

Jamaican Attitudes Toward Foreign Countries: A Survey Study

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Introduction

This study examined a survey conducted on the attitudes of Jamaican people toward foreign countries. First of all, I note the outline of Jamaica. Jamaica is a small island, but one of the biggest countries in the English Caribbean. It gained independence from the U.K. in 1962, thus the official language is English, but people speak Jamaican Creole, too. For the long history of slave trade, more than 90% of the Jamaican population is black. A colonial history has resulted in complex regional and external relationships from within the Caribbean. For example, South and Central America is generally not considered one region but the Latin American countries, which officially use Spanish Portuguese or French, and English Caribbean countries, of which the majority is member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) have great differences. The differences are not only linguistic; there are also diverse cultural, political, religious, and racial elements. Even among English Caribbean countries, diversity and difference are great. For example, about the scale, some tiny states in the Lesser Antilles, which is a part of the English Caribbean, contain only less than 100,000 inhabitants in contrast to Jamaica's population, nearly three million. Although the West Indies Federation (a political union comprised of English Caribbean islands, including Jamaica) was

established in 1958, it only lasted until 1962. That is to say, it was too difficult to unite the English Caribbean islands. This may show the lack of the bonds between these islands, a situation that persists. Moreover, relationships with European and North American countries are still affected by their colonial period and geopolitical importance as a “backyard.”

This survey was designed to help understand Jamaica’s relationships, attitudes of the people and diplomatic dealings involving foreign countries. For example, Caribbean nations have been seeking regional integration to survive since the mid-20th century due to issues such as economic vulnerability. However, plans have not gone well until now. This research was thus intended to provide suggestions about these factors.

1. Survey outline

Table 1 shows the survey questions. Because each question was open-ended, some answers, maybe confusing, mentioned cities, continents, or provinces rather than states. I considered these answers invalid. However, Jamaicans may consider self-governing Caribbean dominions of Europe or the U.S.A. as countries, so I counted these answers as valid. The survey was conducted in a street-side setting during August and September of 2018 in Kingston, Jamaica. Help was provided by Jamaican student assistants. Finally, responses were obtained from 684 individuals between the ages of 15 and 77. The results are shown in Figure 1-6. I omitted any countries receiving only one or two votes from display in the contained graph.

With 684 samples, this study’s survey was of a large scale. While it was exclusively conducted in areas of Kingston, the downtown area was

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avoided because of safety concerns; respondent ages were also different compared to the overall distribution in Jamaica. This study was thus limited by this aspect.

Table 1. Survey questions

Category	Question
Personal data	age
	gender
	job
	final education
Caribbean	Which Caribbean country do you like the most apart from Jamaica? Why?
	Which Caribbean country do you dislike the most apart from Jamaica? Why?
Latin America	Which Latin American country do you like the most? Why?
	Which Latin American country do you dislike the most? Why?
World	Which world country do you like the most apart from Jamaica? Why?
	Which world country do you dislike the most apart from Jamaica? Why?

2. Survey Results

2.1. Caribbean country category

This section discusses the results from Question 1 (“Which Caribbean country do you like the most apart from Jamaica?”) and Question 2 (“Which Caribbean country do you dislike the most apart from Jamaica?”). The most commonly liked and disliked country was Trinidad and Tobago. Apart from N/A (not applicable) answers, Trinidad and Tobago obtained more than double the number of “dislike” responses than the second-most disliked nation (i.e., Haiti, with 17.1% of the total). Trinidad and Tobago is the one of the most important and strongest countries in the English Caribbean because, for example, of its oil resources. Its population is greater than one million, which is third highest among all CARICOM members. The survey results showed that

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Trinidad and Tobago's presence was strong for the Jamaican people. However, this presence was not positive for all Jamaicans (19.3% liked the country, while 36.5% disliked it (a 1.89 times greater response-rate)) . The most common reasons for liking the nation were its good economy, carnivals, music, food, accents, having family or friends there, similarity to Jamaica, and closeness to Jamaica. The most common reasons for disliking the nation were how it treated other Caribbean or Jamaican people, news reports of Jamaican people who were treated badly there, belief that they hated Jamaicans, racism, natural rivalry, and that many believed inhabitants thought they were better than Jamaicans because of oil, classism, and a large U.S. influence. Racism was a very common answer. The racial makeup of Trinidad and Tobago is not the same as Jamaica's, but Indians and mixed races comprise more than half in Trinidad and Tobago.

Among all Caribbean countries, only one other than Trinidad and Tobago obtained more than 10% of all dislike votes. That is, 17.1% of respondents disliked Haiti (only 1% liked it) . In other words, only Trinidad and Tobago and Haiti have strong presence and disliked by many Jamaicans. The most common reasons for disliking Haiti were poverty, illegal gun trading, voodoo, natural disasters, poor living standards, the uneven distribution of wealth, crime, and violence. Haiti is one of the poorest countries in the world and a large earthquake in 2010 affected terribly its capital and economic conditions even more. These factors may have also resulted in a negative impression. The Voodoo religion is a combination of Christianity and African religions. Some respondents indicated that the Voodoo faith led to dislike because it indicated a lack or absence of the Christian faith.

Only three countries that obtained more than 10% of the total vote

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(thereby having a strong presence) were liked more than disliked (i.e., the Bahamas, Barbados, and Cuba) . As mentioned above, there are large cultural differences between Latin America and English Caribbean countries. Although the two regions are close, relationships and the sense of unity are not very strong. However, Cuba received the fourth most like votes (13.6%) among all Caribbean countries. Cuba is a prominent Latin American country in the Caribbean country category. This is notable because English Caribbean countries tend to have great political influence through the Westminster system . It would therefore seem natural for many people in Westminster countries to feel an aversion toward Cuba, which has maintained a communist one-party system for over fifty years . However, Cuba received 13.6% of the like votes, which was four times greater than its 3.4% of dislike votes. The most common reasons were peacefulness, orderliness, the educational system, nursing program, rich history, friendly and helpful people, government, language, and equality. The Cuban nation has aided Caribbean countries, especially in education and medicine. Survey results show that Cuba's many decades of support have resulted in a positive impression on the Jamaican people. Although dislike votes were mostly based on politics, Jamaicans viewed the Revolution of Cuba in 1959, revolutionary regime (which still exists) , the iconic Castro brothers, and Che Guevara as positive parts in the history of resistance against the powerful rather than being undemocratic.

The Bahamas, which contain popular beach resorts, was liked by 19%. This is remarkably high compared to its 1.3% of dislike votes. The most common reasons for liking the Bahamas were beautiful beaches, the tourism industry, beautiful scenery, hospitality, and friendly people. The few dislike votes were mostly based on the perception that Bahamas

natives were not friendly to Jamaicans.

Barbados had a strong presence for Jamaicans. It received 16.8% of the like votes and 6.3% of the dislike votes. The most common reasons for liking Barbados were the nice beaches, quiet and safe environment, accents, economy, education system, Rihanna , having family there, and a high standard of living. Although the racial makeup of Barbados is similar to Jamaica (90% of inhabitants are black) , the most common reasons for disliking it were racism and bad treatment of Jamaicans.

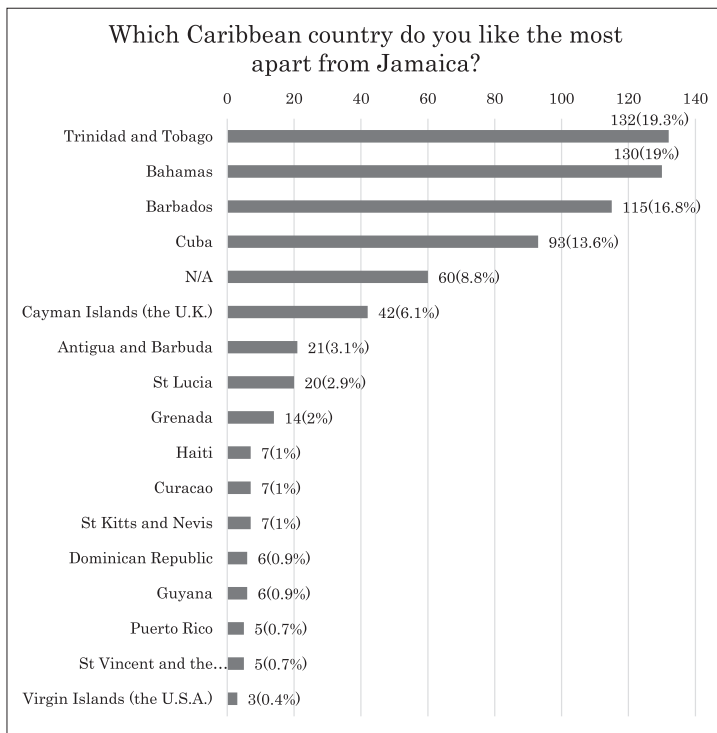


Figure 1.

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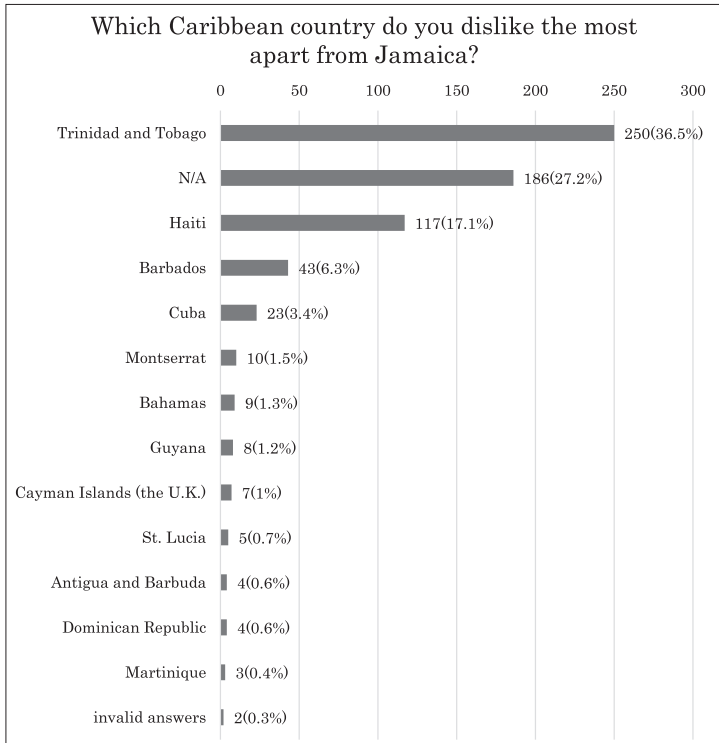


Figure 2.

2.2. Latin American country category

Answers of N/A were common for the questions “Which Latin American country do you like the most?” and “Which Latin American country do you dislike the most?” (17.4% of the like and 49% of the dislike votes; first place) . Both answers contained the comment “not know enough to like/dislike.” This could mean that Latin America is not as familiar to the Jamaican people as English Caribbean countries even though the area is geographically close.

Brazil prominently received 25.7% of the like votes in this category.

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Except N/A, Brazil is the second most dislike votes (7.5%) . That is to say, Brazil has a strong presence for Jamaicans. The outstanding reason for both answers was football. Other reasons for liking Brazil included its culture, sexy women, Neymar , food, dance, Capoeira, friendly people, and black population. The most common Reasons for disliking it were racism, high levels of crime, and the football world cup.

Cuba received 11.3% of the like votes. Similar to its ranking in the category of Caribbean countries, Cuba ranked high and received nearly five times more votes for like than dislike. The reasons for this were nearly the same as in the category of Caribbean countries. Although it is possible that the votes were affected by the order of questions, Cuba received more votes in the Caribbean category than in the Latin America category. The Jamaican people may consider Cuba to be a Caribbean country. That is, one of them.

Mexico and Panama also received a high number of like votes. The most common reasons for liking Mexico were the food, liquor, rich history and diversity, culture, language, football, and friendly people. These for liking Panama were the advanced economy, friendly people, that many Jamaicans worked there, and Jamaicans helped build the canal. One respondent commented the following: "Panama is a Spanish Jamaica."

Countries that received a high number of dislike votes were Colombia (7.9%) , Mexico (7.5%) , Argentina (6.1%) , and Venezuela (4.8%) . Colombia and Mexico were largely disliked for corruption, violence, and drugs. Argentina was mainly disliked for racism and football.

Venezuela received 4.8% of the dislike votes (more than twice its 2.2% of like votes) . Even though the previous Chavez administration and the present Maduro administration of Venezuela supported Jamaica through

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Petrocaribe , the Jamaican people seem to have a negative attitude toward Venezuela. The most common reasons for disliking it were corruption, turmoil, the government's management of the country's economy, political instability, crime, and communism.

In the Latin America category, most like and dislike votes were based on culture and sports. Except for N/A and Cuba (which were also included in the Caribbean category), only Mexico and Brazil received more than 10% of the total like votes, respectively. Most votes were based on football.

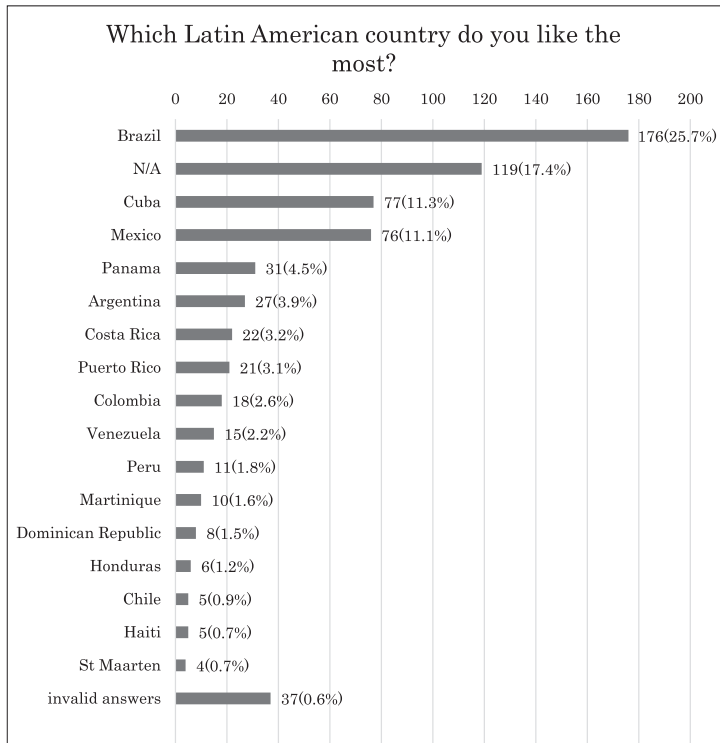


Figure 3.

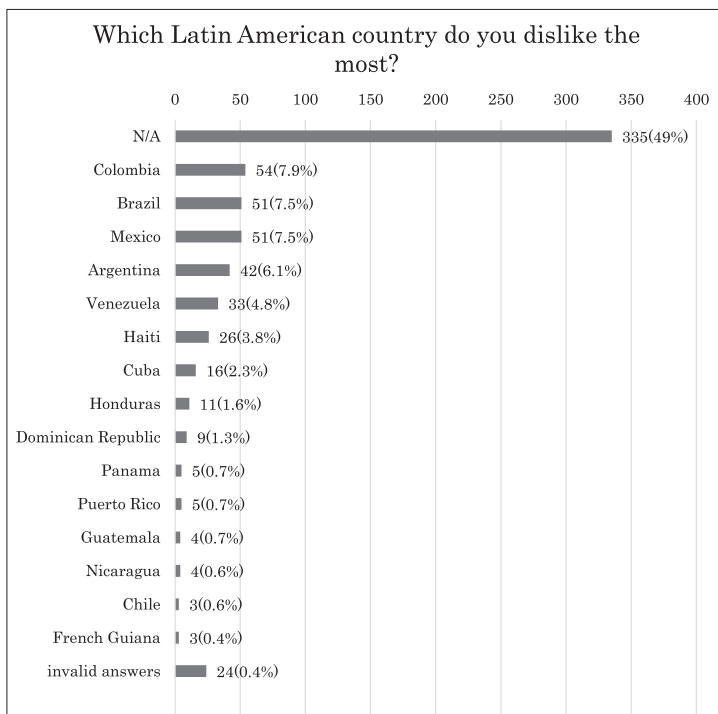


Figure 4.

2.3. World countries category

Except for N/A, the U.S. received the most votes for both like and dislike. However, its 25.1% of dislike votes remarkably exceeded its 15.1% of like votes. The U.S. was liked mainly because Jamaicans had family there, its many job and education opportunities, chances, wealth and prosperity, economy, and that everything was there. The U.S. was disliked mainly because of President Trump (the current regime) , capitalism, racism, corruption, its interventions with other countries, and bombing. Some respondents used the words imperialism, neo-colonialism, and military expansion. People from South and Central America tend to

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have ambivalent feelings and thoughts toward the U.S.A. (i.e., both admiration and hatred) . This survey showed that the Jamaican people had similar feelings and thoughts, indicating that the U.S.A. has a strong presence for Jamaicans. On the other hand, President Trump and the current regime were the most common reasons for disliking the U.S. Thus, the survey results may have been affected by temporal factors.

Other countries receiving many like votes were France, the U.K., Japan, and the United Arab Emirates. The most common reasons for liking these countries were advanced economies and cultures. It should be paid attention to the U.K. The U.K. (the suzerain of Jamaica until only a half-century ago) , received the third most like votes with 12.3% of the total (five times more than its dislike votes (2.2%)) . In short, many Jamaicans held a positive attitude toward the U.K., but its presence was not the strongest. The U.K. was liked because of its economy, currency, culture, accents, football, having family there, climate, and that it was supportive in the past. Some respondents also said that the U.K. had a large Caribbean community and that England was the mother country of Jamaica. These answers show that many Jamaicans positively view Jamaica' s history with the U.K. On the other hand, the U.K. was disliked because of its history of oppression in Africa, slavery, and racism.

Countries with reports of persisting conflicts or serious international issues such as North Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria received many dislike votes. Naturally, many reasons for this dealt with politics and conflict. Except for N/A, China had the sixth most dislike votes with 3.2% (more than double its 1.3% of like votes) . Neither percentage was high. Although China has actively invested in Caribbean countries in recent years (including Jamaica) , the Jamaican attitude toward China is not positive. China was mostly disliked for its political system,

overpopulation, and many respondents commented “China seeks to take over Jamaica”.

N/A was also a very popular answer in this category (N/A received 27% of all dislikes and the fifth most likes at 7.5%) .

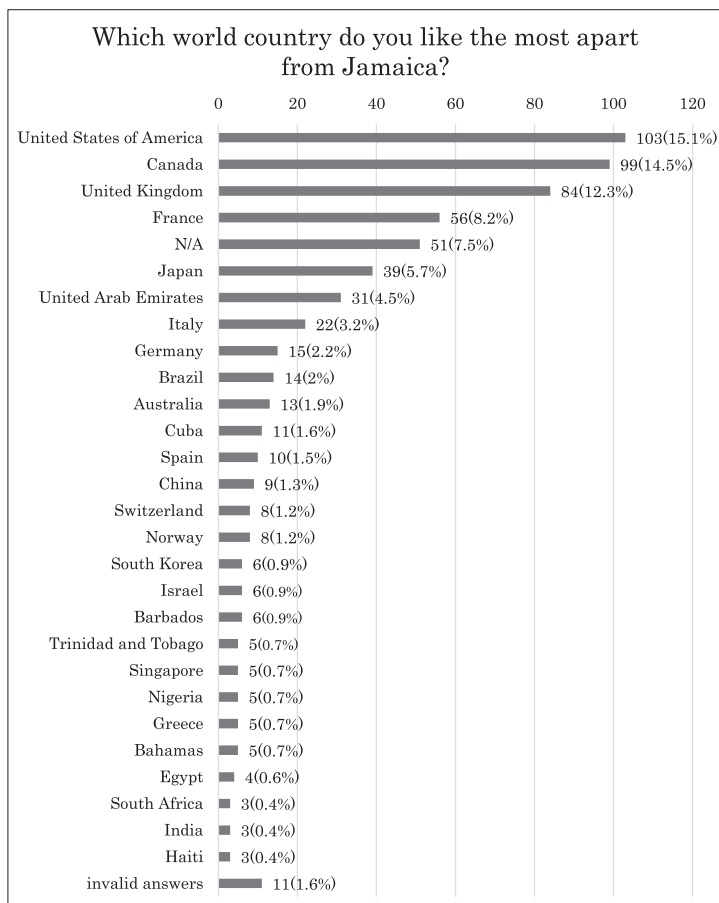


Figure 5.

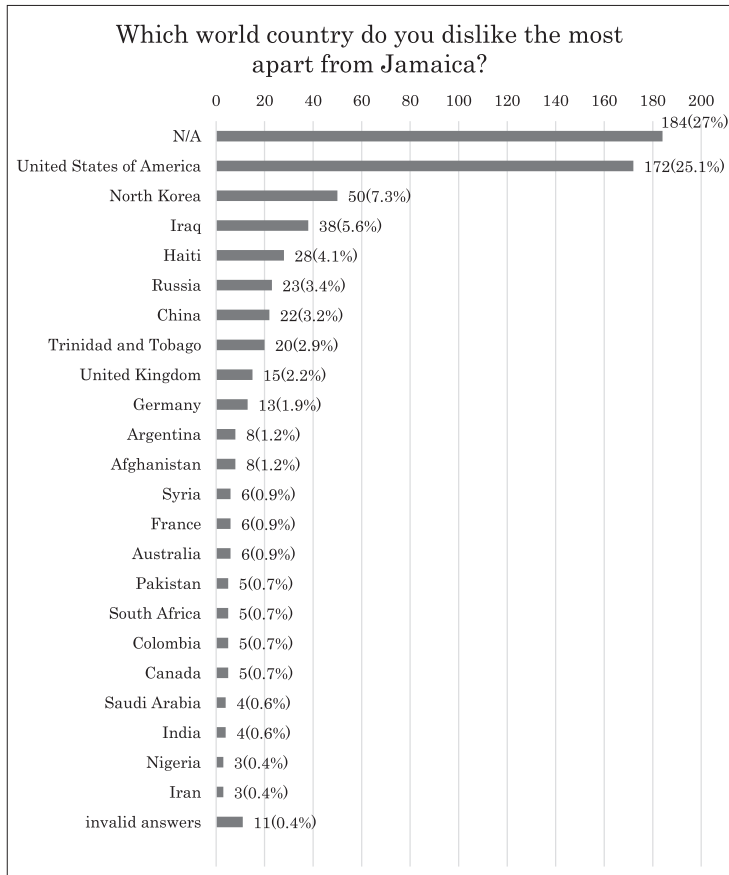


Figure 6.

Conclusion

This survey provided useful implication for understanding politics and external relations of Jamaica. The first result was the Jamaican attitude toward Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago is an oil-producing country and, like Jamaica, a major part of CARICOM. Both are expected leaders in this context. However, survey results indicated that Jamaican

attitudes toward Trinidad and Tobago were remarkably negative and strong. This could be an obstacle for regional integration.

Second, Jamaicans had a positive attitude toward Cuba. As mentioned above, Cuba has maintained a one-party system for over fifty years, while Jamaica's political system is a liberal democracy. Moreover, Latin America is not as familiar to Jamaicans as the Caribbean. It may thus be natural that the Jamaican people have some aversion to Cuba. However, Cuba's like percentages were four or more times higher than its dislike percentages in two categories (i.e., the Caribbean and Latin America). In all categories, only six countries had more than 10% while also receiving at least two times the number of like votes as dislike votes (i.e., the Bahamas, Barbados, Brazil, Canada, the U.K., and Cuba). In recent decades, the relationship between Cuba and other Caribbean countries has been reinforced and improved. Some observers point out that the relationship must be limited because of the different political systems. However, survey results indicate that Cuba may not be an undemocratic and incomprehensible country for the majority of the Jamaican people. Notably, the votes for Venezuela and China show that economic presence or support is not the only basis for comparison.

Third, Jamaicans held a strongly negative attitude toward the U.S. The U.S. is also not the only major power considered by Jamaicans; survey results for the U.S. and U.K. were clearly different even though their economic influences are not currently the same.

Finally, many respondents notably provided one answer for disliking countries at high rates in all categories. That word is racism. Even though some countries with similar racial makeups to Jamaica received this answer, it may also have been used to indicate xenophobia. The survey thus showed that racism is one of the biggest problems for

Jamaicans, who appear to be sensitive to racial issues.

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