



TOWARD HARMONIZED AI POLICIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CARIBBEAN

FINAL REPORT
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CTU CARIBBEAN AI TASK FORCE

Final Report: Toward Harmonized AI Policies and Recommendations for the Caribbean

This report is published by the CTU Caribbean AI Task Force (CAITF).

This final report reflects the collective experience and expertise of more than 35 nominated members drawn from Caribbean governments and national agencies, multilateral organizations, the private sector, academia, civil-society organizations, non-profit institutions and non-governmental organizations. The Caribbean AI Task Force was established by resolution at the Caribbean Telecommunications Union's 31st General Conference of Ministers, with a one-year mandate to develop harmonized regional AI policy recommendations and coordinate the Caribbean AI Forum in 2026. This report represents the culmination of that mandate.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AI – Artificial Intelligence
- ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations
- AU – African Union
- CAF – Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean
- CARICOM – Caribbean Community
- CARDTP – Caribbean Digital Transformation Project
- CDB – Caribbean Development Bank
- CSME – CARICOM Single Market and Economy
- CTU – Caribbean Telecommunications Union
- CXC – Caribbean Examinations Council
- ECCB – Eastern Caribbean Central Bank
- ECLAC – UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
- ECTEL – Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority
- GDC – Global Digital Compact
- GDP – Gross Domestic Product
- HLAB-AI – UN High-level Advisory Body on AI
- ICT – Information and Communication Technology
- IDB – Inter-American Development Bank
- IMPACS – Implementation Agency for Crime and Security
- ITU – International Telecommunication Union
- MIGDIA – Inter-American Framework on Data & AI Governance (OAS)
- MSME – Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
- NDTs – National Digital Transformation Strategy
- NIST – U.S. National Institute of Standards and Technology
- OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- OECS – Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States
- SIDS – Small Island Developing States
- SoDTIC – School of Digital Transformation and Innovation in the Caribbean
- UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade & Development
- UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- UNGA – United Nations General Assembly

The Task Force agrees that the diffusion of Artificial Intelligence is occurring in an environment of profound structural asymmetry. The benefits of AI remain heavily concentrated geographically, economically, and technologically, while unfortunately, the systemic risks associated with its deployment, including algorithmic bias, socioeconomic exclusion, and the erosion of information integrity are distributed universally. To compound this, Caribbean citizens, firms and public institutions are becoming intensive users of AI systems without having proportional influence over their design, deployment, governance or value capture.

The global AI market is projected to expand from approximately USD 189 billion in 2023 to USD 4.8 trillion by 2033¹. For Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), AI integration could contribute up to USD 0.5 trillion to the broader economy by 2030, representing a potential 5.4% boost to regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP)². Under favourable conditions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects that AI could elevate a developing country's GDP by 2.7% to 3.5% over a single decade³. Despite generating 6.6% of the global GDP, the LAC region currently captures a mere 1.12% of global AI investment⁴. Within the Caribbean sub-region, the deficit is even more acute; AI-native enterprises number in the single digits, and the region operates overwhelmingly as a consumer of imported technology rather than a producer of localized innovation.

The Caribbean is currently characterized by a high-intent but low-capacity equilibrium, where policy ambition is consistently outpaced by infrastructural realities, fragmented data governance, and severe human capital attrition.

This is a disaster.

The Task Force, in its analysis, demonstrates that effective AI governance in the Caribbean cannot be achieved through isolated national strategies. This report, which serves as the foundational advisory framework for the Caribbean AI Task Force, articulates seven primary recommendations centered on themes including a unified regional AI policy framework, building sovereign data infrastructure, catalysing commercial innovation, reversing human capital flight, mobilizing targeted regional

¹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development* (Geneva: United Nations, 2025), <https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-innovation-report-2025>

² PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), *Sizing the Prize: PwC's Global Artificial Intelligence Study—Exploiting the AI Revolution* (2017),

³ Eugenio M. Cerutti, Antonio I. Garcia Pascual, Yosuke Kido, Longji Li, Giovanni Melina, Marina Mendes Tavares, and Philippe Wingender, *The Global Impact of AI: Mind the Gap*, IMF Working Paper no. 25/76 (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, April 2025), <https://doi.org/10.5089/9798229008570.001>

⁴ Álvaro Soto et al., coords., *Latin American Artificial Intelligence Index (ILIA) 2025: Key Findings, Applied Artificial Intelligence, and Human Talent*, Project Documents LC/TS.2026/1 (Santiago: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and National Center for Artificial Intelligence, 2026), <https://doi.org/10.65730/maolsdjpr>.

financing, and embedding AI within climate resilience strategies. Through multilateral cooperation, the interim report has helped shape the UNDP+CARICOM AI Regional Programme 2026-2030 and the UN ECLAC's SIDS National AI Agenda.

The Caribbean stands as one voice with an agreed set of values, principles and direction.

The choice before the Caribbean is therefore not whether AI will transform the region, but whether that transformation will occur primarily on terms established elsewhere. This report provides the foundation for collective action; implementation must now become the region's priority.

1. Introduction

A. The Global Inflection Point

Since the first wave of national AI strategies emerged around 2017, global AI policy has rapidly matured from early phases of strategic posturing, innovation competition, and localized ethical standardization into an era strictly defined by the realities of generative AI advancements, rigorous systemic risk regulation, and intense geopolitical contests over technological sovereignty. What has not happened, across any of these phases, is convergence on a single governance model. Instead, a differentiated landscape has emerged in which countries calibrate AI governance to their own economic structure, institutional capacity, and strategic position.

For most of this period, the Caribbean's engagement with this evolution has been largely indirect; the region has been a consumer of AI tools, an object of global policy discourse, and a participant, when at all, in instruments designed elsewhere, for other contexts. This report is built on the premise that this indirect posture is no longer adequate to the stakes involved, and that the region has the human capacity, the institutional foundation and a closing window of opportunity to change it.

The urgency of this global inflection point was codified by the United Nations with the release of the *Preliminary Report of the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI: Evidence-based assessment of opportunities, risks and impacts of AI in July 2026*. The UN report explicitly warns that current evaluation methods and institutional safeguards cannot keep pace with the exponential growth of AI capabilities, noting that the world cannot effectively govern what it cannot independently evaluate or understand.

Table 1.1- The Seven Key Domains of the UN Independent International Scientific Panel on AI (July 2026)

Domain Focus Area	Core Analytical Imperatives Highlighted by the UN Scientific Panel
AI Science, Advances & Trajectories	Tracking the exponential growth of frontier models, emergent autonomous agentic behaviours, and the extreme geographical concentration of global computing power.
Societal Applications	Evaluating the integration and disparate impacts of AI within foundational societal pillars, including empirical science, public health, educational ecosystems, and agricultural modernization.
Economic Implications	Analysing macroeconomic disruptions, labour market exposure, wealth concentration dynamics, and the specific vulnerabilities of developing economies.
Security, Systems & Environment	Assessing systemic risks introduced by interacting AI agents, cybersecurity vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure, and the massive energy and environmental footprint of data centres.

Human Rights, Information & Democracy	Investigating the erosion of information integrity, the proliferation of synthetic media (deepfakes), authoritarian capture of digital ecosystems, and structural algorithmic discrimination.
Cultural Flourishing & Child Safety	Examining the long-term cognitive and cultural impacts of continuous human-AI interaction, autonomy preservation, and the specific vulnerabilities of minors in digital spaces.
Management, Governance & Reliability	Highlighting the severe underdevelopment of independent risk evaluation methodologies and the fragmented nature of current corporate-led governance instruments.

Crucially for the Caribbean context, the UN Preliminary Report confirms that the so-called “AI divide” is no longer a question of technological access; it is fundamentally an asymmetry in the capacity to influence AI development, shape its design, and govern its deployment. The global evidence base regarding AI's socioeconomic impacts is highly skewed toward high-income, English-language contexts, while the underlying AI evaluation infrastructure remains linguistically and geographically concentrated. The overwhelming concentration of computational power, where a few advanced economies and their domiciled corporate entities control virtually all leading general-purpose models, threatens to entrench existing global inequalities and significantly undermine democratic accountability.

The economic stakes are also substantial. UNCTAD projects that the global AI market will expand approximately twenty-fivefold by 2033, increasing from about 7% to 29% of the frontier-technology market.⁵ It also estimates that the United States and China together hold approximately 60% of AI patents and produce about one-third of AI-related research publications. The Caribbean does not need to compete in frontier-model development. It must, however, determine the terms under which external models, platforms, infrastructure, and standards enter the region.

This requires more than defensive regulation.

The region must engage the market directly, developing systems that meet its own needs, investing in research and building research-to-commercialization capacity, producing tools that can be exported to other markets. The region is not starting from zero. ECLAC's ILIA 2025 notes that Latin America and the Caribbean account for 14% of global visits to AI solutions and rank third worldwide in downloads of generative AI applications⁶,

⁵ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development (Geneva: United Nations, 2025), <https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-innovation-report-2025>.

⁶ Álvaro Soto et al., coords., *Latin American Artificial Intelligence Index (ILIA) 2025: Key Findings, Applied Artificial Intelligence, and Human Talent*, Project Documents LC/TS.2026/1 (Santiago: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and National Center for Artificial Intelligence, 2026), <https://doi.org/10.65730/maolsdjpr>.

showing that demand and user adoption are real, but that the region retains weak control over the upstream layers of value creation.

Within this precise global framework, the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) has sharply framed the geopolitical stakes for the region. During the high-level dialogue series convened in May 2026 alongside the eLAC Digital Agenda and the EU Global Gateway, the existential digital sovereignty question was posed. Will emerging economies remain perpetual “rule-takers,” or will they evolve into “rule-makers”? Rule-takers are structurally forced to adapt to predetermined, established technological systems and regulations designed by external entities. This reactive posture leaves their fragile economic and social fabrics highly vulnerable to foreign regulatory paradigms and exogenous technological shocks over which they have no agency. Rule-makers, conversely, leverage regional integration to assert digital sovereignty, demanding interoperability, technological localization, and equitable, unified participation in standards-setting forums.

For the Caribbean, delaying proactive, unified governance inevitably increases long-term dependency on external models, foreign computational infrastructure, and imported normative frameworks. We cannot delay any longer.

B. Scope and Audience of this Report

This report is addressed to the governments of CARICOM member states, the regional institutions whose mandates intersect with AI policy, to development and financing partners considering support for Caribbean digital transformation, and to the wider public whose engagement will determine whether AI policy in the region is shaped with legitimacy or imposed without it.

There are three things this report deliberately does not attempt to do. First, it does not provide a costed implementation plan, budget allocation, or financing instrument design; these are the subject of work led by the relevant regional and international partners and prescribing them here would substitute the Task Force's judgment for that of the institutions actually responsible for delivery. Second, it does not propose a single uniform model to be adopted identically across all member states; Caribbean states differ materially in population, fiscal space, and institutional capacity, and effective AI policy must be adapted accordingly. Third, it does not attempt to forecast the technology itself; its recommendations are framed to be robust to a range of plausible AI trajectories, rather than contingent on any single technical scenario.

C. Approach

This report is the product of a regional advisory process led by the CTU Caribbean AI Task Force. The Task Force brings a Caribbean perspective to the rapidly evolving global AI policy landscape by consolidating available evidence, examining its implications for small states, and translating that evidence into practical recommendations for CARICOM governments and regional institutions. Its role is not to replace national policymaking or the mandates of implementing agencies, but to provide a shared analytical foundation from which coordinated national and regional action can proceed.

This report draws on prior thematic work which includes the Caribbean-specific findings of UNESCO's Caribbean Artificial Intelligence Policy Roadmap, built on consultation with more than 1,000 stakeholders; ECLAC's exploratory review of Caribbean AI readiness and its companion regional policy brief; the global benchmarking and governance-gap analysis of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Body on AI; and current data from UNCTAD, the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union, the European Investment Bank, and national and regional sources cited throughout.

Where the available evidence is inconsistent, incomplete, or no longer current, the report identifies those limitations explicitly and avoids implying a level of precision that the underlying data cannot support. For example, CARICOM's Secretary-General has cited a regional food-import bill of approximately US\$13.76 billion over 2018–2020, equivalent to roughly 5% of regional GDP alongside estimates that the Caribbean imports more than 60% of the food it consumes⁷. Similarly, widely cited estimates of skilled emigration from Caribbean states originate in International Monetary Fund research published in 2006. This report therefore uses those estimates as evidence of a persistent structural challenge, not as a measurement of present-day migration rates, which may have changed materially over the intervening two decades.

The Task Force also treats missing data as a substantive policy finding. Several CARICOM members are absent from, or incompletely represented in, international datasets concerning AI infrastructure, innovation, investment and readiness. Such omissions limit the region's ability to benchmark progress, identify investment needs and participate effectively in evidence-based international governance. Strengthening national statistical capacity and establishing a comparable regional AI evidence base are therefore integral components of the report's recommendations, rather than secondary research concerns.

An interim version of the report was released in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in December 2025 and subsequently circulated for regional review. Its findings and

⁷ Caribbean Community (CARICOM), "Investment Matters More Than Ever-CARICOM Secretary-General," e-CISTAR, November 10, 2022, <https://www.caricomstats.org/E-CISTAR/2022/11/10/investment-matters-more-than-ever-caricom-secretary-general/>.

recommendations were examined through conferences, seminars, panels, presentations and stakeholder discussions. Written and verbal feedback from these engagements was consolidated by the Task Force and used to refine the analysis and recommendations presented in this final report. This document should therefore be understood as both an evidence synthesis and a regional policy contribution as it identifies Caribbean priorities while recognizing that implementation must be adapted to the institutional capacity, economic structure and development circumstances of individual member states.

Box 1

AI for Agriculture & Food Security



Background

Although agriculture has a relatively modest direct contribution to output in many Caribbean economies, it remains strategically important for food security, employment, rural livelihoods, nutrition, export diversification and resilience to external shocks. In Commonwealth Caribbean small island developing states, agriculture, forestry and fishing contribute approximately 5.6% of gross domestic product and employ up to 9.42% of the population [1]. Regional averages nevertheless conceal substantial differences among countries where the economic and employment importance of agriculture has historically been greater in continental and large-island economies, including Guyana and Haiti, than in most tourism-dependent small island states [2]. The Caribbean's annual food-import bill is estimated at approximately US\$6 billion [3]. This dependence exposes regional food systems to international price movements, exchange-rate pressures, transportation disruptions, geopolitical conflict and extreme-weather events. In April 2024, the CARICOM–World Food Programme Caribbean Food Security and Livelihoods Survey estimated that approximately 3.0 million of the 7.1 million people in the English- and Dutch-speaking Caribbean were moderately or severely food insecure. This represented a 17% decrease from May 2023, but a 78% increase relative to the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 [4]. These results indicate that agricultural transformation must be framed differently. It is not solely a sectoral productivity issue; it is also a food-security, balance-of-payments and systemic-resilience priority.

Lessons from comparable regions

Pacific SIDS provide the closest structural comparison because they also face small domestic markets, dispersed islands, climate exposure and fragmented production. Agriculture contributes approximately 14% of GDP and employs 28% of the population across Commonwealth Pacific countries, compared with 5.6% and 9.4%, respectively, in Caribbean SIDS [1]. Both regions face limited agricultural data, uneven connectivity and difficulty financing digital solutions.

Experiences from larger smallholder systems demonstrate how these constraints can be addressed:

- **Kenya:** A government-led agricultural big-data platform and observatory connected 1.1 million farmers to geospatial weather information and customised agronomic advice. Between 2020 and 2022, the platforms distributed five million advisory messages, while partnerships involving 27 county governments and 24 agricultural-technology companies expanded last-mile service delivery.
- **Telangana, India:** The Saagu Baagu digital-agriculture programme reported a 21% increase in chilli yield per acre, a 9% reduction in pesticide use, a 5% reduction in fertiliser use, an 8% improvement in unit prices and approximately US\$800 in additional income per acre per production cycle.

The Caribbean can possibly

- Establish a shared open-data hub combining satellite imagery, IoT sensors, local weather data for pest/disease prediction and hospitality demand feeds.
- Deploy multilingual voice assistants (English, Creole, Spanish) to deliver localized agronomic advice and climate alerts.
- Use AI to optimize logistics and cold-chain routing to enable cutting spoilage, reduce post-harvest losses and synchronize deliveries to resorts, restaurants and cruise calls.
- Create low-cost demo farms (such as in the Cocoa Industry) for testing computer vision-based yield estimation and soil health analytics that field traceability and farm-to-table marketing.

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2. The Caribbean AI Landscape

Promise Against a Backdrop of Disparity

A. The Caribbean AI Value

The region's most compelling AI use cases are those that generate returns across more than one dimension simultaneously for instance economic, resilience, and inclusion gains from a single intervention. This “co-benefit” structure is the strongest argument for prioritizing sequenced public investment in AI-enabling conditions, because it means a well-chosen intervention pays back across several policy objectives at once, rather than only one.

Table 2.1 - Illustrative AI Value Pathways for Caribbean Sectors

Sector	Illustrative AI Application	Documented or Comparable Impact	Value Dimensions Engaged
Disaster early warning	Multi-hazard early-warning systems	A four-year, approximately US\$5.5 million WMO/UNDRR initiative across fourteen Pacific SIDS targets approximately 2.3 million people exposed to cyclones, floods, and sea-level rise ⁸	Resilience, public safety
Flood forecasting	AI-based river and flood forecasting	Comparable systems in South and Southeast Asia provide forecasts up to seven days ahead of riverine flooding ⁹	Resilience
Public administration	AI-assisted service automation	Reduces transaction costs and improves accessibility and transparency of public services.	Efficiency, inclusion, transparency

A small island agricultural advisory tool, for instance, simultaneously improves yields (a productivity gain), strengthens resilience to weather variability (a climate-adaptation gain), and supports smallholder farmers who are otherwise structurally excluded from formal advisory services (an inclusion gain). A regional early-warning system protects lives (the primary objective) while also reducing the fiscal shock of disaster response (an economic-resilience gain) and demonstrating the kind of regional public good that justifies pooled investment.

⁸ World Meteorological Organization, “Inclusive Early Warning and Action in the Pacific Project Launched,” September 28, 2025, accessed July 17, 2026.

⁹ Sella Nevo et al., “Flood Forecasting with Machine Learning Models in an Operational Framework,” *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences* 26, no. 15 (2022): 4013–4032, <https://doi.org/10.5194/hess-26-4013-2022>

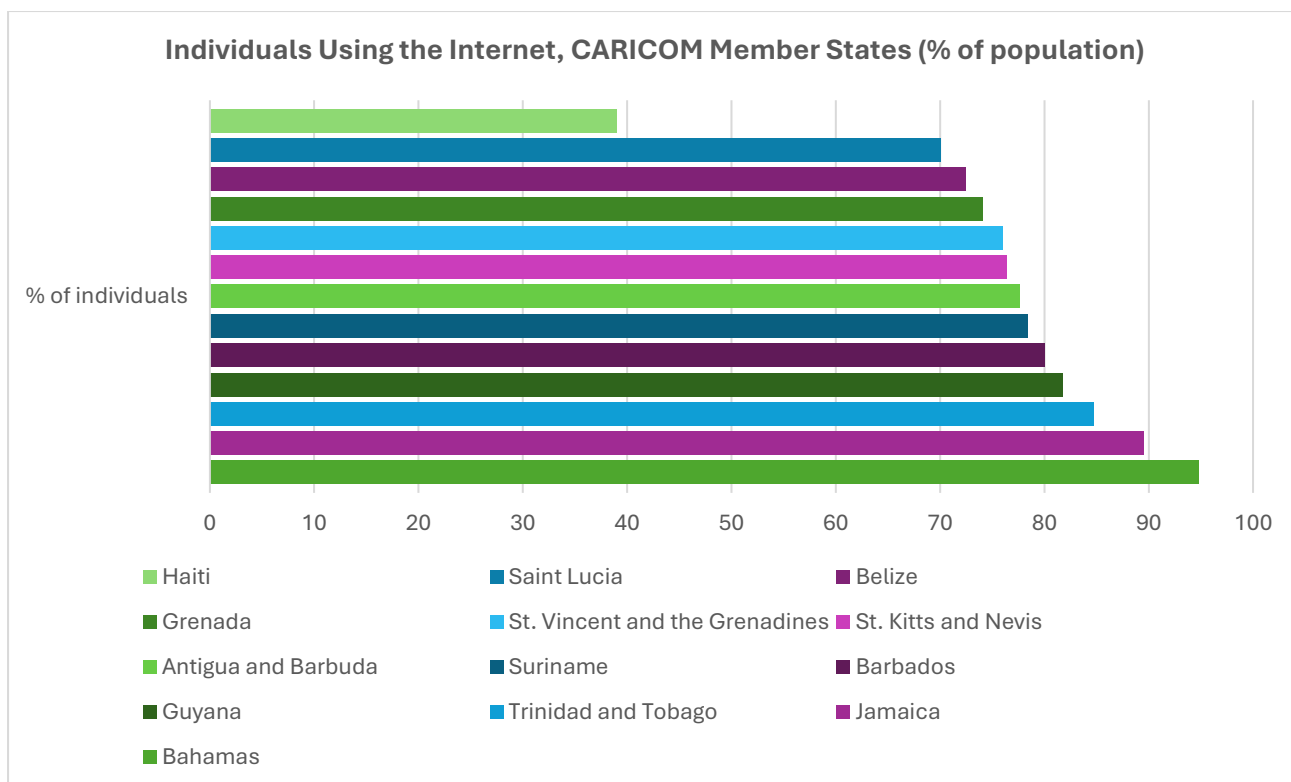
B. The Connectivity Paradox: Structural Realities

The Caribbean's digital starting position is genuinely paradoxical. On one measure, the region appears digitally engaged: approximately 75% of the population of Caribbean small island developing States used the Internet in 2023. Internet use across SIDS as a whole grew at an annual rate of 8.4% between 2014 and 2023, exceeding the global rate of 6.7% over the same period.¹⁰ On most other measures, however, the region's digital foundations remain fragile. Broadband services in Latin America and the Caribbean remain costly relative to income, with average prices exceeding 5% of gross national income per capita, well above the internationally established affordability target of 2%.¹¹ The region also remains dependent on externally routed Internet traffic, an ITU study reported that between 75 and 85% of Latin American and Caribbean traffic, including locally generated content, passed through Miami, reflecting the limited development of regional exchange points and backbone infrastructure.¹²

¹⁰ International Telecommunication Union, *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures—Focus on Small Island Developing States* (Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2024), 8–9, <https://caribbean.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/itu-measuring-digital-development%E2%80%93facts-and-figures-focus-on-small-island-developing-states.pdf>.

¹¹ Antonio García Zaballos et al., *Challenges in the Growth of Fiber in Latin America and the Caribbean* (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2023), 48, <https://publications.iadb.org/publications/english/document/Challenges-in-the-Growth-of-Fiber-in-Latin-America-and-the-Caribbean.pdf>.

¹² Oscar Messano, *International Internet Connectivity in Latin America and the Caribbean: Regulatory and Market Environment* (Geneva: International Telecommunication Union, 2013), 39–40, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regulatory-Market/Documents/International%20Internet%20Connectivity%20in%20Latin%20America%20and%20the%20Caribbean.pdf>.



Source: International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as reported through the World Bank World Development Indicators (indicator IT.NET.USER.ZS), latest available year per country. **Note:** Saint Lucia's figure is approximately 70%. Haiti's latest available data are from 2021, while no recent published data are available for Dominica or Montserrat. Data for all other countries were collected in 2023.

This external dependence can increase latency and cost, expose the region to concentrated points of disruption and reduce sovereign control over where regional data are routed and processed. Finally, global high-performance computing capacity is heavily concentrated in a small number of technologically advanced economies. Although some developing economies notably Brazil, China, India, and the Russian Federation, possess powerful supercomputers, the Caribbean has no presence among the world's leading publicly ranked high-performance computing systems and lacks the large-scale computational infrastructure generally required to train frontier artificial-intelligence models.¹³

This paradox matters because it means digital engagement in the Caribbean is currently built on a foundation the region does not control. Citizens consume AI-enabled services; very little of the underlying infrastructure, data governance, or value capture happens domestically or regionally. Addressing this is not a matter of building Caribbean compute capacity to compete at the frontier, that scale of investment is neither feasible nor

¹³ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development* (Geneva: United Nations, 2025), 9–10, https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tir2025_en.pdf

necessary for the region's needs, but of building enough shared, regionally anchored infrastructure to reduce dependency and retain a meaningful share of value and control.

This dependency is compounded by a more basic problem where the region appears largely absent from the datasets used to track global AI infrastructure in the first place. The major public sources that benchmark supercomputers and large-scale compute clusters by country typically group all but a handful of leading economies into a single residual category rather than reporting individual shares, and no Caribbean state is identifiable within these rankings. This is a different, and arguably more consequential, problem than ranking poorly. A country positioned at the bottom of a capability index is still a counted observation that can inform policy and investment decisions; a country that does not appear in the underlying infrastructure data at all is not part of the analytical frame used to model global AI capacity. Smaller Caribbean states may also be missing from broader readiness indices altogether, simply because the underlying indicators are not consistently collected or reported by national statistical offices, a known limitation for small island states generally.

If this absence holds, it will compound an existing governance gap, the economies left out of the infrastructure conversation are, almost by definition, unlikely to have a meaningful voice in the international forums now shaping AI governance norms. This would place the Caribbean in a different position from smaller economies that have begun building measurable, if modest, sovereign compute capacity, such as the Gulf states. On this reading, the region's task is not only to close a capacity gap behind the frontier, but to become a measured presence in the datasets, indices, and forums that determine how global AI infrastructure, investment, and governance are allocated. Regional strategy should treat data visibility as a precondition for attracting investment and shaping governance, not merely a byproduct of building infrastructure later.

C. The Global AI Governance and where the Caribbean Region Stands

The global governance of AI has undergone a rapid structural transformation since the emergence of the first national strategies in 2017. What began as a decentralized wave of innovation-focused policies has progressively evolved into a complex, multi-layered regulatory environment concerned with risk management, algorithmic accountability, digital sovereignty, and the mitigation of systemic harms. This evolution has culminated in significant multilateral milestones, including the Bletchley Declaration, the Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence, and the United Nations Global Digital Compact.

For Caribbean SIDS, the central implication of this global policy maturation is that international frameworks cannot be directly transplanted without severe structural misalignment. Global AI governance models implicitly assume the existence of sufficient

economic scale, the effective exercise of regulatory sovereignty, the availability of deep fiscal space, and the presence of dense institutional ecosystems capable of supporting complex technological supervision. These assumptions routinely fail in small-state environments. Attempting to replicate hyperscale governance regimes results in “copy-paste governance” frameworks that are formally aligned with global principles but remain functionally inoperable due to resource scarcity and administrative constraints. Therefore, the region must develop a uniquely Caribbean governance architecture grounded in shared principles and operational realities.

The available evidence shows a region with uneven but usable digital foundations, weak AI-specific strategic direction, and growing regional policy momentum. The main problem is not simply that Caribbean states score below global AI leaders. It is that the region’s readiness profile is structurally imbalanced: data and infrastructure foundations are generally stronger than government readiness, while technology-sector depth remains shallow. This pattern matters because AI adoption without governance capacity creates dependency, procurement risk, weak accountability, and exposure to imported standards.

The 2023 Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness data, as compiled and analysed by ECLAC, show that the Dominican Republic, The Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago formed the leading group among the sixteen Caribbean countries assessed.¹⁴ However, the pillar breakdown gives the more important policy signal. The Caribbean countries generally performed better on data and infrastructure than on government readiness or technology-sector maturity. The average data-and-infrastructure score across the sixteen countries was approximately 51.44, compared with approximately 32.82 for government readiness and approximately 27.59 for the technology sector.¹⁵ The implication is that the region’s binding constraint is not only digital access; it is institutional coordination, strategic vision, AI governance, innovation capacity, and implementation capability.

The clearest governance gap remains strategic vision. In the 2023 assessment, every Caribbean country except the Dominican Republic scored zero on the AI “Vision” dimension, which measures whether a government has articulated a national AI strategy or equivalent policy direction. This confirms that the absence of AI strategy is not a marginal weakness. It is the organizing weakness from which many other gaps follow: unclear institutional mandates, weak procurement guidance, insufficient data

¹⁴ Dale Alexander, Lika Døhl Diouf, and Chaela Wooding, *Artificial Intelligence Readiness in the Caribbean: An Exploratory Review*, Studies and Perspectives series—ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, no. 131 (Santiago: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2024), 12–13.

¹⁵ Alexander, Døhl Diouf, and Wooding, *Artificial Intelligence Readiness in the Caribbean*, 13–14, fig. 1.

governance, limited public-sector adoption planning, and fragmented investment in skills and infrastructure.

Since that benchmark, the regional picture has begun to shift. Jamaica has moved from task-force work and policy recommendations into a more visible readiness and governance position, while Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Suriname, and other states have begun or completed readiness-assessment processes. At the regional level, the UNESCO Caribbean AI Policy Roadmap and the CTU Caribbean AI Task Force create the basis for a harmonised Caribbean approach. This is essential because most Caribbean states lack the population scale, fiscal space, technical workforce, and compute infrastructure to build full AI governance systems independently.

The readiness snapshot therefore points to a dual conclusion. First, Caribbean AI governance is still early-stage, fragmented, and under-benchmarked. Second, the region already has enough digital, legal, institutional, and regional cooperation assets to move quickly if those assets are deliberately coordinated. The strategic question is whether Caribbean governments use the current window to become producers in selected domains, such as climate resilience, tourism, agriculture, public services, education, culture, financial services, and disaster risk management or remain consumers dependent on external platforms and regulatory models.

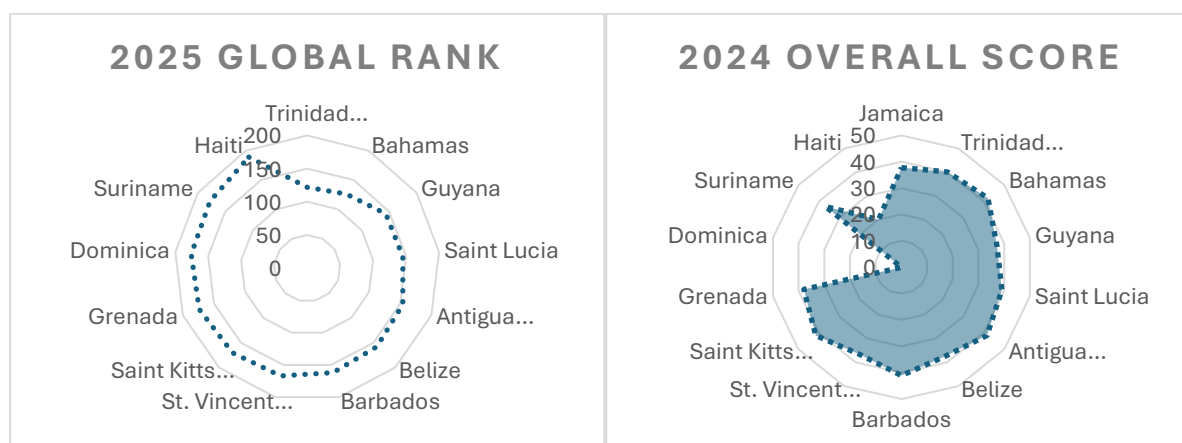
The 2025 edition of the Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index, published in December 2025, assessed 195 countries and covers fourteen of the fifteen CARICOM member states. Jamaica recorded the region's most significant movement, rising from 122nd in the 2024 edition to 93rd in 2025, the highest position of any CARICOM member state, a shift consistent with its progression from national AI task-force work toward published policy direction. The remainder of the region, however, sits between 122nd (Trinidad and Tobago) and 189th (Haiti), and no CARICOM state other than Jamaica places in the top 100 globally.

Table 2.2 - Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index (2025 rank; 2024 overall score)

Country	2025 Global Rank	2024 Overall Score
Jamaica	93 (highest CARICOM; up from 122nd in 2024)	37.79
Trinidad and Tobago	122	40.14
The Bahamas	126	42.03
Guyana	144	37.23
Saint Lucia	145	39.11
Antigua and Barbuda	154	41.61
Belize	158	37.59
Barbados	162	41.11

St. Vincent and the Grenadines	167	36.65
Saint Kitts and Nevis	170	41.62
Grenada	174	37.96
Dominica	176	Not ranked in 2024 (insufficient data)
Suriname	178	36.87
Haiti	189	20.06
Montserrat	Not listed (both editions)	Not listed

Source: Oxford Insights Government AI Readiness Index 2023, as compiled in ECLAC, "Artificial intelligence readiness in the Caribbean: An exploratory review" (2024).



D. The Inclusion and Information-Integrity Gap

The risks algorithmic bias, socioeconomic exclusion, and the erosion of information integrity, are already visible in how AI systems currently perform for the region and how unprepared the region is to detect when those systems are misused. Global AI models are trained overwhelmingly on data from outside the region, and speech and language models in particular perform measurably worse on Caribbean English and Caribbean Creoles than on the dialects they were built around.

AI-generated deepfakes have already been used to interfere with elections elsewhere. Two days before Ireland's 2025 presidential election, fabricated videos mimicking an RTÉ News broadcast falsely claimed that candidate Catherine Connolly had withdrawn from the race.¹⁶ During the Netherlands' 2025 general election campaign, two members of Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom circulated an AI-generated video depicting rival candidate Frans Timmermans being arrested, for which Wilders subsequently apologised.¹⁷ The World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report 2026* ranks

¹⁶ RTÉ News, "AI-Generated Deepfake Videos Target Presidential Election," October 22, 2025; RTÉ News, "AI Videos Spreading Áras Election Misinformation Removed," October 22, 2025.

¹⁷ Will Barker, "Believe It When AI See It: Is This a Deepfake Turning Point in Politics?," *The Week*, October 31, 2025.

misinformation and disinformation as the second-most severe global risk over the two-year horizon and the fourth-most severe over the ten-year horizon.¹⁸

The Caribbean is not exempt from this trend by virtue of size. Regional research supported by UNESCO found that Caribbean newsrooms are frequently constrained by limited resources and competitive pressure to publish quickly, while regional fact-checking collaboration remains underdeveloped.¹⁹ These conditions increase the risk that a fabricated broadcast or synthetic image will spread before it can be authoritatively investigated and corrected. A region with no articulated AI strategy is, by construction, a region with no coordinated plan for detecting or responding to AI-enabled disinformation around its own elections. Left unaddressed, these risks compound the harms this report exists to prevent. A regional AI agenda that builds infrastructure, talent, and commercial capacity while leaving deployed systems unaudited for bias and undefended against synthetic disinformation does not merely reproduce existing harms; it automates and accelerates them.

E. The Labour-Market Exposure

What happens to the much larger existing workforce in occupations that AI is already capable of transforming or displacing? A joint ILO-World Bank analysis published in July 2024 estimated that approximately 26–38% of employment across the Latin American and Caribbean countries studied was exposed to generative AI in some form. Depending on the country, approximately 8–14% of employment fell within the study’s “augmentation potential” category, in which generative AI could enhance workers’ productivity, while approximately 2–5% fell within the category presenting a potential for full automation.²⁰ Exposure was concentrated disproportionately in formal, urban and relatively higher-income occupations requiring more education.²¹ A subsequent ILO research brief published in March 2026 found that approximately 29% of female-dominated occupations were exposed to generative AI, compared with 16% of male-dominated occupations. It also identified Caribbean and Pacific small island developing states among the economies in which more than 40% of women’s employment was exposed.²²

¹⁸ World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2026*, 21st ed. (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2026),

¹⁹ Public Media Alliance, Media Institute of the Caribbean, and Association of Caribbean Media Workers, *Media Literacy, Disinformation & Misinformation in the Caribbean: Situation Report* (London: Public Media Alliance, 2022), 8–9, 57–59.

²⁰ Paweł Gmyrek, Hernan Winkler, and Santiago Garganta, “Buffer or Bottleneck? Employment Exposure to Generative AI and the Digital Divide in Latin America,” Policy Research Working Paper 10863 (Washington, DC: World Bank, July 2024), 19–20, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099826507262419608/pdf/IDU197096bf316be814a251b452145b5f0fd5aca.pdf>.

²¹ Gmyrek, Winkler, and Garganta, “Buffer or Bottleneck?,” 21–23, 32.

²² International Labour Organization, *Gen AI, Occupational Segregation and Gender Equality in the World of Work*, research brief (Geneva: International Labour Organization, March 5, 2026); International Labour

Jamaica's global-services and business-process-outsourcing sector alone accounts for approximately 60,000 jobs, while Jamaica's national investment-promotion agency estimates the size of the ICT/BPO industry at approximately US\$900 million.²³ Contemporary accounts have also described the sector as one of Jamaica's leading sources of employment and foreign-exchange earnings, although its precise ranking and economic value vary by source and reporting year.²⁴ The sector has traditionally included substantial concentrations of customer-service, administrative and transaction-processing work. These are among the routine and codifiable functions most susceptible to transformation by generative AI. In July 2026, Jamaican global-services industry representatives publicly acknowledged that AI would disrupt the sector, while arguing that it would increasingly generate reports, analytics and workforce schedules and allow employees to concentrate on functions requiring human judgement and decision-making.²⁵

Workers who lose routine roles without a transition mechanism do not simply move up the regional pipeline; many leave the labour force or the region entirely, intensifying the same brain-drain dynamic Pillar 4 is otherwise designed to reverse. The ILO's own policy guidance, lifelong-learning programmes, social-protection adaptation for transitions, and explicit attention to gender gaps in exposure, already exists as a template; what is missing is a Caribbean mechanism applying it to the specific sector where the region's exposure is concentrated.

Organization, "New ILO Data Confirm Women Face Higher Workplace Risks from Generative AI than Men," March 5, 2026, <https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/new-ilo-data-confirm-women-face-higher-workplace-risks-generative-ai-men>.

²³ Jamaica Promotions Corporation, "Global Digital Services," *Do Business Jamaica*, <https://dobusinessjamaica.com/invest/sectors/global-digital-services/>.

²⁴ "Investment in BPO Industry on the Up," *Business Focus*, September 12, 2023, <https://businessfocus.org.uk/investment-in-bpo-industry-on-the-up/>.

²⁵ Jamaica Information Service, "Industry Leaders Say AI Will Boost, Not Replace, Global Services Jobs," July 10, 2026, <https://jis.gov.jm/industry-leaders-say-ai-will-boost-not-replace-global-services-jobs/>.

Box 2

AI for Tourism and Culture



Background

Tourism is one of the Caribbean's principal sources of employment, foreign exchange, investment and small-business activity, while the region's music, festivals, cuisine, languages, visual arts, heritage sites and Indigenous and African-derived traditions are central to its international identity and tourism product. The Caribbean received approximately 34.2 million international overnight visitors in 2024, 6.1% more than in 2023 and 6.9% above the 2019 level [1]. Tourism dependence also creates vulnerability to hurricanes, health emergencies, international recessions, airlift disruptions and changes in traveller preferences; across small island developing states, tourism generated approximately 38% of export revenues in 2023 [2]. Culture provides an important mechanism for diversifying Caribbean tourism beyond traditional sun, sea and sand products: globally, cultural and creative industries account for approximately 3.1% of GDP and 6.2% of employment [3], while Jamaica's cultural and creative industries have been estimated to contribute approximately 5.2% of national GDP and 3% of employment [4]. AI can strengthen both sectors through demand forecasting, personalized visitor services, multilingual communication, cultural-heritage documentation, digital content production and improved destination management. However, poorly governed AI could misrepresent Caribbean history, reproduce cultural stereotypes, appropriate artists' work, weaken intellectual-property protection and transfer valuable tourism and cultural data to foreign technology platforms.

Lessons from comparable regions

- **Singapore:** The Tourism Analytics Network consolidates industry data into a shared platform governed by a Data Trust Charter. Lesson: AI applications need trusted regional infrastructure, not fragmented commercial platforms [5].
- **Slovenia:** Paired market-intelligence platforms with workforce training and financial assistance for small tourism businesses. Lesson: Data platforms require accompanying skills development and funding so SMEs can adopt them [6].
- **New Zealand:** Te Hiku Media developed Māori language technologies using 30 years of archival recordings. Lesson: Communities must retain authority over language data and control how AI models use cultural materials [7], [8].

The Caribbean can possibly

- Establish a regional hub integrating visitor arrivals, accommodation, airline and cruise data, expenditure, mobility and events. AI-powered multilingual visitor assistants could provide itinerary planning, emergency alerts and personalized recommendations to lesser-known communities, reducing congestion at major sites while dispersing tourism revenue regionally.
- Develop digital twins and predictive tools to model visitor flows, resource demand, site capacity and hurricane disruptions.
- Build a digitized repository of photographs, music, oral histories, manuscripts and festival archives.
- Develop Creole and Indigenous language technologies for visitor communication, archive transcription and restoration, ensuring communities retain control over cultural data and model licensing.
- Provide AI-enabled tools for subtitling, translation, digital restoration, audience analysis and international marketing that augment (not replace) Caribbean musicians, writers and heritage professionals. Technology vouchers allow small hotels, museums, festivals and cultural enterprises to adopt approved tools and receive training in analytics and cybersecurity.

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- [7] World Economic Forum, "This Māori leader trained AI to speak his language and preserve Indigenous knowledge," 2024. [Online]. Available: <https://www.weforum.org/videos/maori-language/>.
- [8] UNESCO, "New report and guidelines for Indigenous data sovereignty in artificial-intelligence developments," Dec. 11, 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://www.unesco.org/ethics-ai/en/articles/new-report-and-guidelines-indigenous-data-sovereignty-artificial-intelligence-developments>.

3. The Governance Deficit

Why the Caribbean Cannot Wait

Adapting the diagnostic frameworks utilized by the UN High-Level Advisory Body on AI, this framework identifies four distinct but interrelated governance deficits currently paralyzing the Caribbean: the representation gap, the coordination gap, the implementation gap, and the research gap.

A. The Representation Gap

The representation gap signifies that Caribbean states are functionally absent from the plurilateral and multilateral institutions actively writing the operating rules of global AI governance. The regulations, technical standards, and safety thresholds forged in forums where the Caribbean has no representation will nonetheless apply to the region by default. This occurs through international trade agreements, cross-border data flow regulations, and the non-negotiable terms of service mandated by foreign AI oligopolies. Absence from the rule-writing table does not grant a nation exemption from the rules; it eliminates their sovereign influence over the design and enforcement of those rules.

B. The Coordination Gap

CARICOM remains the only regional bloc of comparable standing globally without a binding, collective AI governance instrument. While regions like the European Union operationalize the binding AI Act, and the African Union implements a unified Continental AI Strategy, individual Caribbean states, most with populations well under one million, are left to negotiate with hyperscale global technology firms in complete isolation. At this fragmented scale, no single CARICOM member state commands the geopolitical leverage or commercial market share necessary to demand localized data sovereignty or customized algorithmic auditing from multinational AI providers. Furthermore, where high-level policy commitments do exist, such as the Declaración de Santiago signed by six Caribbean states, they suffer from an implementation gap. Commitments frequently remain aspirational, lacking the costed roadmaps, institutional ownership, legislative sequencing, and monitoring mechanisms necessary to translate a diplomatic declaration into an enforced domestic reality.

Table 3.1 - Selected Regional and Plurilateral AI Governance Instruments

Body / Bloc	Instrument	Nature
European Union	EU Artificial Intelligence Act	Binding regulation
Council of Europe	Framework Convention on AI	Binding treaty
African Union	Continental AI Strategy	Strategic framework

Organization of American States	Declaration & Plan of Action on AI (incl. MIGDIA, 12 guideline areas)	Declaratory / guidance
Arab League (via ALECSO)	Charter on AI Ethics	Declaratory
ASEAN	AI Governance and Ethics Guide	Voluntary guidance
OECD	AI Principles	Voluntary principles
G7	Hiroshima AI Process	Voluntary process
G20	AI Principles	Voluntary principles
Latin America (20 states, incl. 6 Caribbean)	Declaración de Santiago (Oct. 2023)	Declaratory
CARICOM	None	—

Source: Compiled from the Caribbean AI Task Force's mapping of external regional governance, cross-referenced against OECD.AI and official instrument texts. Note that six Caribbean states including Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname, are signatories to the Latin American Declaración de Santiago, but no CARICOM-wide instrument exists.

To effectively counter these compounding gaps, the Caribbean must aggressively pursue the strategic option of “interoperability.” As detailed extensively in the July 2026 UN White Paper, *Toward Interoperability and Inclusive Participation in AI Governance*, interoperability serves as a highly pragmatic, cooperation-oriented mechanism. It allows sovereign, often divergent governance philosophies to communicate and cooperate effectively across borders without sacrificing domestic regulatory priorities or cultural values. To transition from passive rule-takers to active rule-makers, the Caribbean must foster coordinated legislative and technical action across the UN's six specified layers of interoperability.

Table 3.2 - The Six Layers of AI Governance Interoperability (UN White Paper, July 2026)

Interoperability Layer	Caribbean Application and Strategic Imperative
Semantic Layer	Establishing shared, regional definitions for terms like "high-risk AI," "autonomy," and "bias" across all CARICOM member states to prevent legal fragmentation.
Ethical Layer	Aligning regional AI deployments with unified ethical values, utilizing the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI as the foundational baseline.
Legal Layer	Ensuring cross-border regulatory compatibility, allowing AI services developed in one CARICOM state to be legally deployed in another without facing contradictory statutory hurdles.
Organisational Layer	Aligning administrative processes, procurement guidelines, and algorithmic auditing workflows across public sector ministries region-wide.

Technical Layer	Mandating open data standards, API compatibility, and strict data portability requirements to prevent vendor lock-in by foreign cloud and AI providers.
Institutional Layer	Establishing shared regional oversight bodies (e.g., leveraging the CTU, CDB, IMPACS) to pool regulatory talent and conduct unified risk assessments that no single state can afford alone.

C. The Implementation Gap

Even where Caribbean AI commitments exist, in national digital strategies, in sectoral pilots, in the Task Force's own preliminary recommendations, they frequently remain aspirational rather than operational. This report's review of the existing regional AI policy landscape finds high-level commitments are made, but without the costing, institutional ownership, sequencing, or monitoring mechanisms that convert a policy statement into a delivered outcome.

This is not a uniquely Caribbean failure. Globally, AI governance instruments at every level routinely struggle to move from declaration to enforcement. But the consequences of this gap are sharper in small-state contexts, where governments rarely have the redundancy of capacity to revisit and relaunch failed initiatives repeatedly. The implementation gap is the central reason this report's recommendations, in Chapter 4, place explicit emphasis on institutional anchoring and sequencing logic, not merely on the substance of what should be done.

As of early 2026, no CARICOM member state has a standalone, adopted national AI strategy in force, although the picture is beginning to move: Jamaica has progressed from its 2024 national AI task force toward published policy direction, Trinidad and Tobago has created a ministry with an explicit AI portfolio and commenced a UNESCO Readiness Assessment, and Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda completed their UNESCO Readiness Assessment. Guyana has advanced sovereign digital-infrastructure initiatives under its broader digital agenda, and The Bahamas has strategy development underway. For the remaining member states, no national AI strategy process or completed readiness diagnostic is publicly reported. The pattern confirms the implementation gap where activity is real but concentrated in a small number of states, unevenly documented, and nowhere yet consolidated into the adopted national strategies that the readiness literature treats as the precondition for structured governance and investment.

Table 3.3 - National AI Strategy and UNESCO Readiness Assessment Status, CARICOM Member States (as of early 2026)

Country	National AI strategy	UNESCO Readiness Assessment (RAM)
Jamaica	Policy direction published (2025); National AI Task Force (2024); no standalone adopted strategy confirmed	Completed

Trinidad and Tobago	In development; ministry with AI portfolio created (2025)	In progress (2025, with UNESCO)
Antigua and Barbuda	None	Completed
The Bahamas	In development	None reported
Guyana	Digital agenda incl. sovereign cloud initiatives; no AI strategy	None reported
Barbados	None reported	None reported
Belize	None reported	None reported
Dominica	None reported	None reported
Grenada	None reported	None reported
Haiti	None reported	None reported
Montserrat	None reported	None reported
St. Kitts and Nevis	None reported	None reported
Saint Lucia	None reported	None reported
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	None reported	None reported
Suriname	None reported	None reported

Source: Compiled from the UNESCO Global AI Ethics and Governance Observatory, UNESCO Caribbean readiness-assessment records, Oxford Insights country profiles (2025), and national announcements, as of early 2026.

D. The Research Gap

Clearly, research-to-commercialization deserves particular emphasis, because it is the one link in the AI value chain that cannot be procured, harmonised, or imported from elsewhere. Every other capability addressed in this report, infrastructure, governance standards, even talent pipelines, can in principle be built by adapting external models to Caribbean conditions. Research and innovation cannot; it is the activity through which the region produces AI systems rather than consumes them. The practical question for the Caribbean is therefore not whether research activity exists, several universities and a small number of firms are already producing it, but whether that activity is organised so that it converts into deployable products, exportable services, and regionally owned intellectual property, rather than dissipating into isolated pilots and publications that generate no further economic activity.

The available evidence indicates that this conversion is not yet occurring at scale. The Startup Genome CARIBEquity assessment, commissioned under a facility co-funded by IDB Lab and the European Union and published in December 2025, examined startup ecosystems in 15 Caribbean countries. It mapped 154 validated technology startups and placed all 15 assessed ecosystems in Startup Genome’s earliest “Activation Phase,” characterized by limited startup experience, modest startup output, and gaps in support

infrastructure, capital, mentorship, and ecosystem connectivity.²⁶ Separately, the 2024 Caribbean Digital Transformation Report produced by Digicel Business and Symptai Consulting found that 60% of surveyed organizations were delayed in implementing their digital-transformation plans. Among more than 2,500 businesses reportedly surveyed, the leading barriers were poorly integrated systems, cited by 35%; key resources being consumed by operational problems, cited by 34%; and inadequate priority-setting and senior-level attention, cited by 31%.²⁷ These findings do not measure AI-engineering capacity directly, but they are consistent with broader Caribbean evidence that difficulty recruiting appropriately skilled workers significantly reduces firms' likelihood of undertaking technological and non-technological innovation.²⁸

This points to a structural constraint. In larger and more mature innovation systems, the business sector carries much of the cost and risk associated with applied research and commercialization. Across the OECD, for example, businesses accounted for 73% of total research-and-development expenditure in 2024.²⁹ Caribbean startup finance is considerably thinner where many technology ventures remain dependent on founders' savings, family and friends; formal angel networks are rare; and follow-on investment remains limited. Regional financial systems also remain oriented principally toward conventional, collateral-based bank financing rather than the patient, loss-tolerant equity required by early-stage technology ventures.³⁰ The resulting policy risk is not that every publicly funded invention will necessarily become foreign-owned, but that research will remain uncommercialized or that a disproportionate share of its downstream development, intellectual-property value, and economic returns will be captured outside the region. A World Intellectual Property Organization assessment of Trinidad and Tobago, for example, identified weak integration of intellectual property into the national innovation system, uncertainty regarding ownership of publicly funded research, limited commercialization capacity, shortages of specialized intellectual-property expertise, and the need for pooled technology-transfer support.³¹ Against the Caribbean's long-documented skilled-emigration problem, a weak domestic commercialization pipeline

²⁶ Startup Genome, *CARIBEquity Regional Ecosystem Report I: Assessment* (IDB Lab, December 2, 2025); Stephan Kuester, "Building Islands of Innovation: The Nascent Yet Promising Caribbean Startup Ecosystems," *Startup Genome*, December 11, 2025.

²⁷ Digicel Business and Symptai Consulting, *Navigating Digital Transformation: 2024 Caribbean Research Report and Maturity Guide* (2024), 5–6, 22, 24;

²⁸ Jeetendra Khadan, *Estimating the Effects of Human Capital Constraints on Innovation in the Caribbean*, IDB Policy Brief no. 274 (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, May 2018), 16–18.

²⁹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "OECD Overall R&D Growth Stable; Government R&D Budgets Decline and Reorient towards Defence," statistical release, March 31, 2026.

³⁰ Diether W. Beuermann, Sylvia Dohnert, Henry Mooney, and Ricardo Sierra, eds., *Are We There Yet? The Path toward Sustainable Private Sector Development in the Caribbean* (Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 2024),

³¹ Alfred Radauer, *Integrating Intellectual Property into Innovation Policy Formulation in Trinidad and Tobago* (Geneva: World Intellectual Property Organization, May 5, 2015), 6, 38–39.

also gives technically trained graduates fewer opportunities to build research-intensive careers and firms within the region.³²

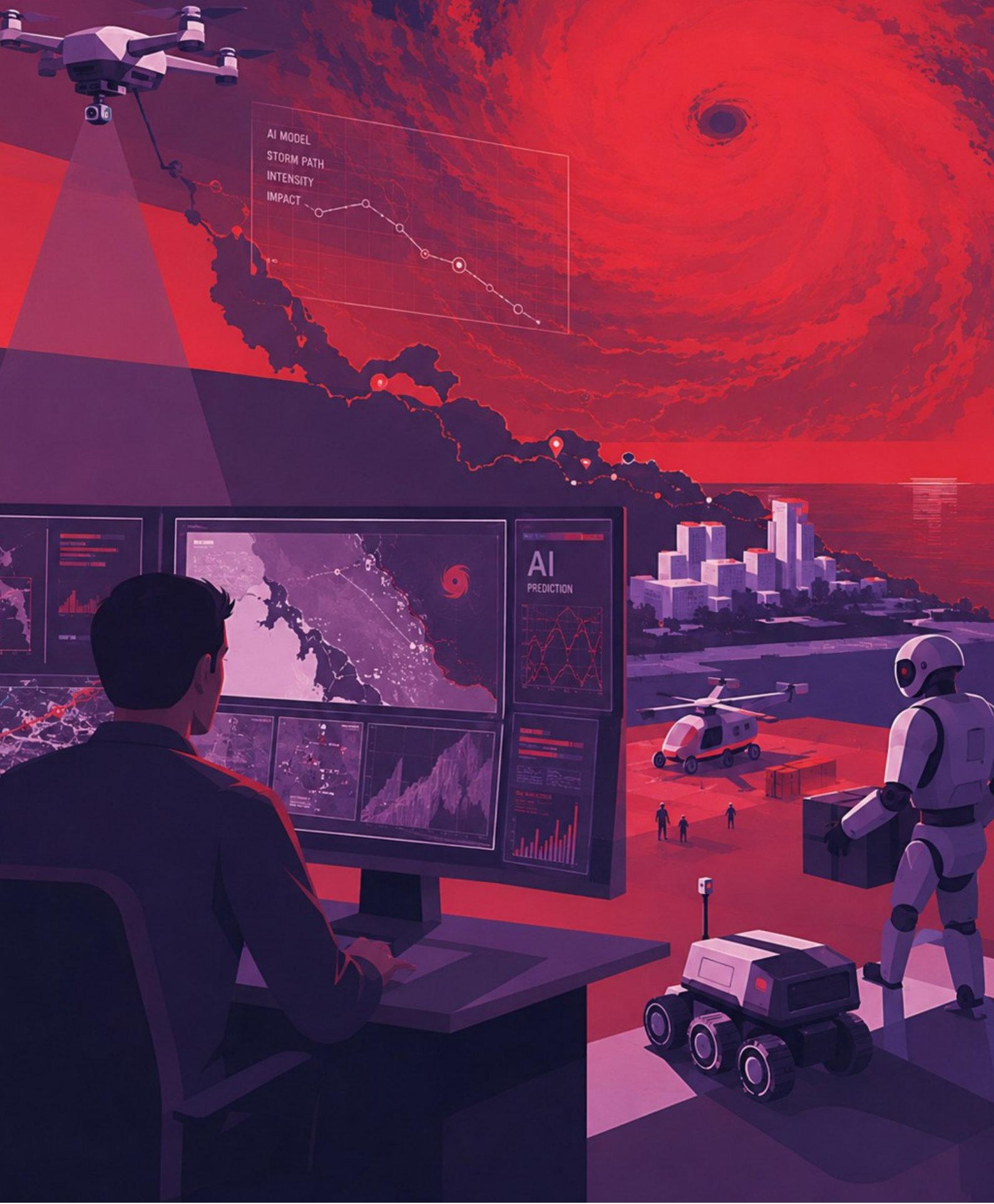
The corrective is for public institutions, regional development partners, universities, and private firms to jointly perform the risk-absorption function that corporate R&D budgets and venture-capital markets perform in larger economies. This requires translational-research grants, proof-of-concept funds, shared technology-transfer capacity, founder and product-development support, public-procurement pathways, and co-investment mechanisms that carry promising AI research from laboratory validation to a stage at which Caribbean or international firms can credibly commercialize it. The case for this approach is not that the public sector should permanently replace private investment, but that it must absorb enough of the earliest and least measurable risks to produce an investable pipeline to which private capital can subsequently respond.

Regional comparators show this is achievable at Caribbean scale. Jamaica's BIGEE programme, backed by an initial US\$25 million Inter-American Development Bank facility, and the EU/IDB Lab-financed CARIBEquity blended-finance facility for Caribbean private-sector innovation, both demonstrate that catalytic, risk-tolerant capital can be mobilised and structured for small-state innovation pipelines without requiring the scale of investment available to larger economies.

Institutional anchors already exist, including UWI's Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre (AIIC), together with complementary capacity at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, the University of Guyana, Anton de Kom University of Suriname, the University of Technology, and emerging research nodes within the OECS. What is missing is the financing architecture needed to convert that starting point into a functioning pipeline, one that is staged, stage-appropriate, and partly self-sustaining through reinvestment of commercial returns.

³² Diether W. Beuermann and Ricardo Sierra, "Skills and Employability: The Dire Need to Improve Human Capital in the Caribbean," in *Are We There Yet?*

AI for Early Warning & Risk Mitigation



Background

The Caribbean is among the world's most disaster-vulnerable regions because of its exposure to hurricanes, floods, droughts, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic activity and coastal hazards, combined with small economies and concentrated infrastructure. The European Investment Bank reports that Caribbean countries represent approximately 0.2% of world GDP but account for ten times that share in monetary climate-related damages and twenty times that share in recorded climate events [1]. A single disaster can therefore erase years of development gains, disrupt essential services and generate losses exceeding national GDP. AI can improve hazard detection, impact forecasting, emergency logistics and post-disaster assessment, but it must complement authoritative meteorological, geological and disaster-management institutions. The region already has a foundation for this work through CDEMA's Regional Response Mechanism and Caribbean Risk Information System, which provide regional coordination, disaster databases, risk profiles and geospatial information [2].

Lessons from comparable regions

- The Pacific's Climate Risk Early Warning System (CREWS) integrates ML models with satellite data to forecast extreme rainfall up to five days in advance. It supports early-warning improvements for 2.3 million people inhabiting the Pacific's Small Island Developing States [3].
- Bangladesh's flood forecasting system, powered by Google's Flood Hub, integrates machine learning models with weather forecasts, river gauges, satellite imagery, and hydrological data to predict riverine floods up to seven days in advance [4].
- Mexico's SeismicAI Early Warning System integrates AI algorithms with a network of accelerometer sensors to process seismic data and provide real-time alerts for regional, local, and offshore earthquakes [5].

The Caribbean's archipelago structure mirrors Pacific SIDS, allowing for tailored AI models using shared geospatial data across islands. Additionally, the region has existing assets such as CDEMA's regional coordination, CARICOM Climate Smart Accelerator, and partnerships with NOAA and ECLAC. Integrating these with AI-driven forecasting can localize and automate risk management, while the region's compactness facilitates networked resilience across islands.

The Caribbean can possibly

- AI-Integrated Early Warning Dashboard: Combine satellite data, social media analysis, and IoT sensors to detect and broadcast real-time alerts.
- Disaster Logistics Optimizer: Apply ML to pre-position relief supplies based on vulnerability mapping and population data.
- AI Damage Assessment Drones: Post-storm drone imaging analyzed with computer vision to fast-track insurance and recovery.
- Regional AI Resilience Hub: Coordinate AI disaster datasets, simulations, and training in collaboration with UWI and CDEMA.

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4. Pillars & Policy Recommendations

The recommendations in this chapter are organized around the seven thematic pillars already established in the Caribbean AI Task Force's prior work, finalized here. Each pillar opens with the relevant evidence base, followed by a small number of numbered recommendations addressed to Caribbean governments and regional institutions. Recommendations are deliberately framed at the level of strategic direction; the specific design, costing, and sequencing of implementation is left to the national and regional entities.





Pillar 1: Data, Digital Infrastructure & Compute

The Caribbean's "connectivity paradox" means high digital engagement atop fragile, externally dependent, and disproportionately costly infrastructure, is the foundational constraint on every other pillar in this report. No developing country hosts top-tier AI compute infrastructure, and most intra-regional data traffic is routed externally, raising both resilience and sovereignty concerns. At the same time, comparator small-state and developing-region experience shows that meaningfully closing this gap does not require continental-scale investment: shared, distributed, and modular infrastructure models, rather than a single large national facility, are consistently the more cost-effective approach for small states.

Recommendation 1: Pursue a shared, regionally anchored digital and data infrastructure strategy.

- a) Governments should prioritize harmonization of data-protection and cross-border data-flow frameworks across CARICOM, reducing the current fragmentation that constrains both regional data-sharing and AI model development.
- b) Regional institutions should explore the feasibility of shared, distributed compute and data infrastructure, modeled on small-state and distributed approaches rather than single large national facilities, to reduce dependence on externally routed infrastructure while remaining proportionate to regional absorptive capacity.
- c) Governments should prioritize climate-hardening of any shared digital infrastructure investment, given the region's exceptional climate exposure (see Pillar 6).
- d) Open-source and open-standard approaches should be prioritized over proprietary lock-in wherever feasible, to preserve future flexibility and reduce long-run dependency costs.



Pillar 2: Governance, Ethics & Standards

CARICOM is the only major regional bloc without a collective AI governance instrument, and no CARICOM member state currently has a binding national AI law. This governance vacuum leaves AI deployment across the region largely subject to the standards and practices of foreign providers rather than to rules established by Caribbean governments. Rather than developing an entirely new framework, the region can build upon UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of

Artificial Intelligence, adopted unanimously by all 193 UNESCO Member States in November 2021, while leveraging UNESCO's AI Readiness Assessment Methodology, which is already being piloted in several Caribbean countries.

The effectiveness of any regional AI governance framework, however, depends on a consistent legal foundation for data protection, and that foundation remains uneven across the Community. Eleven of the fifteen CARICOM member states have enacted data protection legislation, but implementation varies considerably. Only The Bahamas has a long-established supervisory authority. Barbados and Jamaica have brought modern, GDPR-influenced regimes into force with appointed commissioners, while several other states have enacted legislation that is only partially operational or has yet to enter into force. In at least one case, legislation passed more than two decades ago has never been implemented. Three member states Dominica, Haiti, and Montserrat, have no national data protection legislation, and Suriname's framework remains in draft form. Consequently, a harmonized regional AI governance framework cannot assume a common baseline for privacy and data governance. Closing these legislative and institutional gaps should therefore form part of the framework's initial implementation programme and serve as a prerequisite for trusted regional data sharing under Pillar 1.

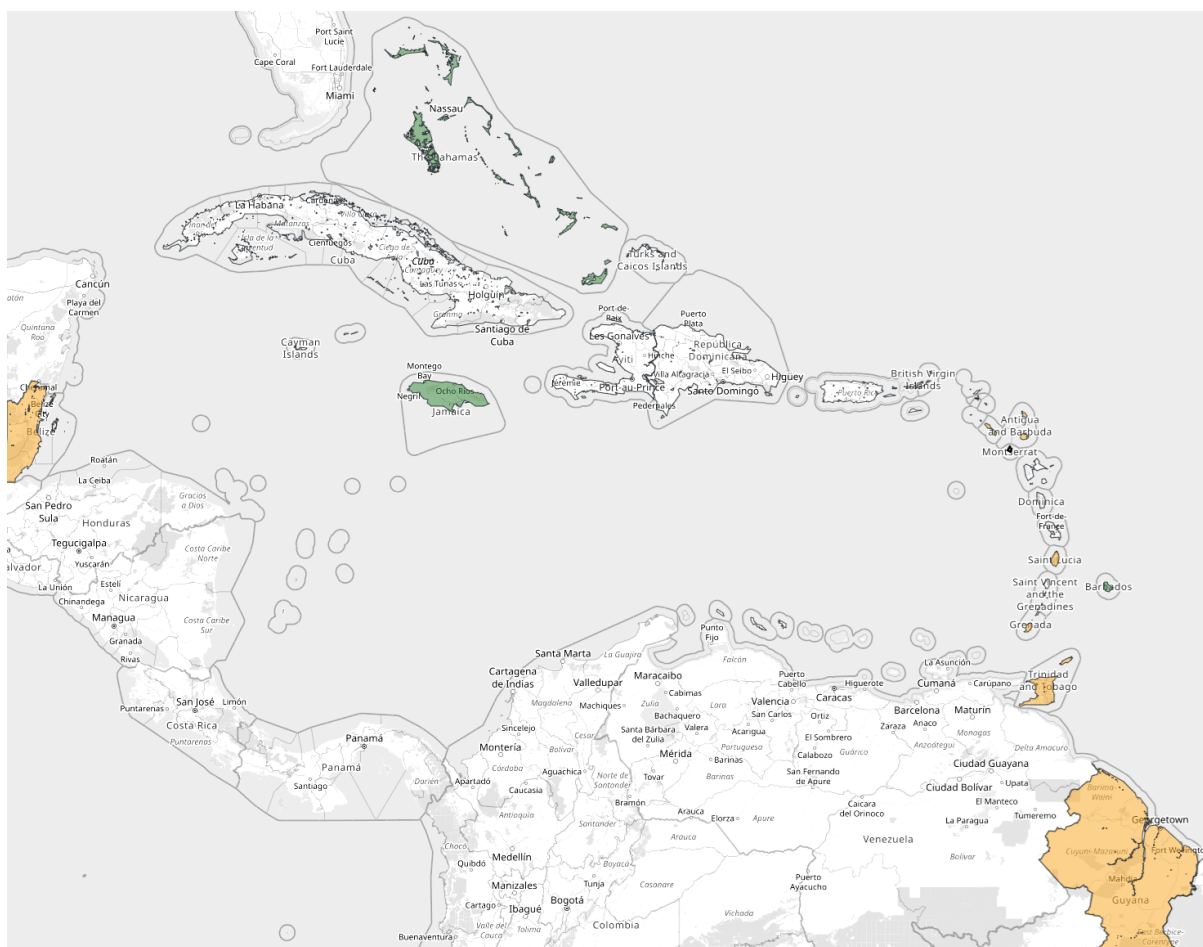


Table 4.1 - Status of Data Protection Legislation, CARICOM Member States

Country	Legislation (year)	Status
The Bahamas	Data Protection Act (2003)	In force; Data Protection Commissioner established
Barbados	Data Protection Act (2019)	In force (2021); Commissioner appointed; GDPR-modelled
Jamaica	Data Protection Act (2020)	In force (Dec 2023); Office of the Information Commissioner operational
Antigua and Barbuda	Data Protection Act (2013)	Partly in force
Saint Lucia	Data Protection Act (2011)	Enacted (pre-GDPR framework)
St. Kitts and Nevis	Data Protection Act (2018)	Enacted
Trinidad and Tobago	Data Protection Act (2011)	Only partially proclaimed; no functioning regulator
Belize	Data Protection Act (2021)	Passed; not fully in force
Guyana	Data Protection Act (2023)	Passed; not fully in force

Grenada	Data Protection Act (2023)	Enacted; enforcement body not yet operational
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	Privacy Act (2003)	Never brought into force
Suriname	Draft legislation (2020)	Not enacted
Dominica	None	No data protection statute
Haiti	None	No data protection statute
Montserrat	None (national)	Partially covered under UK framework arrangements

Source: Compiled from regional legal surveys and official sources, including the ECLAC Caribbean cybercrime and data protection legislation portal and regional data-protection practitioner surveys (2024–2025).

Recommendation 2: Establish a harmonized Caribbean AI governance framework, anchored in existing international norms.

- a) CARICOM should develop a regional AI governance framework anchored explicitly in the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, avoiding duplication of normative work already settled at the global level.
- b) The framework should establish minimum regional standards for algorithmic transparency, risk classification, and public-sector AI procurement, while allowing member states flexibility in domestic implementation appropriate to their institutional capacity.
- c) Governments should designate or strengthen an existing regional body, rather than necessarily creating a new one, to provide ongoing oversight and coordination, consistent with the principle that policy survives longest when anchored in institutions that already outlast political cycles.
- d) Member states should expand participation in UNESCO's Readiness Assessment Methodology and equivalent diagnostic tools, to build a shared, comparable evidence base for governance design across the region.
- e) The regional governance framework should require AI systems deployed in or serving the Caribbean to be assessed for disparate performance and impact across Caribbean languages, dialects, and demographic groups before public-sector deployment, and CARICOM should develop coordinated capacity to detect and respond to AI-generated disinformation.



Pillar 3: Economic Transformation, Innovation & Industry

As mentioned previously Latin America and the Caribbean attract approximately low global AI investment despite generating 6.6% of global GDP, one of the starkest investment-to-output mismatches of any major world region. Within this, Caribbean AI firms represent a very small fraction of all AI firms in Latin America and the Caribbean, and only a handful of CARICOM startups currently have AI-based core

business models. At the same time, the region's economic-transformation challenge cannot be approached as a leap to frontier AI development; comparator evidence consistently shows that attempting to skip foundational capacity-building in favour of advanced applications produces systemic failure rather than acceleration.

Recommendation 3: Sequence economic-transformation policy from foundational adoption toward higher-value innovation, built on a structured research-to-commercialization pathway, rather than attempting to leapfrog directly to frontier development.

- a) Governments should prioritize policies that lower the cost and complexity of AI adoption for existing micro, small, and medium enterprises before prioritizing frontier research investment, given the region's current readiness profile.
- b) Regional and national innovation-support mechanisms (sandboxes, challenge funds, accelerator support) should be designed to draw on patient, blended capital appropriate to the longer innovation cycles AI ventures require, rather than short-cycle grant funding alone.
- c) Governments should evaluate the case for Caribbean-specific language and data resources, including support for regional languages and Creoles currently underserved by global AI tools, as a distinct strategic asset rather than a marginal accessibility feature.
- d) Trade and investment-promotion bodies should treat AI-related foreign direct investment and outsourcing opportunities as a distinct strategic category, given the scale of global capital currently being mobilized by comparator regions.
- e) Regional authorities should establish a staged research-to-commercialization financing pathway, anchored in university-based research institutions, that funds fundamental research (multi-year, patient capital, evaluated on knowledge and talent outputs) and applied research (shorter-cycle, milestone-based grants, evaluated on prototype and adoption evidence) under distinct instruments, and that channels a defined, published share of resulting commercial returns, licensing income, or spin-out

proceeds back into upstream research funding, so that public investment in AI research compounds over time rather than ending at the pilot or publication stage.



Pillar 4: Talent & Skills

Across Latin America and the Caribbean, UNESCO-derived estimates reported by ECLAC suggest that approximately 5% of people aged fifteen and over can write a computer program and 19% can use formulas in spreadsheets. These figures should be treated as approximate regional indicators rather than precise measurements for every country, since country-level observations remain sparse and digital skills are difficult to measure consistently.³³

More recent business evidence also cautions against treating AI adoption difficulties as a technical skills shortage alone. A January 2025 survey of 1,200 business decision-makers in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Colombia found that the leading reported obstacle to implementing or expanding AI was a lack of clarity about how to integrate AI into business processes and management systems, reported by 34% of respondents. This exceeded the 26% reporting a lack of qualified personnel, while 16% identified organizational resistance. Because the survey covered five major Latin American markets and no Caribbean states, its results should be treated as indicative rather than representative of the entire Latin American and Caribbean region.³⁴

Before designing or scaling AI training programmes, member states and regional bodies should undertake a structured training-needs assessment to identify which skills are required, by whom, at what level, and through which delivery channel. That assessment should segment needs across at least six target groups: policymakers and ministers; regulators and legal officers; public-sector managers and procurement officials; educators and trainers; MSMEs and entrepreneurs; and technical practitioners and researchers. Training delivery should then be tiered accordingly, combining broad-based AI literacy, job-linked practitioner training, and a smaller specialist pipeline for advanced research, safety, data science, and public-interest AI.

Recommendation 4: Build a tiered talent pipeline spanning mass digital literacy through to specialist AI research capacity.

a) Governments should prioritize foundational digital and AI literacy at scale, across the public sector, education system, and small business community, recognizing that this tier reaches the largest number of beneficiaries per unit of investment.

³³ Dale Alexander, Lika Døhl Diouf, and Chaela Wooding, *Artificial Intelligence Readiness in the Caribbean: An Exploratory Review*, Studies and Perspectives Series—ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, no. 131 (Santiago: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2024), 26–27.

³⁴ SAP and Edelman, *Artificial Intelligence in the Corporate World—Regional Report* (January 2025), 1, 21–22.

- b) Regional tertiary institutions, led by the University of the West Indies and equivalent national institutions, should be supported in developing applied AI and data-science training pathways targeted at practitioner-level public and private sector roles.
- c) A smaller number of advanced research and specialist scholarships should be maintained to retain a pipeline of regional AI expertise, recognizing that this tier will necessarily reach far fewer people but is necessary to sustain the other tiers over time.
- d) Governments should treat organizational and integration barriers to AI adoption, not only raw technical-skills gaps, as a distinct and addressable category of the talent challenge, consistent with recent regional survey evidence.
- e) Alongside building new AI talent, governments and regional training institutions should design transition pathways, reskilling toward higher-value analytical, quality-assurance, and AI-supervision roles, for workers in occupations most exposed to generative-AI displacement.



Pillar 5: Public Sector AI

Public-sector AI deployment offers some of the clearest near-term efficiency and transparency gains available to Caribbean governments, but it depends on the governance and infrastructure foundations addressed in Pillars 1 and 2. The region's current government AI-readiness scores indicate that most CARICOM states have not yet articulated the strategic vision that typically precedes structured public-sector AI deployment.

Public-sector AI cannot be deployed responsibly on immature digital foundations. Member States should first advance interoperable DPI, digital identity, data exchange, and digital payments, drawing on UNDP's DPI framework, the World Bank's DPI agenda, GovStack standards, and the lessons of India Stack for small states, while building on the OECS/World Bank Caribbean Digital Transformation Project (CARDTP, P171528; US\$94 million).

Recommendation 5: Use public procurement and public-service delivery as the proving ground for Caribbean AI governance standards.

- a) Governments should pilot AI-enabled public service delivery in a small number of high-value, low-risk domains (such as routine administrative processing or citizen information services) before extending to higher-risk domains such as benefits determination or law enforcement.
- b) Public procurement standards for AI systems should require basic transparency and auditability commitments from vendors, consistent with the governance framework proposed in Pillar 2, so that public-sector adoption itself reinforces regional governance norms.
- c) Governments should treat public-sector AI pilots as a deliberate source of regional learning, with findings shared across CARICOM rather than retained nationally, given the limited capacity any single member state has to evaluate outcomes alone.
- d) Leverage public-private partnerships financed through development finance institutions. Given SIDS' constrained fiscal space and middle-income ineligibility for concessional finance, Member States should structure public-sector AI deployments as PPPs blended with DFI financing using public procurement as the proving ground for Caribbean AI governance standards.



Pillar 6: Natural Disaster & Climate Resilience

The Caribbean's disaster exposure is exceptional even by global standards: Caribbean countries experience approximately ten times the global average monetary cost of climate-related damage and approximately twenty times the global average number of climate events. Between 2000 and 2019, five Caribbean nations ranked among the world's top twenty for climate-related fatalities per capita, while eight ranked among the top twenty for economic losses as a share of GDP.³⁵ A comparable regional initiative in the Pacific demonstrates the scale at which early-warning investments can be organized across small-island states. The approximately US\$4.8 million CREWS Pacific SIDS 2.0 project, implemented between 2021 and 2024, strengthened hydro-meteorological and early-warning capabilities for vulnerable populations across Pacific SIDS, whose combined population was approximately 2.3 million.³⁶

Recommendation 6: Prioritize AI-enabled early-warning and resilience applications as a flagship, co-benefit-generating regional investment.

- a) Regional disaster-management institutions, led by CDEMA, should evaluate the feasibility of an AI-enabled multi-hazard early-warning capability for the Caribbean, drawing on comparable Pacific SIDS models, rather than each member state pursuing separate national systems.
- b) Any shared digital infrastructure built under Pillar 1 should explicitly incorporate disaster-resilience requirements (redundancy, climate-hardening, rapid failover) from the outset, rather than retrofitting them later.
- c) Given that agriculture represents a comparatively small share of regional GDP but a disproportionately large share of regional employment, governments should evaluate AI-enabled agricultural advisory tools as a resilience and food-security priority, with reference to comparable yield and resilience gains documented in Kenya and India.

³⁵ Barbara Marchitto et al., *Climate Risks for Latin America and the Caribbean: Are Banks Ready for the Green Transition?* (Luxembourg: European Investment Bank, 2023), 3, doi:10.2867/167466.

³⁶ World Meteorological Organization, "Strengthening Hydro-Meteorological and Early Warning Services in the Pacific (CREWS Pacific SIDS 2.0)," project portfolio, accessed July 18, 2026.



Pillar 7: Regional Leadership, Trade & Global Interoperability

As Chapter 3 establishes, CARICOM's absence from collective AI governance, both globally and relative to comparator regional blocs, is the single most consequential gap this report identifies. The UN General Assembly's 2025 resolution establishing the Independent International Scientific Panel on AI and the Global Dialogue on AI Governance creates a

concrete, near-term forum in which the Caribbean can register a coordinated voice; the Panel was seated in February 2026, and the Global Dialogue's first substantive session was held in Geneva July 2026.

Recommendation 7: Establish CARICOM as a coordinated voice in global AI governance.

- a) CARICOM should designate a coordinated regional position and representation for the Global Dialogue on AI Governance and related UN processes, rather than allowing member states to engage individually or not at all.
- b) The region should evaluate the case for a CARICOM-wide AI governance instrument building on, rather than duplicating, the Declaración de Santiago commitments already held by six Caribbean states to close the coordination gap identified in Chapter 3.
- c) Regional bodies (the CTU, CROSQ, and others) should pursue interoperability and mutual-recognition arrangements with comparable small-state and regional blocs (the OECS, the Pacific Islands Forum, and others) to share the cost of standards development that no single Caribbean state can bear alone.

5. The Task Force

Chair: Craig Ramlal

Executive Director, Artificial Intelligence Innovation Centre, The UWI

Vice Chair: Christopher Reckord

Chairman, National AI Task Force, Jamaica

Coordinator: Shernon Osepa

Strategic Advisory, Caribbean Telecommunications Union

Members (in last name sorted):

Armstrong Alexis, Deputy Secretary General, CARICOM	Russell Gardiner Director of Technology, Turks and Caicos Islands Telecommunications Commission	Tariq Mohammed Chair, Caribbean ICT Youth Network
Utica Alves CARICOM Secretariat	Cordel Green Executive Director, Broadcast Commission, Jamaica	Nia Nanan Senior Research Analyst, Caribbean Telecommunications Union
Annie Baldeo Executive Officer, Policy, Planning and Economics, Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago	Michelle Grell-Bereaux Lead of International Digital Development Affairs, The Utilities, Regulation and Competition Authority, The Bahamas	Opal Neil Independent Consultant ICT Policy and Regulations
Jennifer Britton CARICOM Secretariat	Tracy Hackshaw Chef d'entreprise, Universal Postal Union, UN	Kurleigh Prescod Chief Executive Officer, Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
Edmund Burke Digital ICT Director, Government of Grenada	Sharukh Hussain Director Innovation Unit, Office of the Prime Minister, Guyana	Elvia Smith-Maduro Permanent Secretary, Government of the Virgin Islands
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Dave Dowrich Vice President & Chief Financial Officer, Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America	John Lewis Director, ICT Government of Trinidad & Tobago	Amit Uttamchandani Technology Consultant, Caribbean Signal
Richard Feveck IT Specialist, Caribbean Telecommunications Union	Shanea Lewis Policy Analyst, Caribbean Telecommunications Union	Desiree Zachariah Manager, Business and Data Analytics, Ministry of Information Communications Technologies, Antigua and Barbuda
Nicholas Fuller Vice President, AI & Automation, IBM	Preetam Maloor Head of Emerging Technologies, International Telecommunications Union	
Michelle Garcia Marketing & Comms Specialist, Caribbean Telecommunications Union	Junior McIntyre Deputy National Chief Digital Officer, Trinidad and Tobago	

About the CTU Caribbean AI Task Force

Under the mandate of the CARICOM Single ICT Space as an ICT-enabled borderless space that fosters economic, social and cultural integration for the betterment of Caribbean citizens, the CTU formalized the Caribbean AI Task Force to address the need for coherent and regionally harmonized policies that govern the responsible adoption and use of AI.

The Task Force on Regional Harmonization of AI Policy operated for a period of one year. Its primary objective was to assess the current landscape of AI implementation, identify challenges, and formulate recommendations for the development of regionally harmonized AI policies within the Caribbean. The Task Force will consist of members from academia, government, civil society and private sector.

The Task Force has engaged with a diverse set of stakeholders, including Government representatives from relevant ministries and regulatory bodies, Industry leaders, technology companies, and AI solution providers operating in the Caribbean, Academia and research institutions involved in AI-related studies, Civil society organizations, advocacy groups, and legal experts, international organizations and bodies involved in AI policy development.

Based on feedback to the interim report, the Task Force has released this report which provides detailed recommendations for regionally harmonised AI policies, a strategic roadmap for policy implementation and guidelines for continued collaboration and evaluation.

