

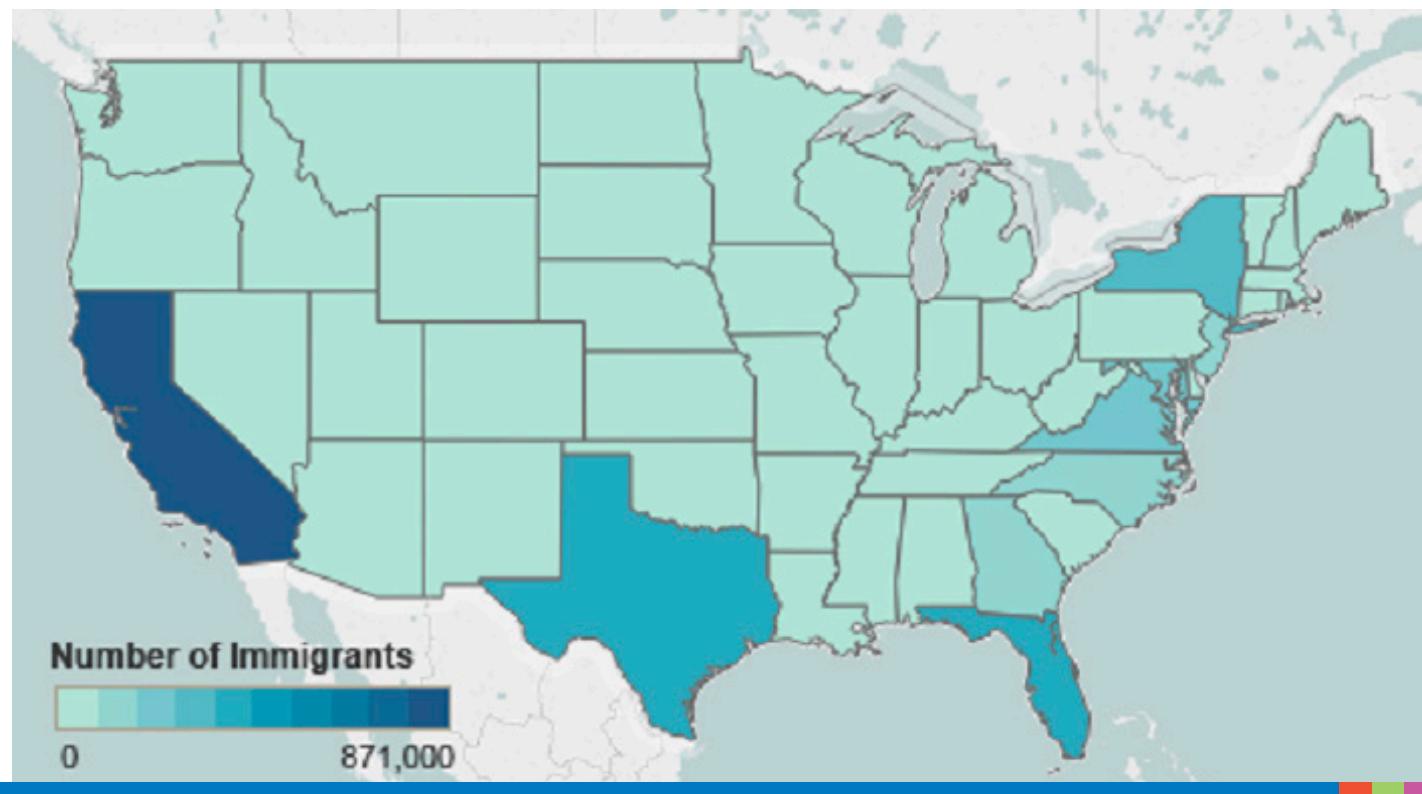


Overview

Almost half of the nearly 4 million Central American immigrants (who come from the countries of Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama) residing in the U.S. as of 2017 have lived here since 2000 (if not earlier). Immigrants from the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) comprise the vast majority of these immigrants (and this sheet will therefore highlight these countries). In 2017, Central American immigrants represented just 8% of the United States' almost 45 million immigrants.

Today, Central Americans continue to flee insecurity as well as poverty that has been exacerbated by drought and significant crop failure. As immigrants from this region enter the United States, it is essential that we get an at least basic understanding of who they are and what they contribute.





Immigration + Notable People

From 1980 to 2017, the size of the Central American immigrant population grew tenfold (see Figure 1). Since 1980, immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras accounted for the greatest increases in the Central American population, with each origin group growing by over a thousand percent by 2017. The other origin groups had much lower growth rates.

In general, Central American immigrants tend to have lower educational attainment, English proficiency, and incomes than the overall immigrant population, but they participate in the labor force at a higher rate than foreign- and U.S.-born adults, and nearly half of Central American immigrants in the United States lived in California (26 percent), Texas (12 percent), and Florida (11 percent). Almost 30 percent have settled in four counties: Los Angeles County, California; Harris County, Texas; Miami-Dade County, Florida; and Prince George's County, Maryland.

The largest groups of Salvadorans and Guatemalans live in Los Angeles County, while Miami-Dade County was the most popular destination for Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans.

Some of these immigrants, and their descendants, include...

Notable People - El Salvador

Hala Ayala

Representing the 51st District in the Virginia House of Delegates, Hala Ayala's roots reach to El Salvador and North Africa on her father's side, and to Ireland and Lebanon on that of her mother. Her eclectic career has seen her serve as a cybersecurity specialist for the Department of Homeland Security, as chapter president of the National Organization for Women in 2014, and as an organizer of the 2017 Women's March.



J.R. Martinez

Actor, motivational speaker, and former soldier, J.R. Martinez has roots in Louisiana, where he lived with two sisters who were raised with his mother's family in El Salvador. His career began in the military, and after recovering from burns to over 34% of his body sustained while serving, he built a career in television via ABC's All My Children and Dancing With the Stars. Around this career, he spends much of his time providing support to fellow burn survivors and veterans.



Bernard Lewinsky

Having been featured in several medical textbooks, Bernard Lewinsky, physician and medical researcher, is known for his contributions to oncology and sits in the top 15% of breast cancer researchers (in terms of publication volume). Born in San Salvador, El Salvador, he now practices medicine in California. He is also known for his photography, which is used to help soothe and heal those undergoing cancer treatment.





Francisco Goldman

This novelist, journalist, and professor was born to a Guatemalan mother and Jewish-American father. He has taught at colleges in America and Spain; aside from his teaching, he directs the Aura Estrada Prize (a prize meant to contribute to the creation of literature written by women) and has authored six acclaimed books, which have been translated into 15 languages worldwide. His novel, *The Art of Political Murder: Who Killed the Bishop?*, is an account of the assassination of Guatemalan Catholic Bishop Juan José Gerardi Conedera by the Guatemalan military and won him the 2008 Duke University-WOLA Human Rights Book Prize.



Daphne Zuniga

This San Francisco-born actress, born to a Guatemalan father and a Polish and Finnish mother, expressed interest in acting at an early age. She followed this dream through, and has become known for roles in *The Sure Thing* (1985), *Spaceballs* (1987), *Melrose Place*, and *One Tree Hill*. Aside from acting, Zuniga is active in environmental issues and is a founding member of the Earth Communications Office.



David Campos

A native of Puerto Barrios, Guatemala, David Campos's family fled across the border to the United States multiple times; they successfully emigrated in 1985. After graduating at the top of his high school class, earning scholarships to Stanford, his now alma-mater, and meeting his now-husband Phil Hwang while studying law at Harvard, Campos became a permanent resident of the United States. He has used his career in law and politics to advocate for reproductive health, clean energy, and protecting undocumented youths from separation from their families.





Bianca Del Rio

Roy Haylock, better known by the stage name Bianca Del Rio, is a drag queen, comedian, actor, and costume designer. He was born in Gretna, Louisiana to a Cuban mother and a Honduran father, and after moving New York and back (this time, to New Orleans), he built a career in costume design, began doing drag, and earned a spot on Season 6 of RuPaul's Drag Race, where she served as the series' first Hispanic winner. Since the show, she has penned and toured several stand-up shows and movies.



America Ferrera

Born in Los Angeles to Honduran parents, America Ferrera expressed interest in acting at an early age. Her early 20s saw her career grow with movies like The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants, and her role as the lead in Ugly Betty brought her to critical acclaim. Apart from acting, she is socially and politically active, being involved in organizations like Voto Latino that aim to get Latinx Americans to vote, or otherwise being an opening speaker for the 2017 Women's March. She is also a founding member of the Time's Up legal defense fund for victims of sexual violence.



Francia Raisa

A Los Angeles native with Honduran and Mexican roots, Francia Raisa Almendarez (known professionally as Francia Raisa) is an actress known for her roles in Bring it On: All or Nothing, The Secret Life of the American Teenager, and Grownish, a spin-off of ABC's Blackish. She is an outspoken member of the Latinx-American community and is a signatory of the Querida Familia Latina letter, which expresses support and love to that community.





Holidays & Festivals - El Salvador

Fiestas Patronales de San Salvador

Held between August 5-6th, the *Fiestas Patronales de San Salvador* celebrate and honor Jesus Christ (*El Salvador*, "The Savior") with a procession that departs from the Basilica of the Sacred heart of Jesus and ends in front of the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Divine Savior of the World. Here, a representation of the Transfiguration of Jesus is held, and a mass at that Cathedral closes the festivities the following day. These festivities include the Mail Parade on August 1st, which marks the beginning of the holiday, the Trade Parade on August 3rd, and amusement parks, at which you may be able to purchase:

Tamales Pisques

While Tamales originate in Mexico and Guatemala (and all the way back to 100 AD at that), El Salvador's unique and iconic take on this stuffed-and-steamed packet of masa includes refried beans, bell peppers, onion, and tomato.

https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/tamales_pisques/





Holidays & Festivals - Guatemala

Día de todos los Santos (All Saints' Day)

This Christian holiday, traditionally held on November 1st, honors all of the saints, known and unknown. While it is a worldwide holiday, it bears special significance in Guatemala, where it is a national holiday. During Dia de Todos los Santos, it is traditional to visit cemeteries, leave *fiambre* (a cold meat and vegetable salad, see below) at the graves of loved ones, and to fly kites to help unite the dead and the living. Festivals are held, giant, colorful kites are flown, and *fiambre* is prepared and eaten.

Fiambre

This traditional Guatemalan salad is prepared both on All Saints' Day and Day of the Dead. While the salad can traditionally include sausages, cold cuts, pickled baby corn, onion, beets, cheese, and olives, the variants are endless, and dozens of different ingredients can be included.

<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/fiambre/>





Holidays & Festivals - Honduras

La Ceiba Carnival

Celebrated in the eponymous port city of La Ceiba, this Honduran festival and parade is held every third or fourth Saturday of May and honors Saint Isidore the Laborer, the patron saint of the city.

The festivities include crowning a queen, holding processions and parades before the official parade, enjoying carnivals, feasting, and partying along Avenida San Isdro throughout the night. This festival is the largest in Central America; for example, in 20018, the even drew over half a million tourists.

A common food you will find throughout Honduras, as well as during the Carnival, is the famous Baleada:

Baleada

For this traditional Honduran recipe, thick flour tortillas are filled with mashed fried red beans and folded. The variations are endless, and can range from simple baleadas filled with beans, cream, and cheese, to special versions with scrambled eggs, to super special versions that feature ground meat or sausage.

<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/baleadas/>





Food Palate and History

The Central American cuisine we know today is a blend of indigenous Native American food and that of the Europeans who settled and/or conquered the area; we may also recognize influences from the neighboring Caribbean region, as well. Corn, rice, beans, masa, tortillas, and other staple ingredients and dishes symbolize the region's cuisine as a whole; this is not, however, to say that the region's cuisine can be simply grouped up.

While following chart includes a list of staple ingredients, methods, and dishes from the region, each country in this subcontinent has unique flavors, ingredients, and preparations that give them distinct identities:

- For instance, **El Salvador**'s cuisine is deeply rooted in that of the native Pipil people (and other native tribes), and each Pipil-derived dish, which is likely to include corn, is usually given some kind of European spin.
- **Guatemala**, on the other hand, boasts delicious traditional food based in Mayan cuisine (which therefore features corn, chilies, and beans), and while the country as a whole has signature flavors and dishes, each of the country's 22 "departments" has its own very different take on food.
- **Honduran** cuisine mixes Spanish, Caribbean, Garifuna (an indigenous Caribbean people), and Maya-Lenca food, and as a result, emphasizes certain ingredients that are otherwise used minimally in South America, such as coconut.

Food Palate and History (cont.)

Today, most Central American cuisine features these ingredients and dishes*:

Primary Starches	Primary Proteins	Primary Produce
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Masa• Cornmeal• Quinoa• Tortillas• Rice• Potatoes• Plantains	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chicken• Turkey• Beef• Cod• Pork• Chicharrones• Chorizo	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corn• Beans• Squash• Onion• Tomatoes• Chiles• Plantains• Coconut• Cassava• Guava• Melons• Citrus
Primary Seasonings	Primary Cooking Methods	Foundational Dishes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cilantro• Mint• Parsley• Zamat• Epazote• Allspice• Cinnamon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frying• Boiling• Baking• Steaming	<p>El Salvador</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupusas• Pollo encebollado• Yuca frita• Panes rellenos <p>Guatemala</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chicken pepián• Fiambre• Kak'ik• Hilachas <p>Honduras</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sopa de caracol• Tajadas• Sopa marinera• Catrachitas



Featured Ingredient - El Salvador

Corn

As Salvadoran cuisine is deeply rooted in that of Native Americans, it is no wonder that maize, or corn, is a staple ingredient. It is used in, for example, soups, salads, as the base for fried cakes, and in tamales; it is processed into flour for dishes like:

Pupusa

This renowned stuffed flatbread, similar to the Venezuelan and Colombian Arepa, has unclear origins. El Salvador and Honduras both claim to be the birthplace of the pupusa, although for purposes of international trade, El Salvador owns the right to the dish.

In any case, they are typically attributed to the Pipil tribes who inhabited what is now El Salvador, who made them in half-moon shapes and filled exclusively with vegetables. Now, these cornmeal-based flatbreads are circular and are usually stuffed with cheese, chicharron, squash, or refried beans.

<https://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/pupusas/>





Featured Ingredient - Guatemala

Plantains

This starchy ingredient, also known as a cooking banana or green banana, is pervasive throughout Central American cuisine. In Guatemala, they hold a special place, and can be eaten boiled, fried or prepared in a dish such as:

Rellenitos de plátano

This sweet dish, whose name roughly translates to “little stuffed plantain things,” is made by mashing sweet plantains with refried beans, chocolate, and/or cinnamon, then shaping the mixture into balls and deep-frying them.

<http://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/rellenitos-de-platano/>





Featured Ingredient - Honduras



Coconut

Honduran cuisine, a fusion of indigenous, Spanish, Caribbean, and African cuisines, features coconuts extensively. They are used for their milk, which is used both in soups and to prepare meats, as well as for their meat. One of the dishes that utilizes coconut milk and which best represents the eclectic nature of Honduran cuisine is:

Sopa de Caracol

Sopa de caracol, or conch soup, was made famous throughout Latin America by a famous song of the same name; the soup consists of conch cooked in coconut milk, spices, yuca, cilantro, and green bananas.



<http://ourrecipeforunity.org/recipes/sopa-de-caracol/>



Did you Know?

Did you Know...



...that CAPTCHA was invented by a Guatemalan professor at Carnegie Mellon?

That's right – Guatemala City-born Luis Von Ahn, entrepreneur and Consulting Professor in Computer Science at Carnegie-Mellon, is actually known for a number of ideas and services we use every day.

He is the founder of reCAPTCHA (now owned by Google), the company behind the software that helps websites determine whether a user is a human or a bot.

However, his credits don't end there; he is also one of the pioneers of crowdsourcing, as well as the co-founder and CEO of Duolingo, a well-known language-learning app and website.



Embassy Information



Embassy of El Salvador
1400 16th St NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 595-7500



Embassy of Costa Rica

2114 S Street NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 499-2991

<http://www.costarica-embassy.org>



Embassy of Guatemala
2220 R Street NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 745-4952



Embassy of Honduras
1990 M St NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 525-4001
<http://www.hondurasemb.org/>



Embassy of Nicaragua

1627 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 939-6570



Embassy of Belize
2535 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 332-9636
<https://www.belizeembassyusa.mfa.gov>.



Embassy of Panama

2862 McGill Terrace NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 483-1407
<https://www.embassyofpanama.org/>

Organizations and Places to Learn More

The Association of Salvadorans of Los Angeles (ASOSAL)

660 S. Bonnie Brae St.
Los Angeles, CA 90057
<http://www.asosal.org/>
(213) 483-1244

Based in Los Angeles, ASOSAL exists to improve “the quality of life of Salvadoran, Central American, and Latino communities by assisting immigrants to obtain Legal Permanent Residence,” to encourage those communities to be politically active, and to disseminate “the richness of...Salvadoran culture and identity.”

League of United Latin American Citizens

1133 19th Street, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20036
<https://lulac.org/>
(202) 833-6130

Through education, health, and technology programs, as well as empowerment and Civic Engagement initiatives, the League of United Latin American Citizens, or LULAC, aims to “advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health and civil rights of the Hispanic population of the United States.”

Hispanic Heritage Foundation

1001 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20004
<https://hispanicheritage.org/>
(202) 558-9473

This Washington, DC-based nonprofit holds a portfolio of important programs, including the Hispanic Heritage Youth Awards, Latinos On Fast Track (LOFT), Hispanic Heritage Awards and Public Awareness Campaigns. HHF “promotes cultural pride, accomplishment and the great promise of the community through public awareness campaigns seen by millions.”

UnidosUS

1126 16th St. NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20036
<https://www.unidosus.org>
(213) 483-1244

Since 1968, UnidosUS has aimed to serve as “a trusted, nonpartisan voice for Latinos.” They partner with affiliates across the United States to “serve millions of Latinos in the areas of civic engagement, civil rights and immigration education, workforce and the economy, health, and housing.”

NALEO

1122 W. Washington Blvd., Third Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90015
<http://www.naleo.org/>
(213) 483-1244

NALEO, or the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, was formed in 1978 and exists today in order to facilitate “full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.” They aim to mobilize “the Latino community to engage in civic life and promoting policies that advance Latino political engagement.”

The Hispanic Institute

908 Pennsylvania Ave. SE
Washington , DC 20003
<https://www.thehispanicinstitute.net/>

This 501(c)(3) nonprofit provides “an effective education forum for an informed and empowered Hispanic America” and engages in projects such as media monitoring, citizenship education, and technology.

Caveat



**Our Recipe for Unity is not suggesting that any person's culture or ethnic identity can be synthesized into one Fact Sheet, especially for a region as diverse and vibrant as Central America. Our resources just a place of beginning. We encourage you to learn more by contacting any of the organizations mentioned at the end of this Fact Sheet; to talk with people from different parts of Central America to understand their experience; and to please feel free to send us any resources that you think would be helpful to include on this site or in these Fact Sheets.*