

COUNTRY INFORMATION SHEET

GUATEMALA



GENERAL COUNTRY DATA



Surface Area: 108.890 km²



Total Population: 16.346.950 inhabitants¹



Life Expectancy: 74 años



Composition of the population: 41,7 % maya; 0,1 % garífuna; 56,0 % ladina; 1,8 % xinka; 0,2 % Afro-descendant²



Economically Active Population:

5.020.548 personas (33.7% of the total)³



Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) 2018: USD 55.774,8 million (at constant 2010 prices)⁴

Brief Overview of the Socioeconomic Situation

Employment/Unemployment. Between 2018 and 2019, Guatemala's unemployment rate did not change significantly, with a slight decrease by **0.3%** (from **2.8** to **2.5%**). According to the 2019 National Income & Employment Survey (ENEI 1) data, developed by the National Statistics Institute (INE). At the time of the survey, Guatemala's unemployed population was **179,000**, less than the **194,000** recorded in the 2018 (ENEI 1).

According to official data, in July 2020 the unemployment rate in Guatemala was still **2,5%**, and it is projected to continue or to slightly increase towards the end of the year.

Inactive Population. The economically inactive population is **4,908,013** people (**32.9%** of the total population). Of these, **3,017,831** work in domestic service; **32,675** provide care to people; **167,466** are rentiers or retirees; **793,547** only studied; **16,170** have a position in the community; and **780,131** perform other activities.⁶

Informality. By July 2020, informal employment reached **70.2%**, and underemployment reached **9.4%**⁷.

Poverty. According to a recent ECLAC report, by late 2020, **21.8%** of the Guatemalan population will live in extreme poverty, and **59.9%** will be poor.⁸

Main Violations of Workers' Rights

Regressive measures to the working class.

The CGTG, UNSITRAGUA Histórica and the Movimiento de Trabajadores Campesinos San Marcos (MTC San Marcos) denounced that the government's measures to buffer the **COVID-19** crisis have been insufficient to protect workers; in fact, now the working class is even more unprotected than before. They also pointed out that these apparent efforts are nothing more than actions to protect business owners and their extractivist and exploitative activities.

The health crisis was used to grant more benefits and greater protection to large corporations, while the actions and struggles of native peoples and the trade union movement were militarized and criminalized. Measures to the detriment of acquired labor rights were intensified, materializing the neoliberal policy and continuing the systematic anti-union violence.

Such measures weaken trade union organizing and seek to abolish the fundamental rights gained after years of struggle by the trade union movement.

Trade union federations denounce the exploitation of workers, their long working hours in unhealthy conditions and non-payment of legal wages and overtime, among other violations of their rights. Workers were

also sent to work at home without provision of the proper training or tools. There were unjustified, government-endorsed, suspensions of employment contracts, through the Ministry of Labor (MINTRAB).

Regressive measures include: the declaration of the state of public calamity until April 12, with limited mobility between 4:00 pm and 4:00 am. The emergency was considered force majeure and allowed the suspension of individual and collective contracts, with prior authorization of the MINTRAB and in "agreement" with the worker in question (ministerial agreement 140-2020); **1,500 million** worth in tax refunds to exporters; exemption of three months or **1%** of corporate tax payments; some companies forced workers to sign mutual consent agreements (under threat of dismissal), with a **20%** salary cut and expecting a **50%** reduction in working hours, i.e. part-time work. It is also important to denounce the authorization to dismiss pregnant women.

Trade Union Denunciations

The lack of safety and health measures in the textile maquila sector, call centers, private security companies, the agricultural sector and the public sector (municipal and state institutions) was denounced at the Autonomous/Global Trade Union Political Council. The Council also rejected initiatives to regulate part-time work and established a differentiated salary, as well as the measures taken by the government and the Ministry of Labor to only benefit employers.

The municipal authorities of Retalhuleu took advantage of the state of calamity and, early in the morning of Friday, April 10, 2020, emptied the worksites of several self-employed vendors, taking the equipment and merchandise of approximately **80** vendors, most of whom are members of the Retalhuleu Market Trade Union, who were following the guidelines and staying at home.

¹ Official Data Census 2018. Available at: <<https://www.censopoblacion.gt>>.

² Official Data Census 2018. Available at: <<https://www.censopoblacion.gt>>.

³ Alvarado, Vladimir (September 20, 2019): "Economically active population is 5.02 million in Guatemala." In El Siglo. Available at: <<https://elsiglo.com.gt/2019/09/20/poblacion-economicamente-activa-son-5-02-millones-en-guatemala>>.

⁴ ECLAC: ECLACSTAT: Databases and statistical publications. Available at: <https://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/tabulador/ConsultaIntegradaProc_HTML.asp>.

Significant Issues of the Context

Trade unions denounce that they are not able to renew their legal status because they cannot hold assemblies and because, even if they could, the MINTRAB's facilities are closed. This implies that trade unions have no legal leadership and creates a problem to be addressed once the pandemic ends, because the work of trade union leaders defending and representing workers before employers and the General Labor Inspectorate has been impeded.

Trade union federations have pointed out the dismissal of many members, and non-organized workers do not dare to report bad practices. Domestic workers are heavily affected: most of them do not have a livelihood as their activities were suspended during the pandemic, hence, they are not receiving a salary. Violence has also intensified in households, compounded by the overload of care work, which befalls on women.

In the health sector, in different countries of Latin America and the Caribbean a constant and common denominator has been the non-payment of salaries and the imposition of extended work hours due to the lack of medical staff to address catastrophic-like situations.

President Alejandro Giammattei decided to dismantle the Peace Secretariat and its associated entities (PNR, CNAP and the National Women's Forum), reducing it to the Secretariat of Human Rights & Peace, which the trade union movement suspects will attempt to work parallel to the established functions of the Human Rights Procuracy.

Guatemalans strongly rejected the 2021 budget presented by the Executive Branch. Mobilizations and strong social disruptions of public order were organized against corruption, including the burning of the Congress of the Republic building.

The crisis became a business to also benefit the banking sector.

Different crises are compounding the country's structural problems. Poverty and hunger have reached their worst levels in decades. The abovementioned closure of the Peace Secretariat is a sign of the indifference and structural racism in Guatemala.

It is necessary to underscore the serious damage caused by the hurricane and tropical storm ETA, which affected entire populations - in particular, the popular classes, the poor, the unprotected, excluded and exploited – and causing the loss of human lives. Far from considering the effects as the result of «natural phenomena», it is necessary to point towards the development model based on the extractivist mining-energy and agro-industrial model, which causes deforestation and the loss of biodiversity, generating risk and vulnerability.

⁵ Given the outdated figures in the INE of Guatemala, other secondary sources are sought that provide reliability by contrast (for example, <<https://www.centralamericadata.com/es>>).

⁶ Alvarado, Vladimir (20 de setiembre de 2019): «Población económicamente activa...» cit.

⁷ Sapalú, Lucero (8 de julio de 2020): «La tasa de desempleo alcanza 2,5 en Guatemala por la pandemia del covid19». En El Periódico. Disponible en: <<https://elperiodico.com.gt/nacionales/2020/07/08/la-tasa-de-desempleo-alcanza-2-5-en-guatemala-por-la-pandemia-del-covid-19>>.

⁸ CEPAL (12 de mayo de 2020): «El desafío social en tiempos del covid19». En Informe especial covid19, n.º 3. Disponible en: <https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/45527/S2000325_es.pdf?sequence=5&isAllowed=y>.

Trade Union Proposals and Initiatives

Trade union proposals and initiatives **call for building national legislation to prevent abuses against workers and to demand a reduction of the bureaucratic procedures involved in the management of food aid to the vulnerable population.**

Attention to migrants at border crossings is essential to address the possibility of exacerbating the spread of the pandemic.

Informal work is one of the core aspects of the violation of labor rights. Therefore, the trade union movement demands concrete actions to serve these workers, including the creation of mechanisms for the numerous self-employed workers that increase the population depending on the informal economy.



CON EL APOYO DE:

