

**MISSIONS ATLAS PROJECT  
AREA OF THE WORLD  
COUNTRY**

**Snapshots Section**

**Country Name:** *Republica de Nicaragua* or Republic of Nicaragua

**Country Founded in:** September 15, 1821

**Population:** 5,785,846

**Government Type: (national, regional and local)** Republic

**Geography/location in the world:** Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America and is bordered by Costa Rica and Honduras.

**Number of people groups:** 7

**Picture of flag:**



**Religion Snapshot**

Major Religion and % of population: In 2005, 58.5% of the population claimed to be Roman Catholic.

All religions and % for each:

Roman Catholic 58.5%

Evangelical 21.6%

Moravian 1.6%

Jehovah's Witness 0.9%

Other 1.7%

None 15.7%

Government interaction with religion: The Constitution protects a citizen's rights to religious freedom. Therefore, the government does not promote a state religion. However, the Roman Catholic Church, because of its historic influence in the country, does have a strong positive image in government circles.

There are some specific steps that religious groups need to follow in order to properly gain legal status with the government. First, religious groups must obtain a *personeria* juridical from the National Assembly. Then they must register with the Ministry of Government. This registration process provides the religious groups with a tax-exempt status and allows them to enter into legal contracts.

Religious groups do not generally receive money from the government to fund religious programming. However, two Catholic universities do receive monetary support from the government. Also, teachers of private Catholic and Protestant schools may have their salaries paid for by the government.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html>  
<http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108533.htm>

## Country Profile

### Basic Facts

**Country Name:** Republic of Nicaragua *Republica de Nicaragua*

#### Demographics:

The estimated population of Nicaragua is 5,785,846. Children up to fourteen years of age account for 34.6% of the population. There are 1,019,281 male children between the ages of newborn to fourteen years of age. There are 981,903 female children between these same ages.

Adults between the ages of fifteen and sixty-four years of age account for 62.1% of the population. There are 1,792,398 males in this age category and 1,803,133 females. In the last age category, sixty-five years and above, there are 82,840 males and 106,291 females. This 65 and over group accounts for 3.3% of the population. The median age for males and females is 21.7 years old.

The birth rate is 23.7 births for every 1,000 people. There are an estimated 2.63 children born to every woman. The infant mortality rate is 25.91 deaths for every 1,000 live births. The death rate is 4.33 deaths for every 1,000 people. The life expectancy for the total population is 71.21 years. The life expectancy for males is slightly lower at 69.08 years while the life expectancy for females is slightly higher at 73.44 years.

There are approximately eighteen different people groups living in Nicaragua. The Mestizo population accounts for about 69%. The Mestizo population are descendents of Amerindians and Caucasians. Another 17% are of Caucasian descent. About 9% of the population is of African descent while the remaining 5% are of Amerindian descent.

#### Language:

Spanish is the official language, and about 97.5% of the population use Spanish as their main language. About 1.7% of the people use Miskito. English and other languages like Garifuna, are used along the Atlantic coast.

#### Society/Culture:

Greetings are important. Friends will usually greet each other by shaking hands or even share a hug. Women more commonly share hugs than men and may even kiss each other on the cheek. People will give calling cards in business situations, but may also choose to give them to acquaintances they meet on the street. Finally, titles such as Senor or Senora are used to denote respect. Older people who have high social status may be addressed as Don or Dona.

People value interpersonal contact so they will devote time to interacting with others. Friends can visit others without needing an invitation or without feeling the need to telephone to ask if a visit would be convenient. People do not want to impugn the honor of another person so they will withhold negative statements.

Fiestas and sports events offer people times to relax. Baseball is the most popular sport in Nicaragua, although other sports like soccer and basketball offer inexpensive sources of amusement. People may choose to attend cock-fights or bull-riding contests. Among young people, going dancing in local clubs is quite popular. The most famous disco in Managua is called Lobo Jack's.

Family life is very important to Nicaraguans. Extended families include grandparents and will include godparents. Newly married couples often live with the parents or extended family until they can financially afford their own dwelling.

Godparents play an extremely important role in the lives of most people. Usually, the godparent is a close personal friend or relative of the mother and father. However, the parents could choose to ask an influential politician or rich community member to fulfill this position in the hope that the godparent will be able to help the child with schooling or career opportunities later in life.

In Roman Catholic families, the job of godparent begins at birth when the godparents plan the baptism ceremony and all of the special parties that accompany the event. It continues when special gifts are given as the child participates in First Communion. In case of the death of both parents, the godparents could be expected to adopt or provide financially for the child.

Marriage occurs differently for different class levels. In poorer areas, common-law marriages may be more acceptable, because of the fees associated with civil or church ceremonies. In most middle class or upper class families, church or civil ceremonies are expected. These ceremonies have a stronger legal standing in a court of law, although common-law marriages received a type of legal status during the 1980's. Divorce or separation without a legal divorce has been an increasing problem. This problem has led women to become more prominent leaders in single parent homes.

Many people may live in a small dwelling, as housing can be difficult to find. Adobe structures are common in urban areas, except in extremely poor sectors where people simply use any building materials they can find to construct some type of shelter. By contrast, the rich usually have well constructed elaborate homes with fences and special security features. In rural areas, the dwelling may consist of a straw house with a covering of palm-fronds on the top.

People may hold multiple jobs if they come from the poorer section of society. For centuries, a small percentage of the very wealthy controlled most of the cultivated land. People worked for these large landholders as migrant workers while attempting to supplement their meager incomes by selling small items on the street or from their homes. During the Sandinista years, much land appropriation and redistribution occurred. Land seized by government representatives was given to poorer families or turned into large farming cooperatives. This redistribution helped many families. Some from the poorer class were able to advance to the middle class. Yet, much poverty remains. People still face the issue of underemployment. Those in the wealthy class still enjoy many privileges never experienced by the poorest in the country.

Most meals consist of beans and corn. Beans are the main source of protein while corn provides starch and some vitamins. Women may rise early in the morning to grind the corn and prepare corn tortillas for their families. Usually, people eat *gallo pinto* for breakfast. This dish is made from red beans mixed with rice. Another common dish is called *nacatamal*, which is a mixture of rice, tomatoes, and meat wrapped in cornmeal. This dish is similar to tamales. *Sopa borracha* is a popular Christmas treat. This dish is made of slices of caramel or cake dipped into a rum-sweetened syrup.

People usually schedule more time for meals because they take great pleasure from a leisurely meal eaten while conversing with family or friends. Most families choose to eat a larger meal sometime around noon or in the early part of the afternoon then retire for a time of siesta. Siesta is a time when people can rest and refrain from working during the heat of the day. This cultural practice does extend the workday into the evening hours, as people return from siesta, to continue working.

Roman Catholicism, which in some areas is mixed with ideas from the traditional indigenous religious practices, continues to impact many cultural activities. For example, homes often have a *cuadro*, which is a picture of a saint. Family members usually believe that this picture has special supernatural powers that can protect the family from harm. Associated with this belief is the practice of celebrating people's personal saint days instead of celebrating their birthdays. People may not bring gifts or even mention another's birthday, but will participate in celebratory activities on the person's saint day. Consequently, large community gatherings often occur yearly to commemorate local patron saints.

In addition to the celebrations of local saints' days, people enjoy several other national holidays. The Feast of the Immaculate Conception, *La Purisma*, occurs on December 8<sup>th</sup>, centers around the glorification of the Virgin Mary. People will decorate special altars in their homes. Other people will visit the altars in processions while praying.

Another important holiday in December is the celebration of *posadas*, which is the nine nights preceding Christmas Eve. This time commemorates the journey taken by Mary and Joseph as they sought to reach Bethlehem.

Towns hold many parades and festivals during the week surrounding Easter. Political holidays include Independence Day, September 15th, and Liberation Day, July 19th. Independence Day honors those who gained independence from Spain in 1821, while Liberation Day remembers those who fought to overthrow the Somoza government in 1979.

People may participate in witchcraft or visit local medicine men that offer magical potions to cure their illnesses. Some of this practice is culturally based upon ancient traditions, but some are based upon the lack of adequate health care in rural areas.

There are many different types of music and dances in Nicaragua. Music around Masaya uses the marimba. The marimba is a musical instrument that resembles a xylophone. It is often used in traditional music along with the oboe and a single string bow instrument. However, on the east

coast, people often play accordions or guitars accompanied by drums. Much of this latter type of music has similarities to music found on Caribbean islands settled by people of African descent.

Dance groups are quite popular forms of artistic expression. Usually the dancers are masked. In one special dance called *La Gigantora*, a woman of extremely tall stature performs with a short man. In the *pale volador*, dancers tie themselves to a high pole and slowly unwind themselves as the music progresses. This dance could possibly be tied to ancient Indian religious rituals. In *El Gueguense*, dance and satire are combined in a dramatic form. The hero uses his intelligence to outsmart rich overlords.

The culture along the Caribbean coast differs from that of the rest of Nicaragua. People may be more likely to speak English rather than Spanish. Certain customs have been retained and adapted from the British and Americans, with whom they interacted for so many years.

*Worldmark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life*

<http://countrystudies.us/nicaragua/>

<http://archive.elca.org/countrypackets/nicaragua/recipe.html>

<http://www.artemaya.com/collection/matias008.htm>

## **Government:**

Nicaragua is officially a republic. Laws are based upon the constitution which was initially approved January 1987. Subsequent reforms occurred in 1995, 2000, and 2005. The constitution provides for three areas of government—the executive, the legislative, and the judicial branches.

The executive branch consists of the office of president, vice-president, and the presidential council. The president serves a five year term and functions as the head of the government and the chief of state. The president selects the Council of Ministers. He cannot run for re-election immediately after his first term, but can serve a second term at a later time. The vice president and president are both elected by popular vote. The current President is Daniel Ortega Saavedra. He was elected in 2006 and will serve until 2011. He received 38% of the vote in the last election.

The legislative branch consists of the *Asamblea Nacional*, which has 92 seats. Ninety of the representatives are selected from party lists through proportional representation. The former president gets to have one seat while the person who got the second most number of votes in the previous presidential election gets the other remaining seat. Members serve five year terms. The last legislative election occurred in 2006.

In the last election, the FSLN gained 38 seats while the PLC gained 25. The ALN got 23 seats while the MRS gained 5. The APRE gained one seat—the one held by the former president, Enrique Bolanos. Four seats were won by independents.

The judicial branch consists of the Corte Suprema de Justicia and several lower courts. The Corte Suprema de Justicia has sixteen judges who are elected by the National Assembly. Like most elected officials, they serve five year terms. The Corte Suprema decides who will serve as judges in lower courts. The judicial branch supervises civilian and military court cases.

The Nicaraguan government divided the country into 15 different departments—Boaco, Carazo, Chinandega, Chontales, Esteli, Granada, Jinotega, Leon, Madriz, Managua, Masaya, Matagalpa, Nueva Segovia, Rio San Juan, and Rivas. Municipal councils oversee each area. There are also two autonomous regions—Atlantico Norte and Atlantico Sur.

### **Economy:**

In 2008, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) equaled \$17.37 billion. The GDP showed a growth rate of about 2%. The GDP per capita was \$3,000. This is the second lowest in the Western Hemisphere.

About 17% of the GDP came from agriculture related endeavors. People raise coffee, bananas, sugarcane, cotton, rice, corn, tobacco, sesame, soya, and beans. Fishermen catch shrimp and lobsters along the coastal areas, while in the interior, ranchers raise cattle in order to produce milk and beef. Veal, pork, and poultry bring revenue to this sector. About 29% of the population work in this sector.

Industrial enterprises account for about 26.1% of the GDP. Some people work in the textile industry processing materials and then making different types of clothing. Others work in food processing plants or produce different types of beverages. Petroleum refining and distribution provides jobs for many. Other industries include chemical, machinery, and metal plants. About 19% of the population work in this sector.

The largest sector of the GDP, 56.9%, comes from service related businesses. About 52% of the population works in this sector.

In 2008, exports equaled \$3.183 billion. In the past, about 60% of the revenue from exports came from the textile and apparel industry; however, changes in wages could possibly affect this segment of industry. The main export partners were the United States, El Salvador, and Honduras. The US-Central America Free Trade Agreement, which came into effect in 2006, helped boost exports. Other export partners included Costa Rica, Canada, Guatemala, and Mexico. Coffee, tobacco, sugar, and peanuts were the main agricultural exports. People also grew and exported tobacco. Finally, meat products like beef, shrimp, and lobster were sold to international markets.

Imports cost the government \$5.279 billion. Imports included consumer goods, different types of machinery and equipment, raw materials, and petroleum products. Approximately 22.5% of the imports came from the United States while 13.5% came from Mexico. Other import partners included Costa Rica, Venezuela, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

Approximately 2.322 million people work. Approximately 3.9% are officially unemployed, around 46.5% are underemployed. Children under the age of 14 are not supposed to work, but many attempt to help bring extra needed cash to their families by working on farms in rural areas or by selling goods along the street in cities. In 2001, agricultural workers could earn around \$47 a month if they were working full time. Construction workers usually earned about \$118

dollars while people working in some type of manufacturing plant might be able to receive about \$75 per month.

The maximum work week is supposed to be 48 hours but many people find that they have difficulty finding enough work. This work week allows for one day off a week.

Nicaragua gains benefits from international aid. In 2004, they were able to reduce their foreign debt by 4.5 billion under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative. Then, in 2007, the International Monetary Fund granted a new poverty reduction and growth facility program to further help. In 2008, the IMF visited Nicaragua and met with different officials from the government and private sector. In September 2008, increases to the program were approved to help Nicaragua deal with the effects of the natural disasters experienced in 2007. The total external debt remains around \$3.214 billion.

The gold *cordoba* is the national currency. In 2008, the exchange rate per U.S. dollars was 19.374.

<http://www.imf.org/external/country/NIC/index.htm>

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html#Econ>

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### **Literacy:**

The overall literacy rate for 2003 was 67.5%. For 2005-2006, the youth literacy rate among males between 15 and 24 years was about 84%. The rate was 89% for females.

In 2003, about 85% of the eligible population went to primary school. Children between the ages of six and twelve were supposed to attend school, which is freely offered. Usually, the student to teacher ratio was about 35 to 1. About 15.5% of the population attended some type of private school.

In 2003, about 39% of the eligible population attended secondary school. Secondary schools provide about three years of additional education. After these three years, students may choose to continue for two more years or attend a type of technical school. The student to teacher ratio was 34 to 1. About 29% of the attendees went to some form of private school.

There are 14 schools of higher education. The National Autonomous University has two locations—one in Leon and another in Managua. Central American University, which is associate with Georgetown University in Washington D.C., and Polytechnic University of Nicaragua are also both located in Managua.

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nicaragua\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/nicaragua_statistics.html)

*Worldmark Encyclopedia to the Nations Americas 12<sup>th</sup> Edition*

### **Land/Geography:**

Nicaragua has three main different geographic areas. On the eastern seaboard, the Caribbean lowlands stretch along the Atlantic Ocean. This area is sometimes called the *Costa de Mosquitos*



perhaps because some of the area's earliest inhabitants were the *Miskito* people. This area tends to be very hot and humid and has soil that is not very productive agriculturally.

Rainforest spreads across a large portion of the area from the *Laguna de Perlas* to the Rio San Juan. This forest is a prime target for lumber companies that wish to gain access to the ebony, cedar, rubber, and mahogany trees that grow in abundance. Also, savannas stretch north to south.

There are several rivers that intersect the area—the *Escondido*, the *Río Grande de Matagalpa*, the *Prinzapolka*, and the *Coco*. The land along the banks of these rivers is useful for agricultural pursuits, but does hold the danger of extensive flooding during the rainy season. The rainy season will last from May to sometime in October. During this time anywhere between 98 and 250 inches of rain may fall. However, rains may fall extensively at other times due to the easterly trade winds blowing across the Caribbean. In the past, hurricanes like Joan and Mitch have swept through the area causing millions of dollars worth of damage and leaving many people dead.

The central highlands intersect the country and divide the Pacific and Eastern coasts. Mountain ranges rise about 3,000 to 5,000 feet in height and are interspersed with deep valleys and forests. The land in the valleys and along the Western slopes are generally very productive agriculturally and have been fairly well settled. Temperatures generally range from around 75 degrees during the day to about 59 degrees at night. Less annual rain falls here than in the Caribbean area.

The Pacific lowlands run along the Pacific Ocean. Made of coastal plains that extend inward towards Lake Managua (*Lago de Managua*) and Lake Nicaragua (*Lago de Nicaragua*), this area is generally humid and hot. The land is fertile, and a large portion of the population lives in this sector. Rainfall averages about 40 inches a year. In this area there are a band of semi-active volcanoes that occasionally cause disruptions. Nicaragua lies along the edge of two tectonic plates and experiences earthquakes as a result. The havoc wreaked by natural disasters has taken a heavy toll upon the economy in the last several decades.

Nicaragua, like all countries, has its own individual struggles with environmental issues. The Sandinista government started the Nicaraguan Institute for Natural Resources and Environment (*Instituto de Recursos Naturales--Irena*), which monitored environmental concerns and sought to create sound ecological strategies for land management. Part of the work of Irena was to set aside areas of rainforest as reserves, to protect the land and the endangered animals making their homes there. Budget constraints caused by the civil war hampered these efforts, but Irena has continued to function to protect the environment as government support and monies have been available. Current environmental concerns include deforestation, soil erosion, and water pollution.

<http://countrystudies.us/nicaragua/>

*Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations Americas*

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html>

## History

The historical development of Nicaragua has been strongly affected by the central highlands that separated the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. In precolonial days, indigenous groups that settled along the Pacific coast originally migrated south from Mexico and probably had relational ties with the Aztec or Mayan civilizations. Their languages usually derived from *Pipil*, which was similar to *Nahuatl*, an Aztec language.

Three main groups lived in this area: the *Niquirano*, the *Chorotegano*, and the *Chontal*. The Niquirano and the Chorotegano had fairly advanced monarchial states ruled by various chieftains. When Spanish explorers first began to explore the region, the Niquiranos were led by a chief called Nicarao, for whom Nicaragua is named, and were living in the area between Lake Nicaragua and the coast. This monarch decided to welcome the first Spanish explorer, Gil González Dávila, and gave him large quantities of gold. He also had many of his people convert to Catholicism. Spurred by this reception the Spanish continued their exploration a little further until they encountered another group of Niquiranos led by a different chieftain who repelled their advances with a show of military force. Gil Gonzales Davila decided to take the precious booty he had already acquired and returned to Panama to report his findings.

To extend Spanish influence and control from Panama northward, the Panamanian governor decided to send an expeditionary force under the leadership of Francisco Hernández de Córdoba to build permanent cities in Nicaragua in 1523. Cordoba founded the cities of Leon and Granada. Gonzales, because of his earlier expedition, decried this move by Cordoba and disputes arose over who had the right to govern the Spanish settlements in Nicaragua.

In 1528, the Panamanian governor, Pedro Arias Dávila (Pedrarias), convinced the Spanish Crown to allow him to control the region after he had successfully discredited Cordoba by accusing him of mismanagement and due to the death of Gonzales. Pedrarias ruled the area until his death in 1531. Although the Spanish technically claimed the area and allowed Pedrarias to govern, Spanish influence actually diminished during this era because of the increasing number of settlers who moved northward towards Mexico in search of riches or southward towards Peru. During this time the indigenous population greatly decreased due to the introduction of European diseases which caused many to die, and to the exploitation of many as slaves. Those who became slaves often died due to harsh treatment or were exported to other areas to serve as mine workers.

In 1543, Nicaragua, which had been governed by the Panamanian authorities, became part of the audiencia of Guatemala, which was a part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. This administrative division extended from southern Mexico to Panama. To rule the extensive area more effectively, the Spanish governor subdivided it into different provinces which were then governed by *alcalde* mayors who reported to him. In Nicaragua, the *alcalde* mayor decided to make the city of León the capital of his government. The mayor and his council held absolute power in the area and often chose to ignore commands from the leaders of the Viceroyalty of New Spain. These Nicaraguan leaders were probably able to ignore such commands because of the great distance between Leon and the capital of New Spain along with the lack of interest in the development of Nicaragua. Spanish authorities were still primarily interested in exporting the gold found in Mexico and other areas and did not invest much time or money into the settlement of Nicaragua.

Throughout the 1600's, Nicaragua remained relatively unimportant to the Spanish Crown. A series of earthquakes decimated many of the settlements. However, in the 1700's, the Spanish decided that Nicaragua could be profitable if agricultural endeavors developed. This revived interest brought new growth both economically and socially. The cities of Leon, Granada, and Rivas developed as powerful areas of trade and commerce. Leon became a center of liberal politics because of its export of leather products, while Granada, which had more landowners, became the center of conservative politics. The liberalists supported the expansion of free trade while conservatives liked to limit trade as a means of protecting their traditional trade monopolies. Each faction used manipulation to further its own interests and upon occasion used armed force to capture land or power. These two political factions would continue to influence the development of Nicaragua throughout the next century.

The Spanish Crown began to lose power due to internal and external strife towards the end of the 1700's and the beginning of the 1800's. As a result of this strife, in 1821 the area of New Spain ruled from Guatemala declared its independence. The authorities who declared this independence could not effectively control it so the United Provinces of Central America, which included Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, seceded and formed their own union in 1823. Nicaragua remained a part of this union until 1837. A Constituent Assembly convened and formally declared the creation of the new nation of Nicaragua on April 30, 1838.

All of the Spanish conquest occurred on the Pacific coast side and in some parts of the Central Highlands. The peoples living on the Atlantic coast retained their independence from Spain by developing alliances with British privateers and later with the United States. This dichotomous development of the country of Nicaragua would continue to affect the nation to the present day. Indigenous peoples living on the Atlantic coast actually migrated from the area now known as Columbia northward. They spoke languages that were related to Chibcha. These settlers lived in familial clusters and were largely fishermen and agriculturalists. One indigenous people, the Bawihka, intermarried with escaped slaves from other British possessions and formed the Miskito ethnic group. The Miskitos came to dominate much of the Atlantic coast during this time and choosing to remain close to the British.

Due to this alliance, some British settlers actually captured the city of San Juan del Norte in 1848. Soon, thereafter, Nicaraguan authorities were compelled to sign a treaty which allowed Britain to control the Atlantic coast until 1894. In an attempt to counteract the growing influence of the British, Nicaraguan authorities along the Pacific coast decided to receive ambassadors from the United States and chose to sign a treaty in 1849 which gave the United States the right to develop a route which would allow passengers to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific coasts. A private businessman, Commodore Vanderbilt, subsequently convinced the Nicaraguan government to sign a contract giving him the right to build a canal which would allow ships to cross from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. This canal was never built. Instead, in 1850, the United States and Great Britain signed a separate treaty which allowed Britain to control the port cities along the Atlantic coast and the United States to control the business interests along the interior route. The Nicaraguan government was not invited to participate in this agreement.

During this time, discord among the members of the central Nicaraguan government caused further disruptions. In 1853, a conservative by the name of Fruto Chamorro wrested control away from the liberal politicians. His act caused the liberals to initially appeal to liberal leaders in Honduras who sent soldiers to support the liberal forces. However, conservatives in Costa Rica soon stopped this support from Honduras and the Nicaraguan liberals turned to a Tennessee adventurer named William Walker. The liberals promised Walker generous land grants in return for his military support. Walker and a small force landed and took Granada in 1855. After deposing the conservative leaders, Patricio Rivas, a liberal, assumed control of the central government. However, because of his control of the army, Walker retained the real authority in the region.

Conservative governments from other Central American countries were quite dismayed by Walker's success and attempted to send forces to counteract his power. An outbreak of cholera prevented their success. Buoyed by this setback to conservative forces, Walker proceeded to talk about having another election wherein he could be elected president and bring about even more changes. Some of these changes included the establishment of slavery, which most Nicaraguans condemned, and the opening of Nicaragua to North Americans who wished to come and settle. Rivas, the man who had been serving as a puppet President, called for help from other Central American governments.

At this point, Walker held an election and got himself declared president. This was a job title that he would not hold for long. Both liberal and conservative Nicaraguans wished to see him ousted from office. Also, anti-slavery forces from the United States wished him to lose power. Consequently, Vanderbilt, the other strong American influence in Nicaragua at the time, was displeased with Walker because Walker had allied himself with anti-Vanderbilt factions. Furthermore, Great Britain wanted him to leave Nicaragua so that they could have greater power.

Walker began to fight all of these forces in what Nicaraguans today sometimes call the National War. The war officially began in 1856 and ended in 1857. During these battles, Walker's forces fought against combined forces from Central America, the British, and Vanderbilt, who had financed his own fighters. Vanderbilt played a key role in the demise of Walker's plans by offering to send fighters home for free if they would just leave Nicaragua. A commander from the U.S. Navy finally brokered a peace treaty between Walker and the Nicaraguans. Marines escorted Walker and his remaining forces back to the United States.

The National War brought many changes. Granada was burned to the ground and many people were left dead or homeless. Damage done to the transit route caused it to be closed from 1857 to 1862. Eventually, this closing, and the subsequent findings of alternative routes would cause some North Americans to lose interest in building a transcontinental canal through Nicaragua. Many others, however, would persist in attempting to argue that Nicaragua was the best place to build the canal. When the canal project finally launched in the early 1900's, Panama was ultimately selected. Most importantly, liberal and conservative politicians began to work together to solve the Walker issue which led to a coalition. This coalition moved the capital to Managua, its present-day site, and began to re-form the government.

With the re-establishment of this new government, the conservatives ultimately gained power and continued to control Nicaraguan politics until 1893. During this time, Nicaragua prospered economically due to the increased international demand for coffee and bananas. Many roads and communication lines were constructed to help facilitate the export business. Ultimately, this time of peace would end with another revolt. Roberto Sacasa had assumed the presidency after the death of the previous president and then won the next election. Revolutionary forces led by General José Santos Zelaya ousted Sacasa and formed a coalition government. When this government proved to be weak, Zelaya decided to revolt once again and assume the office of president. He would keep this office until his own ousting in 1909.

Zelaya's reign brought benefits and problems to Nicaragua. The economy expanded as he opened the country to increased foreign investment. He built schools and roads that improved the quality of living for some. He also managed to come to an understanding with Great Britain whereby the Atlantic coastal communities became part of Nicaragua. Yet, he was a dictator who would crush any opposing forces. He was ousted from power in 1909 by Emiliano Chamorro Vargas, who had gained British monetary support and military support from the United States.

Upon Zelaya's resignation, José Madriz assumed temporary control before ceding power to a conservative from the eastern sector named, Estrada. Estrada formed a coalition between liberal and conservative forces and wrote a new constitution. His government was officially recognized by the U.S. General Luis Mena disliked Estrada's politics and caused him to resign. Adolpho Diaz, the vice-president assumed temporary control. Mena tried to get himself declared president at the end of Diaz' term. When he was unsuccessful, Mena started a revolt. The Diaz government appealed to the United States and Mena's rebellion was quelled by U.S. marines. This invitation to the U.S. marines resulted in a semi-permanent stationing of a small number of marines until 1933.

Conservative politicians retained power until another uprising in 1925. Carlos Solórzano was elected in 1924 and asked the U.S. to withdraw troops. The U.S. government complied, but left a few teachers to help train a national army. The Nicaraguan government paid a retired army captain to establish the National Guard. The establishing of the National Guard would significantly impact Nicaraguan politics for the next several decades.

In 1925, new disputes arose and led to increased violence. Different leaders try to gain power. Even Adolpho Diaz returned to office for a short period. With the renewal of violence, the U.S. sent ambassadors and troops to help bring the turmoil to an end. This led to the signing of the Pact of Espino Negro, which stated that the U.S. would help Nicaragua develop a nonpartisan military that could then control the violence in the country.

Between 1928 and 1936, different leaders assumed the presidency; however, in 1936, Somoza García won the presidential elections. Somoza Garcia gained political power by rising to be leader of the National Guard. He temporarily resigned this position to run for president then resumed leadership in 1937 after winning the presidential elections. Controlling the presidency and the National Guard gave him ultimate authority in Nicaragua until 1956.

Somoza Garcia used his power to amass his own personal fortune. He and members of his family controlled most of the major industries and export companies. He gained immense wealth during World War II by supporting U.S. war interests.

By 1947, opposition to his rule was increasing so he got Leonardo Argüello elected as a puppet president while still planning to retain his control over the National Guard. Once his presidency was secure, Argüello decided to rebel against the plans of Somoza Garcia. This action caused Somoza to remove him from the presidency and temporarily place Benjamín Lacayo Sacasa as the president. When the United States objected to this move, Somoza Garcia replaced Sacasa with his uncle, Víctor Román Reyes. A Constituent Assembly wrote a new Constitution with strong anti-Communist language in the hopes that the United States would decide to approve of the change of leadership. Somoza Garcia made promises to insure more freedom to commercial enterprises in the hopes of gaining the approval of the rich.

Somoza Garcia returned to the presidency in 1950, a post he retained until his assassination in 1956. After his assassination, Luis Somoza Debayle, his oldest son, assumed the office of president while Anastasio Somoza Debayle became the head of the National Guard. Because of the assassination, the government oppressed any opposition through censorship and violations of human rights. When Luis Somoza Debayle was re-elected in 1957, he eased restraints somewhat. He continued as president until 1963.

Although others served in the office of presidency from 1963 to 1967, they were merely representatives for the Somoza family. In 1967, Luis Somoza Debayle could not participate in the presidential elections due to ill health so his brother, Anastasio Somoza Debayle, ran instead. He won and began to repress any opposition to his rule.

Anastasio Somoza Debayle continued to rule until 1979 amid growing discontent from many different oppositional forces. Anastasio, as head of the government and the National Guard, held ultimate power in Nicaragua during this time. He used the power to further enrich himself and his family members. He also used the power of the National Guard to brutally oppress any opposition. In the end, his intolerant and repressive tactics would lead to his resignation and flight from Nicaragua.

The Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) were the main source of opposition to the Somoza regime. They formed in 1961 and slowly grew to prominence. While different ideological branches existed in the 1960's and early 1970's, these branches began to work together and eventually succeeded in gathering support from other oppositional forces to form a government in exile in Costa Rica in 1979. This government consisted of a five person junta-- Daniel José Ortega Saavedra, Moisés Hassan Morales, Sergio Ramírez Mercado, Alfonso Robelo Callejas, and Violeta Barrios de Chamorro. Each member represented different political factions, yet all were committed to the downfall of the Somoza family. Through waging a guerrilla war, the FSLN forces brought the new government to power in Managua by July of 1979.

The new government desired to repair the failing economy caused by the many years of war and abuse by the Somoza family. They instituted a variety of new programs aimed at helping the very poor get adequate access to better economic opportunities. They also worked to build

schools and to promote literacy. Additionally, the government initially indicated that they would work hard to insure that human rights would not be violated egregiously.

The junta established a Council of State that was supposed to have representatives from all of the different revolutionary groups, but the majority of seats were given to FSLN (Sandinista) members. Two of the members of the junta who were not necessarily affiliated with the FSLN, Violeta Chamorro and Alfonso Robelo, both resigned in 1980. They were initially replaced, but the number of junta members was reduced to three in 1983. Daniel Ortega emerged as the leader of the junta. He was closely associated with the FSLN party.

The seizure of power by the FSLN (Sandinista) members of most of the government resulted in the formation of different oppositional factions. The most well-known of these factions was called the Contras group. The Contras group formed when some former members of the National Guard joined with representatives from the Caribbean coast and others to wage war against the new government. The renewed guerrilla warfare brought progress towards rebuilding the economy to a standstill. The FSLN government was forced to use money for fighting the Contras that they might have used to re-build the country.

Eventually, with pressure from other countries in Central America and with international pressure from the United States, who was opposed to the FSLN's alliance with communist governments like Cuba and the former Soviet Union, the FSLN government and the Contras signed a peace agreement in 1988. Presidential elections were held in 1990 and Violeta Chamorro was elected to serve as the next president.

The Chamorro government faced many obstacles. They had to re-build the country's economy and infrastructure while attempting to establish a more democratic form of government. Change occurred slowly. Some observers felt that the Chamorro government gave too many concessions to the former FSLN members.

Yet, change did occur. Today, Nicaragua functions under the 1987 Constitution. Daniel Ortega has returned to the presidency but serves for only one five year term. The Nicaraguan economy is slowly growing and the country is beginning to recover from the many years of war and turmoil.

### **Christian History**

Information about the Catholic Church first came to Nicaragua when Catholic priests entered with Spanish explorers beginning around 1522. When Nicaragua gained its independence, Catholicism became the official state religion. Although this changed with later administrations, the Catholic Church continues to remain influential today.

German Moravian missionaries first brought Protestantism to Nicaragua as they worked among the Miskito people. This early work led to the establishment of the Moravian Church as a dominant force among non-Hispanic peoples living along the Atlantic coast.

Other Protestant groups entered Nicaragua beginning in 1900. The Central American Mission came first and was influential until internal schisms caused it to lose much of its ability to

evangelize. Seventh Day Adventists decided to start work around 1904. American Baptists entered around 1917, and Assembly of God missionaries came around 1936. The work of the Assembly of God missionaries exploded in the 1980's and 1990's with many people coming to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

Today, many people continue to choose to belong to the Catholic Church. However, others have chosen to join evangelical churches. Pentecostalism is the strongest growing religious force in Nicaragua at this time.

*World Christian Encyclopedia Volume I*  
<http://countrystudies.us/nicaragua/>

## Religion

All information unless otherwise noted is gleaned from *World Christian Encyclopedia Volume I* and *Operation World*. (Some information comes from <http://2001-2009.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108533.htm> )

### Non Christian

*Buddhism*—A small Buddhist community exists. A special Buddhist center of worship was constructed in 2000.

*Baha'i*—The first Baha'i missionary arrived around 1939 and two people chose to convert about 1941. In 1945 the Bahai's registered with the government and soon after chose Managua to be the headquarters of the local spiritual assembly. The exact number of Baha'i congregations and members is unavailable at this time.

<http://bci.org/bahainic/index.html#>

*Iglesia Catolica (Catholic Church)*—The Catholic Church first started mission work around 1522. In 2008, there was one archdiocese, 6 dioceses, and 1 Vicariate Apostolic.

The archdiocese is located in Managua and was erected in 1913. In 1950, there were 14 parishes with 95% of the population in the Archdiocese professing to be Catholic. In 2004, there were 92 parishes, with 75% of the population Catholic (about 1,800,300). Approximately 158 priests were serving in the area at that time. The current Archbishop is Leopoldo José Brenes Solórzano.

The six dioceses are located in Esteli, Granada, Jinotega, Juigalpa, León en Nicaragua, and Matagalpa. The diocese in Esteli was first founded in 1962. In 2006 there were 24 parishes and 31 priests serving in the area. About 913,862 people attended mass.

The diocese of Granada formed in 1913. In 2006 431,587 people affiliated themselves with the diocese. About 68 priests served the 35 different parishes. Bernardo Hombach Lütkermeier served as the bishop.

The diocese of Jinotega was elevated in 1991. Carlos Enrique Herrera Gutiérrez functions as the bishop. In 2006, six parishes existed and about 80% of the population considered themselves to be Catholic. Thirty-eight priests ministered to the congregants of this area.



Juigalpa was at first part of the diocese of Granada, but received its own diocesan stature in 1991. René Sócrates Sándigo Jiron serves as the bishop. In 2006, there were 16 parishes and 24 priests. Approximately, 263,000 people attended mass.

The diocese of Leon en Nicaragua first existed in 1534. In subsequent years, the boundaries of the diocese have changed as it has lost territory with the establishment of other dioceses. In 2004, there were 70 priests and 47 parishes. About 85% of the population in the area is Catholic. The present bishop is César Bosco Vivas Robelo.

Jorge Solórzano Pérez is the bishop of Matagalpa. In 2004 there were 15 parishes and approximately 480,000 people affiliated with the Catholic Church. Twenty-seven priests served in the area.

The Vicariate Apostolic is located in Bluefields. Pablo Ervin Schmitz Simon is the Vicar Apostolic. In 2004 there were 14 parishes and 31 priests. About 475,505 people attended mass.

<http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/country/dni2.html>

*Iglesia de Jesus Cristo de los Santos de Los Ultimo Dias (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)*—Mormons first began working around 1953 and had the first conversion in 1954. Although work temporarily ceased when international missionaries were forced to leave around 1978, it later resumed in the late 1980's. In 1989, the Nicaragua Managua Mission officially formed. In 2001, there were approximately, 39 congregations and 11,640 members. There were an additional 22,000 affiliates. Recent reports have indicated that the number of churches has grown to 92 and membership has increased to close to 60,000 members.

<http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/contact-us/nicaragua>

*Islam*—There are about 1,500 Muslims who have chosen to settle in Nicaragua. Most are expatriates from Iran, Libya, or Palestine. They are mostly Sunnis. An Egyptian Sunni came to lead the work in Managua in 2007. The community hopes to build a mosque in the future in Managua, but currently meets for prayer at the Islamic Cultural Center in Managua or in homes.

*Jewish*—In 2008 there were about 40 members. The community was small and had no permanent rabbi. The community did have a special copy of the Torah, which returned to the country in 2007.

*Testigos de Jehova (Jehovah's Witness)*—This group entered about 1934. In 1995, there were about 160 congregations and 4,900 members. There were an additional 40,910 affiliates. In 2001 there were 239 churches and 14,410 members. There were an additional 50,000 affiliates.

## **Christian/Evangelical**

*Asambleas de Dios (Assembly of God)*—Missionaries from the United States arrived in 1912 and began to work in the eastern part of the country. There was rapid expansion. In 2001, there were 710 congregations and 86,862 members. There were an additional 181,000 affiliates.

<http://101632.agwebservices2.org/>

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/regions/latin-america/nicaragua.html>

*Asambleas Locales* (Little Flock)—This group came to Nicaragua in 1985. It first started in China in 1922. In 1995, there were two congregations and 30 members. There were 100 affiliates.

*Asociacion Misionera Evangelical Nacional*—This denomination began as a result of a schism from CAM around 1965. In 1995 there were 16 churches and 1,600 members. There were an additional 4,000 affiliates.

*Convencion Evangelica Centroamericana (Central American Convention)*—This group of churches started as a result of a schism within the Central American Mission. About 11 churches decided to form their own denomination in 1955. In 1995 there were 31 churches and 2,500 members. There were an additional 6,250 affiliates.

*Convencion Nacional Bautista de Nicaragua (National Baptist Convention of Nicaragua)*—This group began work around 1917. In 2001, there were 152 churches and 18,200 members. There were an additional 40,000 affiliates. By 2007, an additional 21 churches had been added and overall membership had increased to 28,000.

<http://www.bwanet.org/default.aspx?pid=437>

*Fraternidad de Los Evangelica Menonita de Nicaragua (Brotherhood of Evangelical Mennonite Churches of Nicaragua)*—This group grew out of work started by the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. In 2006 there were 30 congregations and 1,500 members. The number of affiliates was unknown.

<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/N5349.html>

<http://www.mwc-cmm.org/Directory/2006carcsam.pdf>

*Hermanos Unidos In Cristo (United Brethren in Christ)*—This group came to Managua from Honduras in the 1960's. In 1995 there were 7 congregations and 260 members. There were an additional 578 affiliates. In recent years, the number of churches has swelled to 28 congregations. Work continues in the area around Managua although work has also started around the city of Masaya. Nicaraguan churches have partnered with churches in Honduras to send teams to Guatemala and Costa Rica.

<http://www.ubmissions.com/countries/nicaragua.html>

*Iglesia Adventista del Septimo Dia (Seventh Day Adventists)*—This group began work around 1904. In 1997, there were 98 congregations and 38,143 members. There were 13 licensed ministers. By 2001, there were 133 churches and 47,094 members. As of 2007, the number of churches had increased to 200 and membership had grown to 83,103. Adventists support a vocational school and have their own radio station.

[http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view\\_Summary.asp?FieldID=C10272](http://www.adventiststatistics.org/view_Summary.asp?FieldID=C10272)

<http://www.adventstereo.org/> (in Spanish)

<http://www.iasdsanjudas.com/> (in Spanish)

*Iglesias Apostolicas de la Fe en Cristo Jesus (Apostolic Church of the Faith in Christ Jesus)*—This church started work around 1949. In 2001 there were 200 churches and 16,000 members. There were an additional 50,000 affiliates.

<http://www.iafcj.org/index.php?uri=home#top> (in Spanish)

*Iglesia Apostolica Libre (Free Apostolic Church)*—This church began work in 1953. In 1995 there were 70 churches and 7,000 members. There were an additional 11,700 affiliates.

*Iglesia Apostolica Nicaragua*—This group was started by Nicaraguans affected by the Oneness movement. In 1995 there were 10 churches and 500 members. There were an additional 1,000 affiliates.

*Iglesia Apostolica Omega de Nicaragua*—This group of churches formed fairly recently. The total number of churches and members is unknown. At least two churches exist and two preaching fields have been established. The group hopes to open three new ministry fields--one in Managua and two in interior sections of Nicaragua.

<http://ministerioomega.blogspot.com/>

*Iglesia Bando Evangelistico Gedeon (Gideon's Evangelistic Band)*—This group began work around 1960. Its headquarters are in Mexico. In 1995 there were 5 churches and 600 members. There were an additional 1,000 members.

*Iglesia Bautista El Buen Samaritano (Good Samaritan Baptist Church)*—This group began work around 1972. In 1995 there were 100 congregations and 8,000 members. There were an additional 20,000 affiliates.

*Iglesia Bautista Internacional (International Baptist Church)*—This group began work in 1959. In 2001 there were 50 congregations and 4,080 congregants. There were an additional 8,500 affiliates. They supported at least one school.

*Iglesias de Dios (Cleveland)*—This Pentecostal denomination was found by missionaries of the Church of God of Cleveland in 1950. In 2001 there were 396 churches and 25,553 members. There were an additional 65,000 affiliates. The headquarters for this denomination are located in Managua.

*Iglesia de Dios de la Profecia (Church of God of Prophecy)*—This Pentecostal denomination began work around 1962. In 2001 there were 350 congregations and 16,902 members. There were and additional 34,000 affiliates.

<http://www.camexcaribe.com/index.htm> (in Spanish)

*Iglesia de Los Hermanos in Cristo (Brethren in Christ)*—This group founded missions beginning around 1964. They first worked in the Managua area, but later expanded so that by 1985 they had established churches in 9 provinces. In 2001 there were 70 congregations and 2,800 members. There were an additional 12,000 affiliates.

<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/N5349.html>

*Iglesia del Evangelio Cuadrangular (International Church of the Foursquare Gospel)*—This denomination began work around 1954-1955 when Allen Tolle first came to evangelize. In 2008 there were 57 churches and 5,333 members. The number of affiliates is unknown. This denomination supports an orphanage in Ciudad Sandino. They hope to plant more churches along the Atlantic Coast in the future.

<http://fmi.foursquare.org/countries/countries.sd?iid=31>

*Iglesia del Nazareno (Church of the Nazarene)*—This group officially began work about 1943 when Harold and Evelyn Stanfield arrived to began church planting efforts. Dr. David Ramirez went to Nicaragua around 1937 and began evangelization efforts in Puerto Lacustre of San Jorge in the department of Rivas. In 2001 there were about 130 churches and 9,500 members. There were an additional 15,000 affiliates. In 2007 there were approximately 157 churches.

<http://app.nazarene.org/FindAChurch/results.jsp?n=&c=&s=&z=&y=NU&SearchChoice=churchReports&p=8>  
<http://www.nazmac.org/WMMACEN/Fields/MACSouth/tabid/202/Default.aspx>

*Iglesia del Principe de Paz (Church of the Prince of Peace)*—This group was founded by Pentecostals who migrated from Guatemala. They believe in using exorcism. In 1995 there were 5 congregations and 600 members. There were an additional 1,000 affiliates.

*Iglesia Episcopal (Episcopal Church)*—This denomination is part of Province IX. In 2001 there were 63 churches and 3,402 members. There were an additional 8,300 affiliates.

*Iglesia Luterana Fe y Esperanza de Nicaragua*—This denomination started in 1983 when refugees from El Salvador came to live in the area after civil unrest in their own country drove them from their homes. Some Nicaraguans decided to join the refugees in worship and formed a church. In 1991, work existed in four communities, and the church decided to become a member of the Lutheran World Federation in 1994. Later, work expanded to twenty-four different areas. As of 2009, membership stood at approximately 7,050. The total number of churches and affiliates is unavailable.

<http://archive.elca.org/countrypackets/nicaragua/church.html>

<http://www.mefedia.com/entry/2009-fair-trade-nicaragua-coffee-farmers-2-nmu-students-on-lutheran-world-relief-in-central-america/14080996/> (Video about Lutheran World Relief work in Nicaragua)

<http://www.lwr.org/ourwork/country.asp?CountryName=Nicaragua&CountryID=14&RegionID=3>

<http://www.lutheranworld.org/Directory/SAM/NicaraguanLuthCchFaithHope-EN.html>

*Iglesia Evangelica Menonita de Nicaragua*—This group started work in 1968. They later formed the Conference of Evangelical Mennonite Churches in Nicaragua. By 1986 there were about 30 congregations and 780 members. In 1995 there were 53 congregations and 1,749 members. There were an additional 2,916 affiliates. In 2006 the number of churches had increased to 86 and there were a total of 5,000 members.

<http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/N5349.html>

<http://www.mwc-cmm.org/Directory/2006carcsam.pdf>

*Iglesia Evangelica Nacional*—The origins of this denomination are not known. In 1995 there was one congregation in Managua with 100 members. There were an additional 200 affiliates.

*Iglesia Morava de Nicaragua (Moravian Church of Nicaragua)*—This group started planting churches in 1849 in the Bluefields area among the Miskitu and the Creoles. Later work expanded to include the Mayangna (Sumu) and Rama peoples.

In 1995 there were 135 churches and 12,100 members. There were an additional 36,596 affiliates. In 2001 there were 200 churches and 25,000 members. There were an additional 76,000 affiliates.

The church supports a number of humanitarian aid projects. A hospital functions at Bilwaskarma. There are many elementary schools and two high schools. Additionally, they support a seminary and a university.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/es/iglesias-miembros/regiones/america-latina/nicaragua/iglesia-morava-en-nicaragua.html>

<http://www.moravianmission.org/partnerprovinces/nicaragua.phtml>

*Iglesia Nacional del Nazareno (National Church of the Nazarene)* - This church formed in 1976 as a result of a schism among Church of the Nazarene members. In 1995 there were 4 congregations and 400 members. There were an additional 1,330 affiliates.

*Iglesia Nueva Apostolica*—This group began work around 1985. In 1995 there were 10 churches and 600 members. There were an additional 897 affiliates.

*Iglesia Pentecostal Unida (United Pentecostal Church, Jesus Only Church)*—This group began around 1970. In 2001 there were 273 churches and 9,000 members. There were 19,200 affiliates.

*Iglesias de Cristo*—This group has congregations in Carazo, Chinandega, Leon, Managua, Masaya, and Jinotega. In 1995 there were 21 churches and 3,000 members. There were an additional 6,000 affiliates.

<http://church-of-christ.org/churches/Nicaragua/Nicaragua.htm>

*Iglesia de Cristo de la Mision Pentecostal (Pentecostal Mission of Christ Churches)*—In 1975 this group began to evangelize. In 1995 there were 100 churches and 8,000 members. There were an additional 16,000 affiliates.

*Iglesia Universal Cristiana (Universal Christian Church)*—This group began work around 1980. In 1995 there were 10 churches and 1,000 members. There were an additional 2,000 affiliates.

<http://www.iglesiacristianauniversal.com/>

*Iglesia Evangelica Mision Centroamericana (Central American Mission)*—This group began work around 1900. They experienced schisms in 1955 and again in 1965. In 2001 there were 75 churches and 6,000 members. There were an additional 10,000 affiliates.

## People Groups

**00000**

### **Americans, U.S. (6,000)**

About 6,000 people have emigrated from the United States to work in Nicaragua for various reasons. The people speak English, but probably are learning Spanish as well. About 87% of the people adhere to some type of religious system. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are many resources available including the Bible, the *Jesus* film, Gospel audio recordings, and *God's Story* video.

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### **Amerindian, Detribalized (48,000)**

These peoples are descendants from Amerindian groups that slowly dispersed as Europeans and others came to control Nicaragua. Today they primarily speak Spanish, although some use Creole English as a secondary language. Several Christian resources are available to them in Spanish including the complete Bible, the *Jesus* film, and audio recordings. About 91% adhere to some type of religious belief. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

**00000**

### **Arab (600)**

The Arabs living in Nicaragua have moved there largely for business purposes. They speak standard Arabic, although some are probably bilingual in Spanish.

They are predominantly Sunni Muslim, although about 30% adhere to some other type of religious belief. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

Several Christian resources are available to them in Arabic. The complete Bible has been translated. The *Jesus* film is also accessible. Audio recordings exist.

### **British (400)**

The British living in Nicaragua have moved there for business or government purposes. They speak English. About 77% of the people adhere to some type of religious beliefs. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are many resources available including the Bible, the *Jesus* film, Gospel audio recordings, and *God's Story* video.

**24796**

### **Garifuna (1,757)**

The Garifuna people live in the Región Atlántica Autónoma del Sur around Orinoco village. They speak a language called Garifuna. Many speakers are also familiar with Creole or Spanish. Some alternate names for this people group include Caribe, Black Carib, Central American Carib, or "Moreno."

The Garifuna people are the proud descendents of African slaves who intermarried with indigenous Indian groups who lived on St. Vincent. Two slave ships sank off the island between 1635 and 1670. The survivors made it to the island where, over time, they formed their own society. When the British assumed control of the island around the end of the 1700's, they forced the Garifuna people to move to the island of Roatan, which lies off the coast of Honduras. The Garifuna managed to move to the Honduran mainland and form an important enclave where they could preserve their unique culture and history. Slowly, they spread to other countries like Belize and Nicaragua.

The Garifuna have many important different cultural traditions. They generally hold land communally. Dancing and music are ways that people express their feelings about life. In fact, one Garifuna has developed a music called Punta Rock.

Many of the Garifuna attempt to continue to live lives similar to those of their ancestors. They may work as fishermen or in banana cultivation. They often live in huts made of cement blocks or from sugar cane stalks with roofs of hay. The people do not have easy access to good health care facilities, but rather depend upon the services of *cuardernos*, medicine men, who offer herbal remedies.

About 85% of the Garifuna people adhere to some type of religious belief. Many of them practice a syncretistic mixture of traditional African, Amerindian, and Catholic rites. The practice of *Gubida*, which involves possession rituals, is a key practice of this syncretistic mix. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

There are several ministry tools available in their language. Portions of the Bible were available beginning around 1847. The entire Bible was completed by 2002. The *Jesus* film is accessible. Two audio recordings, "Words of Life" and "Faith Comes by Hearing," also exist.

<http://www.garifuna.com/>

**24797**

**Han Chinese (2,343)**

The Han Chinese living in Nicaragua may have migrated there during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as part of the Chinese Diaspora. They speak Mandarin.

The people are predominantly non-religious although about 15% do adhere to some type of religious belief system. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

There are several Christian resources available. The entire Bible has been translated and the *Jesus* film is accessible. Audio recordings also exist.

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**Jew (population unknown)**

The Jewish population living in Nicaragua is quite small. Many have left to return to Israel or other locations. Most speak Spanish and thus have access to Christian materials printed in Spanish. There is one synagogue in Managua. None are evangelical Christians.

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**Matagalpa (40,000)**

The Matagalpa people speak Spanish and thus have access to Christian resources. About 70% adhere to some type of religious belief. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

**24798**

**Miskito (181,328)**

The Miskito people live in the Zelaya Department of the North Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAN). They also live in the South Atlantic Autonomous Region (RAAS). Some alternate names for this people group are Mískito, Mískitu, Mosquito, or Marquito.

The people speak Miskito, which is a trade language, and many also speak Spanish. The dialects are Honduran Mískito, Tawira, Baymuna, Wanki, and Cabo. The literacy rate in Miskito is between 52 and 58%. It is taught in most primary schools in areas where the Miskitos form the predominant portion of the population.

The ancestors of the Miskito people were Bawihka Indians who intermarried with peoples of African descent who had managed to escape the bondage of their British or Spanish captors. As their society developed, and they developed influence over other groups of Indians, different ethnicities added to the diversity of the Miskito people.

The Miskito people had a kingship and a well developed society which mimicked certain customs of the British, with whom they had frequent interaction. Their culture was also heavily influenced by Moravian missionaries who arrived in 1849 to evangelize.

During the Sandinista years, some Miskitos had open conflicts with the government. As a result, the government eventually decided to allow the traditional homeland of the people to be subdivided into two semi-autonomous regions.

Recently, the Miskito people have faced new challenges to their traditional lifestyles. International developers have reportedly attempted to assert control over land that the Miskitos have used for centuries.

Due to the influence of the Moravian church, many people consider themselves to be nominally Christian. About 93% of the people are associated with some type of religious system. However, only about 1.7% of the people are evangelical Christians.

There are several resources in their language. Bible translation began in 1889. The entire Bible has now been translated. Additionally, the *Jesus* film and the *Father's Love Letter* film are accessible. Audio recordings also exist.



[http://www.native-languages.org/miskito\\_words.htm](http://www.native-languages.org/miskito_words.htm) (Basic Vocabulary List)  
<http://www.mnsu.edu/emuseum/cultural/mesoamerica/miskito.html>  
<http://miskitocoast.org/indians.htm>

**00000**

**Monimbo (18,000)**

The Monimbo people speak Spanish and thus can access Christian resources. About 90% adhere to some type of religious belief. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. Many of the people live in Masaya and are known for their artistic endeavors.

**24803**

**Nicaraguan Deaf (3,446)**

The Nicaraguan Deaf community uses Nicaraguan Sign Language, which has two different forms. This language has been taught in some schools since 1992. People may not be very familiar with Spanish.

About 90.9% of the people are part of some type of religious organization. Approximately 14.8% of the population is evangelical Christian. There are no Christian videos using sign language. The Christian population probably uses Spanish publications or printed materials in other local languages.

**24799**

**Nicaraguan Mestizo (5,743,428)**

The Nicaraguan Mestizos, as a people, developed as immigrants of European and African descent mixed with Amerindians. Today they comprise the largest ethnic group in Nicaragua.

They speak Spanish and are predominantly Roman Catholic. About 15.6% of the people are evangelical Christian.

There are many Christian resources available. The Bible has been completely translated and the *Jesus* film is accessible. Praise music CD's and audio recordings can be purchased.

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**Rama (1,000)**

The Rama people speak a language called Rama although many are probably also familiar with Spanish. They generally live around the island of Rama Cay. An alternate name for this people is Ramaquie.

About 85% of the people have some type of religious belief. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. There are no Christian resources available in their own language, but several exist in Spanish.

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**Romani/ Vlax (12,000)**

The Romani/ Vlax people speak Romani. About 95% of the people belong to some type of religious group. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown. The New Testament has been translated into their language and the *Jesus* film is accessible. Audio recordings exist.

**00000****Spaniards (1,200)**

The Spanish were the first Europeans to settle in Nicaragua. They strongly influenced the culture of the Pacific Coast. Spaniards speak Spanish and thus have access to multiple types of Christian resources. About 95% of the people are Roman Catholic. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

**24825****Sumo (7,696)**

The Sumo people live in villages that stretch from the Prinzapolka River in the south into Honduras in the north. Some alternate names for this people group include Sumu, Soumo, Sumoo, Woolwa, Sumo Tawahka, or Taguaca.

The people speak several languages. Their principal language is called Sumo-Mayangna. The dialects of this language are Panamahka, Nicaraguan Tawahka, Ulwa, Bawihka, and Kukra. Most literacy materials have been written in the Tawahka dialect. Many people are also familiar with Spanish or Miskito.

About 85% of the people have some type of religious belief. Approximately 1.9% consider themselves evangelical Christian.

There are some Christian resources in their language. The complete Bible has been translated. The "Words of Life" audio recording is also available. The *Jesus* film has not been translated into their language.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/573454/Sumo>

**00000****Subtiaba (10,000)**

The Subtiaba people speak Spanish and thus have access to multiple Christian resources.

The people primarily practice ethnic religions although about 10% of the population have chosen to affiliate themselves with some other type of religious entity. The number of evangelical Christians is unknown.

**39265****West Indian Creole (34,460)**

West Indian Creoles are descendents of peoples of mixed Afro-European descent who migrated to the area from islands like Jamaica off the coast of Nicaragua. These peoples today live in areas around Bluefields, Corn Island, and Pearl Lagoon. There are smaller settlements around Monkey Point and in Bilwi.

Creole society forms a unique blend of many different cultures. They speak a form of Creole English, but are bilingual in Spanish. Many are highly educated and hold places of influence in the business world. However, there are segments of Creole society that are poor and have not had the opportunity to pursue educational goals. The poorer Creoles usually live in the lower-income barrio area.

Moravian and Anglican missionaries evangelized the Creole population so many are familiar with the basic ideologies of the Christian faith. However, the number of evangelical Christians is unknown. While many Christian resources are available in English, there are no materials printed or distributed in their dialect of Creole English.

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/topic.463af2212,469f2f092,49749cd7c,0.html>

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to work with local Christians to increase the evangelistic and church starting ministries so needed by the populations. The Christian movement should offer training in evangelism and church starting.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek to introduce ideas concerning church multiplication movements among the peoples of Nicaragua.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches could well introduce the use of Bible Storying as a way of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should develop and train local believers in ways of reaching Roman Catholics and atheists with the Good News
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek ways to alleviate the sufferings that have been caused by various natural disasters in recent years.
6. Evangelical Christians and churches should provide leadership training for the Christians in Nicaragua. This leadership training should include pastoral training as well as lay leadership training.
7. Evangelical Christians and churches should pray that countries like Nicaragua not be forgotten in the missionary thinking of the world today. Evangelical Christianity is a greatly needed movement in this country.

## Pictures



## Links

- <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nu.html>
- <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2008/108533.htm>
- <http://countrystudies.us/nicaragua/>
- <http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/nic/ingles/nica-rd.htm>
- <http://www.prolades.com/cra/regions/cam/nic/ingles/nic-link.htm>
- <http://www.cepad.org.ni/eng/index2.html>