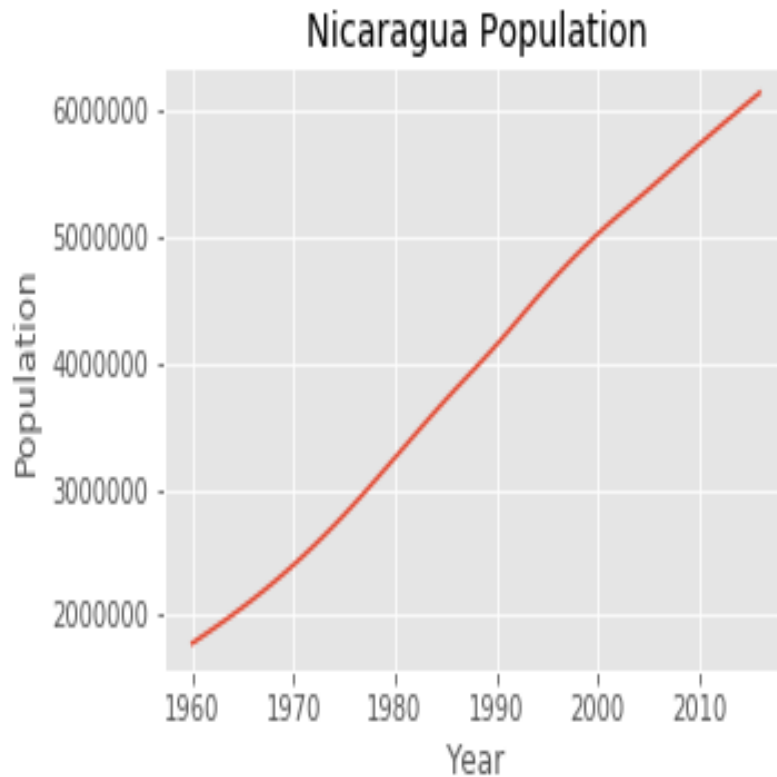


Nicaragua



Nicaragua (/ˈnɪkəˈrɑːwə, -ræ-, -ju/ (listen); Spanish: [nikaˈaˈwa]), officially the Republic of Nicaragua (Spanish: República de Nicaragua (help·info)), is the largest country in the Central American isthmus, bordered by Honduras to the north, the Caribbean to the east, Costa Rica to the south, and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Managua is the country's capital and largest city and is also the third-largest city in Central America, behind Tegucigalpa and Guatemala City. The multi-ethnic population of six million includes people of indigenous, European, African, and Asian heritage. The main language is Spanish. Native tribes on the Mosquito Coast speak their own languages and English. Originally inhabited by various indigenous cultures since ancient times, the Spanish Empire conquered the region in the 16th century. Nicaragua gained independence from Spain in 1821. The Mosquito Coast followed a different historical path, with the English colonizing it in the 17th century and later coming under the British rule, as well as some minor Spanish interludes in the 19th century. It became an autonomous territory of Nicaragua in 1860 and the northernmost part of it was later transferred to Honduras in 1960. Since its independence, Nicaragua has undergone periods of political unrest, dictatorship, and fiscal crisis—the most notable causes that led to the Nicaraguan Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s and the Contra War of the 1980s. Nicaragua is a representative democratic republic.