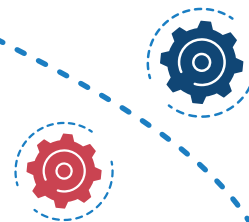




LABOR OBSERVATORY OF THE AMERICAS



Country Profile Guatemala

2021



Total Area:

108.889 km²



Population (2018 Census):

14'901.286 people¹



Population (official 2021 estimate)

17,109,746 people



Economically active population:

(2019)

7,114,935 people¹



Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020:

77.6 billion US dollars²

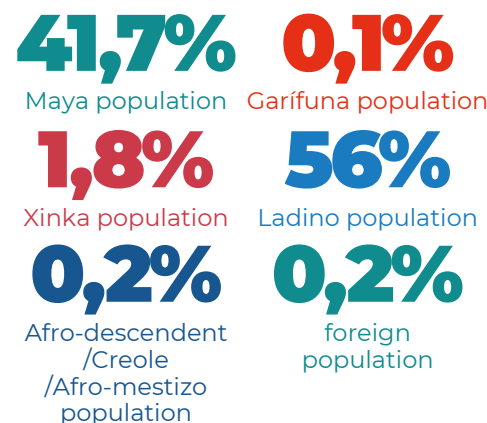


GDP in 2021:

GDP grew by 14.3% between November 2020 and November 2021.

Population composition

(2018 Census):



49,2% ♀ **50,8%** ♂

In 2021, it's estimated that men make up around 49.2% (8,419,722) of the population, and women 50.8% (8,690,024).

¹ Most of the information noted here was obtained from the National Statistics Institute (INE for its acronym in Spanish) of Guatemala. The most recent records are for 2019, and there are some official projections for 2021. Although the Guatemalan State has made progress in the National Employment and Income Survey conducted between September and October 2021, the results have not yet been published.

² <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/perfil-nacional.html?theme=2&country=gtm&lang=es>

³ <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/guatemala/overview#1>



Analysis of socio-economic situation

Employment.

Para el 2019 el total de personas ocupadas fue 6'935.863 con una tasa de empleo de (97,5%), de las cuales 2'263.545 son mujeres, y 4'672.318 son hombres.

Economically Inactive Population.

4,890,424 people.

Informal employment.

The rate of informal employment in 2019 was 65.3%.

Unemployment.

The unemployment rate in 2019 was 2,5%⁴ with 179,072 people unemployed.

Poverty.

According to the report by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) – Social Panorama of Latin America 2020, the estimated poverty rate in Guatemala in 2020 was 50.9%⁵, and extreme poverty was 18.7%. According to the World Bank, poverty was projected to decrease to 45.9% in 2021.⁶

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-san_jose/documents/publication/wcms_755522.pdf

⁵ <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/46688-social-panorama-latin-america-2020>

⁶ <https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/guatemala/overview#1>



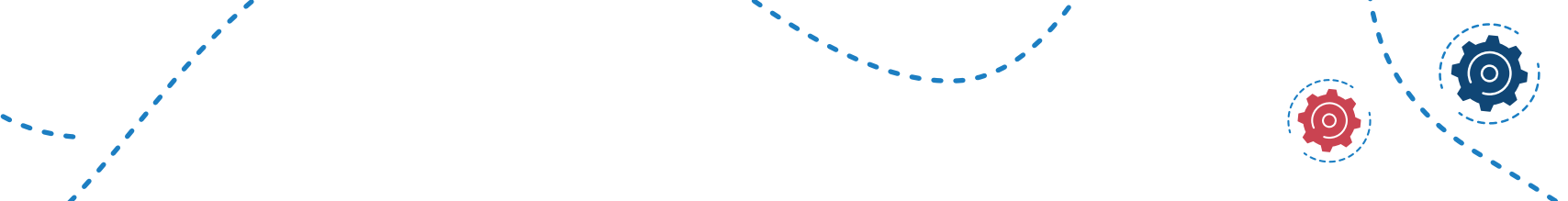
Context Highlights 2021

In 2021, right-wing president Alejandro Giammattei was challenged for his government's management of the COVID 19 pandemic. Guatemala recorded 16,108 deaths at the end of the year, and sadly ranked as the country with the highest number of deaths due to coronavirus in Central America. Criticism focused on the fact that the executive branch was reluctant to take timely containment measures to prevent the spread of the virus, and shifted the responsibility to the population through deeply repressive presidential decrees aimed at stopping legitimate social mobilizations, conditioning the right to strike, and militarizing the national territory.

The health crisis was made worse by the collapse of the Intensive Care Units (ICU) and by delays in acquiring vaccines to immunize the population, which was later reflected in insufficient doses in

the vaccination plan. The citizens' response in the face of social discontent led the country to live through several weeks of mobilizations called by labor, peasant, indigenous, student, and women's organizations. A large part of the population joined the mobilizations to demand the resignation of the president, holding him responsible for the acute health and social crisis, among other revindications of the marchers that were aimed at guaranteeing fundamental rights.

In addition to the pandemic, there was other social unrest; Guatemalans believe that the corruption and bad governance they have endured for decades have kept the country immersed in poverty (almost half of the population) and inequality. Guatemala has difficul-



ties in guaranteeing social rights such as access to healthcare, education, drinking water, and has the highest rate of child malnutrition (47%)⁷ in Latin America.

Protesters permanently mobilized to denounce the above-mentioned social injustices, and indignation increased with the dismissal of Juan Francisco Sandoval, head of the Special Prosecutor's Office against Impunity (FECI for its acronym in Spanish), known as the "anti-corruption prosecutor". Attorney General Consuelo Porras made the controversial decision, leading to demands for her resignation. Porras was widely criticized nationally and internationally, due to the belief that Sandoval was dismissed because of the investigations carried out involving high-ranking government officials.

Among other highlights, the Congress approved the draft 2022 Budget for State Revenues and Expenditures at the end of the year, with 112 votes in favor cast by the President's party and 35 votes against. There was strong criticism from the opposition and other sectors of society for the decrease in social investment programs; the budget greatly reduced the allocation for the National Agriculture Program and cut funds for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises. Additionally, the budget is not clear in the allocation for crucial items such as healthcare and education, and includes a proposal to increase the allocation to the Ministry of Defense by \$39 million US dollars.

⁷ Ídem.



Actions/Denunciations (national and international) by Trade Unions and other social sector

One of the main denunciations of the trade union movement and other social sectors is the violations of the fundamental rights of activists, journalists, and community leaders perpetrated in 2021. At least 849 people experienced violence due to their defense of peoples and their human rights. Criminalization has primarily taken the form of assassinations and harassment. Social organizations expressed their great concern that this sinister phenomenon is related to an attempt to silence the voices of all fighters who denounce corruption and oppose attempts to consolidate an authoritarian State.

In May, more than 200 social organizations in the Latin American country mobilized to demand that the Constitutional Court stop the reform of the NGO law, which the social movement believes will restrict the freedom of association. Through a letter that gathered 212 signatures from as many organizations, the social movement communicated to the Court that the reform seeks to

give the executive branch absolute power to decide who may or may not express themselves and organize themselves, thereby violating the fundamental rights of the Guatemalan population.

On the other hand, the union movement, together with other social sectors, denounced the repression against the community of El Estor municipality, due to its opposition to the mining activities of Guatemala Nickel Company. In October, State forces strongly repressed fisherfolk and indigenous communities that were demonstrating against the violation of their fundamental rights, thus intensifying a conflict that dates back to 2014, the year in which the mining company began operations. In response to social mobilizations, the government decreed a state of siege and sent more than a thousand military personnel to the area, clearly evidencing the criminalization of legitimate social protest.



Trade union proposals and initiatives

Undoubtedly, the trade union initiative to highlight is the Platform of Trade Union Struggle for the Development of Guatemala (Plataforma de Lucha Sindical para el Desarrollo de Guatemala), developed and led by the Trade Union Roundtable – TUCA Guatemala. It is a development strategy from the perspective of unionized workers, which sees work as a fundamental element for justice and dignity.

Roundtable members – the Guatemala General Central Confederation of Workers (CGTG for its acronym in Spanish), the Guatemala Confederation of Trade Union Unity (CUSG for its acronym in Spanish) and the Guatemala Workers' Trade Union (known in Spanish as UNSITRAGUA-HISTÓRICA) – made the commitment to articulate their common values, agendas, and aspirations in order to contribute to the continuation of the struggle for life, justice, freedom, the recognition of the value of work, and democracy. This class-based vision and principles are captured in the Platform.

By integrating political, social, economic, and environmental dimensions, the Platform contains a development strategy that proposes a State dedicated to society and to the environment, with the capacity to control and regulate the market in order to meet social needs. This vision of development reaffirms the pillars of decent work, distribution of wealth, participatory democracy, equality and equity between genders and among the peoples that make up Guatemalan society, social protection and inclusion without discrimination, environmental justice, and the inclusion of elements that are part of the dimensions necessary to achieve dignity and the sustainability of life.

The Platform is a united effort that calls on workers' organizations and movements, and the country's social and democratic movements, to learn about, study, debate, and contribute to the content of the initiative; to establish mechanisms for building trust, dialogue, and alliances to make it a reality; and to thereby defend the rights of Guatemalan society as a whole.



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