

CIA World Factbook–Style Country Report

Republic of El Salvador (República de El Salvador)



Flag

The national flag consists of three horizontal bands of cobalt blue, white, and cobalt blue, with the national coat of arms centered on the white band. The blue bands represent the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea (reflecting the country's Central American heritage), while the white symbolizes peace and solidarity among nations.

Introduction

El Salvador is the smallest and most densely populated country in mainland Central America. Despite its modest size, it occupies a strategically important position between Guatemala and Honduras along the Pacific coast.

After decades marked by civil war (1980–1992) and widespread gang violence, El Salvador has undergone one of the most dramatic security transformations in the Western Hemisphere under President Nayib Bukele. Crime reduction has significantly improved domestic security, although concerns regarding civil liberties, judicial independence, and constitutional governance continue to receive international attention.

Quick Facts

Category	Information
Capital	San Salvador
Largest City	San Salvador
Government	Presidential Republic
Independence	15 September 1821 (Spain)
Area	21,041 km ²
Population	~6.3 million
Official Language	Spanish
Currency	United States Dollar (USD)
Time Zone	UTC−6

Category	Information
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Internet TLD	.sv
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Calling Code	+503
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Geography

Location

Central America, bordering:

- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Pacific Ocean

Unlike every other mainland Central American nation, El Salvador has **no Caribbean coastline**.

Terrain

- Narrow Pacific coastal plain
- Central volcanic plateau
- Mountain ranges
- Numerous volcanoes

Highest point:

- Cerro El Pital — 2,730 meters
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Climate

- Tropical
- Rainy season:
 - May–October
- Dry season:
 - November–April

Higher elevations enjoy considerably cooler temperatures.

Natural Hazards

El Salvador is among the most geologically active countries in the Americas.

Primary hazards include:

- Major earthquakes
- Volcanic eruptions
- Tropical storms
- Hurricanes
- Flooding
- Landslides

The nation is often referred to as "**The Land of Volcanoes.**"

Population

Estimated population:

≈6.3 million

Major ethnic groups:

- Mestizo
- White
- Indigenous minorities

Religion:

- Roman Catholic
- Protestant (especially Evangelical)
- Growing secular population

Literacy exceeds 90%.

Government

Government Type:

- Presidential Republic

Executive:

- President

Legislature:

- Legislative Assembly

Judiciary:

- Supreme Court

Current politics are dominated by President Nayib Bukele and his Nuevas Ideas political movement, which maintains broad legislative support while drawing both domestic approval and international scrutiny over constitutional and civil-liberty issues.

Economy

Major sectors include:

- Manufacturing
- Textiles
- Services
- Agriculture
- Tourism
- Financial services

Major agricultural products:

- Coffee
- Sugar
- Corn
- Beans

The United States is El Salvador's largest trading partner.

Remittances from Salvadorans working abroad remain one of the country's most important sources of national income.

Currency

Official currency:

- United States Dollar (USD)

El Salvador also became the first country to adopt Bitcoin as legal tender in 2021, although its practical use has remained limited relative to the U.S. dollar.

Infrastructure

Major airport:

- Monseñor Óscar Arnulfo Romero International Airport

Principal seaport:

- Acajutla

Road infrastructure has improved significantly in recent years through government investment.

Energy

Energy sources include:

- Geothermal
- Hydroelectric
- Petroleum imports
- Solar
- Wind

El Salvador possesses one of Latin America's strongest geothermal power sectors due to its volcanic geology.

Communications

Internet penetration continues to grow rapidly.

Mobile phone usage is widespread.

Government investment has emphasized digital modernization and electronic public services.

Military and Security

Armed Force of El Salvador (FAES)

Branches:

- Army
- Air Force
- Navy

Personnel:

Approximately **25,000 active-duty personnel**.

Mission

- Territorial defense
 - Border security
 - Internal security
 - Counter-narcotics
 - Disaster response
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Internal Security Assessment

Since 2022, El Salvador has conducted one of the largest anti-gang security operations in modern Latin American history under a prolonged state of emergency.

Results include:

- Dramatic reduction in homicide rates
- Large-scale arrests of alleged gang members

- Significant decline in extortion and organized gang activity

International organizations have simultaneously expressed concerns regarding:

- Due process
- Pretrial detention
- Judicial independence
- Human rights protections

This has created an ongoing policy debate balancing public security gains against civil liberties.

Foreign Relations

Key partners include:

- United States
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Central American Integration System (SICA)

Relations with China have expanded following the establishment of diplomatic ties in 2018, while the United States remains El Salvador's principal economic and security partner.

Intelligence Assessment

Strategic Importance

El Salvador occupies a key position within the Northern Triangle of Central America and serves as an important transit corridor between North and South America.

Primary strategic issues include:

- Counter-transnational organized crime
- Migration
- Economic development
- Democratic governance

- Chinese regional influence
- Regional security cooperation

Intelligence Confidence Assessment

Category	Rating
Political Stability	High
Economic Stability	Moderate
Internal Security	High (significantly improved)
External Military Threat	Low
Disaster Risk	High
Regional Strategic Importance	Moderate

ATLAS Strategic Assessment

Threat Level: Moderate

Outlook (3–5 Years):

El Salvador is expected to remain one of the most politically stable governments in Central America while continuing to prioritize internal security and economic modernization. The sustainability of its security gains will depend on institutional resilience, economic opportunity, and the long-term balance between effective law enforcement and democratic governance. Externally, the country is likely to continue navigating strategic competition between the United States and China while strengthening its role in regional migration and security cooperation.