

## Jamaican men - the true story

Last week, it was reported by The Sunday Gleaner that the president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, declared that all Jamaican men are drunks and smokers of marijuana, they are marginalised by the women in universities, and are not fully represented in public and civic life. We will explore the extent to which these claims made are true.

According to Wikigender, which addresses gender equality in Jamaica, the World Economic Forum reported that while women showed more dominance in areas such as education than males, men achieved more in other areas such as wage equality, labour force participation, income and political participation. (<http://tinyurl.com/equality-ja> or [http://www.wikigender.org/index.php/Gender\\_Equality\\_in\\_Jamaica](http://www.wikigender.org/index.php/Gender_Equality_in_Jamaica)). In 2010, with a population of 2.71 million, Jamaica had a sex ratio of 0.98 (m/f), income ratio of 0.58 (f/m), a literacy ratio of 1.13 (f/m), and a tertiary enrolment ratio of 2.29 (f/m). These figures suggest that there are more males in Jamaica than females. However, more females are literate than males, more females are earning much higher salaries than their male counterparts in general, and more females are enrolled in tertiary institutions than males. This would suggest that there might actually be some truth in Mr Mugabe's statement, after all, with respect to women being literate, earning more income and having a higher enrolment figure in tertiary institutions. Wikigender also noted that 11.7 per cent of females are represented in Parliament. This suggests that men are more involved in the political landscape than their female counterparts. Wikigender also revealed that in 2011, the Gender Inequality Index was 0.45 (Jamaica placed 81st out of 145 countries with statistics) and the World Economic Forum ranked Jamaica 47th from a total of 135 countries in its 2011 Global Gender Gap Report. The Gender Gap reported that Jamaica received a score of 0.7028, representing inequality and representing equality. This report would suggest that we have some serious gender gap issues. Therefore, there might be some half-truths in Mr Mugabe's statements.

**IMPROVEMENT IN GENDER PARITY** In a 2005 survey done by the Statistical Institute of Jamaica, Wikigender highlighted the fact that in terms of education, there seems to be a major improvement in gender parity for primary, secondary and tertiary education. The data, therefore, suggest that males are given access to the same level of education as their female counterparts. But we have another fundamental issue. Why is it that males are not educating themselves at the same rate as females? According to an Internet article titled 'UN DATA', in 2009 the adult female labour force participation rate was 56.1 per cent and the male labour participation rate was 74.0 per cent (<http://tinyurl.com/un-jamaica> or <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Jamaica>). This data would suggest that more males prefer to work instead of furthering their education. According to the National Health and Lifestyle Survey (2008), conducted by the Epidemiology Unit of the Tropical Medicine Research Institute at the University of the West Indies, 65 per cent of the population between the ages of 16 and 74 years old use alcohol, 14.5 per cent cigarettes, 13.5 per cent marijuana and less than one per cent hard drugs such as crack or cocaine.

**UNFOUNDED STATEMENTS** The National Health and Lifestyle Survey (2008) also highlighted the fact that the prevalence rate is significantly higher in males than in females, and that the levels of usage of alcohol among this age group is associated with higher educational and socio-economic levels. This would suggest that there seems to be a direct correlation between these two variables, that is, alcohol use and educational and socio-economic levels. (74 and 71 per cent vs 59 per cent, respectively). The National Health and Lifestyle Survey (2008) also noted that marijuana use was more prevalent in persons with a lower level of education (13 per cent versus 10 per cent).

**Jamaica Gleaner** Based on this statistical information, one can infer that Mr Mugabe's statements are clearly misguided and unfounded. This is based on the statistics based on research conducted. This proves that not all Jamaican men are marijuana users. The research also seems to highlight that not all Jamaican men are rum drinkers, too. Finally, it would seem that more and more males are inclined to enter the job market, as it would seem that socio-economic factors are at play. Therefore, one must not agree with Mr Mugabe's statements in the absence of evidence.