



# Diaspora engagement mapping PAPUA NEW GUINEA

## Facts & figures

Terminology: “Papua New Guineans living abroad” is the term generally used in official government communications, although the term “diaspora” is used in certain policy documents.

### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>



Right to vote in national elections  
for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>



### Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.01%**  
Remittances inflow (USD million): **10.67**

### Voting from abroad:<sup>3</sup>

By post



### 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 \(2023\)](#).

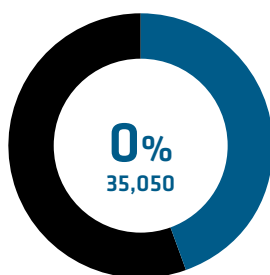
### Emigration



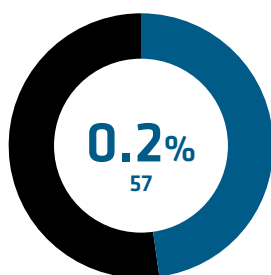
% of emigrants in  
total population



% of which  
in the EU



♂ 44.7%  
♀ 55.3%



♂ 47.4%  
♀ 52.6%

### Top countries of destination



Australia	34,316
Solomon Islands	538
Vanuatu	69
Samoa	34
Cook Islands	19

<sup>1</sup> The PNG government amended the Citizenship Act in 2016, granting its citizens the ability to apply for dual citizenship with a limited number of countries: Australia, Fiji, Germany, New Zealand, Samoa, United Kingdom, United States, and Vanuatu. See [http://www.parliament.gov.pg/uploads/acts/16A\\_42.pdf](http://www.parliament.gov.pg/uploads/acts/16A_42.pdf) and <http://www.pnghighcomm.org.uk/consular-services/dual-citizenship/>.

<sup>2</sup> Government of Papua New Guinea, Organic Law on National and Local-level Government Elections, Section 98 [http://www.paclii.org/pg/legis/consol\\_act/olonalge519/](http://www.paclii.org/pg/legis/consol_act/olonalge519/)

<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth, Papua New Guinea National Election, June-July 2017, <https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/PNG%20COG%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2010** ● The **Papua New Guinea Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030** includes facilitating stronger links with the Papua New Guinean diaspora abroad among its strategic objectives, especially through dual citizenship or permanent residency status. The strategic plan establishes a link between this objective and the country's ability to tap into its human and financial capital.
- 2020** ● The **Papua New Guinea-Australia Comprehensive Strategic and Economic Partnership** provides an overarching framework for deepening bilateral cooperation with Australia and is underpinned by a commitment to achieving concrete outcomes by 2030. The partnership recognises the mutual benefits of improved labour mobility for both countries and commits to increasing the number of Papua New Guineans participating in the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme in Australia in the future.
- 2024** ● The **Australia - Papua New Guinea Development Partnership Plan 2024-2029** provides an action plan outlining agreed development objectives, collaborative implementation, shared outcomes and monitoring and evaluation frameworks between the two countries. Responding to Australia's International Development Policy, the plan aims to establish a meaningful partnership between Australia and Papua New Guinea to ensure sustainable development within the region. Recognising the benefits of cross-border labour mobility, the plan reveals Australia's commitment to issue visas to support movement between Papua New Guinea and Australia through the Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) scheme (see 'Spotlight initiative' section).



### Trends and achievements

With a diaspora estimated at only 30,000 people of a population of almost 9 million, little importance has been given to issues of diaspora engagement in Papua New Guinea since the country became independent. Although the government has historically had very few institutionalised relations with its diaspora, in the last decade it has started to increase efforts in the field of diaspora engagement. The government amended the Citizenship Act in 2016 to allow dual citizenship with Australia, thus securing the rights of the diaspora in Papua New Guinea (in particular those linked to land ownership) and facilitating the return of the diaspora to the country.<sup>4</sup> The government is also keen on developing a database of its diaspora abroad, and the High Commission of Papua New Guinea in Canberra has invited the diaspora to share information about Papua New Guinean groups and associations active in Australia.<sup>5</sup> Similar initiatives were put in place by the Papua New Guinea High Commission in London, which published a 'Registration form for friends of PNG' for persons interested in being involved and in maintaining contact with the PNG community in the country.

During the last decade, the government has made it a priority to encourage its citizens to work abroad, and to benefit in particular from the opportunities offered by regional mobility mechanisms such as the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) in Australia, or the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme (RSE) in New Zealand. Papua New Guinea is participating in the three labour migration schemes,<sup>6</sup> and in 2019 the government established a PNG Labour Mobility Unit (LMU) with the objective of increasing the number of workers sent to Australia and New Zealand each year. The government also supported its diaspora when it expressed its frustrations over an Australian visa policy that was perceived to be too restrictive, echoing the demands of the diaspora during an official visit of the

4 See <https://ica.gov.pg/press-releases/2013/constitutional-amendments-to-allow-dual-citizenship> and <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-investment-climate-statements/papua-new-guinea/>

5 High Commission of Papua New Guinea in Canberra, 'PNG Citizens' <https://pngcanberra.org/png-citizens/>

6 See <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/research-and-statistics/research-reports/recognised-seasonal-employer-rse-scheme> and <https://www.employment.gov.au/participating-countries-and-contact-points>

Australian government in 2013.<sup>7</sup> In the beginning of 2023, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese supported Papua New Guinea's "ambition" to increase its involvement in the Pacific Labour Mobility scheme, and deepen its economic and defense ties, including by allowing more Papua New Guineans to work in Australia. This commitment by the Prime Minister was expressed in the midst of severe labour shortages faced by Australian businesses. As of 2023, Papua New Guinea might be part of Australia's new Pacific Engagement Visa, which is a permanent resident visa that will be made available to citizens from the Pacific islands and Timor-Leste. The scheme aims to give 3,000 eligible people from the region the opportunity to live and work in Australia each year. People will be chosen using a random ballot selection process. The PLS will continue to exist alongside the new visa, the latter of which aims to enhance Australia's engagement with diaspora from the Pacific.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, the government is actively seeking to promote Papua New Guinea as an investment destination for Australian companies,<sup>9</sup> and it has included potential investors from the Papua New Guinean diaspora in Australia in its promotional efforts.<sup>10</sup> The government has also recently announced its objective to encourage the flow of remittances into the national economy, with the stated aim of receiving more remittances from workers abroad than development aid.<sup>11</sup>

## Obstacles



- **Limited services to the diaspora:** The low prioritisation of diaspora engagement by the government of Papua New Guinea results in very few services and little information available to the diaspora. For instance, passports of Papua New Guineans living abroad cannot be renewed at diplomatic missions; documents about to expire must therefore be sent to the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Authority in Port Moresby.<sup>12</sup>
- **Lack of policy and institutional framework:** No policy or strategy on diaspora engagement has been developed in Papua New Guinea, and there is currently no government institution with a specific mandate on diaspora affairs.
- **Poverty and lack of opportunities:** High poverty and unemployment rates in Papua New Guinea form an obstacle to diaspora engagement and return of skilled Papua New Guineans.

7 ABC News, 'PNG PM calls for easier Australian visa access', <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-05-10/png-pm-criticises-australia-over-visas/4680944>

8 How Australia's new Pacific Engagement Visa works. <https://www.abc.net.au/pacific/pacific-engagement-visa-explainer/103011732>

9 See <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/press-conference-hon-james-marape-mp-prime-minister-papua-new-guinea> and <https://apnews.com/article/4cf7ddb14f9b4258a5122b29edb2ddfa>

10 Devpolicyblog, 'Flying the PNG flag in Canberra', <https://devpolicy.org/flying-the-png-flag-in-australia-20180724/>

11 PNG Labour Mobility Unit, <https://www.pngworkers.org/png-lmu>

12 Papua New Guinea High Commission in London, 'Revalidation of Passports', <http://www.pnghighcomm.org.uk/consular-services/re-validation-passports/>

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## SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

### [PNG Labour Mobility Unit](#)

#### LABOUR MOBILITY

Through its new website, the Labour Mobility Unit provides information to potential seasonal workers on how to apply to seasonal labour schemes in Australia and New Zealand, as well as details of current recruitment processes in each of the country's provincial administrations, which are responsible for selecting and recruiting workers. Final approvals are given by the government through the Labour Mobility Unit, with the objective to send 8,000 workers to Australia and New Zealand each year.

### [Prime Minister James Marape's visits to the diaspora<sup>13</sup>](#)

#### NETWORKING

In recent years, visits by the Prime Minister James Marape to Australia and New Zealand provided opportunities for government authorities and business groups to connect with the Papua New Guinean diaspora. During a visit to Canberra in 2019, PM Marape encouraged the Papua New Guinean diaspora to apply for dual citizenship under the 2016 Citizenship Act, and invited Papua New Guineans living abroad to engage back home.<sup>14</sup>

### [@Pasifikavisuals](#)

#### CULTURE

Instagram page '@Pasifikavisuals' is curated by Wap-hill Imbun, a Papua New Guinean- Australian. It offers visuals and stories that reflect the diversity of Pacific people to promote the culture, including among Papua New Guineans abroad and other Pacific islanders.

### [Pacific Engagement Visa \(PEV\)](#)

#### LABOUR MIGRATION

Launched by the Australian government in June 2024, the Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) programme enables eligible Papua New Guinea nationals to migrate to Australia as permanent residents. They will have access to a range of settlement support in Australia, including migrant settlement services, English language programmes, public schools and healthcare, and financial support to encourage their participation in training and education. The programme aims to deepen economic, educational and cultural ties between Australia and Papua New Guinea to support broader economic development in the region.

### [Papua New Guinea Pidgin Language Week \(Papua Niugini Tok Pisin Wik\) 2024 - ongoing](#)

#### CULTURE

As part of the Pacific Language Weeks series, supported by New Zealand's Ministry for Pacific Peoples, Papua New Guinean diaspora hosted their first celebration of Papua New Guinea Pidgin Language Week in November 2024<sup>15</sup> to strengthen their sense of belonging to their heritage. For 2025, this event will be held between 7 and 13 September 2025 under the theme 'Lukautim, strongim na kirapim tokples na pasin blo tubuna - Preserve, revitalise and promote our language and culture'.

### [Kalakai Collective 2023 - ongoing](#)

#### CULTURE, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Previously known as PNG Handcraft Collection, the Kalakai Collective is an initiative run by Victoria and Glorian Kamen, the PNG diaspora in Brisbane, Australia. It serves as a platform to promote Papua New Guinean local crafts and products as well as to facilitate cultural exchange between Australia and Papua New Guinea.

<sup>13</sup> Theinterpreter, 'Marape's blueprint for change in a fast vanishing honeymoon'.

<sup>14</sup> Devpolicyblog, 'Flying the PNG flag in Canberra', <https://devpolicy.org/flying-the-png-flag-in-australia-20180724/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://pmn.co.nz/read/language-and-culture/png-language-week-diaspora-embracing-milestone-achievement>

## Annex:

# List of Actors

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

#### Pacific Community (SPC)

Papua New Guinea is a member of the Pacific Community, an international development organisation that focuses on scientific and technical expertise. SPC's Social Development Programme is involved in managing the Festival of Pacific Arts (FESTPAC), which was created in 1972 as a tool for preserving Pacific culture.

#### Pacific Islands Forum

Papua New Guinea is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, an inter-governmental organisation that seeks to foster cooperation between countries and territories of the Pacific Ocean. Its work covers migration issues, as the forum has organised regional meetings on climate change and migration, as well as workshops between immigration officials from the region.

#### Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC)

Papua New Guinea is a member of the PIDC (known as the Pacific Immigration Director's Conference until 2018). PIDC is a regional consultative process that gathers official immigration agencies of the Pacific region to enable the heads of the participating states' immigration agencies to discuss issues of mutual interest and foster cooperation. Other objectives of PIDC include modernising national immigration legal frameworks in the region.

#### Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)

The Melanesian Spearhead Group is an intergovernmental organisation composed of the four Melanesian countries of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The MSG requested a technical intervention from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) through its ACP-EU Migration Action Programme, and is currently working on the development of a Remittances Policy, which has yet to be finalised.<sup>16</sup>

#### International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Papua New Guinea became a member of the ILO in 1976, a year after it gained independence. With financial support from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the ILO worked with Papua New Guinea to implement the programme "Strengthening Labour Migration Management in Papua New Guinea and Nauru in the context of the Australia Seasonal Worker Program" from 2013 to 2014. The programme was designed to help the governments of Papua New Guinea and Nauru to prepare workers better for their departure abroad and upon their return.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Melanesian Spearhead Group, Melanesian Tok issue 10, <https://www.msgsec.info/wp-content/uploads/newsletter/Melanesian-Tok-Issue-10-Jan-Apr-2020.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> ILO in Asia and the Pacific, 'Seasonal work brings year-round benefits', [https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/articles/WCMS\\_241674/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/asia/media-centre/articles/WCMS_241674/lang--en/index.htm)

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



- **National institutions**
  - At sub-ministerial level

### **PNG Labour Mobility Unit 2019**

The PNG Labour Mobility Unit operates as an independent unit within the Department of Treasury. Its objective is to sharpen the focus on labour mobility as a source of jobs and revenue for Papua New Guinea citizens, and it is responsible for facilitating Papua New Guinea's participation to the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme in Australia, as well as the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme in New Zealand.

### **Immigration and Citizenship Authority (ICA)**

The ICA is responsible for managing Papua New Guinea's borders in relation to the movement of persons into and out of the country. Its mandate includes issuing and renewing passports for Papua New Guinean citizens.

### **Diplomatic missions of Papua New Guinea abroad**

Diplomatic missions provide diplomatic, consular, and visa services, in addition to information on tourism, investment, trade and commerce opportunities in Papua New Guinea. They are also involved in data collection initiatives on behalf of the government.

### **Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM)**

The role of DNPM is to lead, plan, coordinate and facilitate appropriate national and international initiatives that address and promote equitable and sustainable development of Papua New Guinea. It elaborated the Papua New Guinea Development Strategic Plan 2010-2030.

## **Diaspora organisations in Europe**

### **Wantok Support Charity 2011 UK**

- ☑ **Integration activities**
- ☑ **Development activities**

The Wantok Support Charity is a UK-based charity, founded by Papua New Guinean nationals living in the UK, whose mission is to improve the lives of the citizens of Papua New Guinea. Additionally, they provide support services for individuals and families who have settled in the UK. Services include healthcare, education, and environmental issues.

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



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