



Diaspora engagement mapping FIJI

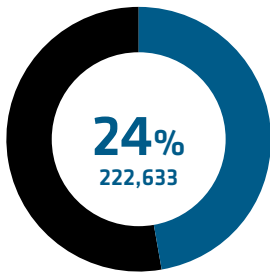
Facts & figures

Emigration

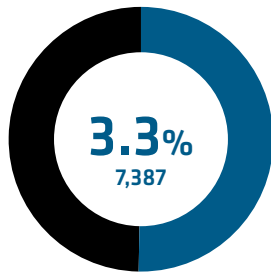
% of emigrants in total population



% of which in the EU



♂ 47.4%
♀ 52.6%



♂ 50.5%
♀ 49.5%



Remittances as a share of GDP: **9.3%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **459**



Top countries of destination

Australia	79,424
New Zealand	56,344
United States	50,561
Canada	26,268
United Kingdom	6,878



Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Voting from abroad:³

By postal vote



Fiji does not have a diaspora engagement policy.

1 2009 Citizenship of Fiji Act allows Fijian citizens to hold dual citizenship, and allows foreign citizens to claim Fijian citizenship without having to renounce their other citizenships.

2 Fijian Elections Office, *Strategic Plan 2020-2023*, available at www.feo.org.fj/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SP-2020-E-copy.pdf

3 Before each election, the Fijian Elections Office works in conjunction with the Fijian Embassies and High Commissions all over the world to facilitate the registration of Fijians abroad. At the time of elections, Fijians who have registered overseas can apply for a postal vote and receive a ballot at their postal address.

Overview of policy and legislative framework



- 2016** ● **Fiji's Financial Sector Development Plan 2016-2025 (FSDP)**⁴ articulates the key reform areas for the financial system until 2025. The FSDP is composed of 10 strategic objectives and 45 operational recommendations to achieve the government's vision. These recommendations include increasing awareness and encouraging the use of convenient and cheaper remittance channels, as well as to encourage partnerships between money transfer operators and financial services providers to develop and introduce remittance-linked financial products and services.
- 2017** ● **5 and 20 year National Development Plans (NDP) Transforming Fiji**⁵ maps out the way forward for Fiji's national development and mentions remittances as an opportunity for Fiji's economic development. The five year development plan 2017-2021 provides a detailed agenda with specific targets, such as increasing the percentage of remittances sent through mobile money from 3% in 2015 to 10% by 2021.

» Trends:

Since 2017 and the publication of the National Development Plan (NDP) and Financial Sector Development Plan (FSDP), the government of Fiji has made it a priority to improve the attractiveness of the country as a destination for investments to support Fiji in achieving its development aspirations.⁶ The government has made innovation and technology fundamental pillars for achieving its new economic development objectives,⁷ and it refers explicitly to the growing diaspora of Fijians working overseas to justify the need to modernise the national financial system, especially in the area of remittances.⁸ Fiji's Digital Transformation Programme, which includes initiatives such as the BizFiji online portal, is an important tool for attracting investments from the Fijian diaspora in the country.

As part of this effort, the Fijian government also reached out to several of the main Fijian diaspora communities abroad over the past years. In 2019, members of the Fijian community in Melbourne were invited to a networking event organised by the Fiji Consulate General and Trade Commission,⁹ and Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama visited the Fijian diaspora communities in San Francisco¹⁰ and Sydney,¹¹ where he encouraged the Fijian diaspora to invest in Fiji. As of 2023, Fiji's Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs Dr. Lesi Korovavala reported that the coalition has formally recognised the diaspora as a cornerstone of the country's foreign policy. He reported that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is in the process of developing both a diaspora policy and a migration policy, in partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs.¹²

The Government is also committed to preserving Fiji's language and culture in its diaspora, as illustrated by initiatives such as the iVolavosa mobile application and the Fijian Cultural Programme (see below).

4 www.rbf.gov.fj/getattachment/a8d8c890-1df5-4dc7-bacf-dc7d0046fdee/Fiji-Financial-Sector-Development-Plan-2016-2025.pdf?lang=en-US

5 <https://www.fiji.gov.fj/getattachment/15b0ba03-825e-47f7-bf69-094ad33004dd/5-Year-20-Year-NATIONAL-DEVELOPMENT-PLAN.aspx>
6 Government of Fiji, Investment Policy Statement, available at: <https://www.mcttt.gov.fj/divisions/trade-unit/investment-policy-statement/>

7 <https://www.mcttt.gov.fj/publications-resources/speeches/minister/hon-ministers-speech-pmiba-launch/>

8 Fiji's Financial Sector Development Plan 2016-2025 (FSDP), available at: www.rbf.gov.fj/getattachment/a8d8c890-1df5-4dc7-bacf-dc7d0046fdee/Fiji-Financial-Sector-Development-Plan-2016-2025.pdf?lang=en-US

9 www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/News/FIJIAN-ENVOY%E2%80%99S-VISIT-CULTIVATES-STRONGER-COOPERATI

10 www.pmooffice.gov.fj/pm-bainimarama-visits-fijian-diaspora-in-san-francisco

11 www.pmooffice.gov.fj/pm-bainimarama-urges-fijian-diaspora-in-sydney-to-invest-in-fiji-13-09-19

12 [Diaspora no longer a side event: Dr. Korovavala](#)



Achievements:

The Fijian diaspora includes a large number of skilled workers and entrepreneurs. Fijian citizens abroad constitute one of the largest pools of highly educated migrants working in OECD countries, with important communities residing in Australia, New Zealand and the United States.¹³

Remittances sent to Fiji have increased noticeably since 2000, reaching 5.5% of GDP in 2019¹⁴ and helping Fiji accelerating its growth rate over the recent years.¹⁵ As a result, remittances have been the second largest foreign exchange earner for the country since 2004,¹⁶ and their importance for the country's economic development was acknowledged in the Financial Sector Development Plan for the years 2016-2025.¹⁷

In addition, the Government of Fiji successfully reached out to its diaspora to assist with relief and rehabilitation efforts in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston, which destroyed over 40,000 homes in Fiji in 2016. Through its embassies and high commissions abroad, the government of Fiji received donations from the Fiji Ontario Association of Canada, the East Hawaiian Fijian Community,¹⁸ the Fijian community in the Solomon Islands,¹⁹ as well as from the Fijian diaspora in the Netherlands and Belgium.²⁰ Diaspora communities also contributed to the Government's 'Adopt a School' programme which was launched to rebuild schools damaged by the cyclone.²¹



Obstacles

- **Corruption and political instability:** Members of the Fijian diaspora often cite perceived corruption as a major obstacle to further engaging with their country. Furthermore, the coups in Fiji's recent history has left a sense of political instability that holds back some of the potential investors from the Fijian diaspora.²²
- **Lack of information:** Because of the digital gap between Fiji and some of the countries where the main Fijian communities are established, the Fijian diaspora faces difficulties in accessing the information needed for engagement, notably regarding overseas voting and business creation. This challenge is currently being tackled by the government through its Digital Transformation Programme.²³

13 *Systematic country diagnostic 2017: Republic of Fiji*, World Bank Group, 2017, available at: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/529271512123603244/pdf/116491-revised-PUBLIC-ACS.pdf>

14 World Bank, Annual Remittances Data (updated as of Oct. 2019) Inflows, available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaisues/brief/migration-remittances-data>

15 *Financing the SDGs in the Pacific islands: Opportunities, Challenges and Ways Forward*, UNDP discussion paper, 2017, available at: <http://www.sustainablesids.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/UNDP-Financing-the-SDGs-in-the-Pacific-Islands-Opportunities-Challenges-and-Ways-Forward-2017.pdf>

16 Reserve bank of Fiji, Personal Remittances in Fiji, available at: www.rbf.gov.fj/getattachment/Publications/Newspaper-Articles/Fiji-Sun-Remittances-In-Fiji_241216.pdf

17 Fiji's Financial Sector Development Plan 2016-2025 (FSDP), available at: www.rbf.gov.fj/getattachment/a8d8c890-1df5-4dc7-bacf-dc7d0046fdee/Fiji-Financial-Sector-Development-Plan-2016-2025.pdf?lang=en-US

18 www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/News/FIJIANS-ABROAD-RALLY-TO-ASSIST-TC-WINSTON-VICTIMS

19 www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/News/PM-RECEIVES-SUPPORT-FROM-FIJIAN-COMMUNITY-IN-SOLOMON

20 www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/News/GOVERNMENT-COMMENDS-BELGIUM-MISSION-FOR-TC-WINSTON

21 www.adoptaschool.gov.fj

22 *Understanding the Investment Potential of the Fijian Diaspora, Results of the Commonwealth Diaspora Investor Survey Country Report*, The Commonwealth Secretariat, 2018

23 www.pmooffice.gov.fj/hon-pms-speech-at-the-launch-of-the-first-e-passport-enrolment-kit-at-the-fiji-mission-in-london-29-11-19

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices



Agreement between the Fijian Elections Office and Fiji Airways to inform overseas voters of the voting registration process

MIGRANT RIGHTS & TOURISM

In order to reach out to potential overseas voters traveling with the airline, the Fijian Elections Office entered into an agreement with Fiji Airways in order to use its inflight magazine, FijiTime. As part of this agreement, the Fijian Elections Office was able to include information on the overseas voter registration process to the magazine. The information included dates for registration at various Fijian embassies and High Commissions in the five main countries of destination of the Fijian diaspora, as well as practical requirements for overseas voters.

iVolavosa mobile application and the Fijian Cultural Programme, 2017 and 2019

DIGITAL

The iVolavosa mobile application is an online dictionary for iTaukei language, which is one of Fiji's official languages. The mobile application was launched by the Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and the iTaukei Trust Fund Board as a tool for the preservation of iTaukei culture. The Fijian diaspora is a key target audience for this service, as it allows to learn the iTaukei language from abroad.²⁴ In addition, in 2019 the iTaukei Trust Fund Board initiated a pilot project in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the University of East Anglia and Fijian communities in the UK to revitalise cultural diplomacy and develop a sustainable Fijian cultural programme in the UK. In the framework of this project, the iTaukei Trust Fund Board is developing an educational resource kit to promote Fijian language and culture.²⁵

BizFIJI online portal bizfiji.com

INVESTMENT

Launched under the Fijian Government's Digital Transformation Programme, BizFIJI acts as Fiji's centralised source of information for new business owners and investors. BizFIJI is a key element of the government's efforts to stimulate investment from its diaspora, and it was presented by Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama in its address to the Fijian diaspora in Sydney in September 2019.

Collaboration between the Government of Fiji and IOM in the framework of the project "Engaging with Diaspora for Fiji's Development", 2019-ongoing

NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS

In 2019, IOM approved the pilot project "Engaging with Diaspora for Fiji's Development" to be implemented in partnership with several government ministries in Fiji, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project aims to assist the government to engage more closely and strategically with Fijian diaspora groups for the development of Fiji. Planned activities include a mapping survey of the Fijian diaspora in Australia, the development of recommendations to the Government of Fiji on strategic engagement with Fijian diaspora communities, as well as the organisation of a diaspora engagement meeting in Suva to strengthen the partnership between the Government and diaspora groups.²⁶ Collaboration is expected to end in 2022.

24 www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/Speeches/HON-PM-BAINIMARAMA-AT-THE-LAUNCHING-OF-THE-IVOLAVO

25 www.fiji.gov.fj/Media-Centre/News/PARTNERSHIP-PROMOTES-CULTURAL-DIPLOMACY

26 <https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/iom-fiji-2021-year-in-review.pdf>

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- At regional level

Pacific Community (SPC) www.spc.int

Fiji is a member of the Pacific Community, an international development organisation which focuses on scientific and technical expertise. SPC's Social Development Programme is involved in managing the Festival of Pacific Arts (FESTPAC), which was created in 1972 as a tool for preserving Pacific culture.

Pacific Islands Forum www.forumsec.org

Fiji is a member of the Pacific Islands Forum, an inter-governmental organisation which seeks to foster cooperation between countries and territories of the Pacific Ocean. Its work covers migration issues, as the forum has organised regional meetings on climate change and migration, as well as workshops between immigration officials from the region.

International Organization for Migration www.iom.int/countries/fiji

Fiji became an IOM member state in 2013, and IOM and the government of Fiji signed a cooperation agreement in 2015. IOM established an office in Suva in 2017, and IOM Fiji is implementing the pilot project "Engaging with Diaspora for Fiji's Development", which aims at assisting the government of Fiji to engage more closely and strategically with Fijian diaspora groups as part of its efforts to contribute to national development.

Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC) www.pidcsec.org

Fiji is a member of Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC, known as the Pacific Immigration Director's Conference until 2018). PIDC is a regional consultative process which aims at gathering official immigration agencies of the Pacific region and enabling 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.





- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs www.foreignaffairs.gov.fj

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs deals with consular matters and oversees Fiji's missions abroad. As such, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is closely involved in diaspora engagement matters, in particular regarding registration of overseas voters for postal vote. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is involved in the Fijian Cultural Programme and is also working in partnership with IOM Fiji in the framework of the project "Engaging with Diaspora for Fiji's Development."

Office of the Prime Minister www.pmooffice.gov.fj

The office of the Prime Minister is instrumental in the government's efforts to attract investments from the Fijian diaspora. In 2019, the Prime Minister visited the Fijian diaspora communities in Sydney and San Francisco, where he encouraged them to invest in Fiji.

Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism www.mitt.gov.fj

The Ministry of Industry, Trade & Tourism is responsible for formulating and implementing policies and strategies to facilitate growth for industries, investments, trade, tourism, co-operative businesses, micro and small enterprises in Fiji. The Ministry manages the BizFIJI online portal, which is a key element of the government's efforts to stimulate investment from its diaspora.

Ministry of iTaukei Affairs (MTA) www.itaukeiaffairs.gov.fj

The MTA is responsible for developing and implementing policies focused on the governance and well-being of the iTaukei people. It has developed the iVolavosa mobile application, which allows its users in Fiji and abroad to learn the iTaukei language.

- At sub-ministerial level

Fiji embassies, consulates, High Commissions and Trade Commissions abroad

These bodies engage with Fijian diaspora communities on issues such as passport issuance and registration of overseas voters. In addition, they have played an important role in mobilising diaspora communities to support the relief and rehabilitation effort in Fiji in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016. The Fiji High Commission in Australia is also involved in the project "Engaging with Diaspora for Fiji's Development" which is implemented by IOM Fiji.

Fijian Elections Office www.feo.org.fj

The Fijian Elections Office is in charge of organising and monitoring elections in Fiji. In order to allow overseas voters to vote by post in elections, the Fijian Elections Office organises registration sessions at Fiji's missions abroad before all elections.

Department of immigration www.immigration.gov.fj

The department of immigration is part of the Office of the Prime Minister. It is responsible for providing an efficient and effective immigration service and enforce the 2003 Fiji Immigration Act. The department of immigration is working in partnership with IOM Fiji in the framework of the project “Engaging with Diaspora for Fiji’s Development”.

iTaukei Trust Fund Board (TTFB) www.itaukeitrustfund.com.fj

The TTFB was established under an act of parliament in November 2004. Its objective is to foster the advancement of indigenous Fijians and Rotumans by promoting initiatives that will better their standard of living, and enhance cultural traditions and values. The TTFB initiated the Fijian Cultural Programme in 2019, through which it is developing an educational resource kit to promote the Fijian language and culture among its diaspora in the UK.

Diaspora organisations in Europe



Communities Fiji Britain (CFB) United Kingdom 2015 cfb.org.uk

Integration activities

CFB was created with the objective to assist Fijians residing in the UK and to prevent their social exclusion. CFB offers advice and practical support to Fijians living in the UK, and its areas of action include family issues, domestic abuse, and liaison with immigration services. The main recipients of CFB’s activities are Fijians serving in the UK armed forces and their families, who represent a significant part of the Fijian diaspora in the United Kingdom.

Communities Fiji Britain (CFB) UK 2015 <https://www.cfb.org.uk/about-us>

Integration activities

They aim to prevent the social exclusion of Fijians residing in the UK, serving in the UK armed forces, veterans and their dependents, as well as to assist Fijian families settling into the UK.

Fiji Support Network (FSN) United Kingdom twitter.com/FijiSupportNet

Integration activities

The Armed Forces Fiji Support Network aims at providing welfare support to Fijian Service personnel in the UK armed forces, veterans and their families, as well as preserving Fijian cultural heritage. The Fiji Support Network organises summer roadshows in UK army information centres on a yearly basis in order to consult Fijians serving in the UK armed forces on the challenges they face.

French Fijian Support Association France

Integration activities

The Fijian diaspora in France is mainly composed of the approximately 300 professional rugby players who evolve in the country’s various leagues. The French Fijian Support Association, which was created in 2015

and has about 100 members, aims at assisting the integration of Fijian rugby players into their clubs and into French society. Other objectives of the association include the creation of a solidarity fund to help Fijian rugby players on a legal level, as well as assistance to Fijian rugby players in their contacts with French authorities, institutions and administrations.

Marama Alliance UK (MAUK) United Kingdom 2019 maramaalliance.com

 **Integration activities**

MAUK's primary objective is to assist Fijian women as they integrate into life in the UK. MAUK's activities focus on themes such as self-care, resilience, inclusion, professional and personal development, as well as culture and identity. During the Fijian language and culture week 2019, MAUK initiated the campaign "learning my roots" on Twitter, with the objective to promote Fijian language in the UK. The network was created in July 2019, and it organises social and networking events for Fijian women living in the UK.

Pacific Rugby Players Welfare (PRPW) United Kingdom pacificrugbywelfare.com

 **Integration activities**

PRPW was established in 2016 by Samoan, Tongan and Fijian professional rugby players living in Europe to support players and their families in integrating to life in Europe. The association provides its members with family support, training and education opportunities, as well as social events.

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Find out more at www.diasporafordevelopment.eu