Jamaicans in the New York Metro Area

QUICK FACTS:

Place of Origin:
Jamaica

Significant Subgroups:
None. Indo-Jamaicans covered under Indo-Caribbeans

Location in Metro New York:
Brooklyn (Flatbush, Brownsville, East Flatbush, Crown Heights); Bronx (Eastchester, Wakefield, Baychester); Queens (Laurelton, North Woodmere, Springfield Gardens, Rosedale); Westchester (Mount Vernon)

Population in Metro New York:
358,220 (ACS 2010 Total Ancestry Reported); 271,568 (ACS 2010 Born in Jamaica)

Population in New York City:
215,294 (ACS 2010 Total Ancestry Reported); 173,814 (ACS 2010 Born in Jamaica)

Primary Religion:
Christianity (evangelical, mainline Protestant)

Secondary Religion:
Rastafari movement

Status of Christian Witness:
Greater than or equal to 10% evangelical.

Primary Languages:
Jamaican Patois, English

Registry of Peoples Code:
104168

Significant Notes:
Greater than or equal to 10% evangelical.

Where Do They Live?

There are three main concentrations of Jamaicans in Metro New York. Apart from the West Indian mecca of East Flatbush and Crown Heights in Brooklyn, Jamaicans have spread out to the Laurelton-Rosedale area of Queens and have a large concentration in the northern tip of the Bronx in the working-class neighborhoods of Eastchester, Wakefield, and Baychester.

What Do They Believe?

On New York subways on Sunday mornings, it is common to see small groups of Jamaicans who socialize and conversing about "living for God" on their way to church. Indeed, Jamaicans, as well as other Caribbeans, have infused their evangelical zeal into the city, reviving "black churches" and others throughout the Metro area. Most Jamaicans adhere to Christianity, with Pentecostal, Baptist, Anglican, and Seventh-day Adventist denominations among the most popular. Although Jamaicans are usually the first to migrate, and there are fifty-one Jamaican men in the US (Census 2000). An estimated fifteen percent of Jamaica's population left the country in the 1970s and 1980s, prompted by a failing economy. In the past couple of decades, Jamaica has become notorious for crime and gangs, inciting others to emigrate for safety reasons. Women are usually the first to migrate, and there are fifty-six Jamaican women for every forty-four Jamaican men in the US (Census 2000).

What Are Their Lives Like?

Jamaicans have a reputation for being strong, confident, and hard-working. Many professionals and intellectuals immigrated to New York because they could not find work in Jamaica commensurate with their education. However, Jamaicans in Metro New York are working primarily class people who socialize in their own networks, through which their native tongue of Patois can flow freely.

How Can I Pray?

Rastafarians have muddled the identity of Christ by claiming that Haile Selassie I was a second incarnation of Jesus. Rastas refer to the Bible regularly, especially Old Testament passages about exodus and restoration, and their congregations hold regular Bible studies. Pray that God would use the Scriptures to point Rastas to a correct understanding of Christ and His Second Coming.

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Photo by Kristine Endsley