



LABOR OBSERVATORY OF THE AMERICAS



Country Profile Honduras

2021



Total Area

112,492 km²



Population (2013 Census):

8,303,771
people



Population estimated in 2021:

9,450,711 people,
4,851,388 women
and 4,599,323 men.

Population composition (2013 Census)

4,251,456 women and 4,052,315 men.
Of the total population, 717,618 (8.6%)
people identify as indigenous,
including Indigenous Peoples and
Afro-Antilleans. There are nine
culturally differentiated Peoples:
Maya-Chorti, Lenca, Misquito, Nahua,
Pech, Tolupan, Tawahka, Garifuna,
and Afro-Antillean.



Economically active population:

(2020)
4,103,427
people



Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2020:

23.83 billion
US dollars²



GDP in 2021:

The Central Bank of
Honduras (BCH for
its acronym in
Spanish) forecast an
annual GDP growth
of 3.6%.

¹ Some of the statistics noted here were drawn from the National Institute of Statistics (INE for its acronym in Spanish) of Honduras, based on the most updated and verifiable information available. Other data were drawn and duly referenced from the International Labor Organization and other official institutions.

² <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/national-profile.html?theme=2&country=hnd&lang=en>



Analysis of the socio-economic situation

Employment.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), the employment rate for 2020 was 59.4%, representing an increase of 2.1 percentage points compared to 2019 (57.3%).³

Unemployment.

The unemployment rate for 2020 was 10.9%, up 5.2 percentage points compared to 2019, when the unemployment rate stood at 5.7%.

Economically Inactive population.

According to the ILO, the rate of economic inactivity in 2020 was 40.6%.⁴

Informal employment.

Informal employment: The ILO estimates that in 2020, 81.4% of the employed population worked in informal employment conditions.

Poverty.

According to the report by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) - Social Panorama of Latin America, the poverty rate in Honduras in 2020 was 58.6%, and extreme poverty was 26.1%.

The National Institute of Statistics (INE for its acronym in Spanish) of Honduras indicated that 73.6% of households were poor in 2021, of which 53.7% lived in extreme poverty and 19.9% in non-extreme poverty.⁵

³ <https://statistics.cepal.org/portal/cepalstat/national-profile.html?theme=2&country=hnd&lang=en>

⁴ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---sro-san_jose/documents/publication/wcms_831272.pdf

⁵ <https://www.ine.gob.hn/v3/imag-doc/2021/11/INE-EPHPM-2021.pdf>

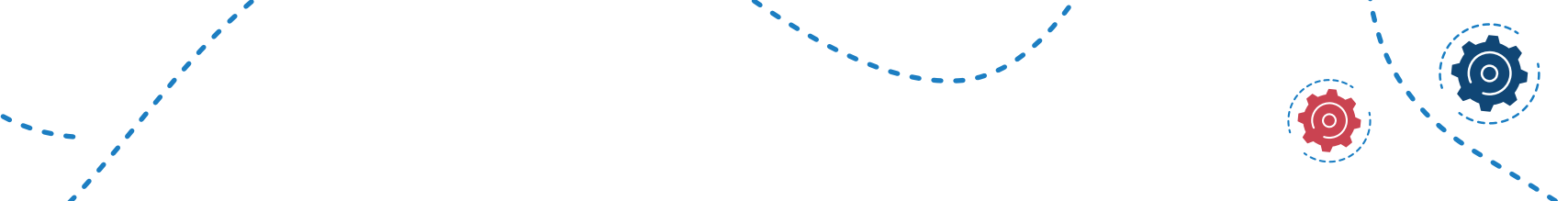


Context Highlights 2021

The year 2021 was critical for Honduras in relation to food security. The UN World Food Program (WFP) estimated that 3.3 million people were food insecure in October, and that the number could reach 4.4 million by the end of the year. This is alarming since before the pandemic, there were 1.8 million people experiencing food insecurity. The pandemic and the impacts of hurricanes Eta and Iota have had an impact on the country's food crisis; however, the crisis of hunger is a direct consequence of the neoliberal agrarian policies that continue to deepen inequalities and violate the right to land and food in the Central American country.

The food crisis is contextualized within the implementation of five executive decrees issued by the President in agreement with the Council of Ministers that deepened the country's agricultural problem. These so-called programs mainly seek to hand over land to the corporate sector while blocking land legalization for peasants. They also offer technical assistance and funds for agro-fuels products for export such as oil palm, to the detriment of bean and corn crops.

Furthermore, they exclude the more than 80% of women and men who do not have access to land, which is a basic prerequisite to access credit and comprehensive accompaniment programs.



A key highlight is the electoral process that took place in the country towards the end of 2021. Honduran society expressed its opposition to the National Party of Honduras (Partido Nacional de Honduras - PNH) government, and elected Xiomara Castro of the Liberty and Re-foundation Party (Partido Libertad y Refundación - LIBRE) as President of the Republic with 53% of the votes. The results represent an important victory because they make Castro the first woman elected to this position in Honduras. As important, the elections returned the left to leadership in the country after 12 years under the PNH's right-wing government – a government that has been embroiled in corruption scandals, and enabled the steady rise in unemployment and waves of migration as a consequence of human rights violations.

One of the most talked-about scandals in 2021 has to do with the life sentence of Juan Antonio Hernandez, brother of the president of Honduras and a former legislator in his government. After several trials, Hernandez had been convicted in 2019 for cocaine trafficking and possession of weapons and destructive devices. The new trial addresses devel-

opments in the investigation that showed that the president's brother collaborated with Colombian and Mexican drug traffickers for the shipment of drugs to the United States, and that the profits from this business were used to finance the PNH political campaigns during the 2009, 2013, and 2017 elections. The US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York lays out in a document how President Juan Orlando Hernandez allegedly received at least one million US dollars from drug traffickers, money he used to win the presidency for two consecutive terms.



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

Social movements and organizations in Honduras denounce the systematic increase in femicides. It is estimated that a femicide takes place every 24 hours in Honduras, with around 90% of cases remaining in impunity. This is evidence of a direct attack on women, who have been on the frontline of struggle during the coronavirus pandemic and in the defense of natural resources. The alarming institutionalization of violence against women is also denounced, such as the case of Keyla Martínez Rodríguez, killed in a police station in La Esperanza, Intibucá, after being arrested accused of violating the curfew and public disorder.

The Honduran social and trade union movement also strongly denounced the hydroelectric megaprojects, particularly in relation to repeated violations of the rights of the peoples and their human rights as a result of resistance to projects. For example, the events related to the Petacon hydroelectric project in the Lenca territory of Reitoca. At dawn on 5 August, the police violently entered the indigenous community of Reitoca, threw tear gas, beat and threatened residents, and detained five leaders, clearly criminalizing and repressing the prosecuted defenders. Hundreds of similar events were denounced across the country, as a result of the engagement of transnational capital in the mining-energy model, and the exploitation and dispossession of peasant, ancestral indigenous, and Garifuna territories.

The consolidation of the dispossession project called Employment and Development Zones (ZEDES for its acronym in Spanish) was vehemently condemned in 2021. The Honduran Department of Economic Development designated areas of the national territory as ZEDES, making them subject to a special regime and leaving investors in charge of controlling fiscal policy, security, and conflict resolution. The Honduran social movement has constantly warned about what these initiatives mean, in relation to territorial control in the hands of transnational capital, the loss of sovereignty, human rights violations, and the seizure of natural resources that are essential for ensuring a dignified life.

Additionally, the trade union movement denounced the rights violations against the National Autonomous Service of Aqueducts and Sewage and Similar Services Workers' Union (SITRASANAAYS for its acronym in Spanish) and the deterioration of Tegucigalpa's drinking water system. According to the complaints, massive layoffs were carried out and unqualified personnel were used to perform technical tasks, which the trade union movement views as a major risk to the health and safety of the population in the Honduran capital.



Trade union proposals and initiatives

The Honduras Workers' United Confederation (CUTH for its acronym in Spanish) proposed the construction of democratic spaces for meaningful participation and dialogue between the trade union movement and the Ministry of Labor, advancing towards a guarantee of genuine representation of workers and their rightful demands. The proposal for the construction of a new labor policy follows Xiomara Castro's victory in November, understanding that parallel labor organizations were created and CUTH unions lost their legal status during the government of Juan Orlando Hernandez – viewed as a period with clear dictatorial overtones.

The Honduran trade union movement also proposes the repeal of the 2014 Hourly Employment Law, which it believes violates labor rights. According to the unions, the law eliminated workers' job security, vacation, benefits, Christmas bonuses, pre- and post-natal rights, and the right to social security, among others.

With a view to strengthening the movement, another union initiative is the greater inclusion of youth and women. Ongoing political formation and the construction of strategies for gender justice – with the support and engagement of the Network against Anti-Union Violence – is a central pillar of socio-political unionism in Honduras. It is worth noting that in 2021, the CUTH successfully completed one formation cycle through the Union Education-Action School, with a rich experience based on gender and youth. This process is expected to continue in 2022.



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