

India and its Diaspora

The Indian diaspora is quite a heterogeneous group and comprises people from different economic and social classes, speaking a diversity of languages, professing a multitude of cultural practices, and can also be divided along the lines of the time of their migration into foreign lands. Read on for an insight into the Indian diaspora for the [IAS](#) mains exam.

This article talks about the Indian diaspora and its significance today. It is a topic that is featured in the news quite frequently and hence, important for the [civil services](#) exam.

Indian Diaspora Meaning and Important Points

A [UN](#) Report – ‘International Migration 2020 Highlights’ by UNDESA (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Indian Diaspora (18 million residing outside India in 2020) is the largest in the world.

What is the meaning of Indian Diaspora – Originally, the term ‘Diaspora’ has Greek origins (loosely it means – scattering of seeds) and is used to refer to the mass movement of Jews away from the homeland. In contemporary times, Diaspora refers to the people living away from their homeland due to various reasons. Hence, the meaning of Indian Diaspora is the group of people who are currently living outside India (temporary or permanent) and those who can trace their origin to India.

Countries with Largest Diaspora – 2020

- India – 18 million
- Mexico – 11 million
- Russia – 11 million
- China – 10 million
- Syria – 8 million

Countries Hosting Indian Diaspora -2020

- United Arab Emirates (UAE) – 3.5 million
- United States of America (USA) – 2.7 million
- Saudi Arabia – 2.5 million

Diaspora increased most in 2000-2020 period from the following countries:

- India (almost 10 million increase in the number of people living outside)
- Syria
- Venezuela
- China
- Philippines

Destination of International Migrants – 2020:

- USA – 51 million (approx 18 percent of the world's total migrants choose to reside in the United States)
- Germany – 16 million
- Saudi Arabia – 13 million
- Russia – 12 million
- UK – 9 million

Aspirants would find this article helpful for the [UPSC 2021](#).

Candidates can enhance their UPSC exam preparation by attempting [UPSC Previous Years Question Papers](#) now!!

To complement your preparation for the upcoming exam, check the following links:

- [Current Affairs](#)
- [UPSC Notes PDF](#)
- [IAS Mock Tests](#)
- [NCERT Notes PDF](#)
- [Daily News Analysis](#)
- [100 Difference between Articles for Revision](#)

Introduction

In the theatre of development, the competitiveness and growth of an economy are determined by its capacity to acquire and apply new knowledge. In a rapidly globalizing world, learning new ways of doing things depends in no small measure on the ability to integrate with the larger world outside. We live in a world in which the free movement of goods and capital across borders is seen as a virtue. Arguably, it is seen to reinforce the principle of competitive advantage and help spur savings, investment, and demand. What is less recognized is that International migration of human capital: the movement of knowledge, talent, and skills across borders is central to learning and development.

The rise of significant Diasporas has in the past few years, brought into the limelight a couple of key facts. First, there is a huge expatriate population of skilled people from developing countries in developed nations. Second, overseas communities can form a major resource for the development of the countries of their origin. The movement of high and low skilled workers from less to more developed economies and back brings about a great many new opportunities for development. Talking about diaspora only in terms of remittances and financial flows is a narrow approach and needs to change. It is not necessary for all expatriates to be investors, and their contributions to their countries of origin need not be solely financial.

An overseas community serves as an important 'bridge' to access expertise, knowledge, markets, and resources for the development of the home country. The success of this bridge often depends upon 2 conditions: the ability of the Diaspora to develop and showcase a coherent, intrinsically motivated, and progressive identity and the capacity of the home country to develop conditions and institutions for a

maintainable, tenable, symbiotic, and mutually rewarding engagement. Home countries are now beginning to recognize the need to pursue and promote the dynamic of Diaspora and development.

Candidates can check the relevant links for UPSC Exam Preparation:

Policy Framework For Indian Overseas Diaspora	Financial Services and Overseas Indian Community
Overseas Citizen of India	India and Migration
Census of India, 2011	Overseas Citizenship Scheme – OCI Card and Eligibility
Pravasi Bhartiya Diwas (PBD)	Difference between Nationality and Citizenship
Citizenship in India	Demographics of India

India, Diaspora and Migration: An Overview

- India is one of the pioneers in recognizing the importance of its overseas population and establishing an institutional framework for sustainable and mutually beneficial engagement with its Diaspora.
- By creating an independent and effective **Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs**, India has given mainstream attention to its estimated 25 million-strong Overseas Indian community.
- This experience too has helped us develop appropriate and well-calibrated institutional responses, through bilateral and multilateral engagements, to meet the challenges of capacity-building for better migration management.

India And Its Diaspora

The Indian Diaspora is a diverse, heterogeneous and eclectic international community, representing a diversity of types, forms, geographies and formation periods. Hence, it requires diverse and distinct approaches to engage them and connect with India. The common thread that binds them together is the idea of India and its intrinsic values. Overseas Indians — comprising People of Indian Origin and Non-Resident Indians, stretching across all oceans and continents — have considerably added to knowledge, innovation and development across the globe by making significant contributions to their countries of residence.

Historically, the dispersion of people from India and the formation of Indian Diaspora communities is the result of different waves of migration over hundreds of years driven by a variety of reasons: slavery under mercantilism, indentured labour under colonisation, and guest work programmes post-colonialism. This transnational engagement of people, riding on the processes of globalisation has been reinforced through global networks of families, friends and businesses, which are symbiotic and which enable the exchange of shared ideas of cultural, social and economic interests.

In retrospect, the formation of the Indian Diaspora makes up an engaging saga of trials, tribulations and the eventual triumph of determination and hard work. It pleases all Indians when the Overseas Indian community is respected for its work culture, discipline, and successful integration with the local community as much as being counted for its outstanding contributions in their countries of residence. This community having overcome considerable adversity represents an eminently successful Diaspora in the host countries

with several of its representatives occupying leadership positions there. We look at them as a significant strategic resource for India.

Aspirants can go through the important links given below to prepare for the exam even better –

Constitution Questions for UPSC Mains GS 2	Indian Polity Questions for UPSC Mains GS 2	Governance Questions for UPSC Mains GS 2
International Relations Questions in UPSC Mains GS 2	International Organisations – International Relations	How to Study International Relations for UPSC Mains

Contemporary flows from India are of two kinds:

- The first is the emigration of the highly skilled professionals, workers and students with tertiary and higher educational qualifications migrating to the most advanced OECD countries, particularly to the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This flow started after Indian independence, in pursuit of better career prospects and living, and gathered momentum with the emigration of IT professional in the 1990s.
- The second was the flow of unskilled and semi-skilled workers going mostly to the Gulf countries and Malaysia—following the oil boom in the Gulf countries, mainly from Kerala and other south Indian states. Of late, northern states in India like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have emerged as the leading states of origin.

Put together, these migratory flows have resulted in diverse communities of people of Indian origin in various parts of the world: East Asia, Middle-East Asia, South and Eastern Africa, Europe, North America, Australia, the northern part of South America and the Caribbean Islands. These distinct communities of people of Indian origin, as well as Indian nationals living abroad, constitute the vast Indian Diaspora. There is no single homogeneous Overseas Indian community; there exist diversities within them as well as in the level and degree of their engagement with India, defined by the lapse of time, generations and distance that separate them from their country of origin.

The Diasporas provide important links and contact points between home and host societies by building transnational networks which transact not only emotional and familial bonds but also cultural, social and economic interests. With advances in information technology and cheaper transport services, the Diasporas, as compared to situations prevailing earlier, are able to maintain connections with people and networks back home more effectively.

Such Diaspora associations in host countries impact and influence local businesses, even political decisions, thereby ensuring a friendlier environment and outcomes for the existing and prospective migrants. At the same time, these Diaspora associations also help to channel remittances, capital and investments to benefit not only home communities but also by developing partnerships with the host-country counterpart, benefit both. The same can be said of the exchange of skills, cuisines, ideas, knowledge and technology.

As such, such exchanges between a host and home countries, leveraged through the Diaspora, are never unidirectional or temporary or limited in scope. What remains a work in progress, however, is the formation of mechanisms or patterns to engage the Diasporas to its full potential. Engaging with the Diaspora in a sustainable and mutually rewarding manner across the economic, social and cultural space is at the heart of

the policy of the Ministry. The officers in MOIA, continually seek to create conditions, partnerships and institutions that will best enable India to connect with its Diaspora comprehensively.

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA)

- Establishment – May 2004 in the name Ministry of Non-resident Indians' affairs.
- Renamed as MOIA in September 2004.
- Mission – To connect the Indian diaspora with its motherland.
- In 2016, MOIA was merged with Ministry of External Affairs (MEA),
- **Reason** – To avoid duplication of work and to improve efficiency.

Such engagement has to take into account the fact that the Indian Diaspora, like India itself, is not a homogeneous group of people. And for this reason, it needs diverse and distinct approaches to engage them and connect with India. It is not necessary for all Overseas Indians to be a part of the development process. Not all of them need to make financial contributions, nor do they need to relocate to India.

These 'Global Indians' can serve as bridges by providing access to markets, sources of investment, expertise, knowledge and technology; they can shape, by their informed participation, the discourse on migration and development, and help articulate the need for policy coherence in the countries of destination and origin.

All of this requires not only the home country to establish conditions and institutions for a sustainable, symbiotic and mutually rewarding engagement with the Diaspora—which are central to our programmes and activities; but for the Diaspora to project itself as an intrinsically motivated and progressive community.

The above details would help candidates prepare for [UPSC 2021](#).