

CIA World Factbook–Style Country Report

Republic of Nicaragua (República de Nicaragua)







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Executive Summary

Nicaragua is the **largest country in Central America** and occupies a strategically significant position between **Honduras** and **Costa Rica**, with coastlines on both the **Caribbean Sea** and the **Pacific Ocean**. Although it possesses abundant agricultural land, freshwater resources, mineral deposits, and access to two oceans, its economic and political development has been constrained by prolonged political polarization,

international sanctions, governance concerns, and periodic natural disasters. The capital and largest city is **Managua**.

National Data

Category	Information
Official Name	Republic of Nicaragua
Capital	Managua
Population	~6.7 million (2025 est.)
Area	130,370 sq km
Official Language	Spanish
Ethnic Groups	Mestizo majority; White; Indigenous; Afro-descendant communities
Currency	Córdoba (NIO)
Time Zone	UTC−6
Independence	15 September 1821 (Spain)

Geography

- Largest nation in Central America.
- Pacific volcanic plain in the west.
- Central mountainous highlands.
- Extensive Caribbean lowlands and tropical forests.
- Home to **Lake Nicaragua**, the largest freshwater lake in Central America.
- Numerous active volcanoes including Masaya, San Cristóbal, Telica, and Cerro Negro.

Highest Point

- Mogotón — 2,085 m

Natural Hazards

- Earthquakes
 - Hurricanes
 - Flooding
 - Landslides
 - Volcanic eruptions
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Flag

Blue–White–Blue horizontal stripes.

Meaning:

- Blue represents the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea.
 - White symbolizes peace and the land between the oceans.
 - National coat of arms represents the former Central American federation.
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Government

Category	Information
Government Type	Presidential republic
Capital	Managua
Administrative Divisions	15 departments and 2 autonomous Caribbean regions
Legal System	Civil law tradition

The country's political system has been dominated in recent years by President Daniel Ortega and the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), with international organizations expressing concerns regarding democratic institutions, electoral competition, and civil liberties.

Economy

GDP

Approximately **US\$20 billion**

Major Industries

- Agriculture
- Coffee
- Beef
- Sugar
- Gold mining
- Textiles
- Tourism
- Manufacturing

Major Exports

- Gold
- Coffee
- Beef
- Sugar
- Tobacco
- Apparel

Natural Resources

- Gold
- Silver
- Copper
- Timber
- Fish
- Freshwater resources

Despite steady economic growth in some sectors, Nicaragua remains one of the lower-income economies in the region and is vulnerable to external shocks, sanctions, and climate-related events.

Energy

Energy sources include:

- Hydroelectric
- Geothermal
- Wind
- Biomass
- Imported petroleum

Nicaragua has expanded renewable electricity generation significantly over the past decade.

Transportation

Road infrastructure links the Pacific population centers, while transportation in the Caribbean region remains comparatively limited. Principal ports include Corinto (Pacific) and Bluefields (Caribbean). Augusto C. Sandino International Airport in Managua is the country's primary international gateway.

Communications

- Mobile phone penetration exceeds the total population.
 - Internet access continues to expand but remains uneven between urban and rural areas.
 - Television, radio, and digital media operate under increasing state influence according to multiple international observers.
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Population & Society

Population distribution is concentrated in the western Pacific corridor.

Major cities include:

- Managua
- León
- Granada
- Masaya
- Chinandega
- Matagalpa

Religion

- Roman Catholic
- Evangelical Protestant
- Other Christian denominations

Life expectancy is in the mid-70-year range, with continued improvements in health indicators despite economic challenges.

Military & Security

Armed Forces

- Army
- Navy
- Air Force

Estimated active personnel:

- Approximately **12,000**

Military spending:

- Approximately **0.5% of GDP**

Equipment consists primarily of legacy Soviet/Russian systems supplemented by limited modernization. Nicaragua maintains defense cooperation with Russia, Cuba, and

Venezuela while also employing its armed forces in border security, disaster response, and domestic support missions.

Intelligence Assessment (ATLAS)

Category	Assessment
Political Stability	Moderate–High Risk
Internal Security	Moderate Risk
Economic Stability	Moderate Risk
Organized Crime	Elevated
Corruption Risk	Elevated
Disaster Vulnerability	High
Foreign Influence	High

Strategic Intelligence Assessment

Nicaragua occupies an outsized strategic position relative to its economic weight. Its location between two oceans and near major maritime approaches has long attracted external interest, including periodic proposals for an interoceanic canal. Although such projects remain unrealized, the country's geography continues to provide strategic significance.

Domestically, political centralization and strained relations with several Western governments have increased Nicaragua's reliance on partnerships with Russia, China, and other non-Western states. Regionally, migration pressures, organized crime, and climate-related disasters remain persistent security concerns. Militarily, Nicaragua does not represent a major conventional power, but its geopolitical alignment and geographic location ensure continued relevance in Central American security dynamics.

Key Indicators

Indicator	Status
Political Risk	High
Economic Outlook	Moderate
Military Capability	Limited
Natural Disaster Risk	High
Strategic Location	Very High
Regional Influence	Moderate

Overall Assessment:

Nicaragua combines considerable geographic advantages, natural resources, and renewable energy potential with persistent governance challenges and geopolitical complexity. Its strategic location, external partnerships, and domestic political trajectory ensure that it remains an important country for regional security analysis and intelligence monitoring.