

Honduras

Country Conditions by Cecilia Menjívar and William Pleites

The extension of protection to Honduran immigrants residing in the U.S. is favorable to the interests of both Honduras and the United States.

Social and demographic conditions:

The total population of Honduras in 2022 was 9.6 million; 53.3% were women and 55.4% lived in urban areas. Adults 60 years of age and over make up 12.4% of the total population (INE, 2022).

11.6% of the population 15 years of age and older is illiterate (6.8% in urban areas and 18.5% in rural areas) (INE, 2022).

The average years of schooling in 2021 was 6.4 years (INE, 2021).

Climate Change:

Climate change is a particular threat to Honduras; according to the Global Climate Risk Index, Honduras is in second place among countries with the greatest risk of vulnerability to climate change (German Watch, 2021). Honduras has lost annually 3.3% of its GDP due to climate change (German Watch, 2014). Hurricanes ETA and IOTA in 2020 caused losses of approximately 52,099 million of lempiras (0.9% of the country's GDP) (BID/CEPAL, 2021), and damages from Hurricane Julia in 2021 amounted to 1.2% of Honduras's GDP (<https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/honduras/overview>) These damages accumulate over time. Thus, another Hurricane Mitch, IOTA, ETA, or Julia, which is not unlikely, could thoroughly devastate the country.



Socioeconomic Conditions

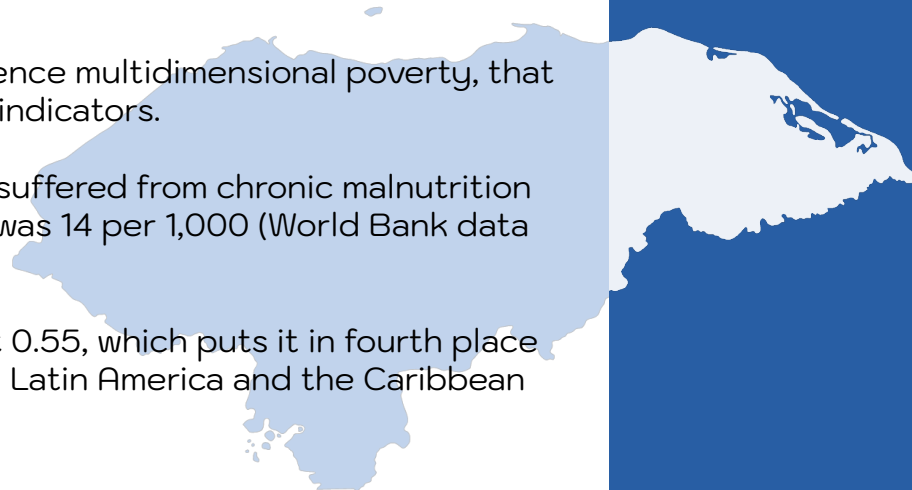
Honduras is one of the poorest and most unequal countries in the Western Hemisphere. Before the COVID pandemic, 71.5% of the country's 9.5 million population lived in poverty; 25.2 in extreme poverty and 46.3% in relative poverty.

By 2021, 73.6% of the country's population lived in poverty; the share of those living in extreme poverty had increased to a staggering 53.7% of the population (INE, 2021).

60% of Honduran households experience multidimensional poverty, that is, high rates in at least four poverty indicators.

18.7% of children under the age of 5 suffered from chronic malnutrition and the infant mortality rate in 2021 was 14 per 1,000 (World Bank data base).

Honduras's Gini coefficient stands at 0.55, which puts it in fourth place among the most unequal countries in Latin America and the Caribbean (INE, 2021).



The country's GDP in 2022 was U.S. \$31,8 billion. Remittances in 2022 amounted to U.S. \$8,683,6 million (17.8% higher than in 2021), equivalent to 27.3% of the country's GDP (<https://www.bch.hn/>

63% of households lack suitable housing: Of 2,152,827 households, 1,366,691 live in inadequate housing (Sánchez and Saldaña, 2022).

The main employment sectors in Honduras, agriculture and manufacturing, have shrunk significantly. Between 1990 and 2021, the share of Honduras's GDP from agriculture declined from 24.2% to 14.3%, and the share from manufacturing declined from 31.3% to 26.6% (Banco Mundial, 2023).

Honduras has one of the most serious underemployment problems in the region. Although 8.6% of its economically active population is classified as unemployed, this figure hides a deeper problem: 68.1% are underemployed (41.2% due to a lack of jobs), and 58% work in the informal sector, where work and wages are unpredictable, and there are no benefits (INE, 2021).

13.1% of the population 5-17 years old works for a living (these children are earners)

There is also a population that neither works nor goes to school: 13.7% of the population 5-17 years old and 29.6% of those between 12 and 30 years old (INE 2023).

This extremely precarious situation creates intense incentives for people to migrate.

Violence and Insecurity:

In 2022, there was a general decline in crime rates as compared to 2022. Homicides declined by 12.8% to a homicide rate of 35.8 per 100,000, the lowest in the past decade. However, Honduras was the second most violent country in Latin America (Venezuela came in first, with 40.4 homicides per 100,000) (Insight Crime, 2023)

COVID Effects:

The country's GDP declined by 9% and the proportion of households with an income under US\$685 increased by 8.2% (<https://www.bancomundial.org/es/country/honduras/overview>

Unemployment increased from 5.7% in 2019 to 10.9% between 2019 and 2020, while underemployment went from 60.6% to 70.6% (INE, 2020)

The above profile creates ripe conditions for destabilization and civil unrest, as well as a stronger impetus for continued migration.

Deporting Honduran immigrants to the precarious situation in Honduras would:

- ◆ Transform the deported migrants into major resources of information about U.S. employment opportunities, migratory routes, etc., for those considering migrating.
- ◆ Remittances would decrease by approximately \$375 million, which means poverty would increase by 5%, and unemployment and underemployment rates would increase drastically, provoking a devaluation of the lempira and a marked increase in inflation.
- ◆ Hondurans have a very good opinion of the United States; between 2000 and 2020, 88.4% of Hondurans had a good or very good opinion of the U.S. (Latinobarometro). However, in 2021 this percentage declined to 67% (likely due to U.S. enforcement policies). At the same time, the percentage of people in Honduras who trust China has increased to 44%.
- ◆ Extending immigration status protection to Hondurans in the U.S. would reinforce the positive image of the U.S. among Hondurans and likely offset China's current efforts to boost its presence in Central America (Barómetro de las Américas).

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