Diaspora engagement mapping
COSTA RICA

Facts & figures
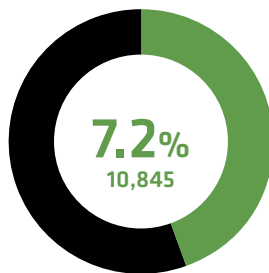
Emigration

% of emigrants in total population

2.9%
150,400
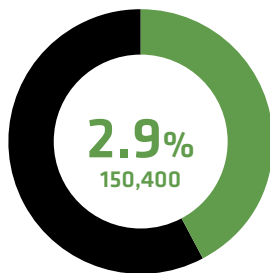
♂ 42.4%
♀ 57.6%

% of which in the EU

7.2%
10,845

♂ 44.7%
♀ 55.3%

Remittances as a share of GDP: **0.8**%
Remittances inflow (USD million): **500**

Top countries of destination

United States of America	99,285
Nicaragua	11,283
Panama	8,260
Canada	4,206
Spain	3,459

Political rights

Dual citizenship[1] ☑

Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad[2] ☑

Voting from abroad:[3]
At embassies/consulates ☑

Terminology: In some cases, the term 'costarricenses en el exterior' is used in addition to 'diaspora'.

Costa Rica does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

1 Constitución Política de la República de Costa Rica", 1949. Article 16 provides that Costa Rican citizenship cannot be lost or renounced. Accessed May 2020
2 Código Electoral. Ley No. 8765", 2009. Accessed May 2020
3 According to article 189 of the Código Electoral, the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) of Costa Rica may set up voting stations in Costa Rican consulates.

REPUBLIC OF COSTA RICA

Overview of the policy and legislative framework

2009 — **General Law on Migration and Aliens - Ley General de Migración y Extranjería (Law No. 8764)** regulates immigration, as well as the entry and departure of foreigners, considering the international human rights instruments executed by Costa Rica. It also establishes the main principles applicable to migration policies. In terms of emigration, one such principle is to promote migrant reintegration into Costa Rican society and to preserve links between the national society and its migrant communities abroad.

2013 — **National Comprehensive Migration Policy 2013-2023 - Política Migratoria Integral para Costa Rica 2013-2023** was designed by the National Council on Migration and mainly centered on immigration, since Costa Rica is mostly considered a migrant-receiving country.[4] It addresses diaspora briefly, including some actions about consular services improvements for Costa Ricans abroad. It also seeks to promote investment in the country, but there are no specific policies for returning migrants reintegration.[5]

2017 — **National Integration Plan for Costa Rica 2018-2022** aims to guarantee the integration and social inclusion of the migrant and refugee population in the country; to promote equal opportunities, equity, and respect for human rights, through joint and articulated work of the public and private institutions; to comprehensively improve social, economic and cultural spaces; and to carry out a diagnosis of the needs of the immigrant and refugee population living in the country. Regarding Costa Rican returnees, this Plan improves consular services abroad.[6]

›› Trends

Costa Rica's experience with its diaspora is relatively recent, perhaps dating back to 2010 when out-migration increased and talented Costa Ricans living abroad reached out to the state and private sector to share their knowledge. Costa Rica mostly considered itself a migrant-receiving country[7]. Government efforts mainly focus on immigration, so there are no special ties or projects with the diaspora. The interaction of the Costa Rican state with its diaspora so far has been mainly limited to consular services offered in small embassies and consulates around the world.[8]

The Costa Rican diaspora resides mainly in the US and one of its characteristics is that its labor composition is highly qualified.[9] In turn, some in the diaspora have offered to improve Costa Rica's public plans by sharing their knowledge and experience.[10]

Due to the small size and relatively new experience of the Costa Rican diaspora, there are not many associations abroad, but there are some informal groups on social media such as Facebook, where they share information and tips about their country of origin, such as Ticos en España, Ticos en Alemania and Ticos en Europa exist.

4 "Measuring well-governed migration. The 2016 Migration Governance Index" The Economist, Intelligence Unit, 2016. Accessed June 2020.
5 International Organization for Migration (OIM). Migration Governance Profile. Costa Rica. 2019. https://costarica.iom.int/sites/default/files/Perfil%20de%20Gobernanza%20Migratoria%20Final%20CR.pdf Accessed June 2020.
6 Gatica, Gustavo, "Diagnóstico de la emigración de costarricenses y su reintegración en el país" *Culturas y Desarrollo en Centroamérica (CUDECA),* 2018. Accessed June 2020.
7 "Measuring well-governed migration. The 2016 Migration Governance Index" The Economist, Intelligence Unit, 2016. Accessed June 2020.
8 Bravo Vanessa. "El Salvador and Costa Rica's State–Diaspora Relations Management", International Journal of Communication 8, Elon University, USA, 2014. Accessed September 2020.
9 Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos (OCDE). Reviews of Labour Market and Social Policies: Costa Rica, 2017.
10 See "Diáspora científica y tecnológica de Costa Rica dialoga sobre estrategia nacional de ciencia para la innovación", 2019.

Achievements

Voting from abroad: In 2014, for the first time, Costa Rican citizens abroad were able to exercise their vote in a presidential election.[11] Voting from abroad subsequently took place in 2018. During such elections, the consulates acted as delegates of the Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones (TSE) of Costa Rica and organized voting stations.[12]

Recognition of highly educated diaspora: The Costa Rican government publicly recognizes its talent abroad, particularly the scientific and highly educated. For example, in 2019, the Ministry of Science, Technology, and Telecommunications (MICITT) invited diaspora to a dialogue via which to provide input to the National Science Strategy for Innovation.[13]

Obstacles

- **Low inclusion:** Although the government has made specific efforts with the emigrant population, such as its inclusion both in the National Comprehensive Migration Policy 2013-2023 and the National Integration Plan for Costa Rica 2018-2022,[14] the diaspora asks for more inclusion in the official discourse and policy debate.[15] The diaspora is rarely acknowledged in Costa Rica, even though migrants currently send around USD$ 555 million a year in remittances, and their contributions are essential for their families' well-being, especially in certain agriculture-based regions of the country.[16]

- **Lack of specific initiatives and data:** Relations between the Costa Rican government and the diaspora centers on consular activities (such as passport requests) and at particular moments when aid is needed (such as during natural disasters),[17] but there is a lack of public initiatives and information available regarding diaspora data and statistics.

11 Bravo Vanessa. Op. Cit. Accessed September 2020.

12 Salgado Retana Eduardo. "El voto costarricense en el extranjero y la participación del cuerpo consular", 2018. Revista de Derecho Electoral del Tribunal Supremo de Elecciones de la República de Costa Rica. Accessed June 2020.

13 "Diáspora científica y tecnológica de Costa Rica dialoga sobre estrategia nacional de ciencia para la innovación", 2019 https://www.micit.go.cr/noticias/diaspora-cientifica-y-tecnologica-costa-rica-dialoga-estrategia-nacional-ciencia-la Accesed June 2020

14 Please see the "Overview of the Policy and Legislative Framework" section.

15 Bravo Vanessa. Op. Cit. Accessed May 2020.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

Ticotal Network

Costa Rican Abroad Talent Network. 2010.

This network of Costa Rican Abroad Talent was created under the National Academy of Sciences to bring together Costa Rican scientists and engineers who study or work abroad. The network seeks to connect them with the scientific and technological cluster of the country by establishing a permanent instrument of interaction that enables the exchange of ideas, contacts, and experiences and identifies opportunities for cooperation in areas such as design and implementation on public policies, sabbaticals in Costa Rica and encouraging scientific and technological skills to young people. Success stories are available on Ticotal's website.

Costa Rican Electoral Supreme Court Program (2012-2014) and Basic Guide on Costa Rican Vote Abroad (2014)

The Electoral Supreme Court developed a 2-year program to inform the Costa Rican diaspora about the absentee vote[18] and compiled the Basic Guide on Costa Rican Vote Abroad, including all proceedings applicable for absentee voting.

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18 Bravo Vanessa. Op. Cit. Accessed September 2020.

Annex:
List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

Latin American and Caribbean Economic System (SELA) 1975

SELA's main goal is to create a system of consultation and coordination for the region to ___ ___ mon positions and strategies on economic issues.

Central American Integration System (SICA) 1991

SICA is the institutional framework for Central American Regional Integration with the aim to fulfil peace, freedom, democracy and development in the region. SICA also promotes free mobility of citizens within the SICA area.

- **National institutions**

National Council on Migration

The Council was created by the General Law on Migration and Aliens (Law No. 8764)[19] as an advisory body formed by several Ministries: in charge of designing the migration policy.

- o   At ministerial level

Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores y Culto

The Ministry is responsible for foreign policy, in charge of diplomatic and consular services and responsible for services to citizens in the national territory and abroad.

- o   At sub-ministerial level

Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería (DGME)

Assigned to the Ministry of Public Security, the DGME is in charge of migration policies execution. It also regulates the activities of foreigners in the country and helps fight human trafficking crimes.

19 Articles 9 and 10.

Diaspora organisations in Europe

Asociación de Costarricenses en Francia (ACRF) 2001 France

☑ **Integration activities**

ARCF's purposes are to share the traditional Costa Rican art, music, and food and to give support to Costa Ricans living (or that will live) in France, in areas such as visa applications, studies, rentals and jobs.

Costa Rica in the UK 2016 UK

☑ **Integration activities**

This non-profit cultural community organization promotes and organizes social and cultural events, to build a strong and welcoming community in the United Kingdom for Costa Ricans.

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