



# Diaspora engagement mapping BARBADOS

## Facts & figures

### 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: 1.33  
Remittances inflow (USD million): 85.18

### 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).

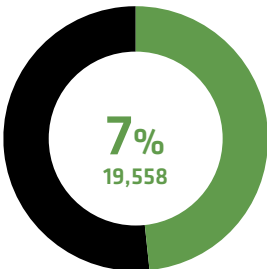
### Emigration



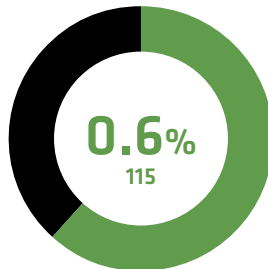
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 48.5%  
♀ 51.5%



♂ 61.7%  
♀ 38.3%

### Top countries of destination



Canada	13,022
Trinidad and Tobago	1,704
Jamaica	550
Australia	408
Saint Lucia	390

Barbados does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

<sup>1</sup> Barbados Citizenship Law, Chapter 186, The Constitution of Barbados (last amended in 2007) outlines the grounds for dual citizenship of Barbados. Dual citizenship is recognised and citizenship rights are conferred at birth to persons born abroad when at least one parent is a citizen of Barbados born in Barbados (Chapter II.5.1). The Barbados Constitutional Amendment Act 2000-18 enacted in 2000 extended the right to citizenship through descent to include not only fathers who are Bajan citizens born in Barbados, but also mothers. This amendment also provided citizenship rights to the spouses of female Barbadian citizens.

<sup>2</sup> [Voting from Abroad: the International IDEA Handbook](#) (2007)

## Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2007** ● **National Strategic Plan 2006-2025<sup>3</sup>** incorporates diaspora engagement into two of its six strategic goals. As part of Goal 6, the plan sets out to engage the diaspora to promote the Barbados brand and model. Goal 5 indirectly involves the diaspora in strategies for strengthening Barbados' prosperity and competitiveness by suggesting the role citizens living abroad play in supporting the domestic market.
- 2023** ● **2023 Barbados Population Policy<sup>4</sup>**, officially approved in May 2024, aims to ensure that the population size remains sufficient to maintain an adequate level of social care and, overall, to promote sustainable inclusive development and good quality of life for Barbadians. Promoting the return of the Barbadian diaspora is one of the key strategies to reach the Policy Goal 1.1: Increase the Population of Persons of Working Age. Additionally, developing enabling structures and networks for diaspora to engage in national development is mentioned as an approach to foster diaspora's connectivity and contribution.

### >> Trends

Recently, the government has taken a proactive stance in implementing foreign policy goals - such as attracting foreign investment - that engage the diaspora in the country's growth and development. It has moved beyond organising biennial conferences with the diaspora,<sup>5</sup> to creating channels that institutionalise and facilitate diaspora engagement as a pillar of foreign investment strategies, specifically in sectors related to the blue and green economies.<sup>6</sup>

Actions that foster inter-generational national identity have also emerged, such as the 2020 homecoming campaign "We Gatherin'"<sup>7</sup> (see Spotlight section) and legislative initiatives to confer citizenship by descent to second and third generations. The "We connect" initiative (see Spotlight) includes the launch of three diaspora promotion investment initiatives (Bajan Connect, Innovate Barbados, and Bloom) aimed at providing marketing, branding and access to business intelligence to prospective investors, including the diaspora.<sup>8</sup>

**Connecting Barbadian exports with the diaspora:**<sup>9</sup> The government recognizes that it is important to differentiate demand behaviour among the diaspora. The size of the diaspora necessitates creative strategies that take full advantage of market demand to achieve profitability. Specific areas that still need improvement include awareness of products and brands, shipping and logistics, and identifying consumer demand in real-time.

**Dual citizenship:** Legislative advances indicate greater governmental awareness that fomenting the diaspora's national identity is key to engaging them for trade and development. In November 2019, the Home Ministry announced that modifications to the Immigration Bill would be introduced to Parliament in 2020, which would extend citizenship rights to second and third generation Barbadians.<sup>10</sup>

As of 2022, this amendment was still waiting to be submitted to Parliament for discussion.<sup>11</sup>

**Right to vote abroad:** Recently, the Bajan diaspora's right to vote has become a focal point of debate, as expressed in discussions with the Constitution Reform Commission and the

3 <http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/fr/national-strategic-plan-barbados-2006-2025-global-excellence-barbadian-traditions-4613>

4 <https://www.barbadosparliament.com/uploads/sittings/attachments/0ce46f73ce6c59e55db891ecdbc05041.pdf>

5 <http://www.bidc.com/search?query=diaspora>, <https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/tag/barbados-network-consultation/>

6 <https://www.investbarbados.org/newsmain.php?view=Inaugural%20Barbados%20Diaspora%20Conference>

7 <https://www.wegatherinbarbados.com/>

8 <https://bidc.org/business-news/we-connect-launch>

9 <https://gisbarbados.gov.bb/blog/are-you-up-for-the-blue-flame-challenge/>

10 <https://barbadostoday.bb/2019/11/21/nationality-law-changes-are-coming/>

11 <https://barbadostoday.bb/2022/09/23/govt-to-expand-net-for-citizenship-qualification/>

Parliamentary Reform Commission. While some members of the Barbadian diaspora advocate for the right to participate in local elections and seek representation in Parliament, concerns have been raised by some who emphasise the potential risks associated with allowing overseas citizens to directly influence electoral decisions. The debate encompasses various aspects, including the potential impact on the electoral system, the desire for diaspora representation, and the need to balance these considerations in the ongoing constitutional reform discussions.<sup>12</sup>



### Achievements

Barbados has been successful in institutionalising diaspora engagement within a framework of social, economic, and cultural development. Government agencies have organised Biennial Diaspora Conferences between 2010 and 2016, and have involved the diaspora in annual business innovation conferences since at least 2016.

### Obstacles



- **Limitations to foreign investment:** Investment from the diaspora is lower than government agencies would desire, despite a relatively favourable investment environment, compared to other neighbouring countries. Nevertheless, there are hindrances to investment and business ownership, including exchange rate controls that make assets expensive, public debt and a need for greater access to angel investment networks.<sup>13</sup>
- **Inter-generational cultural heritage:** Fostering a sense of cultural heritage among second and third generations of the diaspora has been a challenge for Barbados. Not only does it affect the possibility of sustaining traditions abroad into the future it also impacts the potential for export markets, investment, and support for development projects.

### SPOTLIGHT: effective practices

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#### Barbados Network Programme 2010

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Consular Division coordinates the Barbados Network Programme which facilitates the resettlement of Barbadians who are permanently relocating from overseas.<sup>14</sup> The programme was initially established on February 16, 1996 and relaunched on September 1, 2010.

RETURN &  
REINTEGRATION

12 <https://barbadostoday.bb/2023/04/15/count-us-in-4/>

13 Angel investment networks are networks of individuals who either provide capital for small start-ups in the initial phases of the business or help connect them with investors. In this case, diaspora investors who connect with entrepreneurs in Barbados. See World Bank report (2016) [Investing Back Home: The Potential Economic Role of the Caribbean Diaspora](#)

14 <http://jcustomsservices.net/services/returning-nationals/>



## 2020 Year of the Diaspora and “We Gatherin” homecoming campaign 2020

CULTURE;  
INVESTMENT

The government designated 2020 the “Year of the Diaspora”, and the year-long “We Gatherin” homecoming campaign was its core initiative. The effort materialised the interest and commitment of the government to foster relationships with its communities living abroad. The premise was for Barbadians abroad to return to the island throughout 2020 in a celebration of culture and investment. The campaign sought to cultivate relationships with Bajans abroad and mobilise their involvement in the country’s economic development through contributions of time, expertise, and investment in enterprise and social causes. “We Gatherin” campaign is launched again in 2025 under the theme “Come ‘Long Home”<sup>15</sup>

## ‘We Connect’ programmes January 2020 – Ongoing

DIGITAL;  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In 2020, the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation government agency launched its three main programmes Bajans Connect, Innovate Barbados, and Bloom under the theme “We Connect”. This initiative integrates the three programmes under a common strategy focused on engaging the diaspora’s potential as an export market, as well as its potential contribution to Barbados’ development through the exchange of ideas, expertise, and investment. Innovate Barbados and Bloom focus on brainstorming and incubating innovative solutions to development challenges and their particular focus on the blue and green economies is indicative of interest to promote diaspora involvement in these sectors.

## Barbados Diaspora Database

Following the “We Gatherin” campaign, the Barbados Government has set up a data gathering platform encouraging members of the Barbadian diaspora to register. The main aim of the initiative is to engage with Barbadians abroad to become involve with the strategic efforts to uplift the nation, providing a space for the diaspora to share their skills and views.

## Barbados Diaspora Database

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15 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7K-oWN4r6cGab\\_channel=WeGatherin%27Barbados](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7K-oWN4r6cGab_channel=WeGatherin%27Barbados)

## Annex: List of actors

### 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 incentivise domestic enterprises to export outside the CARICOM region.<sup>16</sup>

- **National institutions**

#### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade coordinates the country's relations with foreign governments, regional and international organisations. It negotiates and monitors agreements and treaties related to foreign trade. The Consular and Diaspora Division falls under the Ministry's mandate and is tasked with building sustainable networks with the Barbadian diaspora as well as advising the government to enhance and improve its diaspora engagement practices.

#### **Ministry of Home Affairs**

The Ministry of Home Affairs oversees legislation related to immigration, including citizenship for children of Barbadian nationals born overseas or spouses of Barbadians residing abroad.<sup>17</sup>

#### **Barbados Immigration Department**

The Immigration Department operates as part of the Ministry of Home Affairs and carries the mandate for providing passports to Barbadian nationals abroad. It implements immigration legislation, including citizenship through descent.

#### **Export Barbados / Barbados Investment and Development Corporation (BIDC) 1992**

BIDC is a government agency working to foster innovative and dynamic enterprises. It seeks to develop competitive business enterprises as a means of diversifying and growing the economy through new investment and increased exports, especially among diaspora markets. The BIDC promoted the "We Connect" event that included the three major programmes of diaspora engagement (Bajans Connect, Innovate Barbados and Bloom). Since 2021, it has traded as Export Barbados (BIDC).

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



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

17 <https://barbadostoday.bb/2019/11/21/nationality-law-changes-are-coming/>

## Diaspora organisations in Europe

Barbadian diaspora organisations in Europe are primarily located in the UK.

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



### **Bajans in London** 2007 UK

#### **Integration activities**

The organisation seeks to educate and connect the Bajan diaspora in the UK with Barbados by providing updates on news and developments. It organises social and cultural activities to promote cultural heritage and build relationships among diaspora members in the UK. The organisation also provides guidance on issues such as housing and job searches.

### **Barbados and Friends Association Reading (BAFA)** 2010 UK

#### **Integration activities**

The organization was created to promote community ties among the Barbadian diaspora. They organize cultural events all year long and partner with other organizations to promote similar activities.

### **Barbados Cultural Organization** 2000 UK

#### **Development activities**

#### **Integration activities**



The organisation promotes Bajan culture in the UK by organising sports and entertainment activities that foster cultural heritage. It actively fundraises to support charitable causes in Barbados and maintains partnerships that promote tourism to Barbados.

### **Barbados Heritage UK** 2019 UK

#### **Development activities**

The organisation works to preserve Bajan culture among diaspora members in the UK through activities that promote cultural expression. It focuses on fostering cultural identity among second and third generation Bajans and conducts fundraisers to support charitable projects in Barbados.

### **Barbados Overseas Association Manchester**

1968. The association was created with the purpose of keeping Barbadians in the Manchester area informed about Barbados, promoting Bajan culture, and fostering cultural heritage among future generations of Bajans living in the UK. [] []

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation of Barbadians & Friends Birmingham

- ✔ Development activities
- ✔ Integration activities

The association was founded to promote cultural and education events with an emphasis on Bajan culture and heritage. It also seeks to foster interaction across generations and provide a space for second generation Bajans to openly express their views and aspirations.

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