



# Diaspora engagement mapping NIUE

## Facts & figures

Terminology: Niue refers to its diaspora as 'Niueans abroad' or 'Niueans living abroad'.<sup>1</sup>

### Political rights



Dual citizenship<sup>2</sup>



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>4,5</sup>



### Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP:<sup>3</sup> -  
Remittances inflow (USD million): -

### 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).

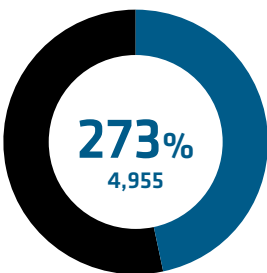
### Emigration



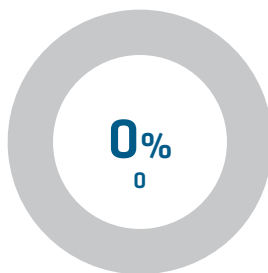
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 46.7%  
♀ 53.3%



♂ 0%  
♀ 0%

### Top countries of destination



New Zealand	3,957
Australia	975
Cook Islands	18
Samoa	4
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	1

**Niue does not have a diaspora engagement policy.**

<sup>1</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization: FAOLEX Database: [Niue National Strategic Plan 2016-2026](#).

<sup>2</sup> Niue Island (tourism website)

<sup>3</sup> Data for remittances as a share of GDP is not available for Niue.

<sup>4</sup> Tahela Aualiitia. ABC News. (1 June 2020) Niue's national election sees the end of Premier Toke Talagi's 12-year term.

<sup>5</sup> The International IDEA Handbook: Voting from Abroad (2007).

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1974** ● Under the **Niue Constitution Act 1974**,<sup>6</sup> Niue is self-governing in free association with New Zealand. New Zealand provides necessary economic and administrative assistance to Niue, as well as assistance with foreign affairs, defence and security if requested by the Niue government. Under New Zealand law, all Niueans are New Zealand citizens.
- 2009** ● The **National Youth Policy 2009-2013** developed an activity to encourage young Niueans to return, called NEVAT (Niue experience of Vaka Atu Toa). The scheme provides an opportunity for young New Zealand-born Niueans to explore the Niuean culture and lifestyle for three months.
- 2016** ● The **Niue Government National Strategic Plan 2016-2026** aims to encourage Niueans abroad - and others - to live on Niue. The population strategy plan is to retain people to enjoy the lifestyle on Niue. It aims to reach 80% of the remuneration in New Zealand, in order to make employment in Niue more competitive. The plan states that Niueans living abroad are important and the cultural bridge with those living in Niue will continue to feature and will complement efforts in other sectors to rebuild Niue's population.
- 2019** ● The **Statement of Partnership** signed by the Governments of New Zealand and Niue on 26 April 2019 sets out the principles and priorities under which they cooperate, coordinate and partner in shared priority areas. There is a specific objective of relevance to diaspora engagement: "People - protecting Niue's taoga (culture) and growing Niue's human capital."

### » Trends & achievements

Niue, the third least populated country in the world,<sup>7</sup> has experienced a population decline greater than that of any other independent state in the world. Due to the country's free association with New Zealand,<sup>8</sup> Niueans are automatically citizens of New Zealand. More than three-quarters of all Niue-born live overseas, mainly in New Zealand. At the last census in 2018, 30,867 ethnic Niueans were resident in New Zealand,<sup>9</sup> of which 83% were born in New Zealand.

Faced with depopulation, the government has long sought to encourage return migration and immigration,<sup>10</sup> over diaspora investment. Niue has always attached more policy significance to return migration than any other country in the region.

The issue of return migration is a contentious topic for many Niueans in New Zealand and Niue.<sup>11</sup> A number of employment schemes have been developed to attract them. Another initiative was bank loans from the Niue bank, made available for people to renovate their homes. There are other housing schemes, such as renovating houses that are then rented to tourists in partnership with the government. However, these schemes have had little impact on the number of Niueans returning home. The population of Niue reached its highest in 1966 at 5,194,<sup>12</sup> but had fallen to 1,611 by 2011. In 2017, the population increased slightly to 1,719. The UN estimate for 2020 is 1,626.<sup>13</sup>

6 New Zealand Government: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade: [About Niue](#).

7 Worldometer: [Countries in the world by population](#) (2020)

8 University of South Wales. IOM: [ANZ-Pacific Migration Governance System](#).

9 New Zealand Government. Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa: [2018 Census data for Niuean Ethnic Group](#).

10 Prof John Connell (14 July 2008) Niue: [Embracing a Culture of Migration](#)

11 Lee, H., Tupai Francis, S., [Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific Perspectives](#). Australian National University E-Press.

12 Niue Government: [Statistic Niue Office: Population](#)

13 World Population Review: [Niue Population](#)

Remittances to Niue have never been significant, both as measured by receipts, and by the willingness of Niueans to send money. From the late 1970s, Niueans were the least likely Polynesian group in New Zealand to send remittances, since they perceived that the family in Niue were unlikely to remain there.<sup>14</sup> Remittances currently make up a small part of the income of many households but may increase in times of crisis.

## Obstacles



- **Little incentive to return:** As Niueans can live in New Zealand as citizens, there is little incentive for return to Niue, as employment is scarce and the Niue atoll has limited natural resources.<sup>15</sup> The “physically easier and relaxed lifestyle”<sup>16</sup> found in New Zealand may be the principal ‘pull factor’ for Niuean migration, as well as a disincentive for potential returnees, particularly skilled ones. Cyclones occasionally devastate the island’s infrastructure, which also acts as a deterrent for residing in Niue.
- **Lack of funding:** The government faces financial constraints that limit the support of diaspora engagement activities.
- **Lack of remittance data:** The Niue Government collects limited data on remittances, which hinders the possibility of understanding remittance flows into the country; remittances sent from New Zealand with a value under NZD\$1,000 are not registered.
- **Lack of a dedicated policy on diaspora engagement:** Niue has not yet established a policy on diaspora engagement, or an institution tasked with coordinating efforts to engage with its diaspora population. Unless efforts and funds are spent on developing an institution, Niue faces a massive obstacle with diaspora engagement.
- **New Zealand superannuation restrictions:** During a 2018 meeting with New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, Niue Premier Toke Talagi had raised the issue of the portability of pensions. Niueans are only eligible for New Zealand superannuation if they lived and worked in New Zealand for the last five years of their working life - leading to many moving away from Niue, often for good.<sup>17</sup> This becomes a barrier for Niueans to return back home as they have already set their lives up in another country. Staying for 5 years could mean they have bought properties or have other commitments, like children’s schooling, that prevent them from returning. The absence of pension portability presents a major financial and logistical obstacle for return.

14 Connell, J., Brown, R.P.C., Asian Development Bank: *Remittances in the Pacific an Overview*.

15 Lee, H., Tupai Francis, S., *Migration and Transnationalism: Pacific Perspectives*. Australian National University E-Press.

16 The impact of Transnationalism on Niue

17 Henry Cooke: Stuff News. *Niue gets \$5.75m from NZ, Premier asks for pension portability*.



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## SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

### EDUCATION

#### [Australia Awards Scholarships \(AAS\)](#)

The Australia Awards Scholarships offer international scholarships and fellowships funded by the Australian Government. The awards provide citizens of Niue with the opportunity to obtain a qualification at an Australian tertiary institution. Scholarships are available from bachelor's degree level to PHD.

### CULTURE

#### [Niue Language Week](#)

New Zealand's Ministry for Pacific Peoples (MPP) organises Niue language week. This annual celebration brings together Niuean diaspora communities living in New Zealand every October.<sup>18</sup> Activities include Niuean arts and crafts, cooking, and using the Niuean language to pray, sing hymns and to learn Niuean dances.

### CULTURE + DIGITAL

#### [Niue Language App "Fakaako e Vagahau Niue" 2022](#)

The app was funded by New Zealand's Ministry of Education and has been created by Kiwa Digital which has now built about 150 similar apps, including many for Pacific languages.

### COMMUNICATION & INFORMATION

#### [New government website](#)

Niue's government launched a new website in September 2024 to commemorate its 50th anniversary of self-governance. This platform aims to enhance connections with the diaspora and international partners.

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Niue-Language-Week-Calendar-of-Events.pdf>

## Annex: List of Actors

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

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level:**

#### Pacific Community (SPC)

Niue 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), created in 1972 as a tool for preserving Pacific culture. Niue became a member in 1980.

#### Pacific Islands Forum

Niue 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. 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)

Niue is a member of Pacific Immigration Development Community (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 and enables 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.

- **At national level:**

#### Niue Government

The Niue Government is responsible for determining the strategy to encourage Niueans living overseas to return.

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