



Diaspora engagement mapping TUVALU

Facts & figures

Terminology: The term “Tuvaluan diaspora” is used in government policies and official communications.

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections
for citizens residing abroad²



Remittances



Remittances as a share of GDP: **3.21%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **2**

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 \(2024\)](#).

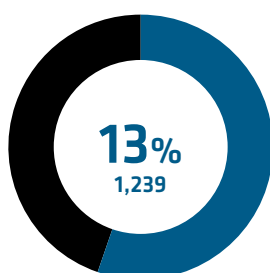
Emigration



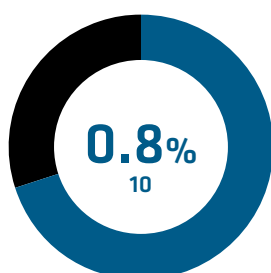
% of emigrants in
total population



% of which
in the EU



♂ 55.5%
♀ 44.5%



♂ 70%
♀ 30%

Top countries of destination



Fiji	428
Kiribati	329
Australia	290
Samoa	55
Tokelau	49

¹ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, [Tuvalu: Whether a person who holds a Tuvalu passport can sponsor his or her spouse for citizenship and/or residence in Tuvalu \(8 January 2003\)](#)

² [The International IDEA Handbook: Voting from Abroad \(2007\)](#)

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2015** ● The **National Labour Migration Policy** aims to provide Tuvaluan citizens with support for opportunities to work abroad. Specific objectives include facilitating the movement of citizens, reducing the cost of remittances and engaging and encouraging inter-agency cooperation and capacity building. The Tuvaluan government acknowledges the importance of the diaspora and states the desire to engage with the Tuvaluan population abroad in the NLMP, yet no specific dedicated strategy has been developed.
- 2016** ● **TE KAKEEGA III - National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2016-2020** seeks to achieve a greater level of security and prosperity for all Tuvaluans and to develop and maintain good relations with countries all around the world. Under this programme the government of Tuvalu hopes to expand overseas employment for suitably qualified individuals through private, bilateral and multi-lateral means. There is also a focus on increasing remittance transfers directly through temporary overseas employment schemes, and indirectly where government policy and initiative can influence temporary or permanent migration opportunities. **TE KAKEEGA IV - National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2021-2030**: does not refer to the diaspora.³
- 2022** ● **Tuvalu National Trade Development Strategy**. End of 2021, the Government adopted the Tuvalu National Trade Development Strategy for 2022 – 2026 which specifically refers to further working with diaspora as market brokers. Among the activities to be undertaken over 2022-2023, the Strategy underlines: Identify value-added products for export to diaspora; Enable marketing to Tuvaluan Diaspora by providing packaging, labeling and certification capabilities; Set-up a platform to garner feedback from Tuvaluan diaspora.

Practices

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Government visit to the Tuvaluan diaspora in Kioa Island, Fiji 2017

Following the end of World War II, the island of Kioa in Fiji was purchased and settled by Tuvaluan emigrants. Today, the population of the island is nearly entirely of Tuvaluan descent and the government of Tuvalu formerly engaged with the Tuvaluan diaspora community of Kioa by sending an official delegation to visit the island.

PACER Plus 2017

Pacific labour mobility arrangements were established as part of the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER Plus) between Tuvalu, Australia and New Zealand. The agreement complements the existing seasonal worker schemes and aims to increase the benefits of the labour-sending countries, as well as establish the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting to discuss further initiatives.

Tuna Australia Scholarships to Tuvaluan Seafarers 2019

Under the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) scheme, Tuna Australia (an association of Australian fisheries) recruits Tuvaluan fishermen for three-year placements in Australia to address labour shortages. The skills learnt during their time working under the Tuna Australia PLS scheme, will help to support the Tuvaluan commercial fishing industry when the workers return home.

³ <https://www.gov.tv/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Te-Kete.pdf>

Seasonal Worker Programs

Tuvalu has signed various seasonal worker programs with New Zealand and Australia, including the PAC (2002), RSE (2007), SWP (2012) and PLS (2018). The policies allow industries to recruit workers from Tuvalu for seasonal work. These initiatives allow workers to build their skills and earn money to send remittances home to support their families.

Tuvalu: the Digital Nation State Programme

At COP27 (2022), Tuvaluan Minister Simon Kofe announced that Tuvalu would become the first digital nation. It would digitally recreate its land, archive its rich history and culture, and move all governmental functions into a digital space.

>> Observations

The “Observations” and “Obstacles” sections contain additional information on the context of diaspora engagement that does not fit directly into the other sections. They are based on a combination of literature review and comments from the authors. New information is incorporated during the annual updates. Readers are invited to verify the relevance of the information at the time of reading, as the context may have evolved.

Tuvalu actively engages with its diaspora, particularly through the labour migration programmes it participates in. The country has a long tradition of labour migration, notably through seafaring and participation in seasonal worker schemes, with labour migration increasing steadily in recent years.⁴ The government has identified the Tuvaluan diaspora as a key asset in its efforts to assist Tuvaluans seeking employment opportunities and in integrating abroad. It has also recognized the role played by the diaspora in providing information to island Tuvaluans on education and work opportunities which are often hard to access in the islands.

Tuvalu seafarers are supported through a formal mechanism whereby they can remit a portion of their base salary to friends and family in Tuvalu; they also make a mandatory contribution to the Tuvalu National Provident Fund (TNPF – Tuvalu’s largest financial institution, which collects a contribution from employees to then invest on their behalf).⁵ Tuvalu migrant workers have had immediate success with the Pacific Labour Scheme since its launch in 2018, with workers able to earn up to ten times their usual salary by working in industries under the scheme,⁶ whilst gaining valuable skills that could be utilized upon their return. This enables overseas workers to support their families, and to earn enough money from their time in Australia to build new family homes.

Building on this strong labour mobility framework, in 2025, Tuvalu and Australia operationalised the Falepili Union treaty, introducing a world-first climate mobility pathway that allows up to 280 Tuvaluans annually to obtain permanent residency in Australia - more than 80% of Tuvalu’s population of approximately 10,900 applied for the 280 available places in the 2025/26 round. Unlike existing temporary labour migration schemes, this pathway provides longer-term mobility with access to services while allowing continued links with Tuvalu. The initiative reflects a shift towards climate-driven migration solutions, although concerns remain regarding potential labour shortages, cultural impacts and sovereignty implications.

4 Immigration New Zealand: [RSE Statistics](#).

5 The NPF provides contributors with access to funds for children’s education, medical expenses and some retirement provision.

6 Zivic, M., SBS News. (10 November 2018) [Australia’s new labour scheme for Pacific Islanders gets underway](#).

The strength of support from the Tuvaluan government to its diaspora has been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the government closely monitoring stranded workers' wellbeing, and assisting workers scheduled to leave Tuvalu that had been unable to do so due to border closures. The pandemic has increased the official diaspora outreach conducted by the government.

Obstacles



- **Lack of funding and resources:** The Tuvalu government faces financial constraints that limits support for diaspora engagement activities.
- **Significant costs for Tuvaluan emigrants:** There are significant upfront costs for workers participating in both the Australia and New Zealand worker schemes. This means many people do not leave as they don't see the benefit of working overseas and remitting when faced with such high initial travel and employment costs. Remittances sent by Tuvaluan workers may, in the early stages of their time overseas, be limited due to the cost burden they face.

Annex:

List of Actors

Explore the institutionalisation of diaspora engagement worldwide via the [typology of 520+ institutions](#)



Diaspora related institutions

- **At a Regional Level**

Pacific Community (SPC)

Tuvalu 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. Tuvalu became a member in 1978.

Pacific Islands Forum

Tuvalu has been a member of the Pacific Islands Forum since 1978. It is an inter-governmental organisation which seeks to foster cooperation between countries and territories of the Pacific Ocean. Its work covers migration issues and 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)

Tuvalu is a member of the Pacific Immigration Development Community (known as the Pacific Immigration Director's Conference until 2018). PIDC is a regional consultative process which 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 a National Level**

Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute (TMTI)⁷ 1978

Following independence in 1978, the Government, with support from international donors, established the Tuvalu Maritime Training Institute (TMTI) which has remained the anchor of the country's engagement with international labour migration.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, Tourism, Environment and Labour⁸ (MFATTEL)

MFATTEL is the lead agency responsible for regulating labour migration. It manages Tuvalu's participation in the seasonal worker programmes under bilateral labour agreements with the Governments of Australia and New Zealand respectively.

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuvalu_Maritime_Training_Institute [Accessed 10.2020]

⁸ <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/tuvalu-ministry-foreign-affairs-trade-tourism-environment-labour> [Accessed 10.2020]

- At sub-ministerial level

Tuvalu Labour Department

The department serves as a focal point for government outreach with its labour mobility workers living and working in Australia and New Zealand.

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