corruption in an understudied country in our region: Belize. Rounding off this edition is Mr. Dennis Mc Call's appraisal of aviation in the Caribbean, that goes beyond the usual discussion about the needs to create more affordable and frequent travel connections across the region by address environmental concerns relating to aviation in efforts to build sustainable aviation in the region. These three pieces promise to provide food for thought and the Department welcomes your feedback on them.

Kristina Hinds, PhD
Senior Lecturer and Head of Department

PARTY FORTUNES: BLP-DLP SINCE 2018.

Barbados has long been credited as one of the more stable liberal democracies in the Caribbean. Since independence, it has had a rich history of competitive elections with the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) both regularly taking the reins of government. However, in recent times, there are concerns regarding the health of this democracy given the electoral difficulties the DLP confronts. Since 2018, the DLP has not received a seat in Barbados' elections and further analysis indicates that the party is not likely to do well in the coming years. This has raised concerns regarding the emergence of a one-party-like state in Barbados with what seems to be the likely continued domination of the BLP.



Part I

Since 2018, Barbadians continue to witness the political fallout emerging from a divided Democratic Labour Party. Although political observers and insiders were well aware of the discord, few expected what seems to be the cannibalisation of the 69-year-old party. This continued internal fracturing is a result of the party's inability to consolidate. Needless to say, a divided DLP has tremendous implications for its electoral future. As one of the two major political parties, the expectation is that the DLP should at least be a formidable opposition capable of forming the government, yet as it stands, it fails in this expectation.

Regarding forming the government, based on the DLP's historical performances, the party may not capture government until 2037 or three electoral cycles away. This is the case since after the 2022 general election, the DLP requires a 23-point swing to receive a sufficient percentage of the national vote to form the government.

Party Fortunes: BLP-DLP Since 2018.

Based on historical electoral analysis, this 23-point swing is a massive task for the DLP. Such is the case as the party's two best performances; 12 points in 1986 and 10 points in 2008, when combined, falls slightly short of the 23-point swing needed to win.

Therefore, the political task at hand for the DLP is clear, the party needs to grow its support nationally. Yet, the DLP's ability to do this is compromised by division. Worse yet, and more fundamentally, the major problem the DLP confronts is that a major faction of the party is arguably the antithesis of what is needed for growth, and this is reflected in the party's weak election performances.

Since independence, there have been 13 national elections. With the exception of 1994 due to the splintering of the vote by the NDP, there were only three instances where a major political party fell under 40 per cent of the national vote. These include 1999 (33 per cent, DLP), 2018 (22 per cent, DLP) and 2022 (27 per cent, DLP). Based on its weakest performances, it appears that the active average DLP's base is 27 per cent of the national electorate.

During more competitive election cycles, both the DLP and the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) have a baseline of 40 per cent of the national vote and compete for the remaining 20 per cent to form the government. However, since 2018, the DLP has been unable to meet this 40 per cent baseline for several reasons.

Among these reasons is the inability of the DLP to capture or create a coalition of the winning. This is the case as the electoral landscape in Barbados continues to shift, and changes in political strategy are vital if political parties wish to do well. There have been socio-economic shifts since the 2000s such as the growth of a middle class, cultural shifts

with the rise of identity politics, technological shifts and shifting demographics at the national and constituency levels. These changes are partially behind the BLP's success as it has tapped into the coalition of the winning more effectively than the DLP.

This is evidenced by the fact that since the 2003 election, the BLP gained an average of 59 per cent of the national vote compared with 39 per cent for the DLP.

These performances, due to a more dynamic electoral strategy, have secured the BLP as the dominant political party in the 21st century. As the DLP remains dated and divided, all things being equal, we are likely to see a continuation of BLP dominance. Therefore, until the DLP can shift its outlook on Barbados and elections, it is safe to say that we now live in BLP country and will be for some time.

Part II

Previously, I explored the electoral performance of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) for the 21st century to offer some insight into future elections. Based on the electoral swing required and historical performances, there is a possibility where the DLP may not return to office until the 2037 period. I also highlighted reasons behind the DLP's weakening performance, evidenced by the fact that on average the party received only four (4) of every 10 votes cast since 2003. This has partially been the case since the DLP has not been sufficiently agile to meet the political realities of a modern Barbados to capture the coalition of the winning.

After independence, Barbados emerged out of the ravishes of colonialism and it was this period where the DLP became a victim of its successes by laying the socio-economic foundations in the 1960s and 70s. During this period, the DLP was credited

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for being socially progressive with people-centred policy interventions, notably in public education and social welfare which provided wide-scale benefits for the working poor. It was at this time that the first phase of post-independence politics emerged. These early investments into everyday Barbadians bore fruit which changed the socio-political and electoral realities in Barbados.

Despite some setbacks, these changes created the conditions for the second phase in politics with the rise of a sizable black middle class, particularly in the early and mid-2000s. This second phase was supported by a stabilised economy, the expansion of industries such as tourism, financial services and real estate, and increased access to tertiary education and banking capital. With a growing middle class, additional political and electoral expectations were placed on the two major political parties. Despite the continued and longstanding bread-and-butter issues such as poverty, unemployment, and social welfare, issues emerging from Barbados' electorate became more diverse.

This second phase has given way to the third phase with the rise and advancement of identity politics that has influenced Barbadian culture and politics. Socio-culturally and civic-politically, there is now greater sensibility and sensitivity around the politics of identity. Whether it be gender, nationality, sexuality, race, religion, ethnicity and others, the electorate has again placed additional expectations on the two major political parties based on identity.

This third phase is now being complimented by an emerging fourth phase fuelled by digital technology, social media and big data. These have turned the electorate into one large data set that can be studied, influenced and predicted. This has raised the important question of the "how" of elections, not simply the who or the what.

Therefore, electorally, Barbados has become a balancing act of four phases that create the coalition of the winning.

Whether in fact or perception, the problem the DLP confronts is that by and large, the DLP has taken refuge in phase one, whereas, the BLP has taken up real estate in all four phases.

Although the DLP continues to be a mass-based political party as it captured an average of 40 per cent of all votes cast since 2003, it is evident that it must embrace the four phases while not losing sight of its founding appeal. Therefore, the question before the DLP remains, what is at the base of its inability to sufficiently balance these four phases? This is particularly important as additional phases in politics are likely to emerge with time. Until the DLP can resolve this question, we can expect that Barbados will continue to be BLP country.

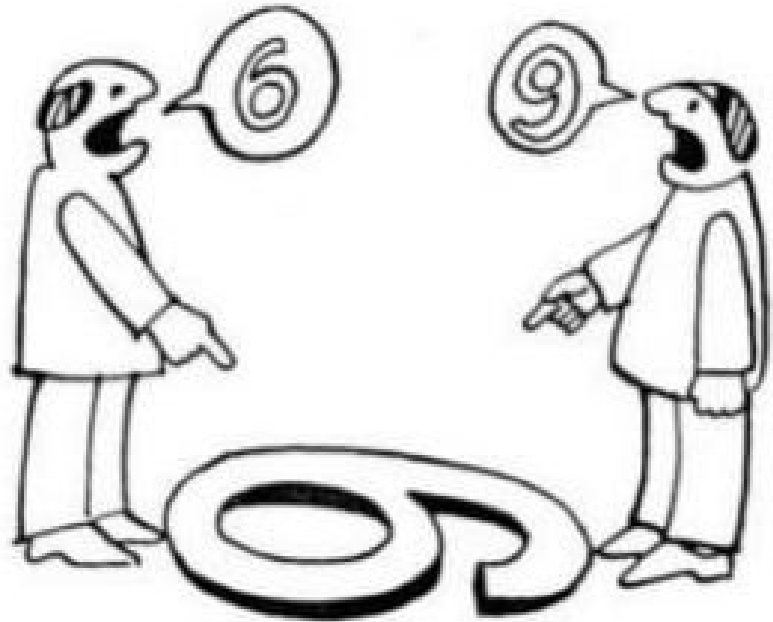
Parts I and II were previously published in the Barbados Today and The Nation respectively.

PERCEPTION- THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER. EXPLORING THE NEXUS BETWEEN CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS AND CITIZEN CONFIDENCE/ TRUST IN GOVERNMENT: EVIDENCE FROM BELIZE.

The discussion below is based on work conducted in pursuit of my MPhil. Political Science Degree.

Executive Summary

Corruption perception studies have been criticised for measuring corruption perceptions and not actual corruption. However, theories suggest that though subjective, perceptions are real if people think they are real and can condition our reactions. Research on corruption and corruption perceptions have shown that corruption has a negative association with citizen confidence and trust in government. Throughout the years, Belize has been plagued by corrupt activity, yet in the field of corruption studies, it remains an understudied country. Given this research gap, I have endeavoured to research and measure the perception of corruption, and citizen confidence in Belize. This policy brief will address the



perception of corruption, citizen confidence in government and the relationship between these two variables. Using quantitative methods and analysis, statistically significant relationships were found between corruption perception and citizen confidence/ trust in government. Because higher corruption perceptions and low trust can cause negative reactions, there are potential implications for the country. For Policymakers, the findings can inform measures to mitigate high perceptions of corruption and increase trust in government.

Introduction

Transparency International (n.d.) describes corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” It is a complex phenomenon that has long proven to be difficult to measure. This difficulty is not only due to its various definitions, forms and manifestations (bribery, nepotism, fraud, among others) but also because these acts are often secretive (Marek 2012). Albeit difficult, “measurements of corruption can be used to identify trends and illustrate the scale and scope of particular

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types of corruption” (UNOCD 2017). Research on corruption has revealed that “corruption erodes trust, weakens democracy, hampers economic development and further exacerbates inequality, poverty, social division and the environmental crisis” (Transparency International n.d).

What is the issue?

Belize has been consistently plagued by a series of acts of corruption, evidenced through nepotistic and clientelist practices, ministers accused of accepting bribes and the eruption of scandals, to name a few (7 News Belize 2021; Vernon 2022; U. S. Department of State Embassy 2022; Matura 2019). Additionally, negative perceptions of corruption were found in a study by Joesie Cantun. Cantun sampled 15 individuals from the public, private and social sectors in the Orange Walk district of Belize and found unanimous agreement across all sectors that corruption exists in the Orange Walk district. Furthermore, the participants strongly agreed that corruption is intrinsic to Belizean politics (Cantun 2018). Further, political party manifestos in Belize, particularly those of opposition parties, consistently address the problem of corruption, underscoring corruption as a prevalent national and government concern. The literature cautions of the implications of corruption and high corruption perceptions and given the paucity of research on corruption in the region, and specifically the links between the perception of corruption and confidence/trust in government, this brief presents evidence of this phenomenon from Belize, a relatively understudied Caribbean country.

Understanding Corruption Perceptions:

Given the inherent difficulties in assessing actual levels of corruption, perception studies are often utilized. Perceptions are a “combination of

one’s thoughts, beliefs, opinions and awareness” (Thomas 2020). They are used to make sense of reality and are often used in the absence of actual evidence. Corruption perceptions are influenced by two factors, the information a person receives about a phenomenon and how that individual processes that information (Čábelková and Hanousek 2004) and how they perceive and interpret this information is based on personal experiences, the media, and cultural norms. Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) are two tools widely accepted and utilised to measure the perceived levels of corruption in a country.

The CPI ranks countries from 0 (very corrupt) to 100 (very clean) using data gathered from 14 different surveys that combine the views of experts and businesspeople. The use of perceptions from experts and businesspeople has led to the criticism of the CPI as having an elite bias. It is therefore regarded as an elitist scale which captures only cases of bribery when corruption is a complex phenomenon which extends beyond paying bribes (Heywood and Krastev 2006). Additionally, the reliability of the CPI is questioned due to its changing methodology. For instance, Knack (2007) advances that with the CPI, one index is computed for each country even if there are missing values on any indicator for a given country. “By this procedure, an index value can be computed for any country for which data is available from even one of the many sources used” (ibid). Therefore, a better measure of the prevalence of corruption is to assess the perception of its citizens.

In contrast, the GCB is the experiences of everyday people confronting corruption around the

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the world (Transparency International n.d.) and it measures both perception of and experience with corruption in a country from citizens, accounting for the citizen's view, unlike the CPI. While the GCB appears to be a more effective tool than the CPI, it too is limited as it primarily captures petty bribery experiences and does not account for grand corruption (Jesper Johnsen and Deborah Hardoon 2012).

Although the major critique of perception studies has been their inability to measure the actual occurrence of corruption, an individual's perception is an important determining factor of their actions. Moreover, although perceptions are subjective judgments, Rose and Peiffer (2019) contend that "these views are real if people think they are real since how people perceive how others act can condition how they relate to others". Melgar, Rossi and Smith (2010) note that "even when corruption perception may strongly differ from the current level of corruption, the latter influences the former. In fact, even though perception studies have been criticised for not measuring actual corruption, in Australia, McAllister (2014) found "that perceptions of corruption across the society as a whole matter much more than personal experience of corrupt public officials. In turn, perceptions of corruption have a major impact on confidence in institutions."

Based on the existing corruption literature, determining factors of corruption perceptions include but are not limited to:

1. Perception of a lack of political will to fight corruption.
2. Political culture of a country.
3. Exposure to the mass media.
4. Personal experiences and knowledge of a

phenomenon.

Why is Confidence/Trust in Government important?

Bean (2015) defines confidence as the "evaluations of the effectiveness of organizations and institutions in performing their designated roles". The OECD (2013) additionally states that trust in government "represents the confidence of citizens and businesses in the actions of government to do what is right and perceived as fair." Public trust serves as both an input to governance- helping or hindering policy implementation and outcome of governance. It is crucial for the effective functioning of public institutions and "social cohesion and well-being as it affects the government's ability to govern and enables government to act without coercion" (OECD 2022). Anheier and Knudsen (2023) speak to the detrimental outcomes of low trust stating that "low trust can decrease compliance with rules and regulations", therefore trust and confidence in government is necessary as it "nurtures political participation, strengthens social cohesion, and builds institutional legitimacy. In the longer term, trust is needed to help governments tackle long-term societal challenges" (OECD 2022).

Based on the existing corruption literature, determining factors of confidence or trust in government include but are not limited to:

1. Evaluative performance of government.
2. The magnitude or perceived extent of corruption.
3. Government response to external and internal shocks.
4. Economic environment.
5. Absence of or weak anticorruption policies.

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The Relationship between Perception of Corruption and Trust/Confidence in Government

Empirical research has demonstrated a negative correlation between corruption perceptions and citizen confidence. The perception of rampant corruption within government has been observed to correlate with a decline in citizens' trust in government. Melgar, Rossi and Smith (2010) state that "high levels of corruption perception could have more devastating effects than corruption itself; it generates a "culture of distrust" towards some institutions and may create a cultural tradition of gift giving and hence, raising corruption". Evidence of this was found in Africa, where, according to Rose and Peiffer (2019), "people who see institutions as very corrupt are less trusting than people who see institutions as having integrity; the effect lowered trust by 43 percentage points". Similarly, McAllister (2014) observed that in Australia, higher levels of perceived corruption do not only play a part in lower levels of citizens' confidence in government but are also the most important factor leading to low trust in political institutions. Additionally, Canache and Allison (2005) identified a strong tie between Mexican's perceptions of corruption and their levels of trust in government.

Key questions addressed in this brief:

1. What are the perceptions of Belizeans of corruption in the country?
2. What is the level of confidence/ trust Belizeans have in the government?
3. Is there an association between the perception of corruption in Belize and the confidence of citizens in the government?

Methods and Evidence

The data collection process was carried out

utilizing a quantitative survey questionnaire. The survey consisted of 32 items developed to measure scandal awareness, corruption perceptions and citizen confidence/trust. For the purposes of this paper, only some items related to perceptions of corruption and citizen confidence are assessed. The researcher utilized quota and convenience sampling to interview approximately 503 Belizeans aged 18 and above in the six districts of Belize to account for the sentiments of Belizeans across the country. Given the inherent difficulties in measuring corruption as stated above, this research utilizes public opinion to capture the perception of corruption and trust in government in Belize.

Perception of corruption was measured with two questions, the first with Likert scale-like options which asked for citizens' opinion of the level of problem they perceived corruption to be. The second question asked respondents whether they believe corruption is widespread in Belize. Trust/confidence in government was measured with Likert scale-like options asking respondents to rate their confidence in government. The quantitative data presented in this paper was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). First, descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data and establish patterns. Next, inferential statistics using chi-square, Fishers exact test and Monte Carlo exact tests were utilized to analyse associations between the two variables.

First, this study found that there was a perception of rampant corruption in the country. A significant number of Belizeans, 88%, reported that corruption was a major problem and an overwhelming 95% reported they believed

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corruption to be widespread in Belize. Secondly, when asked to rate their confidence in the government, 75% of those surveyed reported having little to no confidence in government. Finally, this study found statistically significant relationships between the perception of corruption and citizen confidence in the following cases:

1. Between the perception of corruption and confidence in government ($P= 0.008$).
2. Between widespread corruption and confidence in government ($P= 0.007$).

Among those who believed that corruption is a major problem, a significant proportion have no confidence in the government, this is evidenced by 92.1% of respondents within this group selecting "no confidence at all" when asked about their confidence in government. Of those who believe that corruption is widespread, a significant proportion have no confidence in the government, this is evidenced by 99.3% of respondents within this group selecting "no confidence at all" when asked about their confidence in the government. The pronounced difference in trust between the groups (those perceiving corruption as a major problem or not), (and those perceiving corruption as widespread or not) highlights a possible trend: as the perception of corruption increases, confidence in the government appears to decrease correspondingly.

Implications

1. High corruption perceptions have implications for the image of the country.
 - It sends a message of rampant corruption.
 - It may influence the approach of institutions, organisations or countries in handling their relations with a country.
2. High or negative perceptions of corruption

may create or exacerbate a culture of tolerance for corrupt behaviour (Rose and Peiffer 2019). It can encourage or make people believe they must engage in corruption to receive a service or expedited services or it may entice officials to accept bribes especially if the view is "everyone is doing it." Potentially, therefore, this can have the net effect of increasing corruption in the country.

3. Low confidence or trust in government has implications for political participation. Low trust may dissuade citizens from engaging in political affairs, they may lose interest in politics, voting, and running for public office and it may therefore affect political outcomes.
4. High corruption perceptions have implications for democratic support for the incumbent government and opposition. Corruption theory posits that a negative or high perception of corruption may make citizens sceptical and drive them to action to hold the government accountable by replacing them. Equally, however, opposition political parties may lose support from the voters. McCann and Domínguez (1998) contend that opposition parties may not necessarily benefit from a high perception of governmental corruption as a likely outcome is disaffection from the political process and the act of voting.
5. Both higher perceptions of corruption and low confidence/ trust in government have implications for political legitimacy. These factors may diminish public respect for the government (Park and Blenkinsopp 2011), resulting in reduced compliance with laws. This, in turn, can undermine the legitimacy and stability of the government, impacting its ability to successfully mobilize society

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(OECD 2013; Mahmoudreza and Mahmoudoghli 2020).

Conclusion

This policy brief explored corruption perceptions and trust in government. Even though perception studies have been highly criticised, there is evidence that such perceptions can have deleterious effects on society. There exists a statistically significant and inverse relationship between perceptions of corruption and citizen confidence/ trust in government, where higher perceived levels of corruption are associated with lower levels of trust/ confidence in the government. This inverse relationship can be seen in various countries globally such as Africa, Mauritius, Mexico and Australia. The findings in Belize conform with the evidence found. High corruption perceptions and low confidence in government were both found which have serious implications for government legitimacy and governance. Government must investigate and deepen its understanding of the dynamics of corruption perceptions and trust and work to strengthen trust and improve corruption perceptions.

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THE CHRONICLES OF THE CARIBBEAN AVIATION INDUSTRY AND THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE AVIATION.

Introduction

Dating back to 1000 B.C.E. (Stuni 2023), the aviation industry has been crucial in the movement of goods, people, and services. It “provides the only rapid worldwide transportation network” (Aviation Benefits 2019) and supports approximately 87.7 million jobs globally (Placek 2024). Small Island Developing States (SIDS), such as those in the Caribbean, heavily depend on aviation, which is fundamental to the Treaties of Chaguaramas and Bassesterre and essential for tourism. However, in recent years, various industry experts, government ministers, and international organisations have highlighted the numerous issues plaguing the Caribbean aviation industry. It has been described as a “disaster,” leading to financial crises, high travel costs, and a decline in intraregional travel (Jessop, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has further illuminated these challenges,



especially with the collapse of LIAT 1974 Ltd.

The rapid global expansion of the aviation industry has also significantly impacted the environment. Several international organisations, including the International Civil Aviation Authority (ICAO), Airport Council International (ACI), and the International Air Transport Association (IATA), have raised concerns about the industry's environmental impact and the urgent need for sustainability. Ritchie (2024) noted that “flying is one of the most carbon-intensive activities,” contributing approximately 2.5% of global CO₂ emissions. While other modes of transportation have made strides in addressing their environmental impacts, the aviation industry still lags despite technological advancements that have mitigated some of its environmental effects (Rupcic et al. 2023; Hasan et al. 2021; Patil 2019; Lee et al. 2010).

Recognising the environmental impact of aviation, the concept of 'sustainable aviation' was developed in an attempt to mitigate the industry's effects.

The Chronicles of the Caribbean Aviation Industry and the Need for Sustainable Aviation.

McLellan and Partner (2003), define sustainable aviation as a "balanced approach of aviation for economic growth, social progress, and environmental practices." This concept extends from Elkington's (1997) Triple Bottom Line framework, which emphasises economic, social, and environmental pillars. Although sustainable aviation is often reduced to its environmental pillar, it fundamentally promotes a balanced consideration of all three pillars (Sustainable Aviation 2015; Amaeshi and Crane 2006; McLellan and Partner 2003).

What's at Stake?

Firstly, with the growing focus on climate change, aviation has struggled to address its environmental impact and has consistently increased its CO₂ emissions, contributing to the exacerbation of the climate crisis. Secondly, aviation is the primary mode of transportation for the Caribbean, connecting the region to mainland territories (UK, USA, Europe) and other islands. However, the Caribbean is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, to which aviation significantly contributes. This policy brief aims to address the challenges associated with sustainable aviation development in the Caribbean and seeks to inform Caribbean aviation stakeholders about the urgent need to advance sustainable aviation practices in the region.

Research Approach

The analysis presented in this policy brief is based on two primary methods: a review of nineteen documents related to Caribbean aviation spanning the years 2005 to 2023 and two rounds of semi-structured interviews with 51 key stakeholders in Caribbean aviation. The first round of interviews took place between November 2021 and July 2022, and the second round occurred between July 2022 and December 2022.

The document review collected data on the

challenges facing aviation in the Caribbean, sustainability issues, and aviation stakeholders in the region. The semi-structured interviews provided insights into the challenges of aviation, barriers to sustainable aviation development, and potential solutions to aviation-related issues in the Caribbean.

Key Findings

Caribbean Aviation Stakeholders

The research identified 13 categories of stakeholders who are responsible for decision-making in the Caribbean aviation industry. The stakeholders identified were similar to that of the ATAG's (2018) global aviation system.

1. Air Navigation Service Providers
2. Airline Suppliers
3. Airlines
4. Airports
5. Aviation Regulators
6. Business Community
7. Education and Training
8. Financial Services
9. Government
10. Non-Governmental Organisations
11. Passengers
12. Tourism Partners
13. Unions

Challenges of Aviation in the Caribbean

Although aviation is crucial for the economic development and social progress of the Caribbean, it faces several significant challenges. One key finding is that the region has historically faced the same aviation issues since 2005. Extensive research by organisations such as the Caribbean Development Bank, Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, Caribbean Community, Caribbean Tourism Organisation, and the World Bank has consistently identified these issues. Interviews conducted for this policy brief

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corroborated the findings of these reports and highlighted additional challenges that have become more prevalent between 2021 and 2023. A total of 55 challenges were identified and categorised into nine distinct groups: operational, travel cost, financial, connectivity, regional airline challenges, policy and regulations, political, implementation of recommendations, and the impact of COVID-19. The most pressing issues noted were:

- High travel costs
- Lack of intra-regional connectivity
- High taxes, fees and charges
- The Governments' lack of understanding of the Caribbean and the global aviation industry
- Lack of operational and economic sustainability of the Caribbean aviation industry
- Lack of collaboration amongst regional airlines
- Political interference
- Climate change

Sustainable Aviation in the Caribbean

The importance of sustainability is acknowledged in the Caribbean region, however, there is no mention of sustainable aviation in the reviewed documents. In the second round of interviews, 80% of participants were familiar with the term "sustainable aviation," defining it primarily as the protection of the environment from the aviation industry's impact. This indicates that the region focuses mainly on the environmental aspect of sustainable aviation, neglecting the social and economic pillars.

Additionally, stakeholders are aware of international policies and practices related to sustainable aviation, such as the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), ACI Carbon Accreditation Programme, Net Zero 2050, and ICAO Long-Term Aspirational Goals (LTAG). Despite this awareness, there is no sustainable aviation or sustainable transportation

policy within the Caribbean region. However, some Caribbean countries have implemented sustainable aviation practices, including electric aircraft research, recycling programs, internal energy-saving policies, and ACI Carbon Accreditation.

A key concern identified in the research is the responsibility for promoting and implementing sustainable aviation practices in the Caribbean. The majority of stakeholders interviewed believe that this responsibility should lie with governments (Figure 1).

Who Should Be Responsible For Sustainable Aviation Practices?

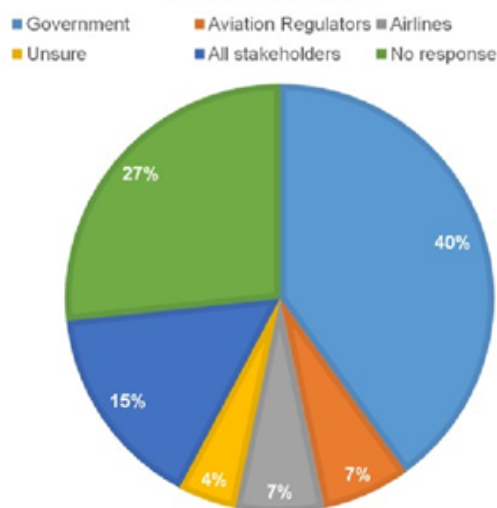


Figure 1: A pie chart depicting responsibility for the implementation of sustainable aviation practices in the Caribbean.

Source: Author

Barriers to Sustainable Aviation Development

The barriers to sustainable aviation development in the Caribbean were identical to the general challenges faced by the region's aviation industry. In addition to the previously mentioned challenges, the following barriers were identified:

- Lack of resources, including financial, human (expertise), and technical.
- Insufficient expertise and technical knowledge for achieving sustainable aviation development.

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- Absence of incentives for airlines and airports to implement sustainable aviation practices.
- Lack of a coordinated regional approach to aviation.
- Inconsistent regional aviation policies and regulations.
- Nationalistic attitudes among regional leaders.

Recommendations

The findings of this research align with previous studies conducted on aviation development in the Caribbean by organisations such as the Caribbean Tourism Organisation, Caribbean Development Bank, Caribbean Community, and the World Bank. It suggests that with clear recommendations, the Caribbean can address its aviation challenges and advance its commitment to sustainability by incorporating sustainable aviation into discussions. With this in mind, the following are key recommendations for policy implementation to promote the development of sustainable aviation in the Caribbean:

1. Establish a multifunctional regional aviation organisation tasked with the sustainable development of the Caribbean aviation industry. This organisation would focus on harmonising aviation policies and regulations, promoting and implementing sustainable aviation practices, and coordinating aviation development efforts.
2. Implement Corporate Social Responsibility policies by all regional airlines to increase their awareness of and engagement with their environmental and societal impacts.
3. Develop a regional Caribbean Carbon Emission Offsetting Policy to ensure accurate monitoring and reporting of aviation carbon emissions.
4. Increase research and development efforts in sustainable aviation practices such as electric aircraft, noise mitigation strategies, and alternative fuel sources like Sustainable

Aviation Fuel.

5. Encourage the participation of all regional airlines and airports in initiatives such as the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme (CORSIA) and ACI's Airport Carbon Accreditation Programme.

Conclusion

This brief paints a comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities facing the region's aviation sector. Aviation has been integral to the Caribbean's economic and social pillars and is vital for connectivity, trade, and tourism. However, despite its undeniable importance, the industry grapples with a myriad of challenges, from exorbitant travel costs to political interference and climate change.

This policy brief underscores the urgent need for sustainable aviation practices in the Caribbean. While the region has made strides in acknowledging the importance of sustainability, there remains a notable gap in translating this awareness into actionable policies and initiatives in the aviation industry. The research identifies key barriers to sustainable aviation development, echoing the broader challenges faced by the industry. From resource constraints to a lack of coordination and nationalistic attitudes by regional leaders. However, amidst these challenges lie opportunities for progress and innovation in sustainable aviation development.

As we confront the pressing realities of climate change and the imperative of sustainable development, the need for sustainable aviation in the Caribbean has never been more urgent. By heeding the lessons of the past and embracing a vision of a more sustainable future, the region can unlock the full potential of its aviation industry while safeguarding its natural and cultural heritage for generations to come.

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