



Diaspora engagement mapping

GUATEMALA

Facts & figures

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad



Voting from abroad:

At embassies



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: 19.58%

Remittances inflow (USD million): 19,980

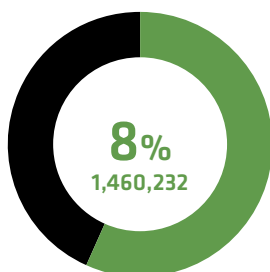
Emigration



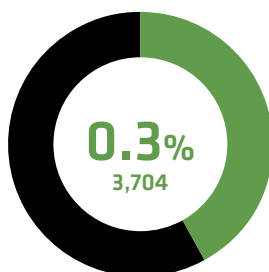
% of emigrants in
total population



% of which
in the EU



♂ 56.9%
♀ 43.1%



♂ 41.3%
♀ 58.7%

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).

Top countries of destination



United States of America	1,298,936
Mexico	81,012
Belize	29,643
Canada	18,187
El Salvador	9,157

¹ Recognizes dual membership selectively and has dual-citizenship agreements with other Central American countries. <https://www.acnur.org/fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2001/0135.pdf>

² In presidential elections only. <http://www.tse.org.gt/images/Acuerdos2016/274-2016.pdf>

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2007 ● **Ley del Consejo Nacional de Atención al Migrante de Guatemala (CONAMIGUA), Decree 46-2007** addresses the needs of Guatemalans emigrating and facing human rights problems in transit to the United States and Mexico. It includes a mandate to establish links and empower migrant representatives to speak and engage with the Guatemalan state.

» Trends

The Guatemalan diaspora has sought to maintain as many ties as possible with the homeland. They do so predominantly on an independent basis, not necessarily in connection to the government. One emerging trend is the economic importance of the diaspora, evidenced for example by the high level of remittances and by the consumption of nostalgic goods.³ However, Guatemala has a lower level of institutionalization of diaspora policies than could have been expected based on the importance of their diaspora.⁴ CONAMIGUA itself is largely an entity that is politicised to satisfy interests among legislators rather than among the broader diaspora.

There are no more than 100 Guatemalan hometown associations, the majority in the United States. Their level of engagement is limited to philanthropic activities. Some of these organisations maintain important links and partnerships with private sector entities. The most typical philanthropic engagement is to provide donations on education or health issues. Guatemalans believe that a way out of migration, of which lack of opportunities is a core reason,⁵ is to invest on education in order to make migration less likely.

The Guatemalan diaspora has become a significant source of funding for local start-up businesses, mostly in commerce, with Guatemalans who have found success outside the country providing those inside the country with international contacts to advise or invest in Guatemalan start-ups or offering employment opportunities if they expand their business into Guatemala.⁶

There is a growing expectation among the diaspora that the Guatemalan government should engage with it. From the government's point-of-view, diaspora engagement is a way to gain international legitimacy. The Guatemalan representative at the Diaspora Ministerial Conference in 2013 stated, "We have to ensure the rights of migrant workers and their families, so we are in close communication with the authorities of the host countries."⁷

In January 2024, the Social Security Institute and the Guatemalan Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed a cooperation agreement to provide medical benefits, including retirement, to the Guatemalan diaspora, with the aim of looking after their health and welfare from abroad.⁸

The government has also expanded mobile consulates⁹ ("Consulados Móviles" and "Sábados Consulares") and accelerated digitisation (e.g. plans for a unified digital platform for passports/IDs) to make consular services more accessible to Guatemalans abroad.

3 <https://www.thedialogue.org/blogs/2018/10/opportunities-for-development-in-guatemala-a-study-on-the-nostalgic-trade/>

4 Soltész, Béla. "Migration and Diaspora Policy Institutions in Latin America." *Demográfia English Edition*, vol. 59, no. 5, 2017, doi:10.21543/dee.2016.2.

5 www.saliendo-adelante.com

6 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelgoldberg/2019/09/08/whats-happening-in-guatemala/#16afbe75175c>

7 Gamlen, Alan John. *Human Geopolitics: States, Emigrants, and the Rise of Diaspora Institutions*. Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 231.

8 <https://prensa.gob.gt/comunicado/firman-convenio-para-establecer-programas-del-regimen-de-seguridad-social>

9 <https://fashiontourismgt.com/es/2024/04/30/campana-informativa-que-lanza-el-ministerio-de-relaciones-exteriores-para-fortalecer-vinculos-con-la-diaspora-guatemalteca/#:~:text=Conforme%20al%20Plan%20de%20Gobierno,los%20connacionales%20en%20el%20extranjero>

Obstacles



- **Lack of government programmes:** There are still no formal or governmental programmes that work with Guatemalans in the diaspora. However, The Foreign Affairs Ministry, MINEX, has proposed measures to improve engagement by expanding diplomatic and consular representation abroad and by strengthening channels of communication for Guatemalans living abroad.
- **Remittances infrastructure:** Although there is a substantial flow of remittances to Guatemala, there is no government scheme that actively encourages the sending of remittances. There is no official source of remittance information; the Bank of Guatemala (BANGUAT) uses the IOM Migration and Remittances Survey to estimate the average cost of remittances to Guatemala.¹⁰
- **Informal nature of diaspora organisations:** Diaspora organisations and associations are often informal and small. The issue of weak institutional and implementation capacity is common in many associations in the US, UK and other European countries. There is a need for capacity-building efforts targeting diaspora-led development initiatives.
- **Lack of interest from diaspora:** Civil participation by Guatemalans abroad is limited. The electoral law was amended in 2017 to allow for voting abroad and work is now progressing on implementation.¹¹

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

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Opportunities for My Community Project: 2016-present

The project, implemented by USAID and the Inter-American Dialogue, links remittances, education and savings to promote economic and human development in Guatemala. It works to engage the Guatemalan government and the diaspora with the country's development through resource mobilisation directed toward educational programs within Guatemala.

The project has supported diaspora engagement through partnerships with Guatemalan Hometown Associations (HTAs), for example HTAs contacted teachers to teach and then the project trained them, monitored the classes, and provided educational materials.

The Project has also collaborated with remittance companies to engage the Guatemalan diaspora in addressing development obstacles. For example, it collaborated with the companies Dolex and Viamericas and delivered about 20,000 informational brochures to Guatemalan remittance senders, raising awareness about the importance of financial literacy in Guatemala. The Ministry of Education works with local schools and diaspora organizations to implement after school education programs funded by the diaspora.

→ Raising funds through remittances for an educational camp for people with disabilities in Guatemala

NGO Vlamistad partnered with remittance company Viamericas to mobilise diaspora resources. The company launched a platform at eleven remittance-sending points located in Maryland from which the Guatemalan diaspora was able to make donations at no additional cost. Through using social media campaigns and newspaper advertisements, the diaspora living in Maryland learned about the campaign and was invited to participate by donating. In ten days, the campaign reached over 5,000 users, of which more than half interacted with the ad.¹²

REMITTANCES

EDUCATION

GUATEMALA

10 <https://migrationdataportal.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/MGI%20Guatemala%20EN.pdf>

11 <https://migrationdataportal.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/MGI%20Guatemala%20EN.pdf>

12 <https://www.thedialogue.org/blogs/2019/08/remittances-for-development-engaging-the-diaspora-with-social-projects-in-guatemala/>



OWSD Guatemala 2020

GENDER

OWSD Guatemala, the national chapter of the Organisation for Women in Science for the Developing World, was established in 2020 with the purpose of strengthening women's participation in science and technology in Guatemala. It is made up of Guatemalan women residing within and outside the national territory. Its focus includes the promotion of the role of women scientists in the sustainable development of the country, as well as citizen empowerment and advocacy in decision-making based on scientific knowledge. The organisation works on various initiatives and activities to achieve its objectives, encouraging the participation of members, affiliates and friends in its mission to promote the presence and contribution of women in the Guatemalan scientific field.

COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

Guatemala Cerca de ti

This multimedia campaign (graphics, videos, radio spots) was initially rolled out through Guatemala's 25 consulates in the US but is designed to extend globally, eventually covering European missions. Its goal is to promote consular services and legal assistance to nationals overseas and to strengthen ties with the diaspora.

NETWORK + SKILL TRANSFER

Red de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (RedCTi)

It is a platform for cooperation to generate research, exchanges, set common goals, and propose joint work that responds to the socioeconomic challenges of Guatemala and its population from the perspective of science and research.

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **National institutions**

General Directorate of Consular and Migratory Affairs

This is the entity entrusted with consular paperwork for Guatemalans living abroad, issuing documentation relating to their identity and national origin.

Ministry of External Relations

The ambassador and consular officers are entrusted with establishing links and relationships with the diaspora.

National Secretariat of Science and Technology of Guatemala (SENACYT)

It is the central government agency responsible for coordinating and promoting scientific research, technological development, and innovation across the country and the professional and scientific Guatemalan diaspora.

- **At ministerial level**

National Migrant Assistance Council of Guatemala (CONAMIGUA) 2008

CONAMIGUA was created through Decree 46-2007 by the Congress of Guatemala and is comprised of the Guatemalan State authorities responsible for monitoring and protecting the human rights and individual guarantees of Guatemalans living abroad. They are the governmental entity in charge of coordinating, defining, supervising the actions of the State aimed at protecting, attending and providing assistance to Guatemalan migrants, their families in Guatemala, as well as the population deported and returned to the country and of the migrants who are in the national territory.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

GUATEMALTECOS EN ITALIA Italy

- ✓ **Development activities**

The organisation strives to connect Guatemalans living in Italy and encourage cultural exchange between Guatemala and Italy. It promotes integration of Guatemalans in Italy and cultural events that promote Guatemala. The organisation is particularly concerned with bringing education to the poorest areas in Guatemala.

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



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



La Asociación de Mujeres de Guatemala (AMG) Spain

A feminist non-profit organization, formed by Guatemalan women refugees and migrants, residing in Spain. AMG's objective is to make the violations of women's human rights, especially in Guatemala, known internationally. AMG supports accountability processes through strategic litigation in national and international courts with a legal team that specialises in human rights and gender-based crimes. AMG's relationship with the countries of origin allows it to work so that the institution of asylum does not become another factor of impunity for the state and for the criminals that cause the exile of women.

Written by: Dr Manuel Orozco
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