

MAPPING THE
RWANDAN
DIASPORA
IN THE
**UNITED
STATES OF
AMERICA**



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MAPPING THE RWANDAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACS	American Community Surveys
ICT	information and communications technology
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KIFC	Kigali International Financial Centre
MINAFFET	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (of Rwanda)
MINECOFIN	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (of Rwanda)
NST1	(First) National Strategy for Transformation
RCA	Rwandan Community Abroad
RDB	Rwanda Development Board
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UNHCR	(Office of the) United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USRCA	United States Rwandan Community Abroad



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mapping the Rwandan Diaspora in the United States of America is the report on a mapping exercise involving a sample of 460 individuals that took place in the United States of America from November 2021 to March 2022. The study aimed to gain insights into the socioeconomic profile, professional skills and expertise of this population and assess their capacity, level of interest and motivation to participate and engage in development-related activities in Rwanda. This report proposes a list of recommendations on ways to match or align Government-led projects and initiatives with skills available in the Rwandan diaspora in the United States and enhance the substantial engagement already in place.

The research consultant received inputs from the leaders of the diaspora organization, United States Rwandan Community Abroad (USRCA), and its constituent chapters (i.e. the “Rwandan Communities Abroad” (RCAs)) spread across the United States. Key informants and opinion leaders (including former community leaders and other, independent leaders), as well as ordinary diasporans, through their participation in focus group discussions, provided invaluable insights. These respondents represent the complex and diverse socioeconomic profiles and experiences of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States.

From November 2021 to mid-January 2022, semi-structured discussions with the Rwandan Embassy team in Washington, D.C., key informants and focus groups (altogether comprising 23 individuals) yielded valuable qualitative data, a general understanding of the underlying realities of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States, and extensive context for the study. A quantitative survey was administered between January 2002 and mid-March 2022 using an online questionnaire created using Microsoft Forms and disseminated through WhatsApp. To complement the online survey, an offline version was conducted through one-on-one phone interviews. A total of 460 individuals responded to the survey, which covered the following topics and information categories:

- (a) General demographics (age, sex, location and marital status);
- (b) Preferred means of communication;
- (c) Education level and skill set;
- (d) Employment status;
- (e) Remittance-sending to Rwanda;
- (f) Investing in Rwanda;
- (g) Visits to Rwanda pre-COVID-19;



- (h) Awareness of opportunities and diaspora engagement activities for investment, employment, and skills and knowledge transfer in Rwanda;
- (i) Awareness of the development policies and initiatives of the Government of Rwanda;
- (j) Interest in contributing to Rwanda's development through skills and knowledge transfer;
- (k) Interest in making a short-term return to Rwanda.

The respondents are generally highly educated and employed in various domains. They are found in all major states and metropolitan areas of the United States, the top 10 of which are (in decreasing order) New York State, California, Arkansas, Texas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Illinois, Georgia, the Washington, D.C.–Maryland–Virginia (DMV) area, and Michigan. The respondents are distributed along gender lines, with 34 per cent being female and 66 per cent, male. Most respondents (74%) belong to the 22–35 age group. A similar proportion (74%) indicate that they are single. Other findings include the following:

- (a) Most respondents (86%) send remittances to relatives and friends.
- (b) Only 8 per cent visited Rwanda pre-COVID-19.
- (c) Some 65 per cent are aware of diaspora engagement activities for investment, employment, and skills and knowledge transfer in Rwanda.
- (d) Respondents' awareness of policies and initiatives is mostly limited to *Umushyikirano* ("National Dialogue Council") (81%).
- (e) The Rwandan diaspora in the United States does not seem to be sufficiently familiar with Rwanda's development aspirations, as spelled out in the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), Vision 2035 and Vision 2050.
- (f) There is a high level (94%) of willingness to contribute to skills and knowledge transfer.
- (g) Investments made by individual diaspora members are not made under a Government-initiated programme.

Obstacles that prevent Rwandans in the United States from more energetically engaging in skills and knowledge transfer include the lack of sufficient information regarding available opportunities for such transfer, busy work schedules, perceived low pay in Rwanda and high mortgage rates in Rwanda. These, among other factors, are detailed in the Recommendations chapter of this study.



Recommendations that focus on enhancing engagement with the Rwandan diaspora in the United States regarding government policies, programmes and practices include:

- (a) Developing creative strategies to recruit diaspora talent;
- (b) Devising incentive schemes to attract talent;
- (c) Promoting short-term engagements to individuals already employed in the diaspora;
- (d) Leveraging video conferencing technologies for synchronous e-learning and e-mentoring (strategies already mentioned in previous Rwandan diaspora mapping reports);
- (e) Establishing sustained and adequate communication strategies to reach the Rwandan diaspora in the United States.





1. INTRODUCTION

IOM Rwanda and the Government of Rwanda (through the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFET) and the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, D.C.) commissioned a mapping exercise to better understand the skills and knowledge of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States, as well as their level of interest in contributing to Rwanda's development efforts. The study follows the successful mapping of the Rwandan diaspora in Belgium, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The main objective of the mapping exercise is to gain insight into the professional skills, knowledge and expertise possessed by Rwandans in the United States and to evaluate their motivations, level of interest and availability to contribute the same to Rwanda's development, notably towards the achievement of Vision 2035 and Vision 2050 benchmarks.¹

This study will allow IOM Rwanda and Government of Rwanda entities (such as RDB, MINAFFET and the Embassy in Washington, D.C.) to gather information to better align or match projects and initiatives to the skills, expertise and knowledge of members of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States. Indeed, previous mapping exercises in Europe have enabled the Government to identify diaspora skills in the areas of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and health. The mapping of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States will likewise allow the matching of diaspora skills to projects and initiatives necessary for the achievement of Vision 2035 and Vision 2050 benchmarks in areas such as airport management and operations, vaccine manufacturing, financial technology, information and communications technology (ICT), mining engineering, tourism and sports management and operations. As labour markets are in constant flux, this study can be the basis of continuing research and a foundation for future mapping of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States.

¹ Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), 2020; National Industrial Research and Development Agency (NIRDA), 2017.





2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study adopts the definition of “diaspora” laid down in The Rwanda Diaspora Policy of 2009:

In the Rwandan context, *Rwandan diaspora* refers in general to all Rwandans who [have] left their country voluntarily or were forced to live in other countries of the world and are willing to contribute to the development of Rwanda.²

As already indicated, the goal of the research exercise is to compile this holistic report that presents a socioeconomic profile of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States that includes information on their expertise, skills and investment interests. In addition, the report reflects on the formal and informal ways in which the Rwandan diaspora in the United States is already engaged in various development-related programmes in Rwanda and is prepared to enhance such engagement. It also examines mechanisms through which the Government of Rwanda can better strategize to leverage the expertise, skills and investment potential of the diaspora.

The following objectives guides the methodology of the mapping exercise:

- (a) Provide an overview of the size and composition of the diaspora (in terms of gender, age, geographic location, skills, education and/or training, and profession) and existing diaspora networks, organizations and associations, with specific information on skilled diaspora members;
- (b) Assess the diaspora’s level of awareness of opportunities to engage in Rwanda (e.g. in the areas of investment, employment, and knowledge and skills transfer);
- (c) Present a clear picture of the gaps in the diaspora’s awareness and knowledge of Rwanda’s current economic and social development.
- (d) Provide an overview of the diaspora’s expectations of the Government of Rwanda that, if met, will allow or encourage them to engage in the country’s development initiatives.

² MINAFFET, 2009:6.



- (e) Detail the diaspora's level of interest in skills and knowledge transfer programmes and their willingness to participate in them.
- (f) Identify other areas in which the diaspora wants to contribute that can support the socioeconomic development programme of Rwanda and how they would want such support to be facilitated.
- (g) Provide diaspora members with information about opportunities to engage in Rwanda (e.g. in the areas of investment, employment, and skills and knowledge transfer).

2.2. METHODOLOGY

2.2.1. Data collection methods

The research consultant adopted a mixed-methodology approach, which integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods, to gather information about the Rwandan diaspora in the United States between November 2021 and March 2022. Research tools included desk research; a group interview with the Embassy team; key informant interviews with diaspora leaders, including officers of the United States Rwandan Community Abroad (USRCA) and its chapters (called "Rwandan Communities Abroad" (RCAs)), including RCA commissioners for knowledge and skills transfer; focus group discussions; a survey conducted online (created in Microsoft Forms) and offline (via phone); and interviews with individuals not reachable through the USRCA network.

Available data and publications about Rwanda and the Rwandan diaspora in the United States were examined during the desk review, most of which took place from November 2021 to January 2021. After being sensitized to the mapping exercise, RCA leaders and members received a link to the online survey questionnaire through WhatsApp and were instrumental in sharing the survey questionnaire with their other WhatsApp contacts. The online questionnaire was disseminated to diasporans mainly through the USRCA network, which counted a total of 28 RCAs. Survey responses were received anonymously and collected in Microsoft Forms. Semi-structured, small-group meetings with key informants and focus groups, as well as one-on-one, in-person and phone interviews, were conducted to ensure that the quantitative data collected prior was representative of the different layers of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States.

To ensure comparability, survey questions and response options in the questionnaires for the Embassy team, key informants and focus groups were mostly standardized with those used in previous diaspora-mapping exercises in Europe.



Most discussions (i.e. during meetings with the Embassy team, key informants and focus groups, as well as one-on-one interviews with selected diaspora members) were conducted via videoconferencing, using Zoom or Webex, due to COVID-19 restrictions in most states. A few significant in-person interactions took place at national diaspora events (e.g. the USRCA National Leadership Retreat on 11 March 2022 and the International Women's Day celebration on 12 March 2022, both held in Dallas, Texas).

Desk review

The consultant gathered baseline information from existing publications and data on Rwanda and the Rwandan diaspora in the United States, including those from/by:

- (a) The Government of Rwanda (specifically, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINECOFIN), the National Industrial Research and Development Agency (NIRDA), RDB, the Ministry of Public Service and Labour (MIFOTRA) and the National Institute for Statistics and Research (NISR));
- (b) World Bank Open Data;
- (c) United States census data;
- (d) US Homeland Security databases;
- (e) American Community Surveys (ACS) Brief No. 12-16;
- (f) Refugee Population Statistics Database (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR));
- (g) Other organizations and academic researchers;
- (h) Diaspora individuals and organizations on social media platforms (e.g. Facebook and LinkedIn).

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews with the Embassy team, key informants and focus groups allowed for robust conversations about the Rwandan diaspora in the United States, which included possible ways of reaching as many diaspora members as possible. Participants were drawn from diverse groups, including diaspora members who had been in the United States for several decades, among whom were those who currently or previously held leadership roles in USRCA and all of whom had good knowledge about the Rwandan diaspora in the country.



Online survey

USRCA and RCA leaders were sensitized to the survey through online meetings and phone calls. The online survey was then disseminated through the WhatsApp groups of the USRCA and RCA network, cascaded from leaders to members. The responses of the 363 online survey participants were captured in Microsoft Forms.

The online survey questionnaire was closely aligned with those used in previous mapping exercises in Europe and covered the following topics and information categories:

- (a) General demographics (age, sex, location and marital status);
- (b) Preferred means of communication;
- (c) Education level and skill set;
- (d) Employment status;
- (e) Remittance-sending to Rwanda;
- (f) Investing in Rwanda;
- (g) Awareness of opportunities and diaspora engagement activities for investment, employment, and skills and knowledge transfer in Rwanda;
- (h) Awareness of the development policies and initiatives of the Government of Rwanda, such as NST1 and Vision 2050;
- (i) Interest in contributing to Rwanda's development through skills and knowledge transfer;
- (j) Interest in making a short-term return to Rwanda.

The survey was also disseminated through other social networks, such as those of the Rwanda Presidential Scholars and the student cohort at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Offline survey

One-on-one phone interviews were used to survey additional target respondents outside the USRCA network and who could be found on digital platforms such as LinkedIn and Facebook. The offline survey counted 97 respondents, whose responses were recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that was eventually merged with the automatically generated results file (also in Excel) from the online survey.



2.2.2. Sampling

The consultant used a non-probability (or non-random) sampling method called *purposeful/purposive sampling*, whereby the online survey was made available to anyone willing to take it. The goal was to reach as many people as possible and capture the complex and diverse nature of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States. Another non-probability method used was chain-referral sampling (also known as *snowball sampling*), whereby RCA leaders and their committees and members helped disseminate the online survey from USRCA leaders. To ensure the process worked, the consultant sent individual WhatsApp messages to RCA leaders to remind them to complete the survey and relay it to other people in their networks. Chain-referral sampling was also used with other groups and social networks, such as those of the key informants, focus groups, Presidential Scholars, Rwandan students at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and an independent organization (i.e. not affiliated with USRCA) based in central New York State, with members in cities and towns such as Syracuse and Binghamton. These networks were instrumental in garnering a high number of survey respondents.

Data from the 2010 United States census, ACS Brief No. 12-16 (2012 estimate), UNHCR (2014 estimate) and the US Department of Homeland Security (2011–2020), as well as scholarly research (estimates in an academic publication), were used to estimate the number of Rwandan diaspora members in the United States.³ Cochran's sample size formula determined, at a 95-per-cent confidence level, that 372 was the minimum required for a statistically significant sample for the estimated Rwandan diaspora population of 11,325 in the United States. The mapping exercise was able to collect 460 respondents – that is, 88 more than the minimum.⁴

2.2.3. Data analysis

Data gathered from the survey was captured in Microsoft Forms and saved in databases in Excel. It was then summarized and organized using pie charts and tables, including pivot tables. The data was analysed to highlight findings about critical demographic variables, such as age, sex, location, level of education, skill set and employment status, as well as preferred means of communication, remittance-sending practices, participation in investment activities in Rwanda, and level of interest in contributing to Rwanda's development through skills and knowledge transfer. In addition, significant qualitative data was collected throughout the study and analysed, with both the quantitative and qualitative analyses offering insights for stakeholders to leverage.

³ See section 3.1 for more details.

⁴ A sample size calculator, used in the current study, is available at www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm.



The survey was vigorously promoted through the networks of the 28 RCAs and the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, D.C., including on social media platforms, particularly WhatsApp. The link to the online survey was posted on the WhatsApp group of USRCA leaders, who, in turn, posted the same in their respective RCA WhatsApp groups (WhatsApp had been the most used means of communication between and among Rwandan diaspora groups for the last few years, as confirmed by responses to one of the survey questions). The same survey was conducted offline through phone interviews with individuals outside the USRCA network, some of whom were on LinkedIn and Facebook. Responses from the offline survey were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet that was later merged with the collated online survey results. The online and offline surveys counted 363 and 97 respondents, respectively, for a total of 460. Discussion meetings with the Embassy team, key informants, focus groups and selected online survey respondents were later organized for the qualitative part of the mapping exercise.

2.2.4. Limitations of the study and mitigation strategies

The purposeful/purposive and chain-referral sampling methods were deliberately used to reach as many Rwanda diaspora members as possible. A disadvantage of these techniques was that the research consultant did not have full control over who responded and who did not – and why. This issue was compounded by the following obstacles: (a) suspicion of bad intentions, with some respondents fearing, for example, that the Government of Rwanda was trying to get information about them, even after multiple assurances that survey answers would be kept anonymous; (b) a general mistrust of surveys; (c) lack of time and interest in the survey altogether; and (d) general privacy concerns. Several people who participated in the offline survey complained about being asked what they considered to be very private information, such as income and the amount of money they were sending to Rwanda.

Mitigation strategies to offset the effects of the study's limitations included the following:

- (a) The fear of not collecting sufficient data was addressed by the strategies used to disseminate the survey described in this chapter. The number of respondents was statistically significant to generate data that is meaningful and representative of the Rwandan diaspora population in the United States – 460 respondents is well above the minimum sample size computed at 372.
- (b) Hesitant target respondents were shown how responses were captured in Microsoft Forms to show them that responses were received anonymously.



- (c) To address the issue of lack of time and interest in participating, regular communication reminded target respondents about the survey and urged hesitant diasporans to participate in it. Reminders were sent or made through the USRCA and RCA networks, during video conferences, through WhatsApp messages (weekly from mid-January to mid-March 2022), and during the USRCA National Leadership Retreat on 11 March 2022 and the International Women's Day celebration on 12 March 2022, both in Dallas, Texas.
- (d) To allay suspicions of bad intentions and address privacy concerns, the survey was prefaced with the following note about data protection and management:

Information gathered through this exercise will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information (PII) will appear in the final report, to be published in 2022. Individual responses will be summarized in grouped formats, and you can skip any question you do not feel comfortable answering.





3. DESK REVIEW

This desk review is based on publications about Rwanda's policies and initiatives regarding the country's engagement with the diaspora.⁵ It also examines various documents and data sets about the Rwandan diaspora in the United States available on the websites of reputable institutions such as the US Census Bureau, the US Department of Homeland Security, the World Bank (Open Data), UNHCR, UNDP and, for information about Rwandan students in the United States, IOM.

3.1. THE RWANDAN DIASPORA IN THE UNITED STATES

The 2000 United States census, conducted by the US Census Bureau, revealed that there were approximately 1,956 Rwandan-born individuals in the country, with only 280 having been naturalized at that time. The census further revealed that 1,425 (72.5% of the non-naturalized) arrived between 1990 and 2000.⁶

The 2010 United States census did not provide data on the numbers of immigrants from specific countries, but ACS Brief No. 12-16 showed that there were approximately 7,000 Rwandan-born individuals in the country in 2012.⁷ In 2014, UNHCR estimated that 445 of these individuals were asylum seekers and about 1,020 were refugees. Data from the US Department of Homeland Security show that 2,881 Rwandans were naturalized as United States citizens between 2013 and 2020 (Table 1).

The brisk increase in the number of Rwandans in the United States from 2002 to 2012 was due mainly to the arrival of resettled refugees. As noted in other mapping reports, the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi led to a significant influx of Rwandans into Western Europe and North America.⁸ It is this wave of arrivals that produced a big part of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States today.

⁵ MINECOFIN, 2020.

⁶ Marson, 2016:57.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.



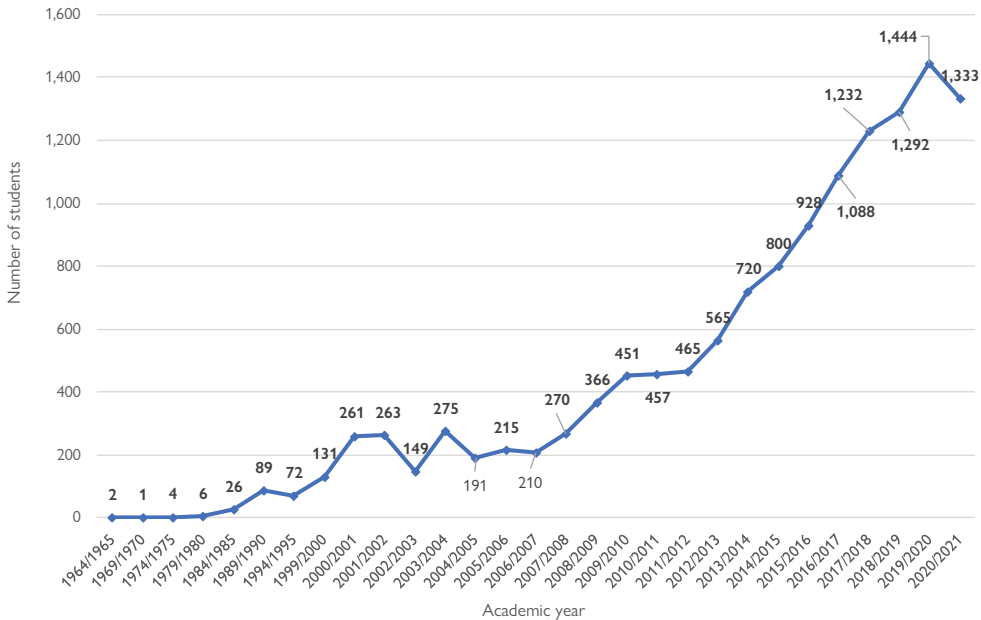
Table 1. Estimate of the Rwandan diaspora population in the United States, 2020

ACS Brief No. 12-16, 2012 (Rwandan-born residents)	7 000
Open Doors project data set, 2020 (international students)	1 444
US Department of Homeland Security, 2013–2020 (naturalized citizens)	2 881
Total	11 325

Source: Gambino et al., 2014; Institute of International Education, 2022; US Department of Homeland Security, 2022.

A component of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States that is of critical importance to this mapping exercise consists of students who have been coming to the United States to study, with a substantial (but unknown) number of them staying in the country after their university education. They can be found at over 200 institutions of higher education. Graduates work for various companies all over the United States. They constitute the highest-educated pool, with areas of expertise in fields such as computer science and engineering, electrical engineering, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, biology, and nursing.

Figure 1. Rwandan student population in the United States, 1964–2021



Source: Institute of International Education, 2022.



3.2. RWANDAN DIASPORA ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

3.2.1. United States Rwandan Community Abroad

The USRCA is a non-political, non-profit organization with a mission to empower Rwandans in the United States to collectively improve their cultural and socioeconomic welfare and contribute to the sustainable development of Rwanda. They have done so by staying connected to Rwanda through cultural events organized by their respective RCAs (local chapters of the USRCA) and to which they invite “friends of Rwanda”.⁹ These events include Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday of November), New Year’s, Heroes’ Day, International Women’s Day, summer picnics and *Umuganura*. An annual commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi (*Kwibuka*) is also organized by all RCAs between April and July.

In 2013, the team at the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, D.C., embarked on a sustained effort to help Rwandans in various communities across the United States to establish their local RCAs. Since then, the Embassy team has helped to create 28 RCAs, namely: Arizona, Atlanta (Georgia), Austin (Texas), Boston (Massachusetts), Buffalo (New York), Dallas (Texas), Denver (Colorado), Washington, D.C. (more precisely, the Washington, D.C.–Maryland–Virginia (DMV) area), Florida, Fort Wane (Texas), Houston (Texas), Indianapolis (Indiana), Iowa, Jacksonville (Florida), Kentucky, Las Vegas (Nevada), Maine, Midwest (Indiana and Michigan), Missouri, New York City, Northern California, North Dakota, Oregon, San Antonio (Texas), Seattle (Washington State), Southern California, Tennessee and Utah.¹⁰ Table 2 shows the 10 RCAs with the largest memberships based on numbers reported by RCA officers to the Embassy in March 2022.

Table 2. Ten largest Rwandan Communities Abroad

Rwandan Community Abroad	Estimated membership
Dallas–Fort Worth (Texas)	>7 000
Midwest (Indiana and Michigan)	2 000
Maine	2 000
Atlanta (Georgia)	800
Southern California	500
Washington, D.C. (DMV)	500
Seattle (Washington)	250
Utah	250
Iowa	200
Northern California	150

Source: Numbers reported by the RCAs to the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, D.C.

⁹ “Friends of Rwanda” are “non-Rwandan nationals who have invested their time and resources to improve lives of Rwandans through various initiatives and organization[s]” (Rwandan American Friends, 2022).

¹⁰ A full list is available at www.rwandanamericanfriends.com/rca-directory/?grpage=2&num=18.



Significant numbers of Rwandans reside in the following cities or states who are not organized into RCAs: Chicago (Illinois), Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania), Rochester, Syracuse and Binghamton (the last three all being in the central New York region).

Colleges and universities with Rwandan students include the University of Nebraska–Lincoln ($n=110$), the University of Arkansas ($n=75$), Hendrix College (Arkansas) ($n=15$), Weber State University (Utah) ($n=20$), Arizona State University ($n=11$), Norwich University (New York) ($n=8$) and George Mason University (Virginia) ($n=3$).¹¹

3.2.2. *One Nation Radio*

Dubbed “the voice of the Rwandan diaspora,” the online radio was founded by a member of the Midwest RCA in collaboration with other RCA members. It has featured members of various RCAs in Africa, the United States, Canada and Europe, as well as prominent officials of various institutions of the Government of Rwanda, such as the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, D.C., the National Bank of Rwanda and the Rwanda Stock Exchange. On many of the programmes produced so far, guests have promoted investment opportunities in Rwanda and called upon the Rwandan diaspora to be more engaged in Rwanda’s development.

3.2.3. *Rwandan American Friends*

The group was launched in 2021 by a group of senior Rwandan-American professors and other professionals to serve as a source of accurate and comprehensive information for the Rwandan diaspora in the United States and elsewhere, “friends of Rwanda” and other interested individuals. It pledges to help fight misinformation in the media and offer trustworthy information. The group’s mission consists of “strengthening the relationship between Rwanda and the United States through exchanges between our two peoples in various areas, which include education, skills transfer, culture, and economics”; “shar[ing] “fact-based news about Rwanda, education about the genocide against the Tutsi”; and “fight[ing] against genocide denial.” This group has created an online platform offering multiple sources of information, including on tourism and investment opportunities in Rwanda.¹²

¹¹ Numbers were provided by the Rwandan Embassy in Washington, D.C.

¹² The organization’s website is available at www.rwandanamericanfriends.com.



3.3. SKILLS GAPS IN RWANDA

Publications by RDB and other government institutions (such as NIRDA, NISR and MIFOTRA) reveal the absence of information about the skills and expertise of diaspora individuals willing to relocate to Rwanda to fill skills gaps.¹³ These studies also note that universities and TVET programmes have not been providing students with the skills needed to sustain the labour market for the Vision 2035 middle-income and the Vision 2050 high-income country benchmarks that Rwanda aspires for. The quality of the skills pool and the development of the same need to increase sharply if these benchmarks are to be achieved. RDB proposes leveraging global talent, notably by attracting Rwandan diaspora skills to fill the competency gaps in priority areas. Before COVID-19, events such as Rwanda Day served as opportunities for RDB and the Rwandan private sector to connect with Rwandans in the diaspora regarding job and investment opportunities back home. RDB further notes that ICT, financial services and professional services in general are areas that could use Rwandan diaspora skills.¹⁴ In addition to various areas of economic development, Rwanda specifically requires expertise in vaccine manufacturing for its ongoing response to COVID-19; airport operations and management, for the new international airport in Bugesera District in the eastern part of the country; and sports operations and management, among others. The need for the continuing development of transversal skills (which all people need, consisting of ICT, leadership, language and soft skills) at all levels also requires sustained efforts in the area of quality education and professional development.¹⁵

The newly created Kigali International Financial Center (KIFC) also stresses that its success will depend on the availability of sufficient human capital, and, like RDB, notes the mismatch in the demand for and supply of skills in the Rwandan labour market.¹⁶ KIFC specifically mentions the need for professionals in information technology, risk and project analysis, treasury management, customer centricity and data analytics.¹⁷ In addition, like RDB, KIFC recommends tapping global diaspora talent to fill identified skills gaps. For this to happen, KIFC proposes a special scheme and incentives such as allowances for transportation back home, tax holidays, tax exemptions for private vehicles and facilitated housing application.

¹³ See, for example: RDB, 2019.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ IOM, 2018.

¹⁶ RDB, 2022.

¹⁷ Ibid.



3.4. SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The USRCA leadership team, as does each of the 28 RCAs, has a commissioner in charge of skills and knowledge transfer. These commissioners are charged with promoting science, technology and knowledge transfer from the diaspora to Rwanda.

Before the RCAs existed, members of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States participated in the programme, Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN). Through this partnership between the Government of Rwanda and UNDP, highly qualified professionals volunteered their expertise between December 2005 and December 2007. IOM reported that the programme was successful and that the United States and Canada provided the bulk of volunteers (without specifying numbers), many of whom had backgrounds in science and technology, including in the fields of agriculture, health and ICT.¹⁸

Study-abroad programmes in Rwanda are another form of skills and knowledge transfer. Even though they first benefit mostly American students who go to Rwanda to earn academic credits, it also directly promotes Rwandan tourism and understanding between the Rwandan and American peoples. Several professors in the Rwandan diaspora in the United States had been involved in these programmes for several years before COVID-19 and supported their American colleagues in developing their own study-abroad programmes that take American students to Rwanda. Some American students stay in Rwanda after their studies, and many others go back to visit or plan to go back through United States scholarship schemes such as the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, Peace Corps Volunteers and the English Language Fellowships, all of which are sponsored by the US Department of State.

3.5. REMITTANCES

On 5 December 2021, *One Nation Radio* produced a YouTube programme featuring, among other guests, the Governor of the National Bank of Rwanda, during which he talked about diaspora global remittances to Rwanda. He reported that the volume had been increasing every year, from USD 153 million in 2015 to USD 274 million in 2020, with about 37 per cent of the money going to family or household support, 24 per cent to education (i.e. to pay for tuition) and 16 per cent to the construction of houses.¹⁹ These inflows of USD-denominated currency help with the country's balance of payments and stimulate the economy in various ways, as they increase the buying power of recipients, with the aggregate sum having a positive ripple effect on the whole economy. When invested in business, remittances have a higher impact because they serve as income for recipients and generate jobs for others. Figures 2

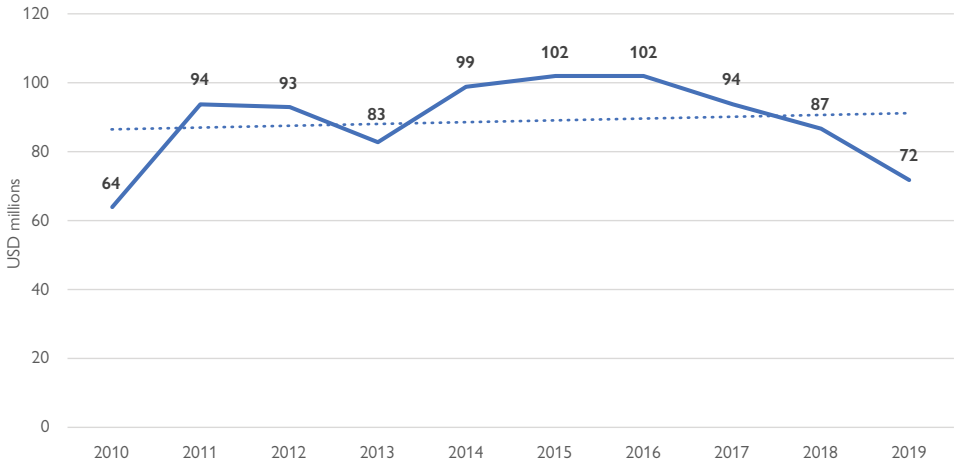
¹⁸ Ibid.; Touray, 2008.

¹⁹ *One Nation Radio*, 2021.



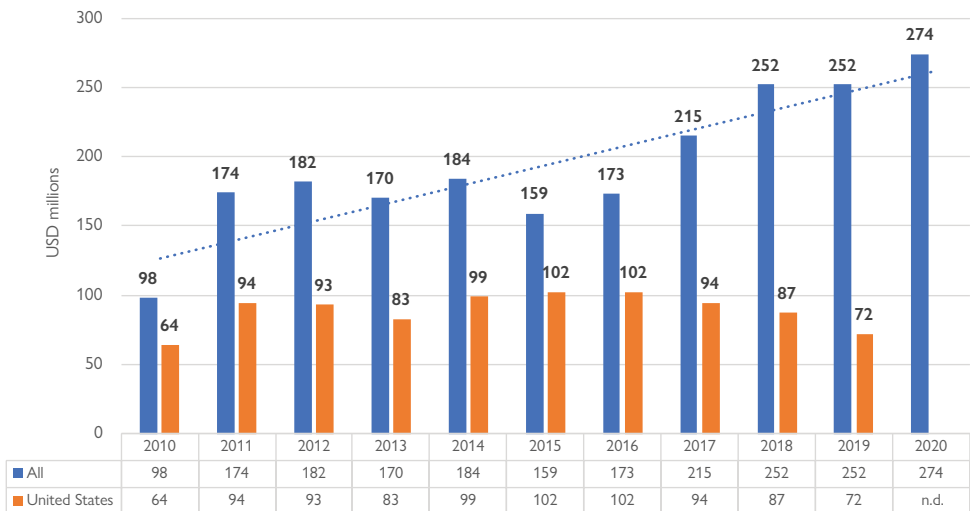
and 3 show that, among all countries hosting the Rwandan diaspora, the United States has the lion's share of remittances to Rwanda.

Figure 2. Remittances from the Rwandan diaspora in the United States to Rwanda, 2010–2019



Source: World Bank, 2022.

Figure 3. Remittances from the Rwandan diaspora in the United States compared to all countries, 2010–2019



Source: Data provided by the National Bank of Rwanda.



The numbers show that remittances from the United States from 2010 to 2019 accounted for 65 per cent, 54 per cent, 51 per cent, 49 per cent, 54 per cent, 64 per cent, 59 per cent, 44 per cent, 35 per cent and 29 per cent, respectively. These high percentages are consistent with what was already known. For instance, in 2017, a few weeks before the commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi, the now-defunct RDGN (Rwandan Diaspora Global Network) launched a global fundraiser to install water tanks in the town of Nyamata in Bugesera District to benefit widows of the genocide. The target budget for this initiative was around RWF 12 million. In less than two weeks, the Rwandan diaspora in the United States alone raised about RWF 8.5 million for the project – that is, about 65 per cent of the budget.

These numbers do not include the amounts personally handed to family members and friends when members of the diaspora visited Rwanda, nor do they include amounts spent on accommodation, transport, food and other items during their stay. However, they do include money remitted by USRCA to support Mutuelle de Santé, the Government’s “mutual health insurance” scheme – in 2018, for instance, the diaspora organization raised and sent more than RWF 12 million.

3.6. INVESTMENTS

Members of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States have started business initiatives that promote the Government’s Made in Rwanda Policy. Some examples are described below:

- (a) Afrizon, LLC is an e-commerce platform that connects local businesses in Rwanda to its global diaspora, who can buy merchandise from the former and have it delivered to their families back home.
- (b) Ebahatishop.com is another online platform developed by young Rwandan entrepreneurs that serves sellers and buyers in the East African Community regional market for hand-made products.
- (c) Gentilsshop.com is yet another e-commerce platform based in the United States that focuses on the sale of Rwanda-made products.²⁰

²⁰ For details about the three e-commerce initiatives, visit www.rwandanamericanfriends.com/diaspora-initiatives.



3.7. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA FOR DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT

The Government of Rwanda considers its network of RCAs to be an integral structure. This is reflected in the policies, strategies and structures, introduced in this section, that have been put in place since the early 2000s to engage members of the diaspora.

Rwandan Community Abroad Unit (RCA Unit)

The unit started in 2021 as a desk within MINAFFET in charge of diaspora affairs. In 2008, it became the Diaspora General Directorate and later the Directorate of the Rwandan Diaspora. The RCA Unit provides services to the 68 RCAs established worldwide,²¹ offering information about investment and job opportunities and encouraging RCA members to engage in Rwanda's social and economic development.

Umushyikirano

Umushyikirano ("National Dialogue Council") is a home-grown initiative that offers the Government, Rwandan citizens and representatives of the RCAs to discuss national issues during an annual, two-day open forum.

Vision 2020

Launched in 2000 and revised in 2021, Vision 2020 has the goal of raising Rwanda out of poverty and transforming the country into a middle-income economy by focusing on six pillars, namely: (a) good governance, (b) human resource development and a knowledge-based economy, (c) a private sector-led economy, (d) infrastructure development, (e) productive and market-oriented agriculture, and (f) regional and international economic integration.²² Members of the Rwandan diaspora were encouraged to be part of this transformation.

Rwanda Diaspora Policy

The policy, launched by MINAFFET in 2009, offers a framework to engage the Rwandan diaspora in Rwanda's economic and social transformation. The three pillars of this strategy are: (a) "cohesion of the Rwandan diaspora"; (b) "accurate information about their nation" provided to the Rwandan diaspora, and (c) the diaspora "playing a significant role in the socioeconomic development of Rwanda."²³

²¹ MINAFFET, 2022.

²² MINECOFIN, 2000.

²³ MINAFFET, 2009.



National Strategy for Transformation (NST1)

The National Strategy for Transformation (NST1) is a seven-year strategy (2017–2024) that serves as a transition between Vision 2020 and Vision 2050.²⁴

Vision 2035 and Vision 2050

Vision 2035 seeks to transform Rwanda into an upper-middle-income country by 2035, whereas Vision 2050 aims to lead the nation to high-income status by 2050.²⁵

²⁴ NIRDA, 2017.

²⁵ MINECOFIN, 2020.



4. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The online survey was first posted in WhatsApp groups on 22 January 2022 and closed on 15 March 2022. Microsoft Forms captured the responses of 363 survey participants during this period. At the same time, a search of diaspora members on digital platforms generated another 97 respondents, mostly on LinkedIn and Facebook, who were then surveyed through one-on-one phone interviews. Their responses were entered into an Excel spreadsheet that was later merged with the online survey results for analysis.

Semi-structured one-on-one discussions with key informants were conducted over the phone. Small focus group interactions were conducted via video-conferencing platforms, in line with COVID-19 restrictions. The total number of participants between the two types of interviews was 23. A special gathering of 28 USRCA leaders on 11 March 2022 offered another opportunity for consultations. Insights from these forums are included in the qualitative analysis and form the basis of some of this report's recommendations.

Table 3. Characteristics of key informants

Participant	Sex	Age range	Educational background
1	Male	55–64	Business administration/financial technology
2	Male	55–64	Engineering
3	Male	Over 64	Humanities
4	Male	35–44	STEM
5	Female	Over 65	Humanities
6	Female	55–64	Health-related fields
7	Male	45–54	Communications
8	Male	22–35	Engineering
9	Female	22–35	Integrated sciences
10	Male	45–54	Humanities
11	Male	45–54	Social work



Table 4. Characteristics of focus group participants

Group	Participant	Sex	Age range
1	1	Male	22–35
	2	Male	22–35
	3	Male	36–45
	4	Male	55–64
	5	Male	22–35
2	6	Female	22–35
	7	Male	Over 65
	8	Female	55–64
	9	Male	35–44
3	10	Male	36–44
	11	Male	56–64
	12	Male	45–54

Despite all efforts made to open these forums, the male–female ratio remained at 4:1 – roughly reflecting that of the leadership of the USRCA and its RCAs.

4.1. GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

4.1.1. Sex distribution

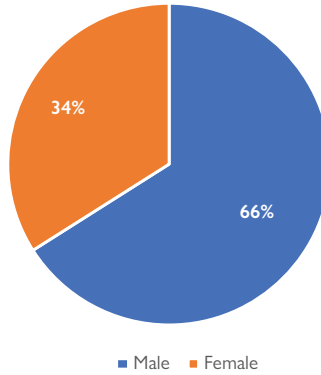
Of the 460 respondents, 34 per cent identified as female and 66 per cent as male (Figure 4). The sex-ratio imbalance is probably the result of the following factors:

- (a) The online survey was shared with RCAs leaders via WhatsApp using the chain-referral sampling method. This group was predominantly male (4:1 male–female ratio), and they probably shared it with more male members than females. Most of them did not even share the survey with their spouses despite the consultant’s reminders to do so.
- (b) The group of young professionals tends to be more male than female.

The strategy adopted to include more female members consisted of contacting known female members of RCAs through Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and email. Additionally, the research consultant attended the Women’s International Day celebration that took place in Dallas, Texas on 12 March 2022 and personally asked females in attendance to take part in the survey.



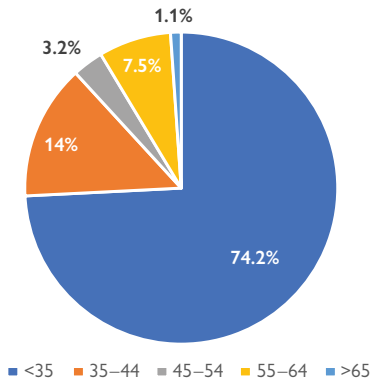
Figure 4. Sex distribution



4.1.2. Age composition

Three quarters (74.2%) of the respondents are under 35 years of age (Figure 5). The 22–35 age group is the largest (74% of respondents (further breakdown not shown)), followed by the 35–44 (14%), 55–64 (7.5%) and 45–54 (3%) age groups. A mere 1 per cent indicate being over 65.

Figure 5. Age composition

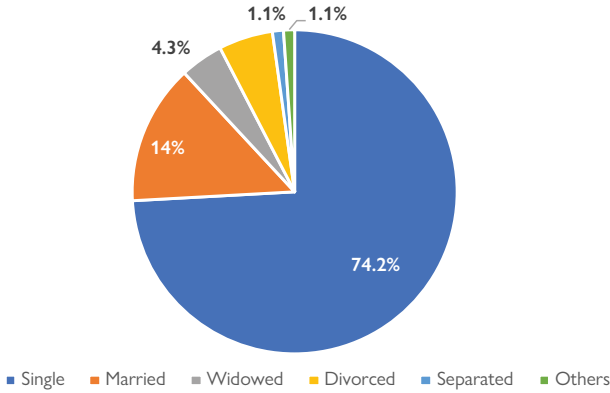


4.1.3. Marital status

Figure 6 reflects the preponderance of respondents who identify as single (74%) – an indication of the dominance of the under-35 age group. The second most-reported status is “married” (14%), followed by “divorced” (5%) and “widowed” (4%).



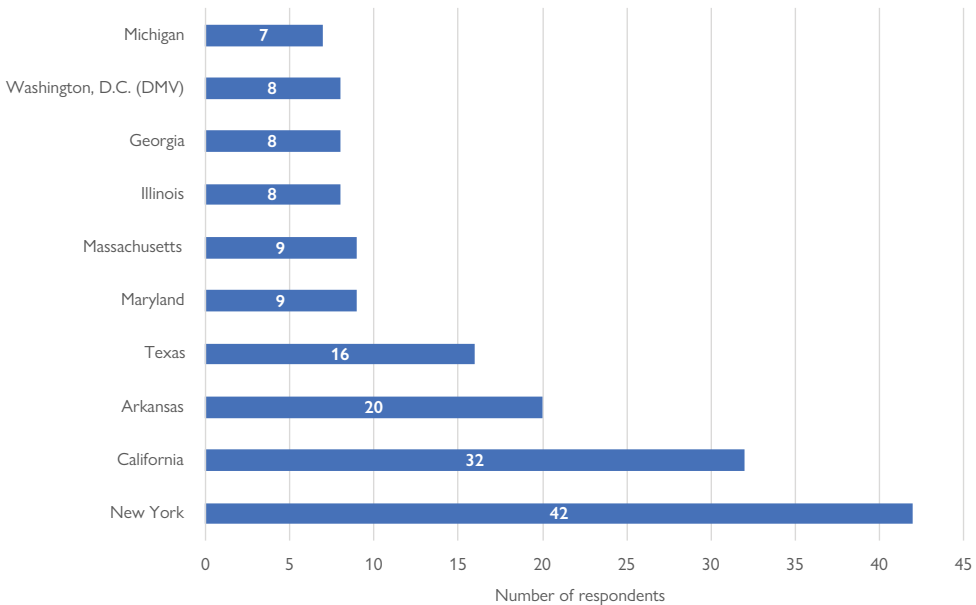
Figure 6. Marital status



4.1.4. Geographic distribution

The survey respondents represent 33 states (of the 50 states of the United States), plus Washington, D.C. The geographic distribution of the respondents closely mirrors that of RCAs. Figure 7 indicates the top ten states where the respondents are located.

Figure 7. Top 10 states where respondents are located





4.1.5. Affiliation with other organizations

Asked if they belong to other organizations besides their respective RCAs, most respondents (92%) respond “No”; some of them, interviewed offline, simply reiterate that they are members of their RCAs. The rest (8%) mention a range of other organizations: Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), *Ibuka* (a group for genocide survivors), Muhanga–Buffalo Sister Cities, Team Amani Love, Mercer on Mission Rwanda, and Rwandan American Friends.

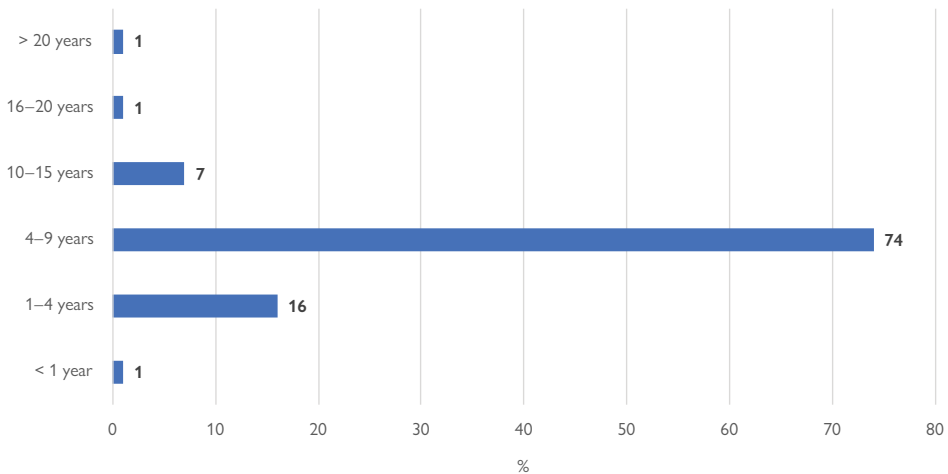
4.1.6. Means of communication within organizations

Asked how information is shared among members of their organization (RCA or others), the overwhelming majority (99%) of respondents mention WhatsApp. Whenever another social media platform (e.g. Facebook or Twitter) is mentioned, it is in addition to WhatsApp.

4.1.7. Length of residence in the United States

Most respondents (74%) state that they have living in the United States for between 4 and 9 years, with the next largest percentage (16%) residing in the country for between 1 and 4 years. These statistics are indicative of the dominant age group (22–35 years old) among survey participants.

Figure 8. Length of residence in the United States

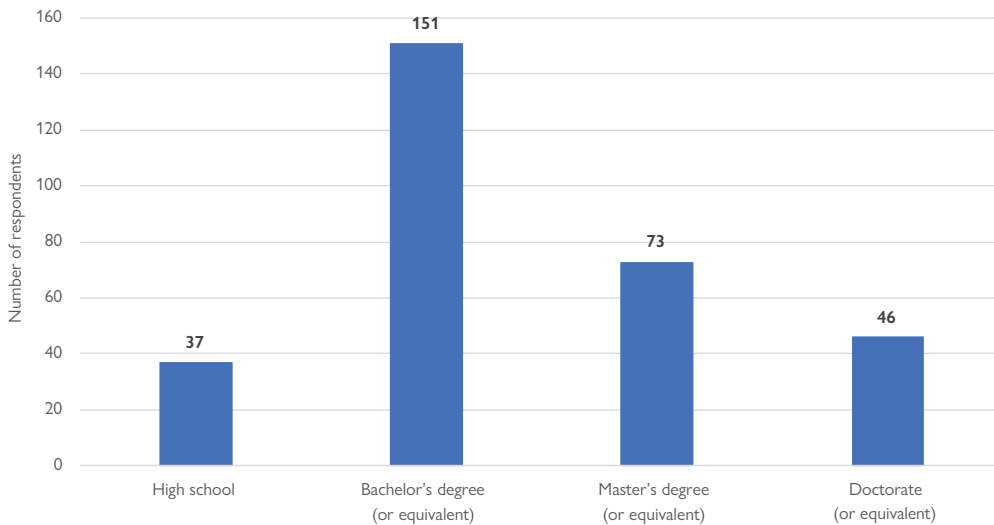




4.1.8. Education levels

The findings reveal a highly educated group. Of the 307 who responded to the question about education level, almost half (49%) say they have completed a bachelor of arts or science degree ($n=151$) (Figure 9). In comparison, 24 per cent ($n=73$) hold a master of arts, science or business administration degree. Fifteen per cent ($n=46$) have completed a doctorate degree. The remaining 12 per cent ($n=37$) report secondary school as their highest level of education. None of the respondents attended only primary school or have no formal education.

Figure 9. Education levels

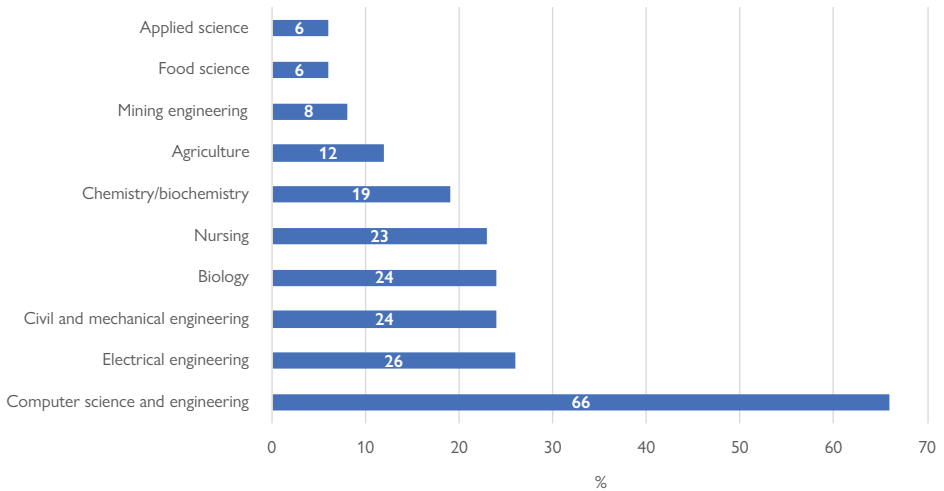


4.1.9. Fields of study

The responses cover a wide range of fields of study, with a preponderance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). Among STEM fields, computer science and engineering come in at first, followed by electrical engineering, civil and mechanical engineering, biology, nursing, chemistry and biochemistry, agriculture, mining engineering, food science, and applied science (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Top 10 fields of study

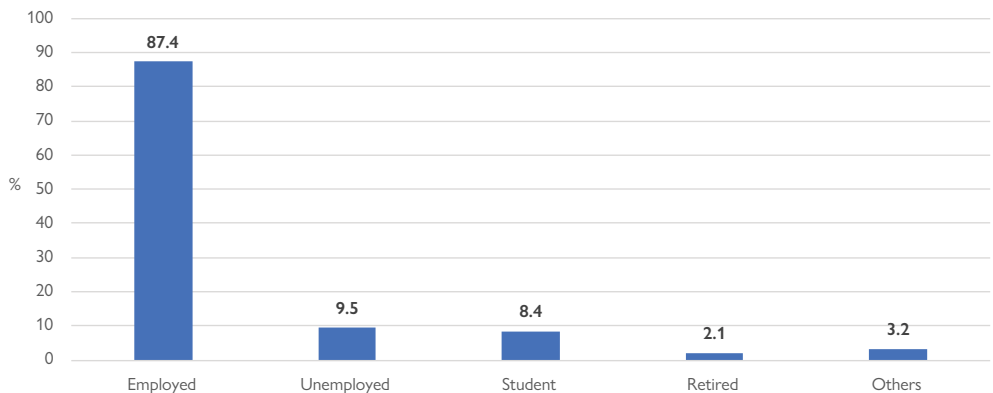


4.2. EMPLOYMENT STATUS, JOB CATEGORIES, INCOME LEVELS AND REMITTANCES

4.2.1. Employment status

Most respondents (87%) state that they are employed, while 9.5 per cent report being unemployed. Those who describe themselves as “students” come in third and account for 8 per cent of the respondents. Those in retirement make up 2 per cent, with the remaining 3 per cent answering “other”.

Figure 11. Employment status



It is not unusual for employed respondents to also be students – in particular, postgraduate students. This explains why the total of the percentages in Figure 11 exceed 100.

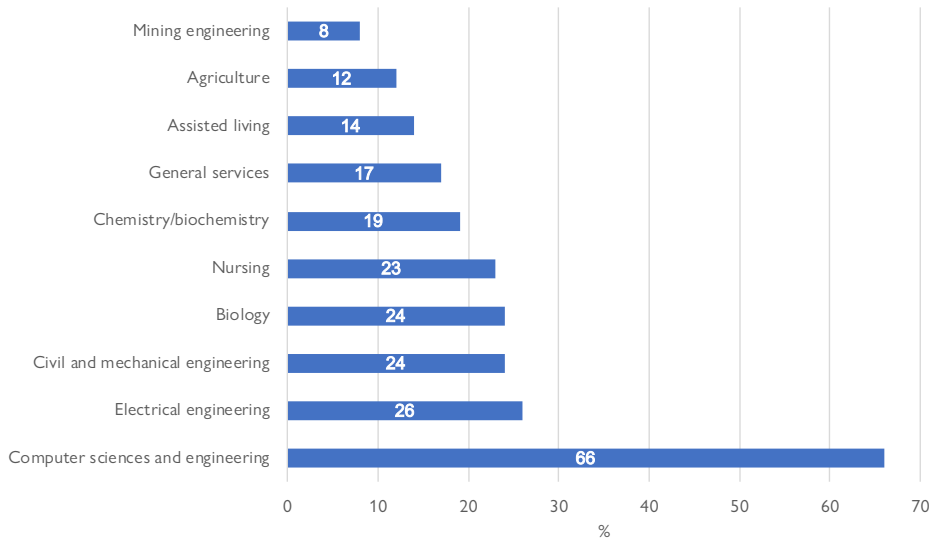


4.2.2. Job categories

Except for those working in general services and assisted living services, respondent distribution by job category mirrors respondents' fields of study. Assisted living services (training for which requires at least a high school diploma, plus additional training) are dominated by females from the first wave of resettled refugees and are now working in nursing homes for elderly people.

Graduates of computer science and engineering, as well as civil engineering, tend to work for technology companies and big corporations. While respondents gladly specify their degrees and disciplines, most are not forthcoming about their incomes or even the companies they work for.

Figure 12. Top 10 job categories



4.2.3. Income

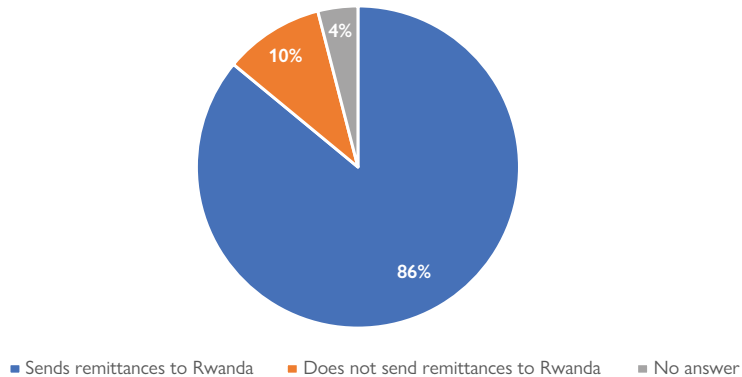
Several RCA leaders reported back to the research consultant that there were members who complained about certain survey questions. The complaint was along these lines: *"If they are looking for skills and knowledge transfer, why are they asking questions that are too personal and have nothing to do with skills?"* Personal income was one of the questions that respondents had issues with. In fact, only 97 out of the 460 respondents answered the question.

**Table 5. Salary ranges**

Annual salary range	% of respondents within the range
Below USD 5 000	1
USD 5 001 – 25 000	2
USD 25 001 – 50 000	88
USD 50 001 – 75 000	6
USD 75 001 – 100 000	2
Over USD 100 000	1

4.2.4. Remittances

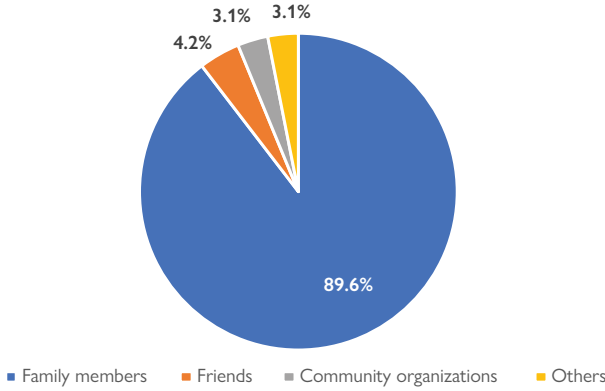
As revealed in the desk review, the Rwandan diaspora in the United States, compared elsewhere, sends more money to Rwanda. Figure 13 shows that 86 per cent of the respondents regularly send money to Rwanda. The survey does not ask those who do not send money to Rwanda why they do not.

Figure 13. Remittance-sending behaviour

The biggest portion of remittances (89.6%) goes to family members, with the rest to friends (4%), community organizations (3%) and others (including towards home construction and other investments) (3%).

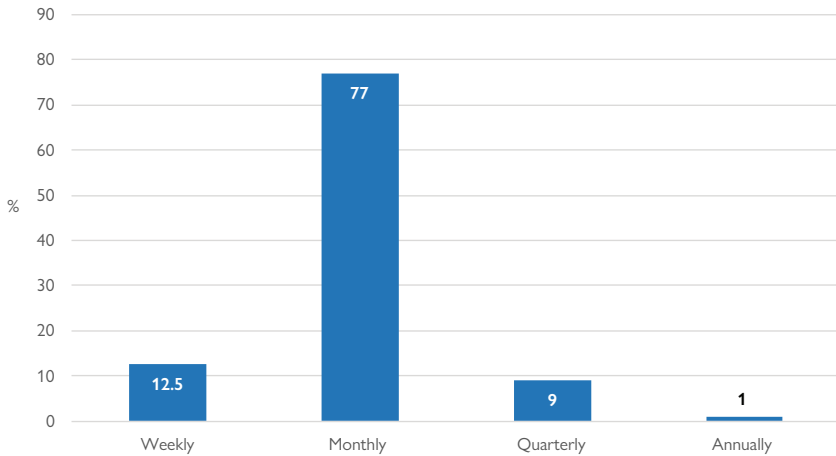


Figure 14. Recipients of remittances



Frequency of remittances to Rwanda

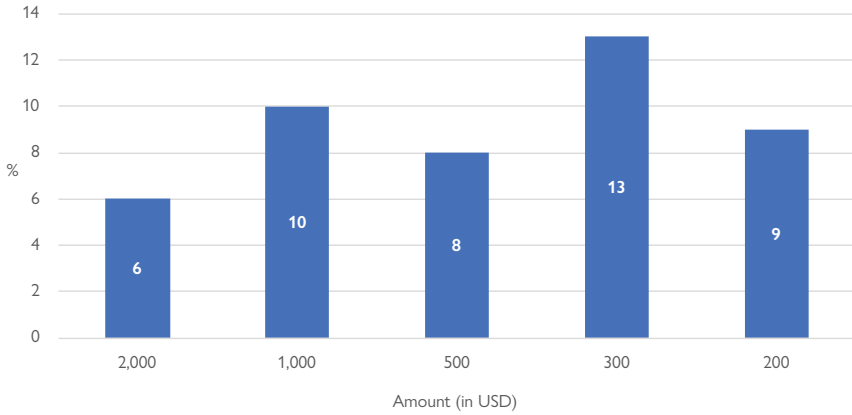
Figure 15. Frequency of remittances



Most respondents (77%) who answered this question indicate that they send money to family members and relatives monthly. There is a wide range of amounts sent monthly – from USD 100 to USD 3,000 – with the top five amounts reported being (in decreasing order) USD 300, USD 1,000, USD 200, USD 500 and USD 2,000 (Figure 16).



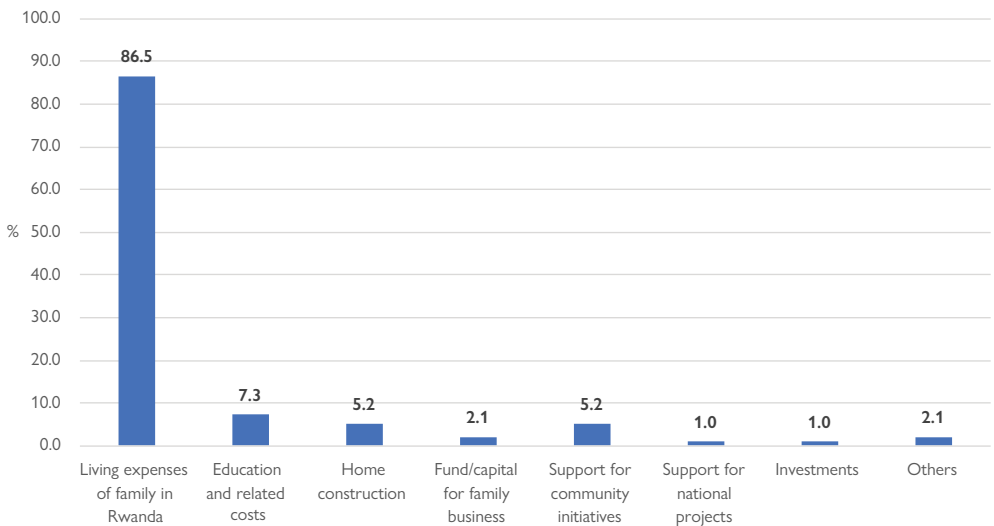
Figure 16. Top five amounts sent monthly



Purpose of remittances

Figure 17 shows the most common purposes of remittances, which include, primarily, supporting the daily needs of family and friends (“living expenses”) and paying for their children’s tuition, among other items. The rest goes towards funding home construction, family businesses or other investments, or supporting community or national initiatives or projects. The total percentage exceeds 100 because respondents are allowed multiple responses. For instance, a respondent may send money for the subsistence of their family back in Rwanda, and, at the same time, a portion of that remittance would be used to cover the education expenses (tuition, school supplies, transportation and related costs) of children in the family.

Figure 17. Purpose of remittances

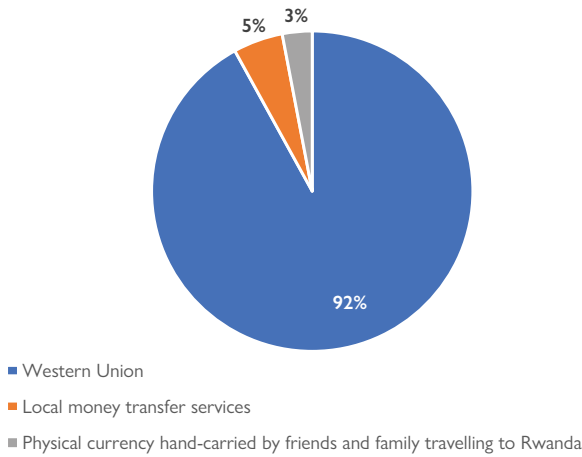




Means of sending remittances

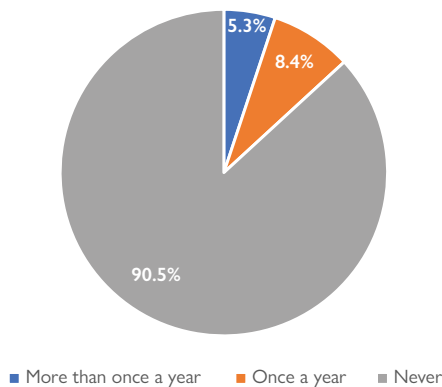
Ninety-two per cent of respondents use international money transfer companies such as Western Union (92%). Other ways of sending money include using local money transfer companies (5%; e.g. MTN Rwanda and Airtel Rwanda (formerly AirtelTigo)) and asking friends travelling to Rwanda (3%) to hand-carry cash. Some wait to visit to Rwanda to personally deliver money to family and friends.

Figure 18. Preferred ways of sending money to Rwanda



4.3. VISITS TO RWANDA PRE-COVID-19

Figure 19. Frequency of visits to Rwanda pre-COVID-19





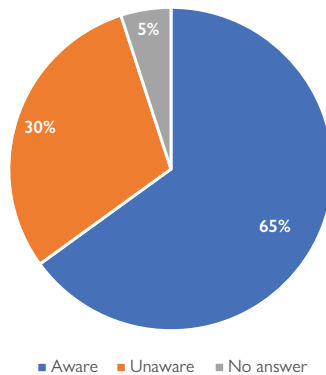
The 22–35 age group dominates the pool of respondents and includes students and recent graduates. Many have come to the United States as students, but others are children of the first wave of Rwandans who moved to the country in the late 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century. This group is less likely to travel to Rwanda compared to older generations, particularly those who have been in the United States since before 1994 and crave to reconnect with their native country – and, in fact, do so on a regular basis (i.e. at least once a year (13.7%)).

4.4. OPPORTUNITIES IN RWANDA FOR THE DIASPORA AND DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Even though 65 per cent of the respondents state being aware of diaspora engagement activities, they also express that more can be done to share information about existing opportunities in Rwanda for the diaspora through, for example, social media or a dedicated platform.

Much of the information in this section was gathered through meetings with key informants and focus groups. These diasporans are highly involved in their RCAs and regularly travel (back) to Rwanda, including for *Umushyikirano*. They are aware of investment opportunities in manufacturing, agro-processing, mining, tourism, education, real estate and more.

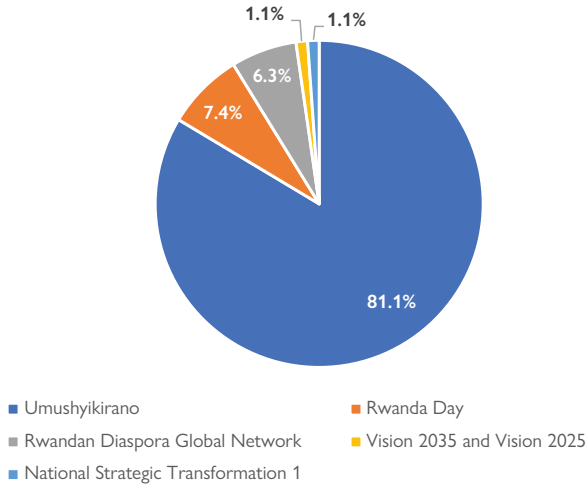
Figure 20. Awareness of diaspora engagement initiatives





4.5. GOVERNMENT DIASPORA POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

Figure 21. Awareness of the Government's diaspora policies and initiatives



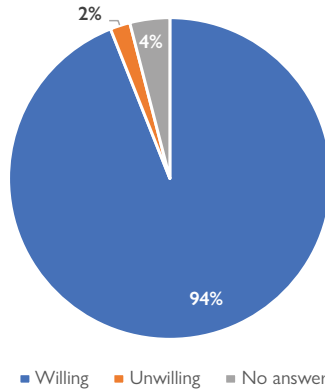
Most respondents (81%) state being aware of *Umushyikirano*. Respondents are less aware of Rwanda Day (7% of respondents) and of Vision 2035, Vision 2050 and NST1 (1% in each case). The low awareness of Vision 2035, Vision 2050 and NST1 is alarming because this mapping exercise is especially geared towards matching diaspora skills with projects and initiatives that aim for the achievement of the benchmarks set in Vision 2035 and Vision 2050.

4.6. SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Asked if they are willing to contribute their skills and knowledge to Rwanda's development, most respondents (94%) say "Yes", as opposed to only 2 per cent answering "No", with the remaining 4 per cent giving no response to the question. In meetings with key informants and focus groups, participants express enthusiasm about this possibility if given sufficient time to prepare, for example, for short-term engagements in Rwanda. Their overwhelming enthusiasm corroborates the high percentage of "Yes" responses.

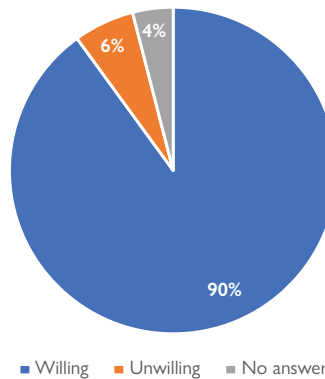


Figure 22. Willingness to contribute skills and knowledge



To the question, “If asked, would you be willing to go back [to Rwanda] for a limited period?”, 90 per cent say “Yes”, 6 per cent say “No”, and 4 per cent provide no answer.

Figure 23. Willingness to go back to Rwanda for a short period



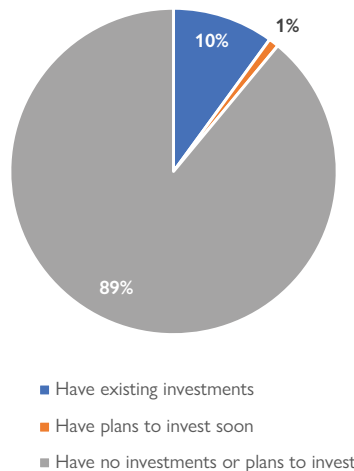
The “No” in Figure 23 is expressed in the following verbiage: “It depends”, “Not sure at the moment”, and “I am raising small children now”. Others (among key informants and focus group participants), such as university professors, say they have enough flexibility to go back to Rwanda and participate in knowledge and skills transfer. They tend to be free from May to August each year and at least about a month around Christmas time. Respondents employed in other industries state the following about their availability to make a short-term return to Rwanda: “Absolutely”, “[Yes, for] 1 month”, “[Yes, for] 6 months”, “[Yes, for] 1 to 2 years” and “I can stay for two years”.



4.7. INVESTMENTS

Most respondents have no existing investments in Rwanda. Out of the 460 respondents, only 47 (or 10.22%) say they have ongoing investments back home, with another 3 stating that they will start investing soon. The existing investments take various forms, including real estate ($n=15$), land development ($n=6$), construction of personal homes ($n=11$), farming ($n=5$) and stocks (i.e. with the Rwanda Stock Exchange (RSE)) ($n=2$), as well as businesses such as housing and apartment complexes ($n=2$), football academies ($n=2$), schools ($n=2$), media (publications) ($n=1$) and hospitality ($n=1$). None of these investments were made under a government-initiated project.

Figure 24. Ongoing investments



4.8. DIASPORA SUGGESTIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA

Asked what the Government of Rwanda should do to encourage more diaspora engagement in the country, survey respondents ($n=48$ only) made the following suggestions (quoted from actual survey responses):

- (a) "More information about opportunities" ($n=5$)
- (b) "More information to all in the diaspora" ($n=4$)
- (c) "More communication with the diaspora" ($n=4$)
- (d) "Online platforms giving information about opportunities in Rwanda" ($n=4$)
- (e) "Time-bound initiatives" (a reference to short-term engagements) ($n=4$)



- (f) “Knowledge and skills transfer for diaspora youth” ($n=3$)
- (g) “Genuine engagement” ($n=3$)
- (h) “More serious outreach” (better communication strategies with the Rwandan diaspora) ($n=3$)
- (i) “Reach more Rwandans who are not aware of what is going on in Rwanda” ($n=3$)
- (j) “Provide more opportunities for successful professionals to work in Rwanda” ($n=3$)
- (k) “Better service delivery for the diaspora at the Rwandan Embassy in the United States” ($n=2$)
- (l) “Connect the diaspora with local institutions that need global/diaspora skills” ($n=2$)
- (m) “Government should encourage and provide support” ($n=2$)
- (n) “Loan rate” (a reference to high interest rates charged by Rwandan banks; mentioned several times during meetings with key informants and focus groups) ($n=2$)
- (o) “More group discussions” (especially among youth) ($n=1$)
- (p) “Mobilization and show that there is no risk in working and investing in Rwanda” ($n=1$)
- (q) “Diaspora representation in Parliament” ($n=1$)
- (r) “Diaspora should be more independent” ($n=1$)

The comments above reflect the same concern about the lack of information on engagement opportunities in Rwanda, which was consistently cited by key informants and focus groups. The rest of the respondents ($n=412$) either did not answer the question ($n=137$) or gave a variety of answers ($n=275$), including “N/A”, “I can’t think of anything right now”, “No”, “None” and “Not at this time”.





5. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The key findings of the mapping exercise are summarized below:

- (a) There is a substantial pool of diaspora talent in the United States covering critical skills in computer science and engineering, civil engineering, mining engineering, business administration (including banking and financial technology) and other fields.
- (b) The Rwandan diaspora in the United States has outstanding strength in STEM fields, including ICT, and finance (including banking and financial technology).
- (c) The Rwandan diaspora in the United States, compared elsewhere, sends more money to Rwanda. Remittance levels could be even higher if appropriate strategies are put in place to harness financial assets from this diaspora for community and national projects in Rwanda. Professionals in this diaspora give to regular (annual) fundraising activities in the United States; they can do the same for similar initiatives in Rwanda.
- (d) The Rwandan diaspora in the United States already has significant investments in Rwanda – in the form of land, homes and housing complexes, and businesses such as schools and football academies, among others. This diaspora is capable of even more. For instance, encouraging professionals to prepare for retirement in Rwanda could encourage more investment in real estate and small business creation.
- (e) There is a high level of interest in contributing skills and knowledge to Rwanda's development, with 94 per cent saying they are willing to do so.
- (f) Asked if they are willing to go (back) to Rwanda for short-term projects and initiatives, 90 per cent say they are. However, factors such as perceived low pay and low standards of living, as well as high mortgage and loan rates and housing and transportation costs in Rwanda, and, in general, having well-paying jobs in the United States make decisions about permanent and/or temporary return to Rwanda difficult to contemplate.
- (g) A very low percentage of respondents report being aware of Vision 2035, Vision2050 and NST1.
- (h) "More information about opportunities" was mentioned many times in the survey and in meetings with key informants and focus groups. There is a perception that there is no genuine interest in attracting diaspora talent, and if such interest exists, it is not effectively communicated (see section 4.8).
- (i) There is a need for a better strategy of connecting the Rwandan diaspora in the United States with local government and private entities that need diaspora skills.





6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made, based on the findings of the mapping exercise:

- (a) To leverage the substantial talent available in the Rwandan diaspora in the United States, innovative and creative strategies need to be put in place, including incentive schemes that can compete with the labour market in the United States. Many Rwandans in STEM and finance (including banking and financial technology) receive job offers even before they graduate. An incentive programme could be put in place to include career advisement (including for job interviews and placement), as well as housing and transportation facilitation even prior to their relocation (back) to Rwanda.
- (b) To mitigate the difficulties involved in relocation, technology can be leveraged for diaspora talent to teach and/or mentor colleagues in Rwanda synchronously online.
- (c) To attract diaspora talent, a new, dedicated online platform could be created to:
 - (i) Provide information about current projects and initiatives and match them with talent in the Rwandan diaspora in the United States;
 - (ii) Serve as a meeting point between public and private entities in Rwanda and diaspora talent. The latter would post their profiles and contact information, and the former would initiate contact for their respective job opportunities or short-term projects/initiatives;
 - (iii) Serve as a space to share best practices in various disciplines (diasporans can share best practices they learned from working at United States companies; post their experiences in contributing their skills and knowledge in Rwanda; or share their personal success stories in Rwanda in investments, tourism and other endeavours);
 - (iv) Highlight the work of diaspora talent in Rwanda as a way of showing genuine interest in this talent pool and encouraging more involvement from the diaspora (there are still many individuals who think that there is no genuine effort to attract diaspora talent).



- (d) Find creative ways of attracting financial assets owned by the Rwandan diaspora in the United States, for example, by:
 - (i) Incentivizing them to invest (e.g. by buying or constructing houses or putting up small businesses) in Rwanda using their retirement plans (many diasporans relocate to the warm state of Florida to retire; Rwanda can become the “new Florida” for Rwandans in the United States);
 - (ii) Vigorously promoting heritage tourism to the families of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States.
- (e) To institute a culture of methodical data collection in various RCAs and embassies and high commissions to serve future requests for information and future mapping exercises. In today’s world, everything is data-driven.



ANNEX 1:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE RWANDAN EMBASSY TEAM

Our discussion topic: In your estimation, how is the Rwandan diaspora in the United States contributing to the development of Rwanda? How can this effort be enhanced? The results of this exercise will be used to inform the design of potential diaspora engagement programme interventions in Rwanda and enable the diaspora to participate more in Rwanda's development.

1. Do you organize and coordinate any initiatives and activities related to Rwandan diaspora engagement in Rwanda?
2. What data do you collect from the Rwanda diaspora in the United States? How do you contact/engage them? How do you use that information to mobilize and leverage Rwandan diaspora business communities for investment and trade in Rwanda?
3. Do you have specific initiatives to mobilize skilled professionals towards knowledge and skills transfer to Rwanda?
4. What are you doing to create an enabling environment for the Rwandan diaspora for financial investment and remittances in Rwanda?
5. Are you aware of United States government programmes to create job opportunities overseas?
6. What is your evaluation of your strengths and opportunities when it comes to encouraging diaspora engagement in Rwanda?
7. If you speak directly to the diaspora, what do you convey to them?



ANNEX 2:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

This questionnaire is for a selected group of diasporans (mostly diaspora leaders in their respective RCAs) who have sufficient knowledge of their communities.

To begin, the consultant describes the mapping exercise and answers any questions participants might have about it with the goal of making them comfortable with the discussions.

1. Can you please introduce yourself to the group and define your current relationship to Rwanda?
2. Can you talk about the Rwandan Community Abroad (RCA) or the organization you are a member of?
3. What opportunities have you had to contribute to Rwanda's development?
4. What challenges do you face in your efforts to support Rwanda's development?
5. What untapped opportunities do you see for better engagement of the diaspora in Rwanda's development?
6. Do you send money (remittances) to Rwanda?
 - (a) If so, how often do you send money?
 - (b) To whom do you send remittances? (e.g. family members, community organizations)
 - (c) What expenses do your remittances cover?
 - (d) Do you invest the remittances in a family business or a community/national initiative or project?
 - (e) In what sector does the investment (i.e. the business, initiative or project) contribute towards Rwanda's development?
 - (f) How easy or difficult is it to send remittances? What ways do you use to send money?
7. Are you currently involved in any development initiatives in Rwanda, such as business, education, investment, or skills and knowledge transfer? If not, are you interested in participating in any of these? If so, in what sector?
8. Are you aware of any organizations and/or initiatives in your community, or in the United States in general, that support diaspora engagement in Rwanda? If so, what is your involvement, if any? If not, why?



9. Can you identify any form of support that is currently absent, which you think would encourage increased participation from the diaspora in the development of Rwanda?
10. Do you have other recommendations for how the Government of Rwanda could support the engagement of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States in investments and skills and knowledge transfer in Rwanda?

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.



ANNEX 3:

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FOCUS GROUPS

Before the discussion, the consultant will make sure that the participants know that their answers will be kept anonymous and confidential, and that the consultant will follow standard ethical regulations routinely prescribed in institutional research.

The consultant will introduce the discussion with this statement:

How is the Rwandan diaspora in the United States contributing to Rwanda's development and how can this contribution be enhanced?

The results from these discussions will be used to guide the design of potential diaspora engagement interventions in Rwanda to support Rwanda's development.

We are recording this interview. This is a discussion among peers on a first-name basis. We will listen to each other attentively and respectfully, even when voicing differences of opinions.

Please switch off your electronic devices. If you must answer a call, please leave the room quietly to do so and come back when you are done.

1. Engagement questions

- (a) Introduce yourself and include a brief discussion of your current relationship to Rwanda.
- (b) As a Rwandan living abroad, what opportunities do you have to participate in Rwanda's development? What challenges do you face in your effort to contribute to Rwanda's development?
- (c) What can you say about your Rwandan Community Abroad (RCA) in the United States? Where is it based? Are you actively engaged in its activities?
- (d) Do you send remittances to Rwanda? To whom do you send them? Do you feel any pressure to send them? How would you like the money to be spent or invested? How can remittances be better facilitated? Why do you think this is not happening yet at the present?



2. Exploration questions

- (a) Are you presently involved in any development projects in Rwanda? Can you tell me about them?
- (b) Are you interested in participating in Rwanda's development activities, such as business, making investments and skills transfer? If so, how would you like to be involved? If not, would you like to be? What sector do you think you might best contribute to?
- (c) Are you aware of initiatives in your host country that support diaspora engagement back home? If so, have you participated in any of these initiatives? If not, why?
- (d) What do you feel are the missing links, tools or instruments that would increase the participation of the diaspora in the development of Rwanda?
- (e) Can you think of ways in which the Government of Rwanda might enhance how you support the country?
- (f) If you had sufficient means, what would you do to support Rwanda's development?

3. Exit question

To cover any aspect(s) that may have received little or no attention:

Is there anything else you would like to say about how the Government of Rwanda could support diaspora initiatives in Rwanda?

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.



ANNEX 4:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

(For sessions with individual members of the diaspora not part of the previous groups.)

The consultant must pay attention to the unique circumstances of the interviewee and, if necessary, adapt the questions accordingly. [During the interviews, the consultant tried to be creative in pursuing secondary questions prompted by each participant's answers.]

Interviewer: Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. To start, for comparison purposes, I would like to ask a few personal and professional questions:

1. What is your age?
2. What gender do you identify as?
3. What level of education have you achieved?
4. What technical training skills do you have?
5. Are you planning/hoping to go back to Rwanda one day? Why (not)?
6. How often do you travel back to Rwanda annually?
7. When did you move to the United States? If not, were you born in the United States?
8. Why did you choose to settle in the United States?
9. What is your current employment status?
10. What industry/sector do you work in?
11. Are you a member of any Rwandan Community Abroad (RCA) in your city or state? If so, what RCA activities are you involved in? If not, why?
12. Are you a member of any other association of Rwandan Americans?
 - (a) Is it a formal association?
 - (b) Does the association have any ties with Rwanda?
 - (c) Can you connect me with other members of that organization?
 - (d) Is the organization or individuals in the organization involved in Rwandan development? If so, in what capacity?
13. Do you have any contacts in Rwanda that collaborate with you?
14. How would you characterize your relationship with Rwanda at this point? Do you consider the country "home"?



15. Do you send remittances to Rwanda?
 - (a) If so, how often do you send money?
 - (b) To whom do you send remittances? (e.g. family members, community organizations)
 - (c) What expenses do your remittances cover?
 - (d) Do you invest the remittances in a family business or a community/national project or initiative?
 - (e) What sector does it contribute to?
 - (f) How easy or difficult is it to send remittances?
16. In what area or sector do you think you might contribute best towards Rwanda's development?
17. Do you see yourself becoming more closely involved with sharing in Rwanda the skills and knowledge you have acquired in the United States?
 - (a) If so, in what sector do you think you might be interested?
 - (b) If not, why? What would it take for you to change your mind?
 - (c) Is there a way you can contribute to the dissemination of skills remotely?

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.



ANNEX 5:

ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The Who?

To better understand the Rwandan diaspora's skills and knowledge profile, as well as level of interest in contributing to Rwanda's development, the Rwandan Diaspora in the United States, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM), and the Government of Rwanda have commissioned this mapping exercise.

This survey is for all members of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States, whether born in Rwanda and now living in the United States, or born outside Rwanda (including in the United States), who identify as Rwandan Americans. Leaders and members of all Rwandan Communities Abroad (RCAs), influencers and all Rwandans, especially skilled professionals, in various roles and associations are encouraged to take this survey.

The Why?

Dubbed "Rwanda's sixth province", the Rwandan diaspora has been increasingly contributing to their motherland's development through skills and knowledge transfer, remittances and investments over the years.

This study will allow IOM, the Rwandan Embassy in the United States, Rwanda Development Board (RDB), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MINAFFET), to gather information to design projects and initiatives in Rwanda to better match the skills, expertise and knowledge of members of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States.

The main objective of this mapping exercise is to gain insight into the professional skills of Rwandans in the United States and to evaluate their motivations, availability and interest in contributing their skills, knowledge and expertise to Rwanda's development, notably towards the achievement of Vision 2035 and Vision 2050 benchmarks.

How long does the survey take to complete?

This survey will take about 20 minutes of your time.

Data protection and management

Information gathered through this exercise will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information (PII) will appear in the final report, to be published in 2022. Individual responses will be summarized in a grouped format, and you can skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.



Survey questions

If you would like to provide more details not covered by this survey and are willing to take a phone call or participate in a virtual meeting with the independent consultant, please answer “Yes” to the last question and provide your contact information.

1. Sex:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other

2. Age range:
 - Under 22
 - 22–35
 - 36–45
 - 46–55
 - 56–65
 - Over 65

3. Marital status:
 - Single
 - Married
 - Widowed
 - Divorced
 - Separated
 - Other

4. How long have been living in the United States?
 - Less than one year
 - 1–4 years
 - 5–9 years
 - 10–15 years
 - 16–20 years
 - More than 20 years

5. City and state of residence:
 - Do you belong to an RCA (Rwandan Community Abroad)?
 - Your answer:



6. Are you a member of any other organized association that participates in initiatives in Rwanda? Please specify which one.

Your answer:

7. How is information shared among members of your organization (RCA or other)? (e.g. phone call, email, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) State all that apply.

Your answer:

8. What is your highest level of education?

Less than high school

High school

Some college/university credits, but no degree

Trade/technical/vocational training

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Professional degree

Doctorate degree (PhD)

9. What is your field of study?

Accounting

Agriculture (specify area)

Airport management and/or operations

Biology

Chemistry

Construction

Economics

Education (please specify area/level)

Engineering (please specify area)

Other (please specify):

10. Current employment status?

Employed (please specify if an employee, self-employed or working in the family business, if any)

Unemployed

Student

Retired

Other:



11. If employed, what industry do you work in?

Agribusiness

Agriculture technology

Airport management and/or operations

Chemical and biological engineering

Finance (including banking and financial technology):

Health

Other (please specify):

12. What is your annual income range?

Below USD 5,000

USD 5,001–25,000

USD 20,001–50,000

USD 50,001–75,000

USD 75,001–100,000

Above USD 100,000

13. Do you send remittances to Rwanda?

Yes

No

14. How often do you send remittances to Rwanda?

Weekly

Monthly

Quarterly

Annually

15. How much, approximately, do you send each time?

Your answer:

16. To whom do you send money?

Family members

Friends

Community organizations

Other (please specify):



17. What expenses do your remittances cover?
- Living expenses
 - Education (tuition)
 - Family business
 - Community initiative/project
 - National initiative/project
 - Investments
 - Other (please specify):
18. How do you send money?
- International money transfer (e.g. Western Union, Remit, MoneyGram)
 - Local money transfer operator (e.g. MTN mobile money)
 - Through friends/relatives travelling to Rwanda
 - Handing money directly to family and friends during visits to Rwanda
 - Other (please specify):
19. How often do you visit Rwanda? (Please consider the period before COVID-19.)
- Never
 - Once a year
 - More than once a year
20. Are you aware of the following benchmarks, policies or initiatives? (Indicate all that apply.)
- Umushyikirano* (National Dialogue Council)
 - Rwanda Day
 - Rwandan Diaspora Global Network (RDGN)
 - The Rwandan Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS)
 - Vision 2035 and Vision 2050
 - The National Strategy for Transformation (NST1)
21. Are you aware of available diaspora engagement opportunities in Rwanda?
- Yes
 - No



22. Do you have any ongoing investments in Rwanda? (Please elaborate and describe the investment.)

Your answer:

23. Have you ever participated in nation-building through skills and knowledge transfer? (Please describe or name the initiative or programme, e.g. Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN).)

24. Are you willing to contribute your skills and knowledge to Rwanda?

Yes

No

25. If asked to contribute your skills and knowledge, are you willing to go back to Rwanda even for a limited period?

Yes

No

26. Do you have any recommendations you would wish to give to Government of Rwanda to improve diaspora initiatives for the development of the country?

Your answer:

27. Would you like to provide more details not covered by this survey, and are you willing to take a phone call or participate in a virtual meeting with the independent consultant? If so, please provide your contact information (phone number and/or email).

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.



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