



Diaspora engagement mapping

COLOMBIA

Facts & figures

Terminology: the most common term used by the government to refer to its diaspora is “Colombians abroad” (“colombianos en el exterior”).

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: 2.78%
Remittances inflow (USD million): 10,111

Voting from abroad:

At embassies/consulates



Data disclaimer

As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World Bank (2023).

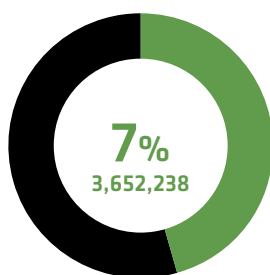
Emigration



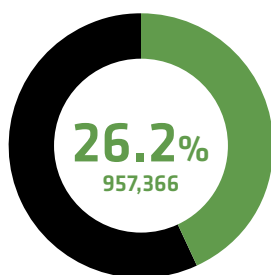
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 45%
♀ 55%



♂ 43.1%
♀ 56.9%

Top countries of destination



United States of America	1,008,875
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	875,552
Spain	792,228
Chile	189,185
Ecuador	159,966

¹ <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/en/node/6289>

² <https://www.registraduria.gov.co/-Colombianos-en-el-Exterior,3752-.html>, The Colombia Diaspora in the United States.” Migration Policy Institute for the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program. May 2016.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2003** ● **Decree 1239³** established the National Intersectoral Commission on Migration (CNIM) as a body for coordination and guidance in the implementation of immigration policy, which includes informing Colombians abroad about strategies concerning rights to protection and social security.
- 2009** ● **CONPES 3603 Document⁴** approved the Comprehensive Migration Policy (PIM) established to provide guidelines, strategies and actions to assist Colombians abroad. It also acknowledges the rights of Colombians abroad and proposes measures such as developing a strategy for the use of remittances and the establishment of a remittances committee.⁵
- 2009** ● **Comprehensive Migration Policy (PIM)⁶** - has the goals to: achieve the defence, protection and guarantee of the rights of Colombians abroad; to strengthen the transfer of skills of diaspora members with high human capital, as well as to maintain and expand training opportunities for Colombians abroad; and to ensure a permanent, sufficient and effective supply of state services towards Colombians abroad.
- 2011** ● **Law No. 1465 of 2011⁷** established the National Migration System (SMN) as “a harmonious combination of institutions, civil society organizations, norms, processes, plans and programmes through which to undertake the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of migration policy so as to enhance the quality of life of Colombian communities abroad.”⁸ It proposes measures such as developing a strategy for the productive use of remittances and the establishment of a remittances committee.
- 2021** ● **Law 2136 establishes the definitions, principles and guidelines for the regulation and orientation of the Comprehensive Migration Policy (PIM).⁹** It contains a specific chapter on strengthening the community of Colombians abroad. It establishes measures for consular protection and assistance, underlining the right of Colombian migrants to receive information about their rights. It seeks to improve the demographic register of residents abroad, promote engagement with the country through initiatives and projects, encourage the productive use of remittances, and facilitate procedures through the use of technology. In addition, cultural promotion for diaspora children and the dissemination of tourism programmes are highlighted.

>> Trends

Firstly, there is an increasing interest in Colombia in strengthening the infrastructure supporting remittances and a renewed focus on using remittances more productively by cross selling products linked to remittances and securitising remittance flows.¹⁰

Colombia has investment schemes but does not have remittances for co-development, controls on remittance fees or improvement to remittance channels. In this regard, Colombia has reformed its tax laws to encourage expatriates to send a larger portion of their earnings to relatives in Colombia. The focus is on easing obstacles and providing incentives.

Secondly, there is a push to maintain relations between the state and diverse groups of the diaspora. The diaspora has an active part in engagement with the state, demanding participation in Colombian affairs.

3 https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/sites/default/files/Normograma/docs/decreto_1239_2003.htm

4 <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/colombia/migracion/conpes>; <https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Conpes/Econ%C3%B3micos/3603.pdf>

5 <http://www.banrep.gov.co/es/remesas>

6 <https://www.cancilleria.gov.co/en/colombia/migration/policy>;

7 http://www.secretariassenado.gov.co/senado/basedoc/ley_1465_2011.html

8 <https://www.iom.int/countries/colombia>

9 <https://www.funcionpublica.gov.co/eva/gestornormativo/norma.php?i=168067>

10 https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/diaspora_handbook_en_for_web_28may2013.pdf

Lately, the government has focused its efforts mainly on returnees, providing information support, networking, as well as tax and social assistance benefits.



Achievement

An International Victims' Forum was established in 2014. It mobilised people in Europe and the Americas to make those living abroad more visible in the peace negotiations and to demand recognition of their rights in the process.

In August 2023, a new Digital Identification System was launched at the Consulate in Madrid, enabling Colombians abroad to obtain a “cédula digital” (ID card) or a duplicate remotely. This system – rolled out to all 27 Colombian consular posts in Europe – uses biometric recognition to issue secure digital IDs, a move hailed by the Ambassador in Spain as a way to modernise services and “reinforce the Colombian identity” among diaspora members.

Since the establishment of the National Day of the Colombian Migrant on October 10 2023, kicking off an annual “Month of Colombianidad Migrante” various cultural events throughout the month have been created such as the music event “A ritmo y sabor” and the film series “Colombia Crea Paz”.

Obstacles



- **Trust:** One challenge to diaspora engagement is building trust after decades-long civil war and political conflict. Although Colombian immigrants have started initiatives to form associations in the United States in order to facilitate collective action or giving, in practical terms few groups have been formed due to lack of trust and the fragmented nature of the diaspora (there are divisions between those supporting the peace agreements and those against it).
- **Resentment:** Efforts to promote the participation of the diaspora have not always been welcomed by civil society in Colombia because of widely held perceptions that ‘living abroad’ equalled ‘living in comfort’. At times, sectors of the political opposition have criticized those who ‘abandoned’ the country in difficult times and later wanted to participate.¹¹
- **Gender:** Difficulties such as ‘machismo’ in civil society organizations remain a significant hurdle for the participation of women both in Colombia and abroad.¹²
- **Bureaucracy:** Red tape and the lack of precedents have further impeded the implementation of participation in diaspora initiatives. For example, three years after having set aside two seats for diaspora representation, the National Peace Council has not been able to agree on the mechanism to select two people to occupy them.

11 The Colombia Diaspora in the United States.” Migration Policy Institute for the Rockefeller Foundation-Aspen Institute Diaspora Program. May 2016

12 <https://www.c-r.org/accord/inclusion-peace-processes/colombian-diaspora-peace-process>

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

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Colombia Nos Une

PARTNERSHIP + RETURN

This is a platform created and administrated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the Directorate for Migration, Consular Affairs and Citizen Services, with the aim of attending to and engaging with Colombians abroad and making them subjects of public policies. The programme seeks to generate initiatives, projects and strategies aimed at establishing contacts and promoting collaborative activities between Colombians inside and outside the country. It also seeks to manage institutional initiatives for Colombians abroad and their families in Colombia, in terms of social security, housing acquisition, opening savings accounts in Colombian banks from abroad, appropriate use of remittances and information and guidance on the recognition and validation of qualifications. Finally, the programme seeks to promote actions aimed at fostering a return in positive conditions for Colombians who decide to return to the country. The portal creates a space to connect communities abroad and provide information on services relevant to the diaspora.

DIGITAL

Conexion Colombia

Provides useful information for Colombians abroad via a website that allows exchange on academic and sport related information, look for jobs abroad, and search for financial sponsors.

INFORMATION

Democracy Earth Foundation

The tech non-profit launched digital voting platform Plebiscito Digital and worked with several civil society organisations to allow Colombians abroad to cast symbolic votes through the platform. The Digital Plebiscite was powered by blockchain technology, testing a new way of validating and authenticating electoral votes.

NETWORKS

National Civil Society Roundtable for Migration (MN-SCM)

It is a space for participation coordinated by Colombia Nos Une open to Colombian citizens living abroad or in national territory, whether as returnees or regular migrants, interested in migration issues. The MN-SCM is part of the National Migration System with the participation of various state and governmental entities and the National Intersectoral Commission on Migration. Its objective is to facilitate and promote citizen participation in the discussion and development of the Comprehensive Migration Policy, allowing face-to-face or virtual registration. In addition, diplomatic missions convene members to consolidate suggestions and proposals aimed at the National Migration System, contributing to the formulation of migration policy.

IDENTITY, COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

La Diáspora También Cuenta

A call for Colombian emigrants to share their personal stories and contributions that showcase the diverse experiences and impacts of Colombian expatriates in Europe and beyond.

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 430+ institutions](#)

Diaspora related institutions

- **National institutions**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Among its many functions, the MFA formulates and executes activities for the protection of the rights of Colombians abroad, and takes relevant actions with the authorities of the country in which they are to be found, in accordance with the principles and rules of international law.

- **At sub-ministerial level**

National Intersectoral Commission on Migration (CNIM) 2003

Decree 1239/2003 set up CNIM as a body for coordination and guidance in the implementation of immigration policy. Its duties include creating programmes that allow the reconnecting of Colombian nationals with the country and informing Colombians abroad about strategies concerning rights to protection and social security in order to safeguard employment history and other benefits which workers can access. An amendment to Decree 1239/2003 linked Colombians abroad - Colombia Nos Une programme - as the Technical Secretariat of the CNIM.

Bureau of Consular and Citizen Affairs: Colombia Nos Une 2002

This Internal Working Group attached to the Directorate of Migration, Consular Affairs and Citizen Service seeks to link Colombians abroad and make them subjects of public policies. Likewise, it seeks to establish the conditions for nationals who wish to migrate to do so voluntarily and in an orderly manner, ensuring the protection of their rights, maintaining their links with the country, and providing support in the event of their eventual return.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Read more about diaspora organisations in "[Starting guide: What is a diaspora organisation](#)"

Aculco (Asociación Cultural Colombiana – Colombian Cultural Association) 1992 Spain

Aculco is a non-profit organisation established in Spain by Colombians residing in the country. It provides information and support to migrants in Europe and it is dedicated to increasing social awareness about the migration phenomenon. One of its aims is to increase the political participation of foreign communities in Spain, Italy, and England.

Colombianitos 2001 UK

- ✓ **Development activities**

Colombianitos is an international organisation with offices in the UK, US and Colombia. It aims to change the future of Colombia by investing in children and by using sport as a tool for social development. Its programme "Scoring for life" was selected as the 'best practice for youth' in Latin America and the Caribbean by UNESCO and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Colombia Solidarity Campaign UK

This UK based organisation campaigns for sustainable peace and a socially just Colombia.

Comité Madrileno por defensa de los derechos humanos en Colombia Spain

Development activities

A Spanish non-profit association that works for the defence of human rights and International Humanitarian Law in Colombia. It studies and disseminates information on the economic, social and cultural situation in Colombia. It also organises awareness activities such as courses, conferences, seminars, colloquiums, round tables and cinema-forums aimed at increasing the solidarity of the Spanish population and Europe in general.

Diaspora Woman Belgium Spain Sweden UK

Formerly the Truth, Memory and Reconciliation Commission of Colombian Women in the Diaspora, Diaspora Woman is an organisation was founded by women from diverse social and political backgrounds who saw the need for a space specifically for women for psychosocial healing and reconciliation and to address the exclusion of women's voices and experiences in the peace process. They have hubs in London, Barcelona, Stockholm and Brussels and the network also works on diaspora integration in host countries.

Colombia Euskadi

Colombia – Euskadi is an NGO that supports the social, labour and cultural integration of immigrant groups in the Basque Autonomous Community, as well as promotes the comprehensive development of their countries of origin, in accordance with the principles of participatory democracy; solidarity and mutual aid; sustainable human development; equity and social justice; and a vision of an inclusive society.

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