

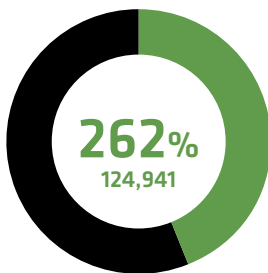


Diaspora engagement mapping SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Facts & figures

Emigration

% of emigrants in total population

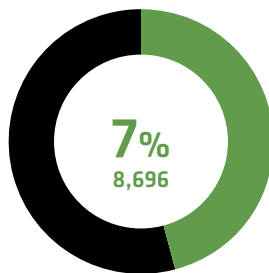


♂ 44%
♀ 56%



Remittances as a share of GDP: **3.4%**
Remittances inflow (USD million): **33**

% of which in the EU



♂ 45.9%
♀ 54.1%



Top countries of destination

United States	20,632
United Kingdom	9,599
US Virgin Islands	7,103
Canada	2,241
British Virgin Islands	1,477

Political rights



Dual citizenship¹



Right to vote in national elections for citizens residing abroad²



Voting from abroad



Diaspora policy 2020



The Diaspora Policy of Saint Kitts and Nevis was approved by the government to guide its engagement with nationals living abroad. This policy, developed through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aims to foster a stronger relationship with Kittitian-Nevisian citizens who reside in other parts of the world.

¹ Saint Kitts and Nevis allows dual citizenship based on the 1984 Citizenship Act and Constitution. As a part of the Commonwealth, nationality and citizenship are used interchangeably. Legal text available online at: <https://www.gov.kn/the-constitution/>.

² Voting for nationals residing abroad is permitted, pending return and prior registration. New electoral reforms are likely to facilitate voting from abroad in the next elections which would enhance accessibility and participation. Available online at: <https://www.legal.gov.kn/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/National-Assembly-Elections-Act.pdf>.

Overview of the policy and legislative framework



- 2022 ● **The Returning Nationals Policy and Procedures** is a framework governing voluntary and involuntary return migration to Saint Kitts and Nevis (SKN). The document lists eligibility criteria for nationals living abroad, with several tax exemptions for imported goods, tools of trade and repatriated capital.
- 2023 ● **The St Kitts and Nevis Citizenship by Substantial Investment Regulation** in its revised form provides certain benefits and incentives for nationals living abroad, such as business facilitation and access to financing streams, as well as the option of selling property to those wishing to apply for economic citizenship in Saint Kitts and Nevis, upon prior registration with the Citizenship by Investment (CBI) Board of Governors.

» Trends & Achievements

Similar to wider regional developments, Saint Kitts and Nevis (SKN) has made significant progress in recognising and engaging its nationals living abroad through a number of incentive programmes, schemes and structured mechanisms for dialogue and consultation, and since 2020, a diaspora policy. Currently, the government's main areas of engagement target socio-economic development, diaspora contributions (i.e. investment opportunities, knowledge networks, skills transfers), culture and heritage, as well as repatriation and reintegration.

By leveraging its participation in international cooperation frameworks, such as the Organisation for Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), CARICOM (Caribbean Community) or the Commonwealth of Nations, SKN is favourably positioned to garner visibility for its diaspora engagement efforts, as well as technical assistance for policy and programme implementation. To this end, RIDU (The Regional Integration and Diaspora Unit) under the purview of the Prime Minister's Office closely coordinates with the OECS Commission and other relevant stakeholders in advancing regional integration and a stronger rapport with the diaspora, globally. To expand its outreach and disseminate timely information, RIDU has developed a number of communication tools, such as Diaspora Digest, a quarterly publication on topics of interest.

The network of diplomatic missions actively engages overseas communities through a range of cultural events, and structured consultations. Moreover, embassy staff also include diaspora officers specifically tasked with community liaison. As a matter of good practice, several associations based in the United Kingdom successfully launched a townhall meeting format, with participation from national institutions and diplomatic missions, thus opening pathways for regular exchanges and more targeted contributions. For instance, one discussion topic approached voting from abroad, which could be facilitated in the upcoming election rounds.

Digitalisation initiatives for administrative services, such as the SMARTS platform launched for the Inland Revenue Department, benefit the diaspora by easing tax filing, indirectly encouraging participation in the home country's economic life. Although there is no specific remittance scheme in place, the government took notable steps in incentivising diaspora-led investment, through business facilitation, property ownership, and tax concessions, among others. Regulations governing the CBI programme were recently amended to benefit not only foreign investors but also diaspora nationals wishing to repatriate their capital and pursue local entrepreneurship. The incentive scheme provides enhanced access to financing schemes, with an option to raise capital through CBI if the applicant can prove that the business idea maximises local employment, contributes to local capacity building or enables technology transfers. Under the Private Home Sale Option, homeowners living abroad can sell their property to those wishing to apply for citizenship, through an application process. Launched in 1984, the pioneering programme is managed by the Citizenship by Investment Unit, a government agency managing applications for the acquisition of economic citizenship.

In Europe, diaspora associations are primarily concentrated in the United Kingdom, due to historical ties and participation in the Commonwealth, which affords SKN citizens a privileged status on British territory (i.e. voting rights in all elections and running for public office). Colonial history in policy and public discourse has been particularly sensitive, and efforts are being made on both sides to address the structural racism ingrained in immigration laws and its effects upon the Windrush generations.³ Thus, heritage and memorialisation play a significant role in the diaspora's mobilisation abroad, with most associations pursuing activities that honour and support community elders or celebrate cultural identity. Within the UK's multicultural landscape, the Caribbean carnivals are a vibrant expression of heritage and culture, drawing wide public participation. In this sense, diaspora organisations not only promote cross-cultural understanding but also preserve the British Caribbean carnival traditions, which historically embodied a form of activism and cultural empowerment.

SKN has developed a programmatic and networked approach to engaging its diaspora, supported by a vast governance infrastructure, with several sub-ministerial units overseeing diaspora affairs and return migration. As a matter of good practice, the comprehensive repatriation and reintegration scheme ensures a cohesive institutional response to the needs of potential returnees during the resettlement process. Hence, the government has demonstrated strategic acumen in incentivising return migration, also evidenced by the creation of a Returning Nationals Secretariat, responsible for overall policy coordination. The integrated portal for potential returnees consolidates all the relevant information, including detailed instructions, eligibility criteria and application forms. Albeit certain limitations, the scheme also targets involuntary repatriation (i.e. deportees) and returning students, who after completion of their studies wish to relocate permanently to Saint Kitts and Nevis. Such developments indicate the government's proactive approach to leveraging the skills and resources of its diaspora for development and socio-economic growth.

Obstacles



- **Politicisation:** Some diaspora organisations express concerns that consultations and diaspora issues in general risk being captured by political parties seeking to capitalise on these strategic constituencies.
- **Trust:** Although the government made significant progress in terms of administrative reforms and the adoption of anti-corruption laws, implementation has not always been consistent. Relatively high levels of corruption undermine public trust and may dissuade citizens living abroad from repatriating capital. In recent years, some public concern has been raised regarding the SKN's Citizenship by Investment and Residence by Investment programmes. In response, the government introduced expanded background checks and stricter oversight.
- **Marginalisation:** As national legal frameworks do not protect sexual orientation and gender identity, LGBTQ+ communities face pervasive societal discrimination. Therefore, engagement with national institutions may pose obstacles for those who decided to emigrate on grounds of discrimination and lack of acceptance.

³ Post WW2, there was a mass wave of migration of nearly half a million people from the Caribbean to Britain, triggered both by mounting labour shortages and the British Nationality Act of 1948 which granted all British colonial citizens the right to work and settle in Britain.

SPOTLIGHT: effective practices



Diaspora Conference 2018

NETWORKING,
DEVELOPMENT

Centred on building lasting partnerships for sustainable development, the three-day inaugural conference took place in Basseterre (Saint Kitts and Nevis) and drew wide community participation. The event was spearheaded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in coordination with the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, the Ministries of Finance, Tourism, and Information Technology, the SKN Information Service, the Citizenship by Investment Unit, the Nevis Tourism Authority and the St Kitts Investment Promotion Agency. Among others, the discussion topics included investment opportunities, fostering greater awareness, and developing a diaspora expertise database. The forum exemplified the government's commitment towards developing and/or improving mechanisms for diaspora engagement, which, in recent years translated into several dedicated units and targeted consultations for the elaboration of a diaspora policy.

Online Portal for Returning Nationals

COMMUNICATION AND
INFORMATION, RETURN
AND REINTEGRATION

Administered by the Returning Nationals Secretariate, a governmental department, the online portal disseminates up-to-date information for potential returnees, including easy-to-download application forms (organised by categories), personalised guidance, and access to various services aimed at facilitating the repatriation process. Moreover, the platform also lists a number of incentives, including duty-free concessions for imported household goods and vehicles, and simplified customs procedures. Eligible returnees are those 18 years or older who resided abroad for 10 continuous years or more and decided to repatriate permanently.

Diaspora consultations 2023

COMMUNICATION
AND INFORMATION,
NETWORKING

Some diplomatic missions have organised onsite diaspora consultations as part of a move to institutionalise dialogue on diaspora contributions for socio-economic development. Other topics included education, mapping needs at home and abroad, heritage, and youth participation. In general, diplomatic teams have a dedicated diaspora officer who provides an interface with communities and organisations and is tasked with the overall coordination of diaspora affairs. The event also provided space for networking and socialisation.

SMARTS E-Services Portal 2024

DIGITALISATION

Presented in the Diaspora Digest newsletter, the SMARTS (Sustainable, Modernised, Administrative Revenue Tax Administration) e-services platform developed for the Inland Revenue Department purports to ensure "unparalleled access to tax management services", which would also benefit taxpayers in the diaspora.

Annex:

List of Actors

Diaspora related institutions

- **National institutions**

- At ministerial level

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MFA

Based on its mission, the Ministry is tasked with formulating and implementing the foreign policy of SKN, promoting, protecting, and advancing the country's strategic interests abroad with an emphasis on development. The official website also links to a dedicated Diaspora page.

- At sub-ministerial level

Diaspora Secretariat

The secretariat plays a crucial role in connecting and engaging with the Kittitian-Nevisian community around the world. It provides an official guide for living, working, visiting, and investing in Saint Kitts and Nevis, offers local services, programs, and initiatives, facilitates connections between the diaspora and the homeland and supports Kittitian-Nevisian nationals in various aspects of their lives abroad.

Returning Nationals Secretariate, RNS 2012

A department in the Prime Minister's Office, the Secretariate was established to specifically coordinate the relationship with returning nationals, in collaboration with ministerial bodies, community organisations and other stakeholders. Its vision "is to establish a seamless and empowering experience for individuals returning to their home after living abroad", through a centralised platform that "offers comprehensive support" and access to services facilitating the reintegration process. The institutional mandate also covers involuntary returned migrants (deportees) and students.

Regional Integration and Diaspora Unit, RIDU 2020

Operating under the remit of the Prime Minister's Office, RIDU leads the implementation of a range of initiatives connected with the OECS (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) regional integration movement, working in close collaboration with the Regional Integration Unit of OECS (based in Saint Lucia). One of its objectives is to deepen the diaspora engagement through awareness and information campaigns.



Diaspora organisations in Europe



Association of St Kitts and Nevis Descendants, ASKaND 2022 United Kingdom

✔ Development activities

The organisation brings people of St Kitts and Nevis heritage together through advocacy, arts, education and a range of socio-cultural activities. It also disseminates a monthly bulletin to its membership and has been an active promoter of culture and heritage, nurturing a sense of community cohesion. Some of its efforts focused on securing funding and grants from the National Lottery Community Fund and Birmingham City Council. The association also engages in development activities, fundraising and procuring medical equipment for hospitals in St Kitts and Nevis.

Association of Young Professionals of St Kitts and Nevis, SKNYPNUK United Kingdom

✔ Integration activities

Also mentioned in the Diaspora Digest (disseminated by RIDU), the professional network engages the youth diaspora residing in the United Kingdom through meetings and socialisation events.

St Kitts and Nevis Association of Leeds, SKNA United Kingdom

✔ Integration activities

According to its official website, SKNA was established to advance and meet the needs of nationals living in Leeds and the surrounding districts, to disseminate information on health and education and to develop links with nationals from other Caribbean islands. The association co-organised consultations on relevant issues such as voting from abroad with the participation of diplomatic mission staff and representatives from the diaspora unit.

St Kitts and Nevis London Association, SKANLA 2016 United Kingdom

✔ Integration activities

A membership-based organisation, it was set up by a group of volunteers to inform, socialise, befriend and prevent the exclusion of nationals residing in the London area. In 2022, SKANLA was awarded a recognition prize by Brent Council for its community services and proactive involvement.

St Kitts and Nevis Association Slough, SANAS 1998 United Kingdom

✔ Integration activities

The association promotes health and well-being, family unity and education, offering a support network for nationals residing in the United Kingdom. A recent event raised funds to host a Christmas luncheon dedicated to the community's elders.

St Kitts/Nevis & Friends Association Birmingham, N/A United Kingdom

Integration activities

The organisation was established to meet the needs of nationals living in the UK, particularly in the Midlands area, as well as to develop links with other Caribbean islanders. Similar to other community organisations, it provides support and socialisation opportunities for the elderly.

St Kitts, Nevis and Friends Association of Luton 1984 United Kingdom

Integration activities

The association was formed after SKN's independence and serves communities based in Bedfordshire through an array of socio-cultural activities, including the Luton International Carnival and events to celebrate the heritage and contributions of the Windrush generations to British society.

St Kitts and Nevis Friendly Association, United Kingdom

Integration activities

The association focuses on youth-related activities, including sports, training, and social interaction. It also operates a youth club that convenes regularly (mainly during weekends).

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