



# **Central American Migration**

*In Numbers*

**Manuel Orozco, June 2024**



# Considerations about Central American Migration

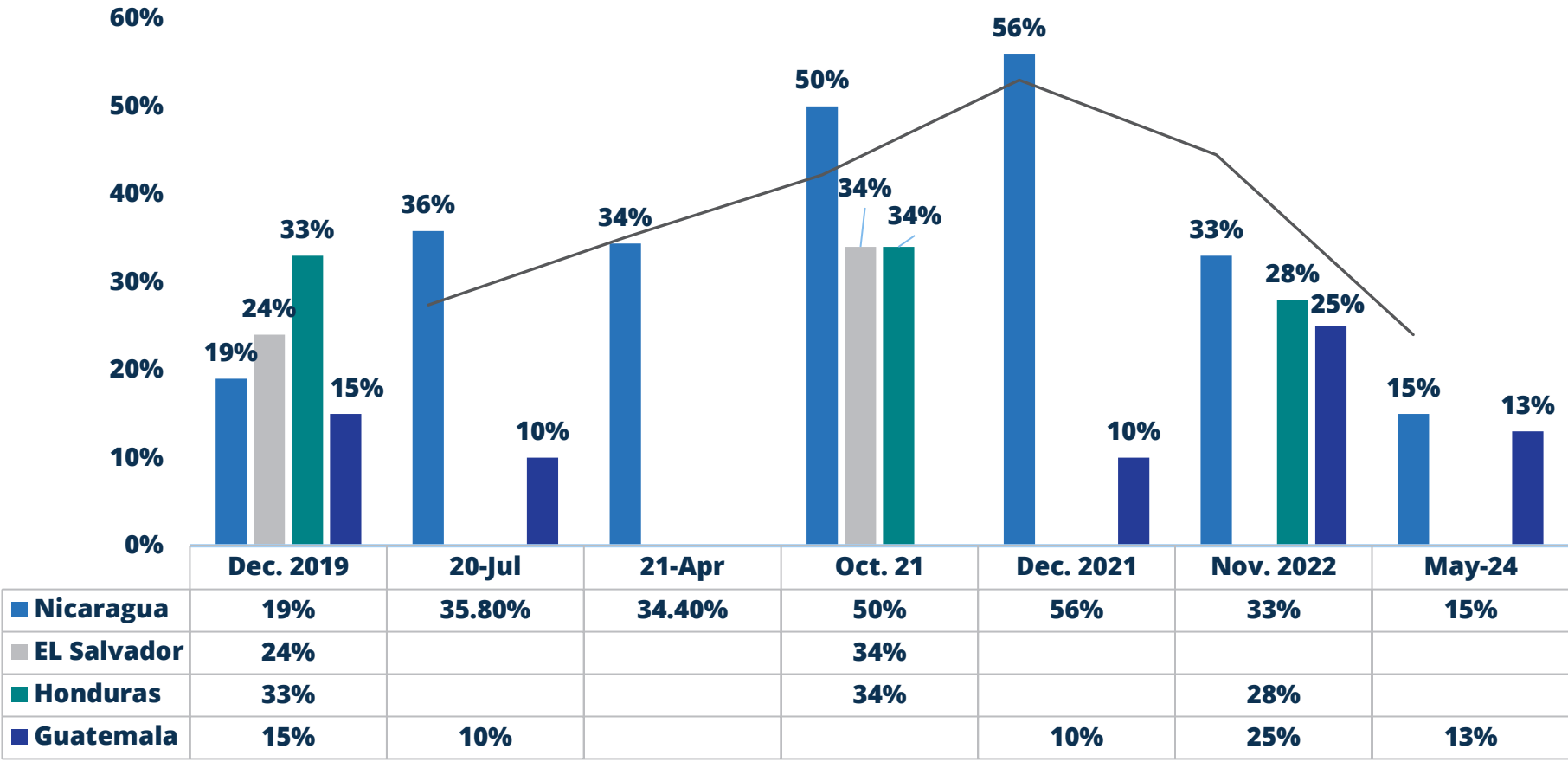
- Central American migration is not new, its largest wave prior to 2019 was in the 1980s
- The number of Central Americans living abroad has increased close to 20% of their homeland population
- This increase largely starts in 2018
- The intention to migrate ranges from 10% to 30% of households but has varied over time
- More than 90% of annual migration is of an irregular nature with arrivals at the Mexico-US border. Border arrivals represent an important percent of people who have left their country
- People applying for asylum are about 5% of border arrivals
- Over half a million unaccompanied minors have arrived at the Mexico-US border, the majority from Central America (Guatemala)
- The risk factors of migration are complex and not reduced to a single one (economy or crime), and vary from country to country
- Family remittances have become a key source of revenue in the economy, sustaining private sector consumption
- Nicaragua is at the center of the weaponization of migration
- US development assistance has been important to mitigating migration, however it needs to increase economic development support

# Migration from Central America

Country	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2019	2020	2023
<b>Costa Rica</b>	69,711	85,421	105,682	118,673	133,027	139,525	150,400	150,241	
<b>Dominican Republic</b>	466,216	675,282	897,785	1,023,442	1,185,546	1,456,950	1,558,668	1,608,567	1,700,000
<b>El Salvador</b>	1,242,075	933,330	949,270	1,119,319	1,337,458	1,514,601	1,600,739	1,599,058	1,671,145
<b>Guatemala</b>	348,332	462,072	583,020	737,106	925,252	1,119,417	1,205,644	1,368,431	2,260,890
<b>Honduras</b>	156,594	246,799	342,337	449,303	587,886	731,096	800,707	985,077	1,435,836
<b>Nicaragua</b>	442,126	438,387	502,243	436,780	610,902	647,919	682,865	850,000	1,157,941
<b>Panama</b>	134,743	133,405	137,430	132,266	140,609	150,417	161,107	139,520	
<b>LAC</b>	13,271,542	17,409,918	22,110,620	26,602,460	31,751,744	33,617,243	36,881,313	39,746,784	44,000,000
<b>CAM-DR/LAC</b>	22%	17%	16%	15%	15%	17%	17%	17%	20%

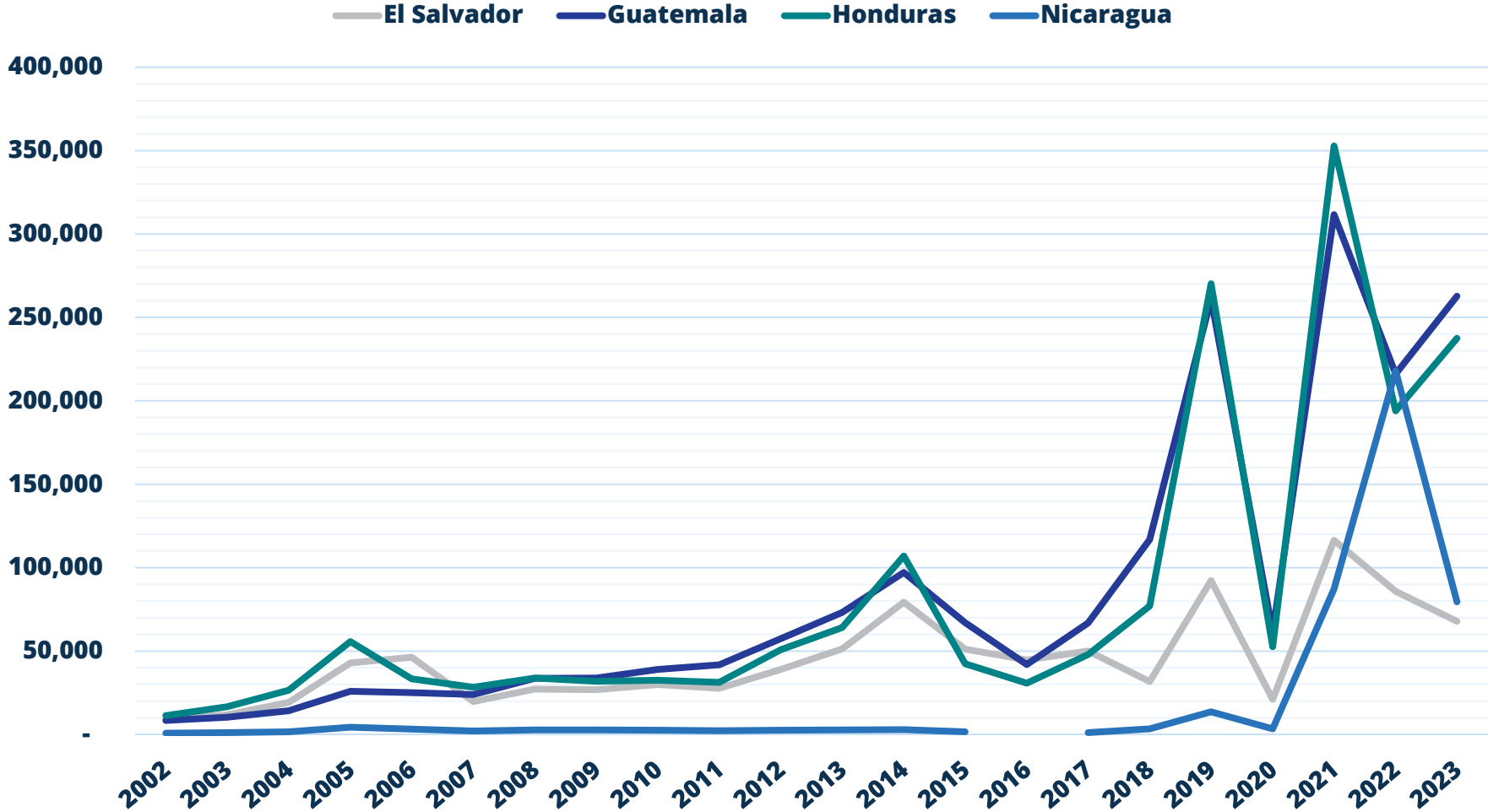
Source: [UNDESA](#). 2023, autor's estimates

# Intention to migrate as percent of households is large



Source: Various survey data collected

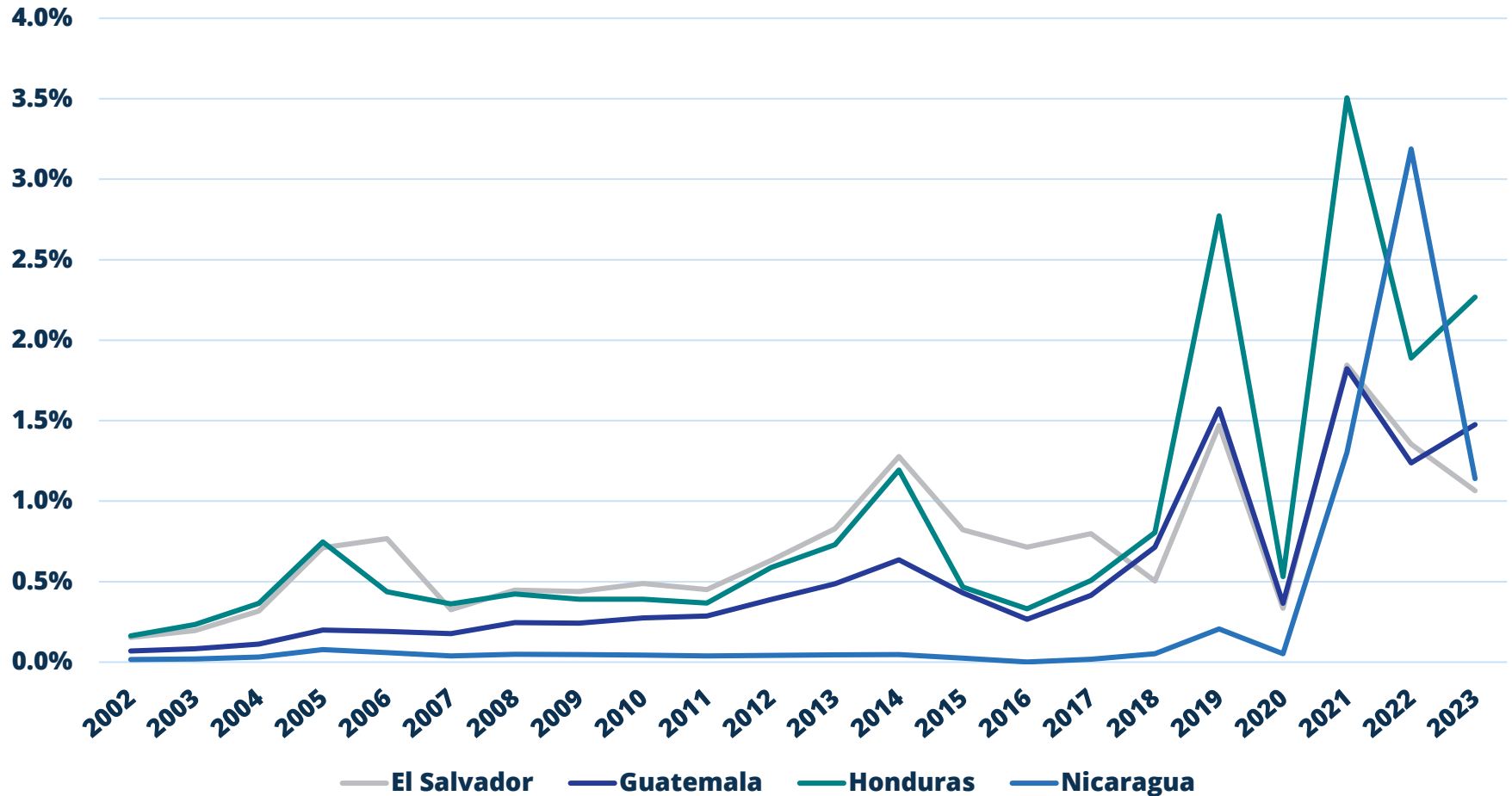
# Annual Nationwide Encounters



Source: [Nationwide Encounters](#)

# At least 1.5% of Central Americans have left their countries consecutively since 2019

Encounters as a Percent of the Country's Population



# Most migration is irregular

El Salvador	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
A. Legal permanent status arrivals	16,014	10,605	5,343	7,787	15,670	16,454	17,276
B&C. Irregular entry estimates	36,523	74,001	10,104	55,909	54,062	42,694	32,530
D. Apprehensions	41,981	85,059	21,051	116,477	85,813	67,768	51,634
E. Visa Overstayers***	869	813	815	410	662	675	675
F. H2A and H2B Visas	740	810	317	1,237	4,471	5,365	5,633
<b>Total Migration</b>	<b>54,146</b>	<b>86,229</b>	<b>16,579</b>	<b>65,343</b>	<b>74,865</b>	<b>65,188</b>	<b>56,115</b>
Deportations	15,445	18,981	12,590	2,872	7,231	7,500	
<b>Net change (migrant replenishment)</b>	<b>38,701</b>	<b>67,248</b>	<b>3,989</b>	<b>62,471</b>	<b>67,634</b>		

Guatemala	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
A. Legal permanent status arrivals	9,188	5,479	2,302	2,703	7,259	7,622	8,003
B&C. Irregular entry estimates**	140,805	198,860	29,514	149,635	103,727	165,562	157,103
D. Apprehensions	161,845	228,575	61,488	311,739	216,098	262,797	249,369
E. Visa Overstayers***	945	1,009	815	396	1,244	1,244	1,244
<b>Total Migration</b>	<b>150,938</b>	<b>205,349</b>	<b>32,631</b>	<b>177,356</b>	<b>111,382</b>	<b>174,429</b>	<b>166,350</b>
Deportations	50,390	54,919	29,790	8,716	10,285	9,945	
<b>Net change (migrant replenishment)</b>	<b>100,548</b>	<b>150,430</b>	<b>2,841</b>	<b>168,640</b>	<b>101,097</b>	<b>164,484</b>	<b>166,350</b>

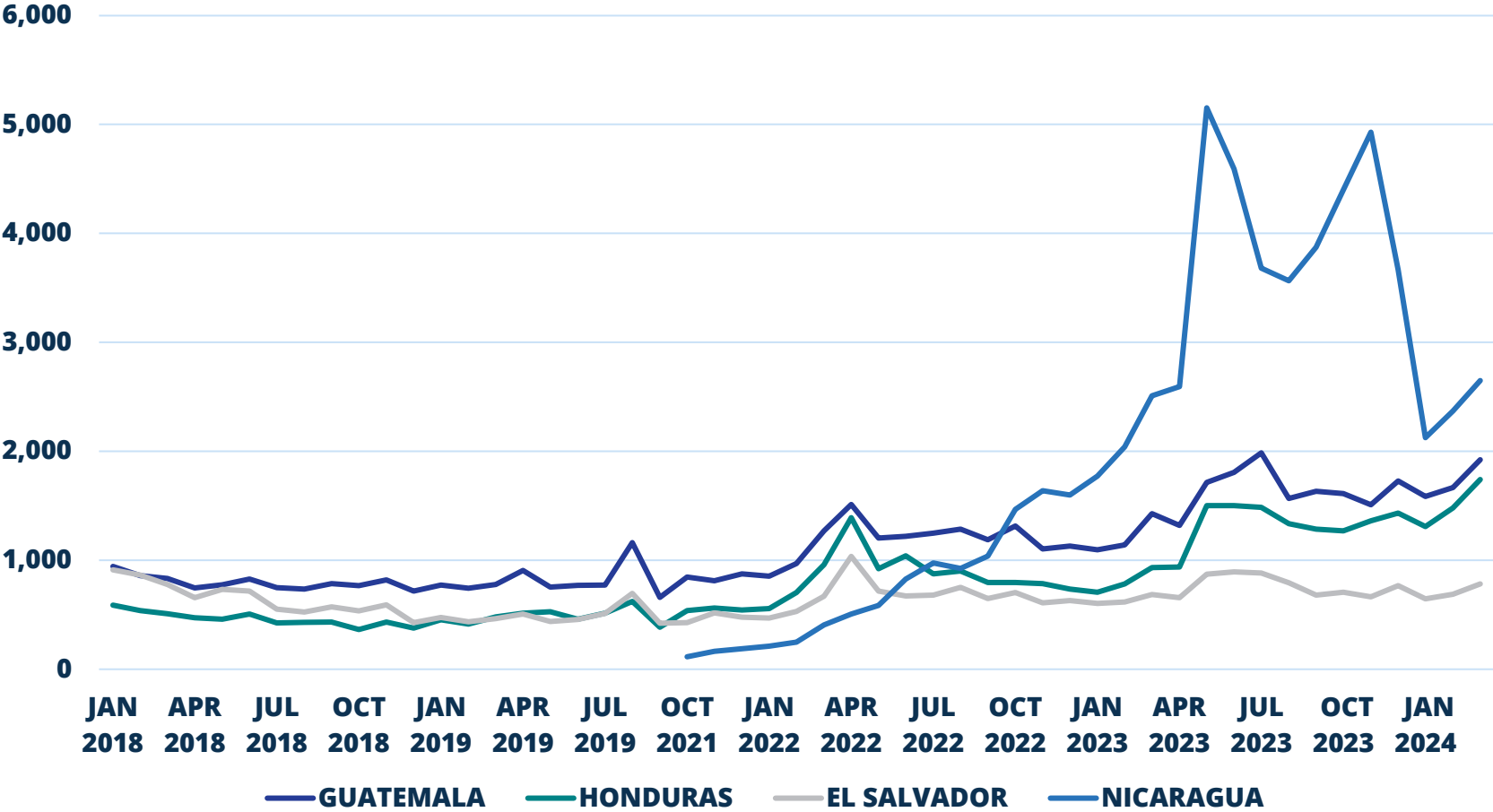
# Irregular Migration (cont.)

Honduras	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>A. Legal permanent status arrivals</b>	6,997	6,045	2,250	3,156	7,563	7,941	8,338
<b>B&amp;C. Irregular entry estimates</b>	101,655	203,416	25,245	169,362	122,187	149,592	92,418
<b>D. Apprehensions</b>	116,845	233,812	52,594	352,838	193,947	237,448	146,695
<b>E. Visa Overstayers***</b>	730	1,419	842	577	737	751	751
<b>F. H2A and H2B Visas</b>	1,150	1,135	1,317	2,668	5,258	5,258	5,258
<b>Total Migration</b>	110,123	211,690	28,654	174,332	134,957	163,650	107,141
<b>Deportations</b>	28,894	41,800	21,139	10,790	16,487	11,439	
<b>Net change (migrant replenishment)</b>	81,229	169,890	7,515	163,542	118,470	152,211	

Nicaragua	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>A. Legal permanent status arrivals</b>	1,953	2,327	1,126	3,216	2,067	1,894	1,989
<b>B&amp;C. Irregular entry estimates</b>	1,800	8,400	960	89,051	222,315	77,922	115,565
<b>D. Encounters</b>	3,000	14,000	3,000	87,305	217,956	79,512	124,263
<b>E. Visa Overstayers***</b>	389	386	228	50	231	344	344
<b>Total Migration</b>	4,142	11,113	2,314	92,317	224,613	80,159	117,897
<b>Deportations</b>	879	2,240	1,416	1,828	1,622		
<b>Net change (migrant replenishment)</b>	6,282	22,794	3,849	114,415	222,991	80,159	



# Asylum applications are low compared to the inflows of migrant border arrivals

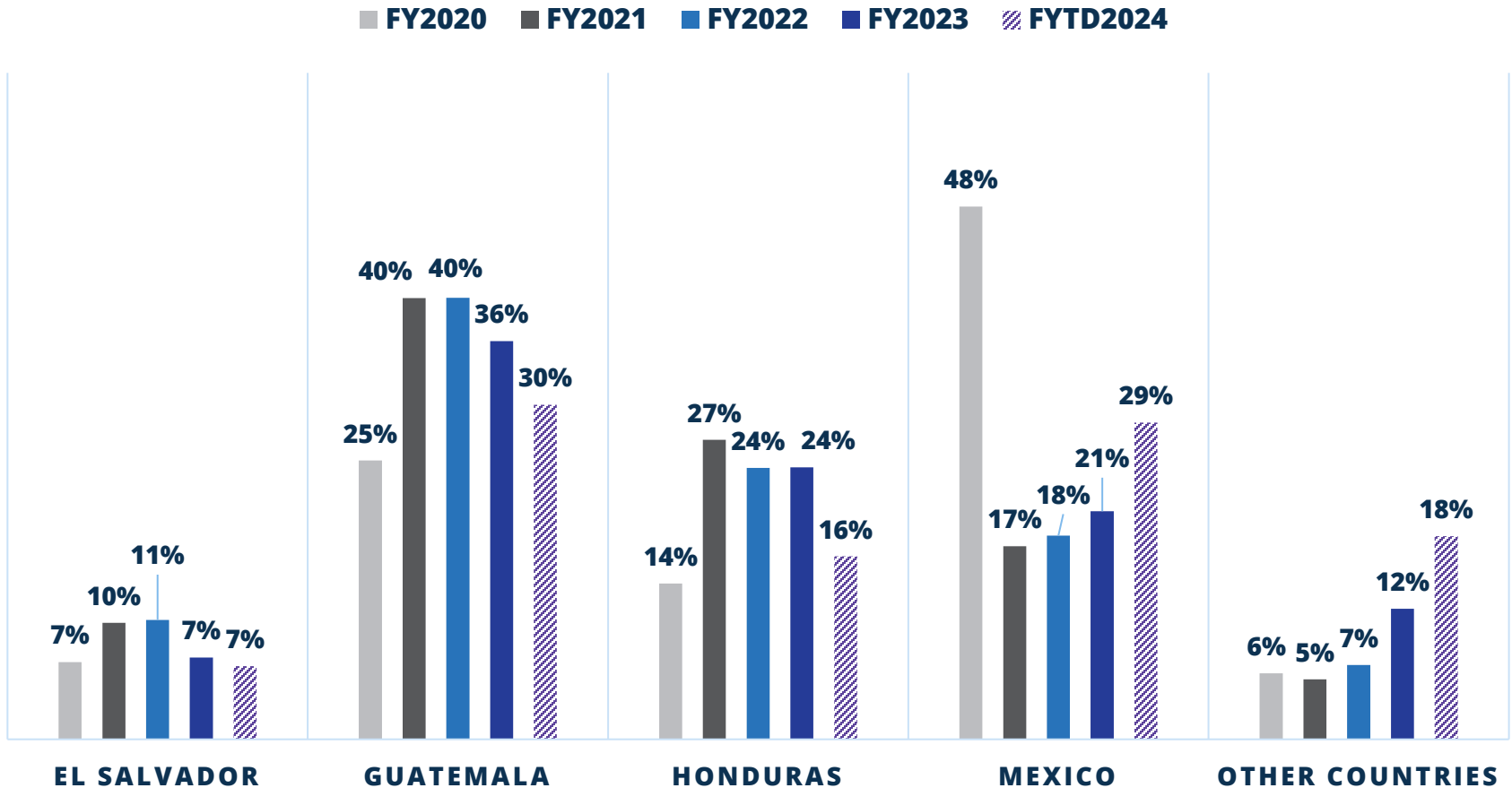


# Demographics of migrant border arrivals

Demographic	El Salvador	Honduras	Guatemala	Nicaragua
Accompanied Minors	0%	0%	0%	0%
FMUA	36%	44%	30%	22%
Single Adults	48%	41%	49%	76%
UC / Single Minors	16%	14%	21%	2%

Source: [Nationwide Encounters](#)

# Child migration: 547,000 unaccompanied minors



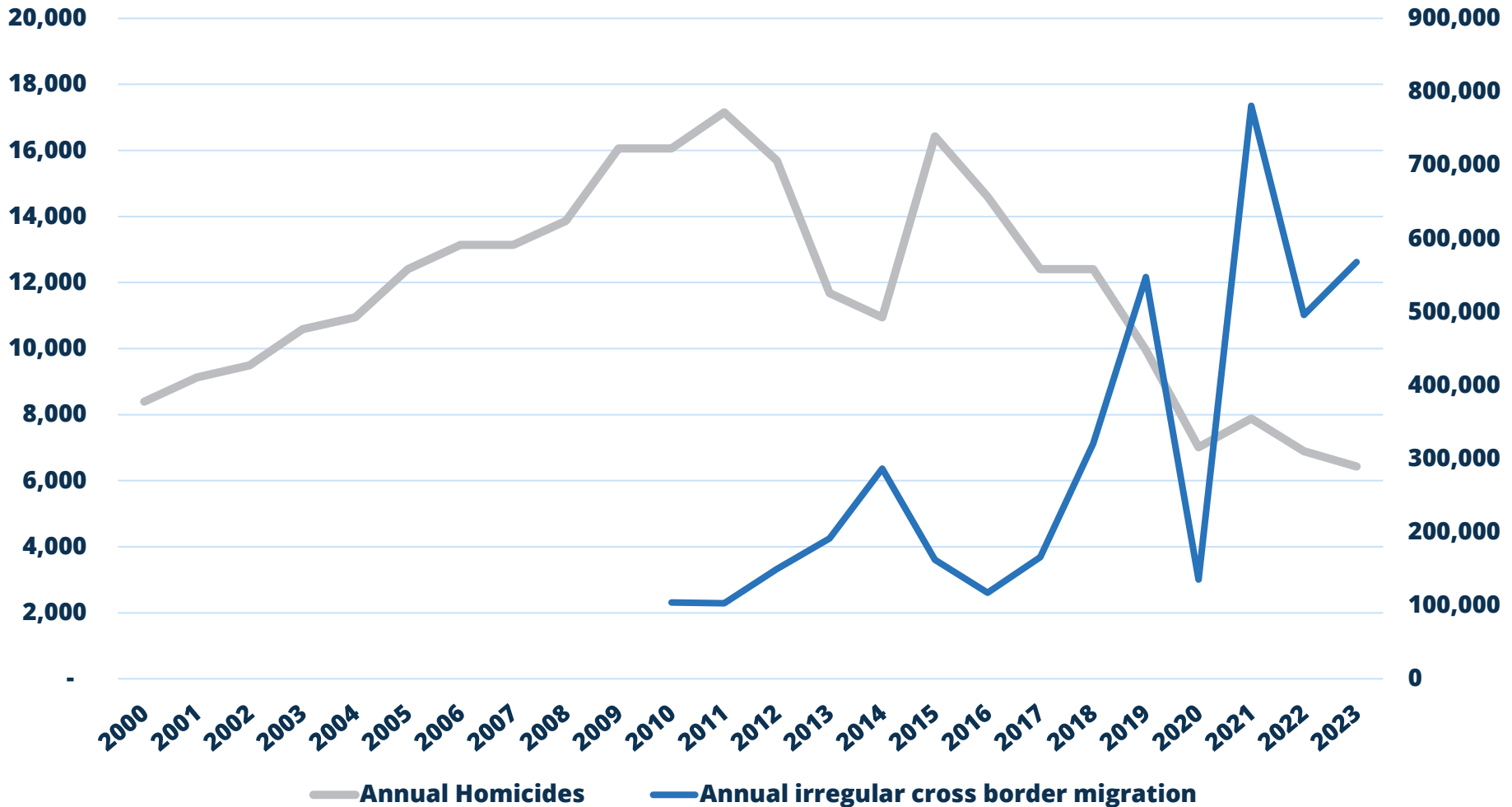
# Determinants and Risk Factors of Migration

- Migration determinants reflect a complex mix of patterns that vary across countries, individual, macro, and local level factors that influence migration
- Prior to 2019, crime was a key predictor of migration in Honduras or El Salvador
- Individual level factors are the most significant predictors of migration
- After the pandemic there have been a mix of factors of which economic vulnerability is a common denominator accompanied by more country specific issues:
  - *El Salvador: concentration of power*
  - *Nicaragua: political repression*
  - *Guatemala: aspirational outlooks*
  - *Honduras: crime*



Economic	Social and Aspirational	Transnational	Political	Climatic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• Informal economy</li> <li>• Low income (&lt;\$400)</li> <li>• Working in agriculture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pessimist outlook of the present and future</li> <li>• Victimization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatives abroad</li> <li>• Receiving remittances</li> <li>• Market access knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mistrust of political system</li> <li>• Concentration of power</li> <li>• Intimidation and political threats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earthquakes</li> <li>• Hurricanes</li> <li>• Droughts</li> <li>• Floods</li> <li>• Pandemics</li> </ul>

# Homicides and migration show distinct patterns over time



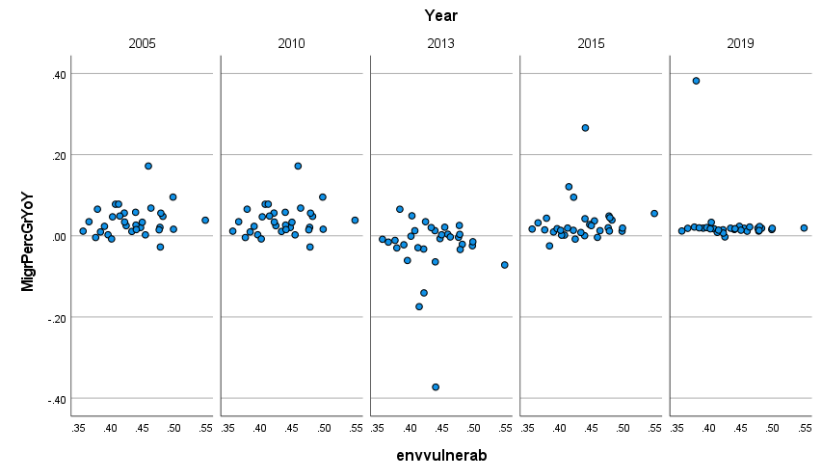
Source: [Nationwide Encounters](#)

# On climate change...

- Statistically, there is no relationship between climate change and migration because these events do not always have immediate effects, with some exceptions as a massive event like Hurricane Eta. But overall, migration is not externally sensitive (that is, vulnerable to changes in activities external to its regular determinants, like income differentials between countries and demographics)

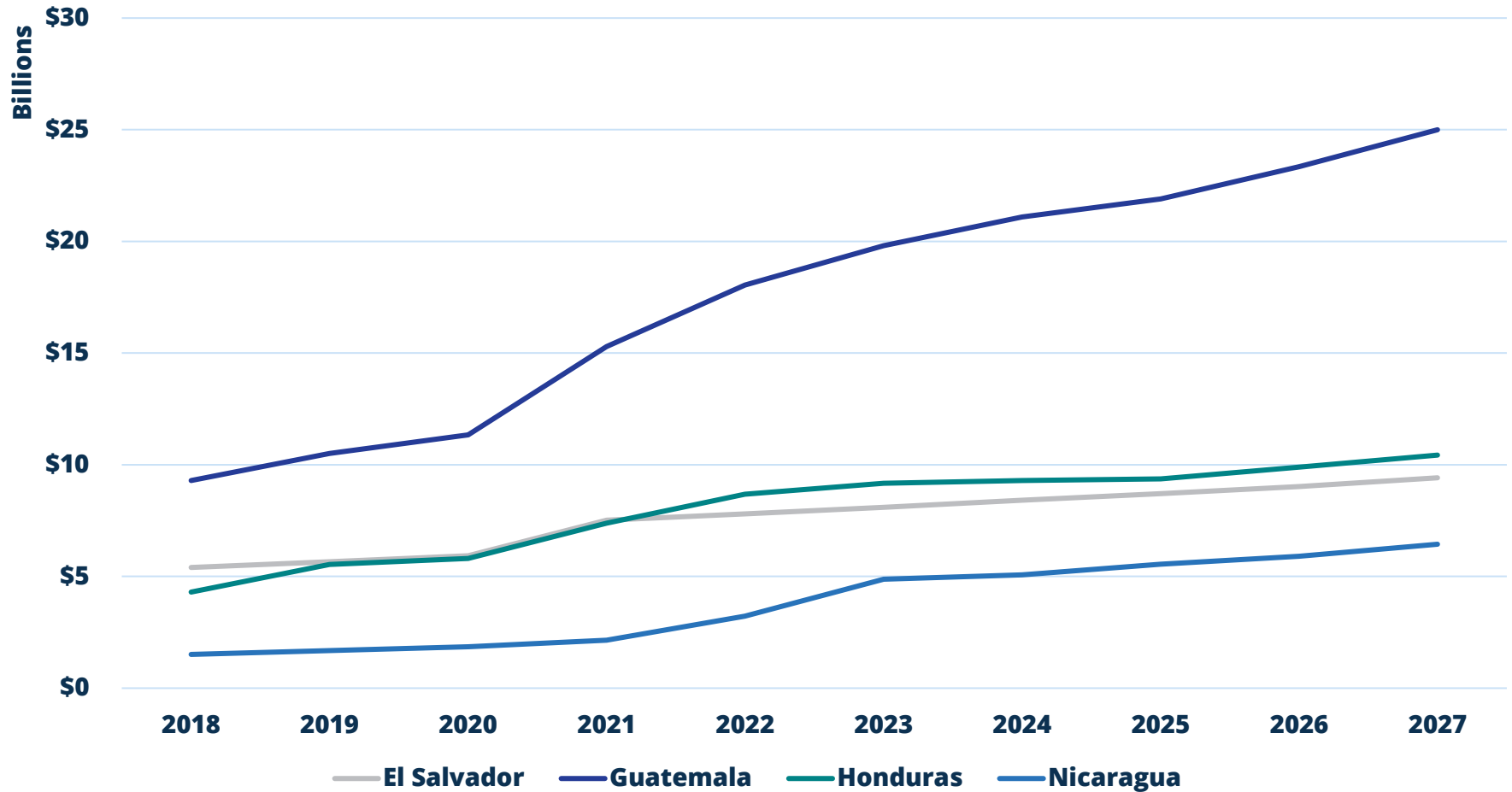
The charts show annual migration growth during five time periods and environmental vulnerability. While environmental vulnerability may be ascending, migration has followed independent patterns of human mobility

However, over time, displacement occurs resulting from climate change



Type of Disaster, 2000-2021	El Salvador	Guatemala	Honduras	Nicaragua	Four Countries
Flood	8	18	9	13	48
Tropical Cyclone	7	4	5	8	24
Epidemic	6	3	6	3	18
Drought	4	4	5	3	16
Earthquake	5	5	2	2	14
Tech. Disaster	2	8			10
Severe local storm	2	2	1	4	9
Volcano	2	6			8
Land Slide	1	4		1	6
Other		2	1	1	4
Cold Wave		3			3
Wildfire			2	1	3
Mud Slide		1		1	2
Extreme temperature		1			1
Fire			1		1
Mudslide		1			1
Storm Surge	1				1
Tornadoes				1	1
Wave			1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>171</b>

# Remittances to Central America



Source: Central Bank of each country

# Remittances as a percent of GDP

Country	1990	2000	2010	2015	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Costa Rica</b>	0.2	0.9	1.4	1	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.9	1	
<b>Dominican Republic</b>	4.5	7.6	7.2	7.3	8	8.3	10.6	11.4	10.3	8.4
<b>El Salvador</b>	7.6	15	18.8	18.2	20.7	21	24.1	26.1	26.7	27
<b>Guatemala</b>	1.6	3.1	10.4	10.4	12.9	13.8	14.7	17.9	20	20
<b>Honduras</b>	1.3	6.6	16.5	17.5	19.8	21.5	23.5	25.3	28.8	28
<b>Nicaragua</b>		6.3	9.4	9.4	11.6	13.4	14.7	15.3	22.2	29.1
<b>Panama</b>	1.7	0.1	1.4	1	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	

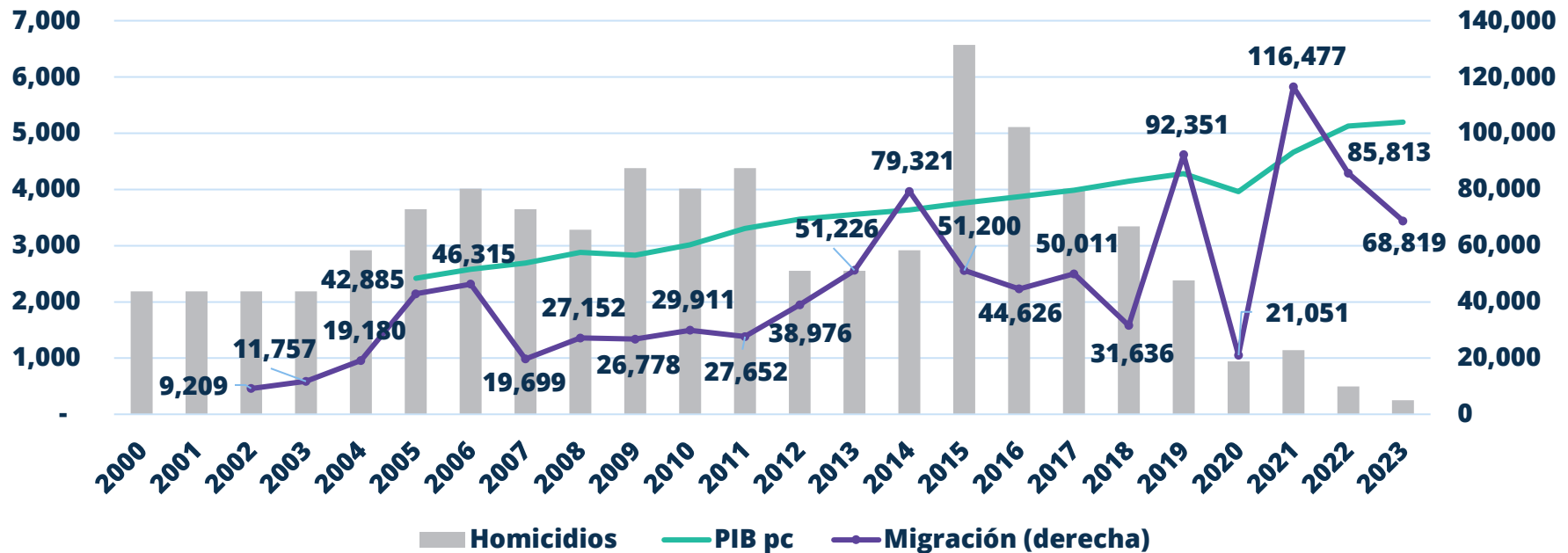
Source: Central Bank of each country



# More Salvadorans have migrated during Nayib Bukele's government than the past 25 years

President	Period	Encounters at Mex-US Border	Total Migration
Flores Pérez	1999-2004	70,000	
Saca González	2005-2009	136,051	
Funes Cartagena	2009-2014	174,543	
Sánchez Cerén	2014-2018	256,794	350,000
Bukele Ortiz	2019-2023	377,075	515,516

El Salvador, Homicides, Migration, and Personal Income



# Nicaragua is weaponizing migration

Flights to Managua from *Port-au-Prince; Havana; Curaçao; Caracas Casablanca; Zanderij*; 1,145 charter flights of at least 150 passengers en route to the Mexico-US border (July 2023-Jan 2024)

2023 Charter Flights	Passengers from Port-au-Prince	Flights	Haitian Arrivals at US-Mex Border
August (4 <sup>th</sup> week)	3,000	30	19,769
September	11,435	100	18,402
October (3 weeks)	17,040	138	16,500
Eight weeks only	31,475	268	54,671

Migration from Nicaragua since 2018 increases due to repression

Expulsion	Nicaragua/Costa Rica	Nicaragua/US	Other	Migration	Parole
2019	39,423	11,113	6,094	46,719	
2020	9,416	2,314	1,413	14,259	
2021	52,929	92,317	15,426	155,660	
2022	68,760	224,613	31,539	318,255	
2023	29,149	80,159	11,953	120,614	56,679
2024	21,493	86,700	14,431	155,619	61,349
<b>Total</b>	<b>221,171</b>	<b>497,216</b>	<b>80,855</b>	<b>811,127</b>	

In 2019, there were 650,000 Nicaraguan migrants abroad. Since 2019, 13% of Nicaraguans have left the country leading to approximately 1.5 million abroad in 2024.

Flights to Managua: Week of May 14 to May 23, 2024, 11 charter flights

Origin	Flights
Miami Int'l (KMIA)	70
El Salvador Int'l (SAL / MSLP)	46
Juan Santamaria Int'l (SJO / MROC)	36
Houston Bush Int'l (KIAH)	23
Tocumen Int'l (PTY / MPTO)	20
Near Corn Island, RAAS (Zelaya)	16
Near Bluefields, RAAS (Zelaya)	14
Fort Lauderdale Int'l (KFLA)	12
Puerto Cabezas (PUZ / MNPC)	10
Lic. Benito Juarez Int'l (MEX / MMMX)	7
La Aurora Int'l (GUA / MGGT)	6
Jose Marti Int'l (HAV / MUHA) [CUBA]	5
Near Maiquetia, Vargas [VENEZUELA]	4
Guanacaste (LIR / MRLB)	3
Hamilton/John C. Munro Int'l (CYHM)	3
Benina Int'l (BEN / HLLB) [LIBYA]	2
Comayagua Int'l (XPL / MHPR)	2
Los Angeles Intl (KLAX)	2
Los Brasiles (MNBR)	2
Other flights within Western Hemisphere – not Venezuela or Cuba	23

Source: FlightAware Statistics

# Between 1990 and 2022 over US\$14 billion in US foreign assistance

Since the passing of the Caribbean Basin Initiative in 1984, foreign assistance has been important to the region.

## Recent efforts include:

- Plan Merida, 2008-2010
- CARSI, 2010-2014
- Alliance for Prosperity, 2015-2019
- Root Causes of Migration, 2021-

Investments in economic growth have been relatively the lowest form of foreign assistance despite the fact that economic insecurity, working in the informal economy, in agriculture, or being unemployed are common denominators of migration.

Political backlash against foreign assistance has been a persistent problem. The current Root Causes Strategy has not received Congressional funding approval.

## US Foreign Assistance to the Northern Triangle

Sector	Share
Economic	9%
Environment	3%
Food Security/Agriculture	8%
Governance and Politics	14%
Infrastructure	8%
Other	12%
Security	21%
Social Policy	26%
Total	US\$14 billion

Source: USAID Foreign Assistance [Data](#)