

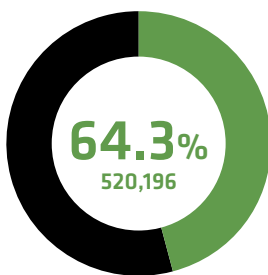


# Diaspora engagement mapping GUYANA

## Facts & figures

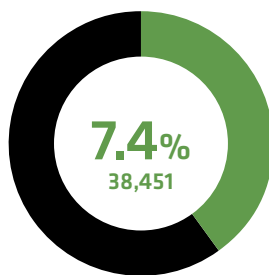
### Emigration

% of emigrants in total population



♂ 45.89%  
♀ 54.11%

% of which in the EU



♂ 40.18%  
♀ 59.82%



**Remittances as a share of GDP: 6.3%**  
**Remittances inflow (USD million): 361**



### Top countries of destination

United States of America	323,052
Canada	93,382
United Kingdom	30,180
Suriname	13,091
Trinidad and Tobago	10,582



### Political rights



**Dual citizenship<sup>1</sup>**



**Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad<sup>2</sup>**



### Voting from abroad:<sup>3</sup>

Available only to diplomatic staff and their families



Terminology: The government uses the term “Guyanese Diaspora” and “overseas Guyanese”<sup>5</sup> and the National Development Strategy refers to “overseas Guyanese”, “expatriate Guyanese” and “Guyanese living overseas.”<sup>6</sup>

1 Constitution of the Co-Operative Republic of Guyana, 1980. Article 44 refers to dual citizenship. According to article 46, the President has the faculty to deprive a citizen of Guyana (who has dual citizenship) of his or her citizenship acquired by registration, naturalization or any other voluntary and formal act (other than marriage). Also, the President has the permission to deprive citizenship if any citizen claimed and exercised any rights exclusively to its citizens in a country other than Guyana. Dual citizens cannot run for office for the Guyanese parliament.

2 Representation of the People Act, 1964. Article 44 (2A) provides that the preliminary list of electors not resident in Guyana shall consist of the names of every elector not resident in Guyana who is - (i) an Ambassador or a High Commissioner; (ii) the wife or husband or child of an Ambassador or a High Commissioner; (iii) a member of the staff of an Embassy or High Commissioner; (iv) the wife or husband or child of a member of the staff of an Embassy or High Commissioner.

3 [https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace\\_publications/election\\_reports/guyana/guyana-2020-election-final-report.pdf](https://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/election_reports/guyana/guyana-2020-election-final-report.pdf).

4 Diaspora Unit. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accessed July 2020.

5 “National Development Strategy”, <https://finance.gov.gy/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/nds.pdf> Accessed July 2020.

## Guyana does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

In 2017, at the initiative of the IOM, the government worked to draft a Diaspora Engagement Strategy and Action Plan.<sup>7</sup> In 2018 it was presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The policy is designed to formally guide the administration's relationship with the diaspora with focus on three main operational areas: Diaspora Communities, Home Country and IT Social Media<sup>8</sup>. The strategy aims at strengthening and expanding of the Diaspora Unit, boosting short and long-term youth programmes, and boosting remittances, in the form of philanthropy. The Diaspora Engagement Strategy and Action Plan was still being finalised in December 2022<sup>9</sup>.

### Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 1980** ● **Constitution of the Co-Operative Republic of Guyana:** According to Article 31 of the Constitution, it is the duty of the state to protect the rights and interests of citizens living abroad.
- 1999** ● The **National Development Strategy 2000-2010** mentions the encouragement of expatriate Guyanese either to remigrate permanently, or to return home for specific periods to perform specific tasks, as a potential strategy to address the shortage of human capital in the country.

### » Trends

Before the creation of the Diaspora Unit in 2011, most of the initiatives in the area of diaspora engagement in Guyana were developed with the support of international organisations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Their approach has been that bringing skills through the diaspora is a relevant capital to be gained.

In 2011, as a result of the recognition by the Guyanese government of the important role the diaspora can play as a contributor to Guyana's development, a Diaspora Unit was created within the Foreign Affairs Ministry, with the purposes of allowing a structured engagement and strengthening relations and dialogue with the diaspora. The Unit is designed to serve as liaison between the diaspora and the government and some of its main functions are to collect information about the diaspora and maintain relations with its leaders.

The government has adopted an ongoing rhetoric through official communications, projects and meetings with Guyanese abroad,<sup>9</sup> in which it recognises that the diaspora is helping to fill the human capital gap in Guyana and that it is in a position to contribute to the implementation of its National Development Strategy (NDS).

However, beyond broad statements, the diaspora often requests that the government offer concrete policies or guidelines in order to participate in the country's development.<sup>10</sup>

Since the 2020 elections, the Diaspora Unit has been reinvigorated with a new and growing team and resources. The unit has begun its work consolidating its understanding of diaspora

6 The Guyana Diaspora Engagement Strategy & Action Plan. (21 August 2017) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Co-operative Republic of Guyana. Accessed July 2020.

7 <https://www.minfor.gov.gy/featured/draft-diaspora-engagement-strategy-completed/>

8 <https://dpi.gov.gy/government-recognises-need-for-improved-structure-to-engage-diaspora/>

9 Such as the Guyanese Diaspora Project launched in Canada and consultative meetings with Canadian-Guyanese. Both accessed September 2020.

10 Wayne Forde, The diaspora human capital could play a critical role in the oil and gas sector. Accessed May 2020

and government needs and undertaking outreach activities to strengthen ties with the diaspora in advance of developing targeted programmes which are aspired for from 2023.



### Achievements

Exclusive desks for diaspora: The government organises a reception desk for diaspora during peak visiting times, such as Christmas and Easter, or in association with events like the Cricket Carnival of 2022.

Mutual collaboration. The Diaspora Unit has sought joint collaboration with the diaspora, including donations and participation in conferences. The donation of medical equipment from the diaspora in Canada to hospitals in Guyana in 2018 is an example of the Unit's achievements.<sup>11</sup>

### Obstacles



- **Lack of confidence in the government:** The diaspora has stressed that its willingness to engage and return is limited by a lack of trust in the state's legitimate commitment towards them.<sup>12</sup>

### SPOTLIGHT: effective practices



#### "Diaspora highlights" 2022

The Diaspora Unit began a series of videos to promote the work of Guyanese diaspora and, on occasion, the diaspora unit. The weekly videos introduce interesting profiles and projects from the Diaspora and demonstrate the Diaspora Unit's work to promote the potential of diaspora engagement for Guyana across all sectors.<sup>13</sup>

#### Online magazine "Diaspora Digest" 2019

Produced by the Department of Public Information, this magazine provides news about Guyana (in areas such as politics, trade and cultural activities). The first edition came out in October 2019.<sup>14</sup>

#### "Go See Visit" 2017

As a result of a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the IOM, a pilot project titled "Go See Visit" brought ten Guyanese entrepreneurs from Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States to explore the possibility to develop local businesses and increase employment opportunities in low-income communities in Guyana.<sup>15</sup>

COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

11 Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Guyanese diaspora donates ultrasound machines to Ministry of Public Health*, 2018. Accessed July 2020.

12 *Guyanese Migration and Remittances to Guyana*. Hisakhana Pahoona. (2012)

<http://www.ppgdstu.propesp.ufpa.br/ARQUIVOS/teses/TESES/2012/HISAKHANA%20PAHOONA%20CORBIN.pdf> (Page 113)

13 <https://www.facebook.com/DiasporaUnitGuyana/videos>

14 Department of Public Information. "Hot off to the press diaspora digest", 2019. <https://dpi.gov.gy/hot-off-the-press-diaspora-digest/#gsc.tab=0> Accessed July 2020

15 *Engaging Guyana's Diaspora*. (21 August 2017) MFA. Accessed July 2020.

## Annex:

# List of Actors

### Diaspora related institutions

- **At regional level**

#### Caribbean Community (CARICOM) 1973

CARICOM promotes regional integration through economic and trade union; coordination of the foreign policy and cooperation in areas such as health, education and culture, communications, and industrial relations.

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

#### Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The MFA is responsible for promoting the interests of Guyana within the international community and for contributing to the economic and social development of the Guyanese people.<sup>16</sup> It also executes the Guyana Diaspora Project in partnership with the IOM.

- At sub-ministerial level

#### Diaspora Unit 2011

The Diaspora Unit promotes relations between the government and the Guyanese diaspora, seeking to engage the diaspora to contribute toward Guyana's national development. The draft Diaspora Engagement Strategy and Actin Plan foresees the expansion of its workforce.

#### Remigration Unit

The Diaspora & Remigration Unit is the department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation that handles applications the "re-migrant scheme" in cooperation with the Guyana Revenue Authority. The unit is focused on processing applications - including eligibility checks and tax exemptions - whilst the Diaspora Unit is the outwards-facing branch of the MFA.

### Diaspora organizations in Europe



#### Association of Guyanese Nurses and Allied Professionals in the United Kingdom 1988

- ☑ **Development activities**

The association provides aid and support for Guyanese healthcare professionals. They also arrange exchanges with institutions and other charitable organisations in Guyana and the UK.

<sup>16</sup> Mission statement. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Guyana. Accessed May 2020.

### Guyana Diocesan Association in London UK 1994

- ✓ Integration activities
- ✓ Development activities

The Guyana Diocesan Association in London links the Church of England and the Diocese of Guyana for charitable purposes, especially in education, relief of poverty, and community development.

### Guyanese Federation of Nationals UK

- ✓ Integration activities

This umbrella body for many organisations works to improve relationships between overseas Guyanese and promotes events where they socialize with friends from home.

### Guyana UK Social Development Association (GUSDA) UK 1995

- ✓ Integration activities
- ✓ Development activities

GUSDA contributes to the social development of Guyanese in Guyana and in the United Kingdom in areas such as health, education, culture, community development and general well-being.

### Leeds UK Guyanese Association UK 2009

- ✓ Integration activities

A hometown association of Guyanese diasporans from Leeds.

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