



Diaspora engagement mapping EL SALVADOR

Facts & figures

Political rights



Dual citizenship



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **24.09%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **8,193**

Source: Remittances, World Bank Development Indicators (2018); **Migration**: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019).

Voting from abroad:

By internet and in consulates³



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).

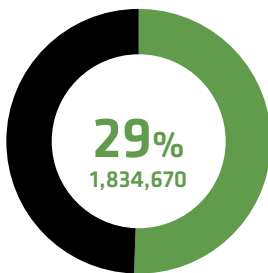
Emigration¹



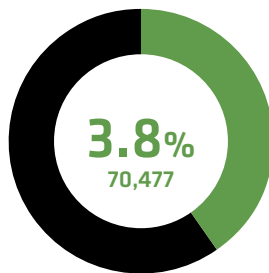
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 50.7%
♀ 49.3%



♂ 40.4%
♀ 59.6%

Top countries of destination



United States of America	1,569,946
Mexico	55,410
Canada	49,004
Spain	42,228
Italy	24,538

El Salvador does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

¹ According to data provided by the Salvadoran government through their Human Mobility Observatory, it is estimated that there are 2.6 million Salvadorans living abroad, representing 41% of the population, of which 4.4% live in the EU.

² While Salvadorans abroad are legally able to vote, for the February 2019 election, only about 5,500 out of the over 350,000 Salvadorans that have the ability to vote registered. The registration process is done online, and it requires that their identification document (DUI) be scanned. Salvadoran's expired identification documents could be one of the causes of low international voting registration rates. (https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/moe_ue_el_salvador_2019_informe_final_esp.pdf)

³ Legislative Decree No. 541 (Special Law on the Exercise of Suffrage Abroad) guarantees the exercise of the right to vote and run for elected office for Salvadorans abroad, anywhere in the world, starting in 2024. At the same time, it regulates the implementation of a remote voting system via internet and an electronic voting system.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2005** ● **Legislative decrees 581 and 685) on identity documents** established a single identity document as to identify any Salvadorian, both within the country and abroad. This law only regulates the issuance of the Identity Document within the national territory. Additionally, Decree 685 (2005) created the Special Law for the Issuance of Identification Documents Abroad, allowing Salvadorans to renew documentation while abroad, facilitating their ability to stay documented.⁴
- 2011** ● **Special Law for the Protection and Development of Salvadoran Migrants and their Families (Ley Especial para la Protección y Desarrollo de la Persona Migrante Salvadoreña y su Familia)** protects the rights of Salvadoran migrants and their families through the creation and monitoring of public policies focused on development and protection through interinstitutional coordination as well as intersectional relationships with civil society actors.
- 2023** ● **Human Mobility Policy** is a strategic framework designed to comprehensively address migration-related challenges and opportunities. This initiative seeks to transform the country's migration management, prioritising the attention and protection of the Salvadoran diaspora. Various actors, including the diaspora, collaborated in its elaboration.
- 2023** ● **Legislative Decree 885** - Special Transitory Law on Incentives and Preferential Treatment Aimed at Favouring the Repatriation of Salvadorans aims to grant tariff benefits to all Salvadoran citizens residing abroad who wish to return to El Salvador, regardless of time, migratory status and the country in which they have resided.



Trends

El Salvador has aimed its efforts to facilitate at a minimum diaspora engagement through its expansion of embassies and consular offices, staffing new personnel for that purpose. It has also looked into mechanisms to promote diaspora investment, offer some protection of migrant rights, and create labour migration programs.

During 2023, the Government of El Salvador, through its Foreign Ministry, has implemented various initiatives to bring programmes and services closer to the Salvadoran diaspora in different parts of the world. Among these initiatives are events such as “El Salvador+”, which bring together governmental and private institutions to offer services to the Salvadoran community abroad. In addition, virtual consulates have been established in Europe to provide attention and advice in an agile manner, thus modernising attention to the diaspora. These actions reflect the government's commitment to improve access to and quality of services for Salvadorans abroad.⁵

The landmark shift in voting from abroad occurred in the 2024 general elections, enabling over 50,000 Salvadorans overseas to vote⁶ during the first three days of the presidential election in January 2024. This marks an important increase, with participation twelve times greater than in the 2019 elections, which saw only 3,800 overseas voters.

4 https://www.asamblea.gob.sv/sites/default/files/documents/decretos/171117_072859923_archivo_documento_legislativo.pdf

5 <https://rree.gob.sv/gobierno-de-el-salvador-acerca-programas-y-servicios-de-diversas-instituciones-a-la-diaspora-en-roma-italia/>

6 <https://apnews.com/article/el-salvador-election-bukele-overseas-voting-54e0898ea2837a309fd2767356ad320a#:~:text=SAN%20SALVADOR%20,The%20Associated%20Press%20on%20Tuesday>



Achievements

- Additions of embassies such as the one opened in China in 2018 as well as the opening of four new consulates (in Canada, the US, and Mexico) provide Salvadorans with more access to assistance from the government.⁷ Services expanded by El Salvador include legal assistance to Salvadorans in the US.⁸ Focus by the government to provide better service for Salvadorans abroad through consular services has resulted in optimization of processes. Between 2014-2019 their consular offices processed 2,831,887 requests. As a way to facilitate communication, an institutional WhatsApp was created which has assisted over 13,000 people worldwide. Through these efforts Salvadorans residing abroad received assistance relating to family registration, notary services, visas, and other related matters.⁹
- The government continued its work to promote diaspora investment in line with the creation, in 2015, at the Foreign Relations Ministry of the *Mesa Interinstitucional de Atención a Inversiones de Compatriotas Residiendo en el Exterior*¹⁰. Between 2018 and 2019, the Ministry has worked to promote businesses in Los Nonaulcos and San Miguel. In December 2018, the Law to Facilitate Access to Credit and Financial Services for Returnees and Investments for the Salvadoran Community Abroad (Proyecto Ley Especial para Facilitar el Acceso a Crédito y Servicios Financieros de Salvadoreños Retornados y las Inversiones de la Comunidad Salvadoreña Residente en el Exterior) was elaborated. In 2018 a conference related to community development and business was held in Los Angeles. 51 individuals from the business community attended through the coordination supported by the Salvadoran Consulate in Los Angeles.
- In October 2022, the Legislative Assembly of El Salvador approved the new Special Law for the Exercise of Suffrage Abroad, which will make it easier for the foreign diaspora to exercise their right to vote. The law will allow Salvadorans abroad to vote remotely via the internet or electronically in person. They will also be able to run for elected office.¹¹

Temporary Migration Program

August 2019

Announced by El Salvador's Labor Ministry in August 2019, the H-2A visa allows Salvadorans to gain a temporary visa to work in the United States. El Salvador's Labor Ministry's Temporary Migration Program (Programa de Migración Laboral) promotes its citizen's inclusion in the workforce through regular migration channels. In cooperation with the United States, the Labor Ministry helps Salvadorans attain employment in the US through the H-2A visa.¹²

In 2024, the government's efforts to engage with the diaspora continued, particularly through the use of digital tools implemented in recent years. One example of these efforts is the user satisfaction survey system¹³, which gathers feedback from Salvadorans utilising consular services.

7 <https://rree.gob.sv/informe/memoria-de-labores-2018-2019/>

8 <https://rree.gob.sv/cancilleria-presenta-logros-y-avances-institucionales-durante-la-gestion-2014-2019/>

9 <https://rree.gob.sv/cancilleria-presenta-logros-y-avances-institucionales-durante-la-gestion-2014-2019/>

10 The Outreach and Investment Roundtable for Salvadorans Living Abroad

11 <https://ultimahora.sv/aprueban-ley-especial-para-el-ejercicio-del-sufragio-en-el-extranjero/>

12 and <https://www.inmigracionyvisas.com/a4518-Programa-Migracion-Laboral-Visas-H-2A.html>

13 <https://derechoynegocios.net/cancilleria-lanza-sistema-de-satisfaccion-del-usuario-para-oficinas-consulares-en-europa/#:~:text=La%20viceministra%20Portal%20explic%C3%B3%20que,salvadore%C3%B1os%20en%20todo%20el%20mundo>

Obstacles



- **Resources:** In October 2019, PROESA's director, Salvador Gómez Góchez, called for Salvadorans residing abroad to invest in the country and offered the institution's assistance.¹⁴ However, PROESA does not have dedicated staff in charge of working with the diaspora population, limiting its capacity to engage the diaspora and provide specialised assistance, despite its potential to do so.
- **Priority:** Current government priorities are linked to pressure from the US to prevent migration. This can have an impact on attention and funds targeting programmes that “regularise” migration rather than creating more links between the government, communities in the country, and communities living abroad.¹⁵

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

Explore 400+ practices by country, SDG or sector of engagement in the [interactive database!](#)



Cumbres de Juventudes Salvadoreñas and Campamento Kuskatan 2018

YOUTH

Four youth conferences (Washington D.C., Dallas, Los Angeles and Milan) were organised for Salvadoran youth living abroad. The conferences aimed to empower youth abroad by sharing their experiences and reflecting to create initiatives for their own development as well as that of their communities. Through these events, Salvadorans abroad created networks to strengthen their cultural, political, and economic ties to El Salvador. The conferences also led to the creation of Campamento Kuskatan, a camp for Salvadorans living abroad to go to El Salvador to learn about its culture.¹⁶

Manos Unidas por El Salvador, 2004 - 2019

EDUCATION

Since 2004, Banco Agrícola and the Pan American Development Foundation have been working with the Salvadoran diaspora with the purpose of social and educational development in the country. As of September 2019, 11,208,275 school infrastructure programmes had been executed in 140 communities and 86 municipalities. The project has had over USD \$6 million in funding with more than USD \$750k contributions originating from Salvadorans in the US.

INVESTMENT

Salvadoreños en el Exterior (SALEX) Investment in Hotel and Restaurant “Bola de Monte Resort” in El Salvador, 2019

To promote tourism and invest in El Salvador, SALEX members invested USD \$3.5 million in a hotel to be built in Ahuachapán. This ecological resort will have 30 rooms, restaurants, and pools.

Attachés for Diaspora Affairs (“Agregados para Asuntos de la Diáspora”) 2022

CONSULAR SERVICES

A new programme of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seeks to strengthen consular service abroad by assigning specialised diaspora officers to consulates in Houston and Dallas, Texas; Silver Spring, Maryland; Woodbridge, Virginia; Long Island, New York; and San Francisco, California. The initiative will strengthen work with Salvadoran organisations, tourism promotion and investment opportunities in the country.

14 <https://ultimahora.sv/proesa-ofrece-apoyo-a-la-diaspora-para-invertir-en-el-salvador/>

15 <https://rree.gob.sv/cancilleria-presenta-logros-y-avances-institucionales-durante-la-gestion-2014-2019/>

16 <https://www.dallasnews.com/espanol/al-dia/dallas-fort-worth/2017/05/31/convocan-a-jovenes-salvadorenos-en-el-exterior-a-participar-en-campamento-kuskatan/>

Viajero SV 2023

Digital platform supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and the Salvadoran Tourism Corporation, designed to encourage national tourism among the Salvadoran diaspora. The platform offers the diaspora exclusive discounts in hotels, restaurants, services and tour operators. More than 68 small and medium-sized enterprises participate in the platform.

HERITAGE
TOURISM

Collaboration with Hospital Bloom 2023

The Salvadoran diaspora, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has played a vital role in the continued support of the Benjamin Bloom National Children's Hospital. Through joint efforts, it has facilitated the arrival of the Moreano World Medical Mission, which offers free reconstructive surgeries, significantly improving the quality of life of approximately 60 patients. In addition, the diaspora has donated medical supplies, such as disposable sets for volumetric infusion pumps, thus strengthening the hospital's capacity to provide crucial medical care.

HEALTH

Documentary "Travelling with the Diaspora" 2023

It is a documentary produced in collaboration with Canal 10 and launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the framework of the Day of the Salvadoran Abroad. The documentary seeks to highlight the contribution of Salvadorans living abroad, showing how they have become agents of positive change in their host communities and actively participate in the development of their adopted countries. The documentary series aims to make visible the stories of the Salvadoran diaspora around the world, recognising the effort, resilience and achievements of compatriots who, despite being far away, maintain strong ties with their homeland.

COMMUNICATION

Digital Observatory on Human Mobility 2023

This resource seeks to provide information of interest on the Salvadoran diaspora to citizens interested in learning about programmes and services provided inside and outside the country. It has accessible and practical elements to locate diplomatic representations, the services offered by the government and their cost; distribution of the diaspora in the world; the services provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on humanitarian management issues, among others. This new tool is useful for public servants, researchers, students, teachers or any other actor in academic circles.

DIGITAL

Annex: List of Actors

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

Diaspora related institutions



- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores) February 27, 1858

The Ministry increases cooperation and financing for development and defends its citizens' rights while abroad.

Interinstitutional Group Focused on the Investments of Salvadorans Living Abroad (Mesa Interinstitucional de Atención a Inversiones de Compatriotas Residiendo en el Exterior)

This group was created in 2015 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote investment in El Salvador by Salvadorans living abroad back.

Viceministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility

Established as part of the Salvadoran government's renewed commitment to its citizens abroad, the Viceministry of Diaspora and Human Mobility serves as a direct channel of communication between the Salvadoran diaspora and the government. Formerly the Viceministry for Salvadorans Abroad, this restructured institution adopts a comprehensive approach to diaspora engagement, recognising Salvadorans abroad as key partners in national development. Its work focuses on consular affairs, human mobility, migrant support, and diaspora development, while also generating data and research to inform responsive migration policies and promote orderly, safe, and regular migration.

- At sub-ministerial level:

CONMIGRANTES

CONMIGRANTES, founded in 2011, is an autonomous and inter-institutional body composed of 22 state agencies, academia, and civil society actors. CONMIGRANTES promotes work relating to migration and development, particularly coordinating activities between consulates and public and private entities for local investment. It creates policies that protect Salvadorans living abroad as well as their families who live in El Salvador.¹⁷

Investment and Export Promotion Agency of El Salvador (INVEST) 2023

Created through Legislative Decree 663, it is the governing body in charge of the integral management of investments in the country. Within INVEST, the Directorate of Salvadorans Abroad and Municipalities (SALEX) was created as one of the three pillars of investment attraction.

¹⁷ <https://rree.gob.sv/nuevo-consejo-de-conmigrantes-se-compromete-a-impulsar-transformaciones-en-materia-migratoria/and> <https://www.transparencia.gob.sv/institutions/rree/documents/otra-informacion-de-interes>

Diaspora organisations in Europe

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



Asociation El Salvador En Francia (ASEF) 2010 France

ASEF's objectives are to facilitate Salvadoran-French cultural, economic, legal, and social exchanges. Projects and activities include the creation of a Salvadoran cultural centre in France and the creation of a French cultural centre in El Salvador.

Development activities

ASSOCIATION OF SALVADORANS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM 2018 UK

Created to promote Salvadoran culture in the UK, support Salvadoran's social causes, and create relationships between the Salvadoran communities and those of Europe.

ASOCIACIÓN SALVADOREÑA EN ANDALUCÍA 2017 Spain

Created in Sevilla, Spain, on the initiative of the former Honorary Consul, Ignacio de Cossio, the group promotes Salvadoran culture and tradition, provides legal assistance, and promotes the rights of unprotected groups.

CÁMARA BINACIONAL DE COMERCIO EL SALVADOR 2017 The Netherlands

Development activities

The organisation seeks to create synergies between Salvadoran private entities and Dutch private entities. The Cámara Binacional has identified business opportunities for 118 Dutch companies and 226 Salvadoran companies and has the support of the Cámara Holandesa de Comercio.

GRUPO SALVADOREÑO DE MUJERES CRISTIANAS BHETA 1995 Italy

This NGO promotes humanitarian assistance focused on integrating individuals into society focusing on women. Located in Italy, the NGO also provides social assistance, helps those without shelter, and provides migration related assistance.

Juventud Activa Por El Salvador En Italia (JAXSI) 2018 Italy

Development activities

JAXSI formed in Rome, Italy, is composed of members aged 17-35 years old who create alliances and better relationships, promote and share initiatives with fellow Salvadorans, and create opportunities for their current and future generations.

La Asociacion Cultural Casa El Salvador en Barcelona Spain

The group assists with the integration of Salvadorans in Spain, promotes Salvadoran culture in Cataluña, and develops projects to benefit Salvadorans in Cataluña and Spain.

MAYA - CELTIC COMUNIDAD SALVADOREÑA EN LA REPÚBLICA DE IRLANDA 2008 Ireland

Development activities

Through this organisation the Salvadoran community in Ireland seeks to assist Salvadoran migrants in their integration into the local community.

RED DE SALVADOREÑOS Y AMIGOS EN SUECIA Sweden

This network seeks to promote relationships between individuals from El Salvador and Sweden through sports and cultural activities.

VOZ DE LOS SALVADOREÑOS PARA EL DESARROLLO EN ESPAÑA 2013 Spain

Located in Madrid, this NGO promotes the interest of the Salvadoran community in Spain, promotes Salvadoran culture, and keeps the community informed on social and economic trends in El Salvador.

