



Nicaragua



Background The Pacific coast of Nicaragua was settled as a Spanish colony in the early 16th century. Independence from Spain was declared in 1821, and the country became an independent republic in 1838. Britain occupied the Caribbean Coast in the first half of the 19th century, but gradually ceded control of the region in subsequent decades. By 1978, violent opposition to governmental manipulation and corruption resulted in a short-lived civil war that brought a civil-military coalition to power in 1979, spearheaded by Marxist Sandinista guerrillas led by Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra. Nicaraguan aid to leftist rebels in El Salvador prompted the US to sponsor anti-Sandinista Contra guerrillas through much of the 1980s.

After losing free and fair elections in 1990, 1996, and 2001, ORTEGA was elected president in 2006, 2011, 2016, and most recently in 2021. Municipal, regional, and national-level elections since 2008 have been marred by widespread irregularities. Democratic institutions have lost their independence under the ORTEGA regime as the president has assumed full control over all branches of government, as well as cracking down on a nationwide pro-democracy protest movement in 2018 and shutting over 3,300 civil society organizations between 2018 and 2024. In the lead-up to the 2021 presidential election, authorities arrested over 40 individuals linked to the opposition, including presidential candidates, private sector leaders, NGO workers, human rights defenders, and journalists. Only five lesser-known presidential candidates from mostly small parties allied to ORTEGA's Sandinistas were allowed to run against ORTEGA. He then awarded the Sandinistas control of all 153 of Nicaraguan municipalities in the 2022 municipal elections, consolidating one-party rule.

Capital name: Managua

Government type presidential republic

Area
total : 130,370 sq km
land: 119,990 sq km
water: 10,380 sq km

Climate tropical in lowlands, cooler in highlands

Natural resources gold, silver, copper, tungsten, lead, zinc, timber, fish

Population total: 6,676,948 (2024 est.)

Population growth rate 0.95% (2024 est.)

Ethnic groups Mestizo (mixed Indigenous and White) 69%, White 17%, Black 9%, Indigenous 5%

Religions	Roman Catholic 44.9%, Protestant 38.7% (Evangelical 38.2, Adventist 0.5%), other 1.2%, (includes Jehovah's Witness and Church of Jesus Christ), believer but not belonging to a church 1%, agnostic or atheist 0.4%, none 13.7%, unspecified 0.2% (2020 est.)
Languages	Spanish (official) 99.5%, Indigenous 0.3%, Portuguese 0.1%, other 0.1% (2020 est.)
Executive branch	chief of state: President Jose Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra (since 10 January 2007) head of government: President Jose Daniel ORTEGA Saavedra (since 10 January 2007)
Legislative branch	legislature name: National Assembly (Asamblea Nacional)
Diplomatic representation in the US	chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); Chargé d'Affaires Sammia Alicia HODGSON MCKENZIE (since 3 June 2025)
Diplomatic representation from the US	chief of mission: Ambassador (vacant); Chargé d'Affaires Elias BAUMANN (since December 2025)
Economic overview	low-income Central American economy; until 2018, nearly 20 years of sustained GDP growth; recent struggles due to COVID-19, political instability, and hurricanes; significant remittances; increasing poverty and food scarcity since 2005; sanctions limit investment
Real GDP (purchasing power parity)	\$52.989 billion (2024 est.) \$51.153 billion (2023 est.) \$48.985 billion (2022 est.)
Real GDP per capita	\$7,700 (2024 est.) \$7,500 (2023 est.) \$7,300 (2022 est.)
Exports	\$8.135 billion (2024 est.) \$8.248 billion (2023 est.) \$7.87 billion (2022 est.)
Exports - partners	USA 51%, Mexico 12%, El Salvador 6%, Canada 6%, Switzerland 4% (2023)
Exports - commodities	garments, gold, insulated wire, coffee, beef (2023)
Imports	\$11.437 billion (2024 est.) \$10.519 billion (2023 est.) \$10.213 billion (2022 est.)
Imports - partners	USA 24%, China 13%, Mexico 9%, Honduras 9%, Guatemala 8% (2023)
Imports - commodities	garments, refined petroleum, crude petroleum, plastic products, fabric (2023)

Population Pyramid

