



# Diaspora engagement mapping

## TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

### Facts & figures

Terminology: The term 'diaspora' is used in national documents. Trinidad and Tobago takes an inclusive approach to defining diaspora, including those born overseas and descendants with a vested interest, as well as the affinity diaspora. Trinidad and Tobago is also interested in engaging the wider Caribbean diaspora.<sup>3</sup>

#### 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: **0.72%**  
Remittances inflow (USD million): **202.34**

#### 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).

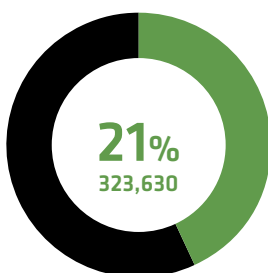
#### Emigration



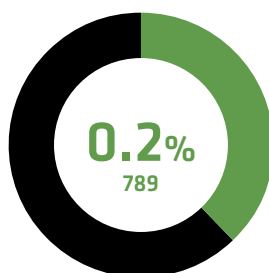
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 43.2%  
♀ 56.8%



♂ 43.2%  
♀ 56.8%

#### Top countries of destination



United States of America	241,541
Canada	62,401
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2,524
Jamaica	2,380
Grenada	2,331

<sup>1</sup> As presented during an EUDiF peer exchange with Guyana and Jamaica, June 2023

<sup>2</sup> According to the Citizenship Act of Trinidad and Tobago Chap 1:50 Section 12(1)

<sup>3</sup> [Voting from Abroad - the International IDEA Handbook](#) (2007) p.244

## 2021 National Diaspora Policy



The Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs is in the process of finalising the development of a National Diaspora Policy. This is in keeping with the Government's intention to engage the Trinidad and Tobago Diaspora and the wider Caribbean Diaspora in a more systematic, strategic and structured manner. The aim is to realise significant rewards for the country across several key spheres: ICTs, Trade, Tourism, Maritime, Sustainable Development, Health and Education. In December 2021 all members of the public and stakeholders were invited to comment on the draft document. It is unclear whether the draft has been amended or adopted afterwards. The National Diaspora Policy is aligned with the national Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and includes avenues and incentives to contribute from afar and/or return to Trinidad and Tobago, or the Caribbean region. Although still in draft in 2023, the policy guides the work of the CSME and Diaspora Affairs Unit.

### Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1973** ● **Constitution of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago** (Article 17(1) – last amended 1973) grants citizenship by descent to children of citizens born abroad when at least one parent is a citizen through means other than by descent.<sup>4</sup>
- 1978** ● **Citizenship of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago Act** (Chapter 1:50, Art. 5 and Art. 11(2D) (last amended 1978 and 1988 respectively) outlines a framework for acquiring citizenship by descent (Article 5) and dual citizenship (Article 11, Section 2D), granting citizenship to persons born outside of Trinidad and Tobago under certain conditions.<sup>5</sup>
- 2016** ∨ ● **National Strategic Plan 2016-2030** addresses diaspora relations and recognizes the diaspora as a strategic actor in achieving several national goals. Goal 2 points to the creation of a Diaspora Affairs Unit as part of strategies to strengthen and modernize public service. Diaspora engagement is also mentioned as a component of economic growth strategies that seek to develop the country's export market, foster trade, and attract a high-skilled workforce. Building partnerships with the diaspora and offering financial and non-financial incentives to attract diaspora resources are recognized as key to these strategies.
- 2030**

### >> Trends

Since 2016, the Trinidad and Tobago government has begun to acknowledge the diaspora's potential as key to the country's efforts to diversify its historic economic dependence on oil and gas production as prices fall. Partly due to the wealth these sectors generated, Trinidad and Tobago had not looked to the diaspora as a source of investment, trade, and expertise in the past. The goals outlined in the most recent National Strategic Plan along with the national investment promotion agency's impetus to target the diaspora indicate a shift towards greater diaspora engagement as part of economic growth strategies, in particular through increased trade via access to new markets and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

The Trinidadian diaspora is mostly located in the United States, where its members are most likely to work in management, business, science, and arts occupations. They have the highest median income compared to other Caribbean diasporas.<sup>6</sup>

4 [https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/mesicic3\\_tto\\_constitution.pdf](https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/mesicic3_tto_constitution.pdf)

5 The citizenship is granted if one of the parents is a citizen who gained citizenship through means other than descent, per constitutional guidelines. It is worth mentioning that in 1988, this law was amended to allow dual citizenship to citizens by birth or descent, a right that was not granted under earlier legislation as citizens had to renounce citizenship of Trinidad and Tobago upon acquiring citizenship of another country.

6 Zong, J., Batalova, J., (Feb 2019) Caribbean Immigrants in the United States MPI

Due to the lack of a policy to entice educated and training personnel, Trinidad and Tobago has faced a problem of skilled worker emigration, such as a large number of nurses who leave the public health system and emigrate to seek work in other countries.<sup>7</sup>

As Trinidad and Tobago has begun to diversify its economy, it has also taken specific steps to institutionalize the diaspora's role in social and economic development and to create platforms for mapping and engaging this group, such as a project conducted by the Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago in Washington D.C. and the ilove TT project (see in spotlight section). This is notable considering that the country's relationship with the diaspora has largely been concentrated in consular services and remittances are not a considerable contribution to GDP. In the 2020s, significant effort is being made to digitalise government services, with diaspora engagement one of the pilot areas. Trinidad and Tobago is working towards a complete "Diaspora eEngagement" offering, including consular services, immigration and other citizen services. The aim is to build a "digital nation" with the trifecta of a digital society, economy and government which will in turn facilitate meaningful connectivity with the diaspora, increase export of goods and service and deliver public value.

## Obstacles



- **Incomplete policy efforts:** Trinidad and Tobago has considerable terrain to cover in terms of a policy framework for engaging the diaspora.<sup>8</sup>
- **Lack of foreign direct investment (FDI):** The diaspora faces limited investment options linked to the country's dependence on fossil fuel production. There are also challenges for streamlining diaspora FDI through the national investment promotion agency, which could help align investments with national development goals. Given the country's oil and gas tradition, diaspora investors have settled into a pattern of funding small-scale projects using personal networks rather than looking at government agencies.<sup>9</sup>
- **Lack of efforts to attract diaspora expertise.** A considerable part of Trinidad and Tobago's skilled workforce lives abroad, and the government's efforts to engage this group are incipient. The lack of connections (and platforms for building them) poses a challenge for initiatives seeking to tap into the diaspora's expertise and professional networks as the country diversifies economically and looks to attract a skilled foreign workforce.

<sup>7</sup> Please see: IOM Trinidad & Tobago and [The Caribbean Diaspora - An Untapped Resource for Impacting Economic Development through Investments in the Caribbean](#)

<sup>8</sup> World Bank (2016) [The Potential Economic Role of the Caribbean Diaspora](#) pg. 117.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pg. 129.



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### HUMAN CAPITAL

#### Mapping diaspora skills & organisations

The Embassy of Trinidad and Tobago in Washington DC is building a database of diaspora members living in the United States as well as diaspora organisations. This is being done via a [Google Form](#) available on the embassy website at the time of writing. Information collected enables a geographical mapping the diaspora, identification of fields of employment, and affiliation with diaspora organizations.

#### [iloveTT 2018 - ongoing](#)

### INVESTMENT; HUMAN CAPITAL

InvestTT, the country's national investment promotion agency, launched the iloveTT project as a platform for collaborating with the diaspora on social and economic development ventures outside the energy sector. In order to build the agency's database of potential diaspora investors and better target their engagement strategy, InvestTT's website hosts a survey where diaspora members can specify their areas of expertise and interest in supporting Trinidad and Tobago, whether it be as an advisor, mentor, brand promotor, investor, entrepreneur, or consumer. InvestTT highlights the [Trinidad and Tobago Fine Cocoa Company \(TTFCC\)](#) as an example of successful diaspora investment. InvestTT played a central role in TTFCC's start-up operations and the company continues to receive guidance today, even as an award-winning chocolate manufacturer.

#### [T&T Homecoming 2022 - ongoing](#)

### NETWORKING

First launched in 2022<sup>10</sup> by the Trinbago Diaspora Outreach Network (TDON), T&T Homecoming covers a wide array of events and activities to showcase the contributions of the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora as well as to foster their ties with their heritage. The activities include: visits to historical and natural heritage sites, gatherings with the locals, and a two-day diaspora grand convention (held biennially) in which diaspora and local experts discuss homeland development issues. The 2024 Homecoming also featured the first Diaspora Patriots Dinner and Awards, held to honour diaspora individuals and groups that contribute to communities in Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>10</sup> <https://trinbagodiaspora.org/success-with-homecoming-tt-2022/>

## Annex:

# List of Actors

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

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

#### Caribbean Community (CARICOM) 1973

CARICOM promotes regional integration and functional cooperation among its 15 member states and 5 associate members; it operates as a single, regional market. CARICOM offers the diaspora a more attractive investment environment than national economies and regulatory frameworks. It also allows countries to incentive domestic enterprises to export outside the CARICOM region.<sup>11</sup>

- **National institutions**

#### Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs

The Ministry oversees foreign relations and serves as a diplomatic channel for promoting national interests and development abroad. It also holds the mandate for services to the diaspora, which are carried out through the Consular Mission.

#### **CME and Diaspora Affairs Unit 2023**

The CARICOM Single Market Economy and Diaspora Affairs unit was established in January 2023 with a view to finalising the National Diaspora Policy and setting up the institutional framework for its implementation. As well as leading with the Ministry of Digital Transformation on the Diaspora eEngagement objectives as part of a national digital transformation, the Diaspora Affairs Unit aims to have diaspora focal points in all ministries. It is also considering creating an umbrella diaspora organisation to coordinate with diaspora organisations around the world.

#### InvestTT 2012

InvestTT is the national investment promotion agency and operates as part of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. It works to promote foreign direct investment in industries unrelated to oil, gas, and other types of energy. In recent years it has taken steps to directly target the diaspora as investors.<sup>12</sup>

#### Immigration Division

The Immigration Division is part of the Ministry of National Security and has the mandate to issue travel documents both locally and overseas, including citizenship documents, which may be requested by the diaspora.

<sup>11</sup> <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/990601467315599193/pdf/105761-REVISED-CDI-Report-FinalLatest-PUBLIC.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.investtt.co.tt/how-we-help/>

## **The Trinbago Diaspora Outreach Network (TDON)**

The Trinbago Diaspora Outreach Network (TDON) is a bridge-building entity which spearheads efforts to locate and sustain diasporic connections between T&T and its overseas nationals. It's goal is to 1. engender social, cultural and economic upliftment in communities and with individuals residing in Trinidad and Tobago. 2. To initiate and sustain efforts to recognize patriotic endeavors undertaken by foreign-based Trinidad and Tobago nationals who can improve community and national wellbeing of Trinidad and Tobago. 3. To facilitate networking among overseas Hometown Associations of Trinidad and Tobago.

## **Office of the Chief Secretary, Tobago House of Assembly**

Following the integration of the Office of the Deputy Chief Secretary (ODCS) into the Office of the Chief Secretary (OCS) under the Tobago House of Assembly, the ODCS functions are executed by five different departments, including the Diaspora Relations Department. This department will facilitate, interface, and create linkages with the Tobago diaspora resident in Trinidad, as well as those living regionally and internationally. It will function as a coordinating agency for collecting data on non-resident Tobagonians, in addition to providing information and support services to the diaspora.

## **Diaspora organisations in Europe**

In Europe, organisations of the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora are primarily located in the UK. This could be due to the country's historic relationship with the Commonwealth and the fact that the diaspora is relatively small and largely resides in the United States and Canada.

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



### **Trinidad and Tobago UK Association (TTA) 1988 UK**

✓ **Development activities**

✓ **Integration activities**

The TTA promotes education and training for both adults and children of the Trinidad and Tobago diaspora in the UK, as well as opportunities for recreation. Its objective is to contribute to the diaspora's overall wellbeing and it primarily works in the London Borough of Haringey.<sup>13</sup>

### **Trinis in London 2003 UK**

✓ **Integration activities**

This organization provides coverage, information and facilitates links between organizations and people of the United Kingdom, Europe, and the Caribbean, through cultural and social events and activities.

<sup>13</sup> <https://beta.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1132060&subid=0>

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