



# Diaspora engagement mapping INDIA

## Facts & figures

### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>



Right to vote in national elections  
for citizens residing abroad<sup>3</sup>



Voting from abroad



### Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: 3.37%  
Remittances inflow (USD million): 119,526

### Data disclaimer

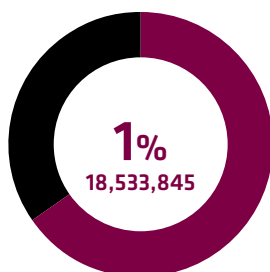
As diaspora definitions vary widely, we have chosen to use comparable data on emigration as a proxy. This does not include all who consider themselves diaspora and is not necessarily aligned with national definitions of diaspora. Emigration data comes from UNDESA (2024) and remittances from the World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

### Emigration<sup>2</sup>

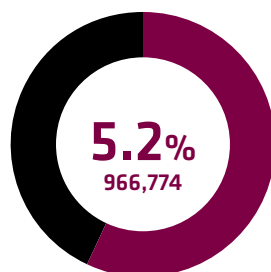
% of emigrants in  
total population



% of which  
in the EU



♂ 64.2%  
♀ 35.8%



♂ 57.1%  
♀ 42.9%

### Top countries of destination<sup>4</sup>



United Arab Emirates	3,248,545
United States of America	3,165,238
Saudi Arabia	1,953,496
Pakistan	1,597,134
Kuwait	1,231,094

1 However, since 2005, India has a program called Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) Introduced by The Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2005

2 UNDESA data is collected on the premise that international migrants are the number of people living in a country other than that of their citizenship. MEA emigration numbers include both NRI's and OCI holders. This distinction means that data from the MEA and UNDESA vary. According to the MEA, there are 32.1 million Indians abroad: [http://mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs\\_1.pdf](http://mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs_1.pdf).

3 Since 2010, an Indian citizen who is absent from his/her place of ordinary residence in India owing to employment, education or otherwise, and has not acquired citizenship of any other country, and who is not included in the electoral roll, is entitled to have his/her name registered in the electoral roll of the constituency of his/her residence in India (as mentioned in his/her passport). See: <https://ecisveep.nic.in/voters/overseas-voters/> and <https://www.nvsp.in>

4 Rankings presented here is on the basis of data available on the Indian Ministry of External Affairs website and covers both Non- Resident Indian (NRI) and Person of Indian Origin (PIO) currently present in the country.

Terminology: India uses the term diaspora as a generic term to describe the people who have migrated from its territories and their descendants. Indian diaspora fall into two categories for which specific data are collected.

The first category, Non-Resident Indians (NRI), refers to Indian citizens holding an Indian passport living and/or working in another country. To maintain one's NRI status, one must be in India for less than 182 days (during the relevant financial year)<sup>5</sup>.

The second category, Overseas Citizens of India (OCI), offers a privileged life-long status and continued relationship with India for those who have adopted another nationality and had to forfeit their Indian citizenship.<sup>6</sup> Former NRI's and their families (spouses of foreign origin, child, grandchild, or a great grandchild of a citizen) are eligible if the person is not, or has never been, a citizen of Pakistan and/or Bangladesh. For more information: <https://ociservices.gov.in/>

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1967** ● **The Passports Act** is an Act to provide for the issue of passports and travel documents, to regulate the departure from India of citizens of India and other persons and related support<sup>7</sup>.
- 1983** ● **The Emigration Act**<sup>8</sup> was enacted in the specific context of large-scale emigration of Indian workers to the Gulf region and mainly addresses the interest of Indian migrant workers by regulating overseas employment and recruitment. It also established the need for Emigration Clearance, a Protector General of Emigrants (PGE), and Protectors of Emigrants.
- 2016** ● The India-EU **Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility (CAMP)** is a comprehensive framework for cooperation on migration management between the EU and India. One objective is to harness the contribution of migrants to the economy of destination countries as well as countries of origin, facilitating the secure and cost-effective flow of remittances and their development effect, supporting diaspora networks, and optimising the benefits of return.<sup>9</sup>

**Bilateral social security agreements** have been established with various countries to protect the interest of expatriate workers and the companies on a reciprocal basis. The Ministry of External Affairs has signed twenty bilateral Social Security Agreements.<sup>10</sup>

**Several bilateral labour mobility agreements and letter of intent** were concluded with several EU Member States such as Austria, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Finland and Greece.<sup>11</sup>

5 According to the Finance Act 2020 as of 2020-2021 this has been reduced to 120 days for NRI's whose income is greater than 1.5 million INR.

6 The Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Scheme was introduced by amending the Citizenship Act, 1955, in August 2005 and launched in 2006 at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas convention

7 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b55910.html>. In honour of the 53rd anniversary of the Passports Act, the Ministry of External Affairs announced that its focus for 2020 is to strengthen outreach efforts, taking passport services closer to their citizens. Additionally, the passport issuance system has been integrated into 70 missions worldwide thereby simplifying the rules and procedures for NRI's abroad. Further steps are foreseen to leverage the use of modern technology i.e. issuance of biometric passports, integration and use of the mPassport Seva app for all steps related to the renewal and/or acquiring of a passport. <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/32781/Address-by-Minister-of-State-for-External-Affairs-on-Passport-Seva-Divas-2020> ; <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/jun/24/we-intend-to-open-passport-seva-kendras-in-every-lok-sabha-constituency-says-eam-jaishankar-2160825.html>

8 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b5318.html>. A draft emigration bill is on the horizon and focuses on establishing new legislative provisions and measures, including an Emigration Management Authority, Bureau of Emigration Administration, and nodal authorities at the state level. Also included are additional provisions for the welfare and protection of diaspora - specifically migrant workers - abroad. See: [https://mea.gov.in/Images/amb1/Salient\\_aspects\\_of\\_Emigration\\_Bill\\_2019.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/Images/amb1/Salient_aspects_of_Emigration_Bill_2019.pdf)

9 For more information refer to: [www.icmpd.org/euindia](http://www.icmpd.org/euindia)

10 [https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26465/Social\\_Security\\_Agreements](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/26465/Social_Security_Agreements)

11 [Expanding Horizons of Mobility- the New Age Migration Agreements of India - Indian Council of World Affairs \(Government of India\) \(icwa.in\)](http://www.icwa.in)

## Trends

Overseas Indians are the largest diaspora in the world<sup>12</sup> and sent 82.2 billion USD\$ (equalling approximately 3% of India's GDP and forming a quarter of the country's foreign reserves) in 2019 to India. Within the European context, most remittances are sent from the UK, Italy, and Ireland.

Indian State and local officials are exhibiting greater awareness towards mobility (intra- and inter-) and their diaspora communities worldwide. Political engagement between India and its diaspora is actively being sought after: the 2019 national elections saw heavy NRI participation in both the campaigning process and during the national election<sup>13</sup>.

The Government of India has put in place the necessary institutional support for NRIs and OCIs to maximise their global success in countries of destination, whilst embracing the diversity of contributions to their communities of origin. Increasingly, state authorities have established dedicated ministries and departments to manage migration. The state government of Kerala was the first state to realise the significance (and potential of emigration) for the state economy and therefore created a dedicated department in 1996 called the Non-Resident Keralite Affairs (NORKA). Similarly, the Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Society was established in 2016. The government of Andhra Pradesh has also passed the AP Migrants' Welfare Policy. Since then, many other state governments (e.g. Punjab) have come forward to develop a migration policy dedicated to capturing the potential benefits and minimising the risks of migration. Punjab state government took one step further in 2023 with the adoption of a diaspora policy.<sup>14</sup>

The role of the Indian diaspora in the economic transformation of the country is growing. The government is taking concrete steps to strengthen this role. With the 'Make in India' sentiment in mind, the government is encouraging contributions to the Indian development story through investment in greenfield and brownfield projects, as well as portfolio investments. The government has facilitated the rules and regulations that have significantly improved Indian ranking in ease of doing business from 130 to 66 in 2020.<sup>15</sup>



## Achievements

The 2005 OCI scheme has boosted India's connectivity with its diaspora. Individuals with Indian heritage are able to retain their foreign citizenship while simultaneously enjoying rights that are conferred to Indian citizens (with a few exceptions). Consequently, the Indian economy is now able to hire OCI cardholders, who enjoy a multiple entry, multipurpose visa to visit India, sparing them the need to obtain separate work permits for life.

India's foreign policy actively develops partnerships with diaspora communities for key projects. For example, the Government of India set up the India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians (IDF-OI)<sup>16</sup> in 2008 as a not-for-profit Trust to facilitate Overseas Indian philanthropy into social and development projects in India. IDF-OI's present mandate is to promote the following projects for funding by Overseas Indians: Government of India's flagship programmes – National Mission for Clean Ganga and Swachh Bharat Mission and social and development projects identified by State Governments. Priority sectors are the following: education, sanitation, healthcare, women's empowerment and sustainable livelihood.

12 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/india-has-the-world-s-biggest-diaspora-here-s-where-its-emigrants-live/>

13 <https://www.connectedtoindia.com/the-nri-push-in-modi-20-5658.html>

14 <http://diprpunjab.gov.in/?q=content/policy-punjabi-diaspora-be-ready-feb-28-kuldeep-singh-dhaliwal>

15 <https://www.wionews.com/opinions-blogs/indian-diaspora-and-economic-development-of-india-443711>

16 [https://mea.gov.in/images/attach/IDF\\_Trifold\\_Pamphlet\\_241016.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/images/attach/IDF_Trifold_Pamphlet_241016.pdf)

The Indian diaspora globally act as 'agents of change' facilitating and enhancing investment back home (reverse brain drain), accelerating industrial development, and boosting international trade. With a booming Indian economy, these agents of change have begun to return, contributing to the rapid urbanisation of India and the development of India's own Silicon City: Bangalore/Bengaluru and Gurgaon. Websites such as <https://backtoindia.com> have made the physical return home easier.

The Indian diaspora marked their strong presence in the 2024 India's general election despite the limited requirement of returning to vote physically. They actively participated through campaign support, financial backing, and advocacy. This massive diaspora-led election support across the globe once again signalled to Indian government to consider revising its external voting schemes.

## SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

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### e-Migrate

#### DIGITAL

As per the Emigration Act, 1983, an emigration check (ECR) is required for special categories of Indian passport holders (individuals who have not completed their 10th grade education) and who plan to travel to one (or more) of the 18 countries listed by Indian Bureau of Immigration. However, a computerised system, e-migrate, enables this process to happen smoothly, as well as providing additional support tools such as a Handbook for Pre-Departure

### Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) 2003 - present

#### NETWORKS

PBD is a convention held every two years to strengthen the engagement of the overseas Indian community with the Government of India and reconnect them with their roots. During the convention, selected overseas Indians are honoured with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to recognise their contributions to various fields both in India and abroad. During the 2023 edition, the Prime Minister released a commemorative postal stamp 'Surakshit Jaayen, Prashikshit Jaayen', commemorating the Indian diaspora and underlining the importance of safe, legal, orderly and skilled migration. During the 2025 edition, the president regarded diaspora as an integral part in achieving India's "Viksit Bharat at 2047" vision, underscoring their roles in youth and women empowerment, as well as sustainable development.

### Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) 2009 - ongoing

#### WELFARE/ RIGHTS

ICWF was set up in 2009 to assist overseas Indian nationals in times of distress and emergency in the "most deserving cases" on a "means tested basis". In 2017, the Indian government decentralised the decision-making process empowering embassies and consulates to disburse funds that are managed by the Ambassador and Diaspora Counsellor within each Embassy.

### Know India Programme (KIP)

#### YOUTH

KIP is a programme run by the Ministry of External Affairs. It consists of a three-week orientation programme for diaspora youth conducted with a view to promote awareness on different facets of life in India and the progress made by the country in various fields e.g. economic, industrial, education.

### Vande Bharat mission, April 2020 - ongoing

In light of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of India has put forward initiatives to ensure the safe and secure return of its citizens and their subsequent employment in India post-return. The Vande Bharat mission is widely reported to be the largest repatriation operation effort globally with the return of upwards of 500,000 Indians from over 130 countries.

RETURN/  
REPATRIATION

### Skilled Workers Arrival Database for Employment Support (SWADES; June 2020 - ongoing

To ensure returnees have opportunities for post-return employment, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), under the Skill India Mission, has partnered with the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and created a database of qualified citizens – based on skillsets and experience. Under the SWADES programme, returning citizens are required to fill up a SWADES skill form following which a SWADES skill card is issued. The Ministry then shares the collected information with companies for suitable placement opportunities in the country.

SKILLS/  
DATA

### Global Pravasi Rishta Portal 2020

Global Pravasi Rishta is the Indian government's web and app-based portal seeking to establish a three-way communication between the Ministry of External Affairs, Indian diplomatic missions, and the diaspora. PIOs, NROs and OCIs are invited to register on the portal which will be used by consular officers for crisis-related communication (including alerts, advisories, and information on visa, passport, immigration and other consular services) and help diaspora connect to the variety of government schemes available.

DIGITAL +  
CONSULAR SERVICES

### Kerala's Loka Keraka Sabha 2024

Kerala's Loka Kerala Sabha is an event hosted by the state government of Kerala to bring Malayali diaspora living around the globe under one platform. It was hosted under the department of Non-Resident Keralites. It aims at utilizing the expertise of NRKs for developing Kerala state. Loka Kerala Sabha is proposed to happen once in two years

NETWORKING

## Annex:

# List of Actors

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

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

#### **The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation - BIMSTEC** 1997

BIMSTEC is a regional organization comprising seven Member States lying in the littoral and adjacent areas of the Bay of Bengal constituting a contiguous regional unity. The objective of building such an alliance was to harness shared and accelerated growth through cooperation in different areas of common interests by mitigating the impact of globalization and by utilizing regional resources and geographical advantages. Unlike many other regional groupings, BIMSTEC is a sector-driven cooperative organization. Starting with six sectors—including trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism and fisheries—for sectoral cooperation in the late 1997, it expanded to embrace nine more sectors—agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counter-terrorism, environment, culture, people to people contact and climate change—in 2008.

- **National institutions**

#### **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA): Division of Overseas Indian Affairs** 2016

Carried over from the now dissolved Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (OIA), this division within the MEA is dedicated to the multitude of Indian Nationals settled abroad. OIA seeks to connect the Indian Diaspora community with India. Positioned as a 'services' division, it provides information, partnerships and facilitation for all matters related to Overseas Indians (comprising Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).

#### **Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA): Foreigners Division**

The division deals with all matters relating to visa, immigration, citizenship, overseas citizenship of India, acceptance of foreign contribution and hospitality.

#### **Protector General of Emigrants**

PGE under Ministry of External Affairs is the authority responsible for protecting the interest of Indian workers going abroad. PGE is also the registering authority to issue Registration Certificate to the Recruiting Agents for overseas manpower exporting business.

- At state level

#### **Non-Resident Keralites Affairs (NORKA)** 1996

The first of its kind at state level, NORKA is a department of the government of Kerala formed to support NRIs from Kerala, and to strengthen the relationship between Keralites living abroad and state authorities. NORKA Roots, established in 2002, serve as an online platform that contain all information pertaining to the welfare of Non-Resident Keralites(NRK) and act as an interface between the diaspora and state authorities. Amidst the Covid-19 outbreak, the Norka-Roots portal facilitated registration from people all around the world to request to return to Kerala. The portal also allowed people stuck in different states of the country to register on their site from 29 April 2020.



## **Non-Resident Indian Affairs Department of the State of Punjab**

This online portal primarily offers NRI's from the state of Punjab electronic access to relevant authorities on a series of subjects (education, farming, urban planning, Punjab policing, passport information, and emergency services). Additionally, the website also details various infrastructure development schemes offering NRI's – and NRI-connected Non-Governmental Organisations - a list of projects in need of support with the aim of developing native communities

## **NRI Commission of the Government of Goa 2006**

The Government of Goa has established a Commission for NRI Affairs as a separate entity with a view to promoting, nurturing and sustaining a mutually beneficial and symbiotic relationship between the State of Goa and its vast and diverse community overseas.

## **Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society (APNRTS) 2016**

ANPRTS is a government owned non-profit society established by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to: bring the Non-Resident Telugu community worldwide under one roof; actively engage them to participate in the growth and prosperity of Andhra Pradesh; and to serve their needs in India. It offers guidance on sector-specific policies and incentives for investment, acts as a lobbyist, guides prospective entrepreneurs, and supports NRTs in accessing lost documentation.

## **Diaspora organisations in Europe**

### **Global Organisation of Persons of Indian Origin (GOPIO)**

1989 Netherlands, Germany, France, UK, and Norway

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



#### **☑ Integration activities**

GOPIO was founded at the First Global Convention of People of Indian Origin in New York in 1989. The initial mission of GOPIO was fighting human rights violations against people of Indian origin. Although this has been improved in the last decade, human rights violations continue to be a major issue for PIOs living outside India. GOPIO has now set its priorities on pooling resources, both financial and professional, for the benefit of PIOs, their host countries and India.

### **Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT)**

#### **☑ Development activities**

The Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) is a consortium of researchers and policymakers from national and international universities, institutes, and organisations. The GRFDT works as an academic and policy think tank by engaging national and international experts from various areas linked to migration, culture, and transnationalism.

### **Indian Students Germany (ISG)** Germany

#### **☑ Integration activities**

ISG is a project initiated by the Embassy of India in Berlin (Germany) and in association with various student associations of Germany with the goal of facilitating open communication and sharing of information across all the Indian students and student organizations in Germany.

### **Indo-German Society (DIG)** 1953 Germany

- ✓ **Development activities**
- ✓ **Integration activities**

DIG brings together people from both India and Germany countries and promotes public knowledge and the appreciation of modern India and its many religious, ethnic, and cultural sources.

### **Ireland-India Business Association (IIBA)** 2008 Ireland

The IIBA was founded to foster commercial links between Irish and Indian businesses. Ten years on, it is the leading bilateral trade organisation operating to build networks and commercial partnerships between Ireland and India. Members benefit from valuable sector intelligence and influencing opportunities, and the IIBA facilitates knowledge-sharing and networking among Irish and Indian business communities through research, reports and working groups.

### **Netherlands-India Association (NIA)** 1951 Netherlands

NIA is the oldest active association in The Netherlands promoting friendly Indo-Dutch relations. The association was created by a group of Dutch people interested in philosophical and varied cultural aspects of Indian society. In the early years, the aim of the association was to organize lectures and talks on aspects of Indian religions, culture and philosophy.

For more information on diaspora organisations please refer to: <https://www.mea.gov.in/images/pdf/list-of-overseas-indian.pdf>

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