



Diaspora engagement mapping KENYA

Facts & figures

Terminology: Kenya refers to its diaspora as 'Kenyans Abroad'.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **3.88%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **4,227**

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).

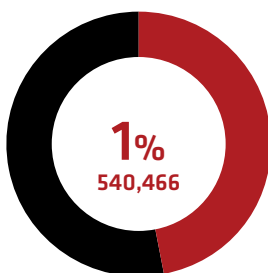
Emigration



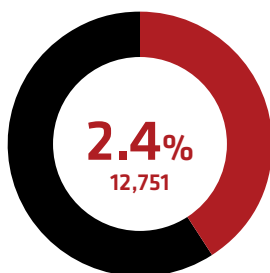
% of emigrants in
total population



% of which
in the EU



♂ 47%
♀ 53%



♂ 40.9%
♀ 59.1%

Top countries of destination



United States	210,991
United Kingdom	137,817
Australia	30,123
Canada	29,988
United Republic of Tanzania	26,345

¹ According to the Constitution of Kenya (2010) and the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act of 2011 (amended 2015), Dual Citizenship is permitted in Kenya. Kenya citizens who have acquired other nationalities are required to disclose their other citizenship. Full text available here: <http://citizenshiprightsafrika.org/kenya-citizenship-and-immigration-act-2011-as-amended-to-2015/>

² The electoral commission extended voting rights to Kenyans living abroad from six to 12 countries to participate in the 2022 Presidential elections. <https://kenyaembassydc.org/information-for-kenyan-voters-in-diaspora>.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



2007 ● **Kenya Vision 2030⁵** is the Kenyan government's national strategy that recognises diaspora contribution as a major enabler to economic growth and a critical factor in the achievement of government's Vision 2030 agenda.

Diaspora Policy. The Kenyan government developed the Kenya Diaspora Policy in recognition of the urgent need to mainstream the Kenyan Diaspora into national development processes in line with the aspirations and goals of the Kenya Vision 2030.⁶

This diaspora policy was developed in order to facilitate a mutually beneficial relationship between the country and its diaspora. Its objectives include developing strategies to engage and mainstream Kenyans Abroad into the national development process; mobilising Kenyans Abroad to form town, city or country specific umbrella associations for effective engagement and representation; developing measures to enhance protection of Kenyans Abroad, as well as mechanisms for dialogue and partnership with them; and establishing institutional mechanisms for co-ordination and administration of issues affecting Kenyans Abroad.⁷

This policy covers issues such as curbing the high cost of remittances, improving consular services to address issues of Kenyans abroad, using the Kenyans abroad to promote tourism, and tapping into diaspora talents to reverse the current brain drain.

2014 ● **Kenya Foreign Policy** was launched in the same year as the Diaspora Policy and is complementary. Kenya's official foreign policy document seeks to "deepen [...] engagement and partnerships with the Kenyan Diaspora in order to leverage and harness their skills and expertise for national development."⁸ It sets out five pillars for its foreign policy, namely Economic; Peace; Environmental; Cultural and Diaspora. Under this fifth pillar, 'diaspora', it stresses the value of 'diaspora diplomacy', recognising the importance of harnessing the diverse skills, expertise and potential of Kenyans living abroad, and facilitating their integration into the national development agenda.

2018 ▼
2022 ● **Kenya Third Medium-Term Plan⁹ (MTP3).** It focuses on nine key foundations and enablers for national transformation, namely: infrastructure; information and communication technology; Science Technology and Innovation (STI); land reforms; public sector reforms; labour and employment; national values and ethics; ending drought emergencies; and security, peace building and conflict resolution. It sees diaspora contributions to all of these as important. Under 'institutional reforms', it also states that a National Diaspora Council of Kenya (NADICOK) will be established by 2021.

MTP3 lists a number of flagship projects, one of which is a Labour Market Information System, which will develop and implement a policy to govern the collection, analysis, storage, retrieval and dissemination of labour market information, as well as "modules for facilitating information exchange between the East Africa Community (EAC) Partner States, migrant workers and Kenyans in Diaspora." It also states that the National Archives should be improved by digitalisation of records, records management, and retrieval of migrated archive from UK and diaspora.

3 <https://repository.kippra.or.ke/handle/123456789/600>

4 Ibid.

5 <http://vision2030.go.ke/>

6 <https://repository.kippra.or.ke/handle/123456789/600>

7 Ibid.

8 Available at: https://mfa.go.ke/storage/2022/03/Kenya_Foreign_Policy.pdf

9 Available at: <http://vision2030.go.ke/publication/third-medium-term-plan-2018-2022/>

2023
2027

The fourth Medium-Term Plan (MTP4) will implement the second to last phase of Kenya Vision 2030 and will set the momentum for transitioning to the next long-term development blueprint. The 4th MTP will place particular attention on: sustained economic growth; income inequality; empower youth, women and persons with disabilities; and revitalise all sectors of the economy to generate employment opportunities.¹⁰

2024

Diaspora Policy.¹¹ Building on the efforts made under the Diaspora Policy 2014 to mainstream the Kenyan diaspora into the national development process, the Diaspora Policy 2024 proposes comprehensive measures for protecting, engaging, empowering and enhancing prosperity for Kenyans abroad in the diaspora, underlining the importance of adapting to the changing dynamics. Its objectives include: 1) protecting the rights and promoting the welfare of the diaspora; 2) facilitating diaspora finance, technology, and skills transfer for development; 3) strengthening partnerships and collaboration with the Kenyan diaspora; and 4) facilitating the placement of Kenyans in the international job market.

Based on these objectives, this policy addresses issues such as establishing comprehensive rights protection and welfare mechanisms, incentivising diaspora remittance, savings and investment, creating frameworks for diaspora engagement in diverse areas of development, and supporting labour mobility through strategic agreements.

2024
2027

Comprehensive Kenya Diaspora Growth Strategy.¹² Aims to expand employment opportunities, while increasing the involvement of the diaspora in national development through remittances, investments, and transfer of knowledge, skills, and technology. Key interventions include comprehensive registration and mapping of the diaspora, financial inclusion through targeted investment products, seamless government services and welfare provisions, such as social protection and healthcare coverage.

Trends

The government's initiative to launch a diaspora policy in 2014 seems to have opened the door for the diaspora to engage with their home country economically and socially. According to Central Bank of Kenya data (2019), remittance data show that the volume of remittances has doubled, 60% of which comes from the diaspora in Europe and North America.¹³

The Central Bank of Kenya has identified the ease of sending money back home as a major factor in the sharp growth of Kenyan remittances, and it has also developed a range of financial products targeting the diaspora including some successful diaspora bonds. Local banks have entered partnerships with remittance service providers that allow them to handle larger volumes of inflows. The expansion of the popular M-Pesa service beyond Kenya's borders is also helping, with direct cash transfers on mobile, making it easier for the millions who actively use mobile money to receive money instantly from relatives abroad.

Extension of the voting franchise in Kenya to include Kenyan residents abroad promises to strengthen diaspora engagement by giving them rights to political representation and increasing their stake in the country as citizens, as well as making it easier to invest and own property in the country. However, this remains a contentious issue for the Kenyan government. Although the Constitution of Kenya (2010) permits diaspora voting in theory, the government has not enabled voter registrations for Kenyans abroad for nearly a decade.¹⁴

10 <https://www.planning.go.ke/official-launch-of-the-fourth-medium-term-plan-2023-2027-preparatory-process/>

11 <https://diaspora.go.ke/uploads/Kenya%20Diaspora%20Policy%202024.pdf>

12 <https://diaspora.go.ke/uploads/Comprehensive%20Diaspora%20Growth%20Strategy.pdf>

13 <https://www.centralbank.go.ke/diaspora-remittances/>

14 See: <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Diaspora-voters-demand-listing-30-days/1056-5044836-c4d0amz/index.html>

The Kenyan government has invested in institutional structures to facilitate diaspora engagement. The MTP 3 plan cited above notes the achievements made in delivering on its foreign policy, including the opening of new consulates in different countries and the establishment of passport offices at the Kenyan Embassies in Washington, London, Berlin, South Africa and the Consulate General of Kenya in Dubai.¹⁵

The Kenyan government is also active in expanding overseas youth employment opportunities, aiming not only to address the youth unemployment issue but also to leverage benefits from diaspora remittances as well as skills and technology transfer in the future. Several measures facilitating youth labour mobility include bilateral partnerships with destination countries¹⁶ and funding support to reduce barriers to international employment opportunities.¹⁷ The government also proposes to develop a national skills inventory to address skill gaps and align local talent with global job demands.¹⁸

As noted above, Kenya has made diaspora engagement an integral part of its foreign and national development policies, which is relatively unusual among African states. This approach promises to bear dividends for the country in the future.

Obstacles



- **Lack of trust** between some diaspora members and the Government of Kenya and perceptions of corruption and business risk continue to hinder diaspora engagement in Kenya.
- **Overemphasis on diaspora financial capital:** Many diaspora members still feel that the Kenyan government values the diaspora living abroad because of the money they send back home, rather than because of their belonging to their home country or the birth-right they hold. This is exacerbated by the lack of diaspora voting, despite the constitution permitting it.
- **Lack of access to funding or credit** for diaspora initiatives, both for development projects and start-up and growth capital for diaspora-led enterprises is a challenge.

SPOTLIGHT: Effective practices

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Kenya Diaspora Homecoming Convention (KDHC)

NETWORKS

A number of diaspora meetings and events have been held in Kenya and abroad to continue the discussion of ways to implement policies and recommendations. For example, the 11th edition of the Kenya Diaspora Homecoming Convention (KDHC) was held in Nairobi, Kenya, in December 2024 on the theme of “Knowledge & Skills for Resilience and Growth”, emphasising the critical need for adapting to technological advancements, enhancing climate resilience, and fostering economic transformation for sustainable development.

¹⁵ See: <http://vision2030.go.ke/publication/third-medium-term-plan-2018-2022/>

¹⁶ <https://lampforum.org/2024/08/29/creating-cross-border-opportunities-for-kenyan-workers-in-japan/>

¹⁷ <https://www.mygov.go.ke/youth-enterprise-fund-disburse-sh300-million-overseas-job-opportunities>

¹⁸ <https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/government-to-develop-skills-inventory-to-leverage-on-jobs-abroad-for-youth/>

Bank of Kenya Diaspora Bonds

As of 2013 Kenya has been successfully issuing local infrastructure bonds, with at least six such between 2009 and 2011. These bonds were open to all investors, including foreign individuals. After the successful uptake of these bonds, Kenya continued with the first Eurobond issuance (in two tranches of five and 10 years) for USD 2.6bn in 2014, and a 2018 issuance of USD 2bn, in two tranches of 10 and 30 years.

In 2017, Kenya took another pioneering step by launching M-Akiba as the world's first ever mobile phone-based bond. Over 300,000 people registered on the platform, but only about 6,000 people (2%) subscribed to the bond, raising USD2.4m (24%) of the USD10m target. Despite the low take up, indicators were positive enough for the Kenyan government to re-launch M-Akiba in February 2019. This re-launch increased the Bond subscription to 79% and the number of people registered on the platform rose to 450,000.¹⁹

Kenya Central Bank (KCB) observed that remittances into Kenya grew from \$4.021B to \$4.17 between November 2022 and 2023. KCB have directed bonds at their diaspora and continue to look at other means of converting remittances into investment flows. KCB carried out a mapping, in the form of an online survey, of the Kenyan diaspora in 2021 and are in the process of developing services based on the findings. The motivation to carry out this survey stemmed from a recognition that while generally agriculture brings in the highest foreign exchange into Kenya, remittances have been surpassing this. The outreach was assisted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenyan missions and other institutions. The governor of the bank supported raising awareness of the survey by interacting with diaspora directly through various activities they held. The survey received 1300 global responses. Services that have already been introduced include an over-the-counter trading platform called DhowCSD which is meant to ease trading in government securities for Kenyans and the diaspora.²⁰

REMITTANCES +
INVESTMENT

Kenya's Diaspora Diplomacy

Kenya recognises the vital role played by the diaspora as cultural and brand ambassadors for the country, as well as possessing skills vital for national development. Dedicated diaspora portals for each Kenyan embassy and consulate were established by the Kenyan Government and include a skills matching programme (e.g. <https://www.kenyahighcom.org.uk/>).

NETWORK +
SKILLS TRANSFER

19 <https://fsdkenya.org/blog/the-story-of-m-akiba-selling-kenyan-treasury-bonds-via-mobile/>

20 <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/new-cbk-bond-platform-signs-up-additional-7-000-investors-4366632>

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU-CIDO)

Kenya nominates a diaspora focal point to the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (AU-CIDO) Continental Meetings

East African Community (EAC)

Kenya is a member of EAC.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has responsibility for foreign affairs, diplomacy, trade, and diaspora engagement.

- At sub-ministerial level

Diaspora and Consular Affairs Directorate (est. 2014)

This Directorate within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade is responsible for developing diaspora policies and programmes, and coordinating diaspora affairs across the Kenyan government.

State Department of Diaspora Affairs (SDDA) 2022

Established under the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, SDDA is tasked with promoting the rights and welfare of Kenyans abroad and facilitating their participation in national development and the democratic process. It does so through continuous dialogue, incentive frameworks for remittances and investment, and support services for employment and enterprise development abroad. It also works in conjunction with the Ministry of Labour to secure the placement of Kenyans abroad and implement the Labour Migration Policy and the Global Labour Strategy.

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



Diaspora organisations in Europe

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



Association of Kenyan Diaspora in Belgium and Luxembourg (AKDBL) Belgium & Luxembourg

AKDBL provides a forum for the Kenyan Diaspora in Belgium and Luxembourg to maintain and enhance its sense of identity, and promote and advance its individual and collective interests. Its mission is “to contribute to the emergence of a strong and vibrant federation of the Kenyan Diaspora in Europe capable of furthering the political, economic and social interests of its members in collaboration with other Kenyan Diaspora associations, in particular in the United States and the United Kingdom.”

Kenya Community Abroad e.V Germany

KCA takes active role to show presence of Kenyans in Germany. Disseminates information, organise events to bring Kenyans together.

Kenya Community Rebuild UK

Development activities

Non-profit organisation underpinned by spiritual development of Kenyans to promote socio-economic, political and moral justice. Values diversity, tolerance, equality and fairness within Kenyans living in the United Kingdom.

Kenyan Diaspora Community in the Netherlands (KDCN) Netherlands & Czech Republic

Development activities

A Kenyan diaspora NGO registered in the Netherlands that serves the Kenyan community in the country and also in the Czech Republic. KDCN has organised diaspora volunteering missions to Kenya, including one supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the African Studies Centre at the University of Leiden, and Voluntary Services Overseas with a focus on supporting entrepreneurs.

Stoke UK Diaspora Sacco UK

Development activities

Stoke UK Diaspora Sacco is a diaspora investment organisation established in 2017 to meet the financial needs of Kenyans in the diaspora and enable them pool resources together to invest as a group.

Kenya Society United Kingdom

Kenyan NGO that provides a forum for British and international residents in the UK with an interest in Kenya to better understand developments in the country by organising talks and social events. In addition, the organisation reaches out to the Kenyans living in the UK.

Mkenya Ujerumani e.V Germany

Development activities

A registered community based organisation based in Germany and Kenya to assist Kenyans in both countries on new opportunities, and general information.

Polish Kenyan Forum Poland

The Kenyan-Polish Forum is a non-profit, non-governmental organization set up by Kenyan graduates of Polish universities. It aims to promote greater friendship between the Kenyan and Polish people, as well as greater understanding of Kenya in the fields of culture, tourism and trade in Poland. It also provides support and advice to Kenyans resident in Poland.

Sahara Communities Abroad (SACOMA) UK

Development activities

Social enterprise organisation that delivers information, guidance and advice, accredited training, business support, and capacity building to SMEs in Kenya and Tanzania.

Uhollanzi Kenya Association (UKEA) Netherlands 2004

In 2004 Kenyans living in The Netherlands came up with an idea of forming a welfare association to help cater for the socio-economic needs of its members who may face difficulties associated with living in a foreign country. UKEA serves as a point of contact between the Kenyan embassy in the Netherlands and the Kenyan diaspora residing in the country.

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