



Elements to understand the challenges of migration

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Recent migration policies to address migration in Costa Rica

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Abstract

Migration has become a critical international issue: human mobility is part of the daily lives of people all around the world and takes on different forms. Costa Rica is no exception to this pattern. In the last two decades, the country has experienced specific kinds of migration movements. The dynamics of recent emigration, immigration and transit through the national territory have defined the direction of the analysis in this study, which focuses on migration policies. It seeks to provide context for and describe the current migration dynamics in Costa Rica. It also reviews the main initiatives that have formed part of recent migration policies and discusses the major challenges identified around implementing migration policy in the country.

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1. Introduction

Migration has become significant in Costa Rica due to the way in which current patterns have developed, significantly the fact that it is a country with both internal and international migration. It receives migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people and victims of trafficking or smuggling and is also a migration corridor for people in transit.

Among the main migration dynamics described in the National Integration Plan for Costa Rica 2018–2022, Costa Rica is a migrant-receiving country. Migrants represent around 9 percent of its population, with Nicaraguans accounting for 79 percent of the total immigrant population. The last two decades have also brought growing numbers of migrants from Colombia and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

In addition, intraregional, extraregional and pan-American migration have recently become evident in transit flows through Costa Rica. These include African, Haitian and Cuban migrants, mainly en route to the United States. It is estimated that some 9,600 people enter the country irregularly every day with the sole intention of crossing it from south to north.

A little more than a decade ago, data from the 2011 National Population and Housing Census profiled the migrant population living in the country, making it one of the most significant sources of information available. However, in the absence of data from a new census, this study had to draw on other data sources to analyse current trends. This included the databases of certain public institutions, such as administrative records and national household surveys.

Migration in Costa Rica is complex and has become one of the most topical social phenomena in the country as a result of the trends mentioned above. In recent decades, initiatives associated with public policies have been promoted by the different branches of government in partnership with the Migration and Alien Affairs Authority, as well as other public institutions. These have focused on various issues of interest in the field of migration.

This document analyses immigrants residing in Costa Rica in three categories established by the Migration and Alien Affairs Authority: temporary residents, special residents and permanent residents. It focuses particularly on the latter, analysing their status in relation to various social development indicators: housing, education, labour, health, income distribution and poverty. The paper also analyses the transit of migrants and their patterns of movement through the country and the Americas and estimates irregular migratory flows.

This is followed by an analysis of the institutional and regulatory framework for migration policies for assisting these populations in Costa Rica. It also looks at how the country is attempting to integrate resident migrants and people in transit into Costa Rican society by examining certain subjective factors in social imaginaries and perceptions of migrant populations, especially those of Nicaraguan origin, who account for the largest share of migrants.

Finally, as a result of the above, it explores the challenges that Costa Rica faces in this regard and then puts forward recommendations to promote the appropriate implementation of migration policy in the country, comprehensive assistance for migrants in transit, and the integration of the resident population to further social development.

2. Contextualizing migration in Costa Rica

Costa Rica's geographical location has favoured different types of migration flows, some are historical flows, and others are more recent. Flows at all times have included both regular and irregular migration.

There are specific features of Costa Rica's migration context that set the country aside from other Central American countries. Current migration flows in the country are associated with processes of attraction and expulsion of the population in response to a range of causes that shed light on recent migration dynamics.

In the context of these mixed migration flows, there are multiple factors drawing migrants to Costa Rica and expelling them from the country. The main two reasons are as follows:

- i. The economic dynamics in migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries are tied to migration movements. Migrants contribute to the labour force in receiving countries by joining the economically active population (EAP). According to data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAHO), migrants in Costa Rica mainly work in the following sectors: household services (14.9 percent), agriculture (14.4 percent), retail (14.3 percent), hospitality (11.8 percent) and construction (11.3 percent).³ Emigration boosts the economy of migrant-sending countries through the remittances that migrants send back to these countries (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2021).
- ii. Cross-border movements of skilled labour have prompted the development of policies that seek to enable people living near Costa Rica's borders to work in the country. Policies have also been implemented to regularize this population's status.
- iii. The causes of migration also include various political circumstances. Sometimes people are expelled from their countries of origin due to situations that generate political instability. In this regard, Costa Rica is considered one of the most stable democracies in Latin America and the Caribbean, which makes it attractive to refugees and asylum seekers.
- iv. This paper analyses the main migration flows that have emerged in Costa Rica in recent years and describes current patterns of immigration and the transit of migrants through the national territory. It also examines the migration policies that have been implemented in the country as part of the institutional and regulatory framework developed to assist this group.

2.1. Immigration

The types of migration flows that Costa Rica has experienced mean that it has traditionally been defined as a migrant-receiving country.

According to article 12 of the General Law on Migration and Aliens (Law No. 8764), the Migration and Alien Affairs Authority (DGME) is a functionally independent agency that is attached to the Ministry of Interior and the Police. It has a remit to implement migration policy dictated by the Office of the President, as established in the General Law on Migration and Aliens and the regulations for this (Asamblea Legislativa, 2009).

³ Data from the 2021 National Household Survey was consulted for people born outside Costa Rica (the foreign population).

Migrants may settle in the country temporarily or permanently, depending on the conditions in which they migrated. Law No. 8764 establishes that the DGME has the authority to define migration categories. Currently, there are three such categories: temporary migrants, special migrants and permanent migrants. According to data from the DGME, around 9 percent of the country's population are immigrants, and around 66 percent of these are of Nicaraguan origin.

Generally speaking, migration flows have been relatively stable over the last five years, in terms of both the countries from which the majority of the immigrant population originate and the percentage distribution of migrants in the total foreign population by country or continent of origin (see table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of the foreign population by place of origin in Costa Rica, 2010–2020 (percentages)

Country or continent of origin	2010	2015	2020
Nicaragua	69	68	66
Colombia	6	6	5
United States	4	5	5
Rest of the Americas	16	16	18
Europe	4	4	4
Asia	2	1	2
Total	100	100	100

Source: Authors based on data from the Migration and Alien Affairs Authority (DGME).

As can be seen in table 1, the vast majority of immigrants are of Nicaraguan origin (66 percent), followed by those of Colombian origin (5 percent), whose presence has tended to decline in the last ten years. Immigrants from the US ranked third, accounting for 5 percent of foreigners residing in Costa Rica in 2020.

2.1.1. Temporary residents

The smallest group of immigrants residing in Costa Rica is that of temporary residents, which includes investors; pensioners; annuitants; members of religious orders; executives; representatives, managers and technical staff of companies operating in the country; scientists; professionals; athletes; media correspondents and personnel, and the dependents of the above groups.

The number of temporary residents has increased since 2010, when there were 7 temporary residents for every 100 foreigners. This figure is now estimated to have risen to 13 temporary residents for every 100 foreigners in 2020. The distribution of temporary residents according to their place of origin is shown in table 2.

Table 2. Distribution of temporary residents by place of origin in Costa Rica, 2010–2020 (percentages)

Country or continent of origin	2010	2015	2020
Total percentage (of the foreign population)	7	10	13
Nicaragua	15	14	12
Colombia	11	8	7
United States	19	21	19
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	4	4	4
El Salvador	6	8	9
Mexico	7	6	5
Rest of the Americas	22	21	18
Europe	11	12	11
Asia	6	5	15
Total	100	100	100

Source: Authors based on data from the Migration and Alien Affairs Authority (DGME).

The data presented in table 2 shows that in 2020, 19 of every 100 temporary immigrants were from the US, 28 were from the rest of the Americas, 12 were Nicaraguans, and 11 were Europeans. There has been an increase in temporary residents of other nationalities in the last five years, such as people from Venezuela and China.

2.1.2. Special residents

The second category covered by the DGME is that of special resident migrants, which includes temporary workers, workers in specific occupations, students, asylum seekers, refugees, stateless people, special guests for security reasons, witnesses in court proceedings, artists, athletes and those taking part in public performances and workers with ties to specific projects.

In 2010, 5 percent of immigrants were listed as special residents, a percentage that rose significantly in 2020, when it reached 16 percent. The main countries or continents of origin of immigrants in the special resident category are shown in table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of special residents by place of origin in Costa Rica, 2010–2020 (percentages)

Country or continent of origin	2010	2015	2020
Total (as a percentage of the foreign population)	5	11	16
Nicaragua	21	47	51
Colombia	38	16	11
United States	9	6	6
El Salvador	3	3	4
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	2	2	4
China	5	4	4
Rest of the Americas	15	16	14
Europe	6	6	6
Rest of Asia	2	2	2
Africa	1	1	1
Total	100	100	100

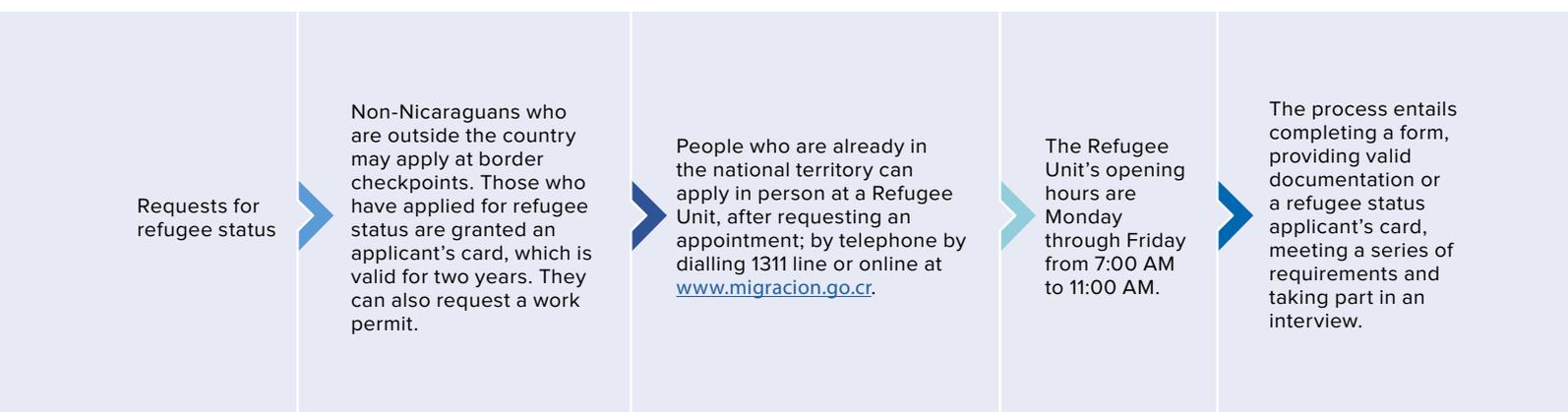
Source: Authors based on data from the Migration and Alien Affairs Authority (DGME).

As can be seen in table 3, there was a significant increase in the share of special residents from Nicaragua over the last ten years (this share increased 2.5 times in relative terms). This increase could be due to the current situation in Nicaragua, which has prompted a segment of the population to leave the country, mainly for political reasons. Costa Rica’s geographical proximity to Nicaragua, its historical migration patterns and standard of living all make it an obvious option for Nicaraguans.

The share of migrants from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and El Salvador has also increased over the past 10 years. In contrast, the flow of migrants of Colombian origin has declined considerably, and there has also been a downward trend in the share of special residents of US origin over the same period.

Immigrants can apply for refugee status in Costa Rica. The steps they have to follow to do so are shown in figure 1.

Diagram 1. Steps for filing for refugee status in Costa Rica, 2022



Source: Authors based on data from the Migration and Alien Affairs Authority (DGME).

The DGME is responsible by law for processing applications,⁴ while the Restricted Visas and Refugee Commission is responsible for approving or denying these applications. If an application is approved, the official document costs US\$68. If an application is denied, an appeal may be filed with the Administrative Tribunal on Migration Matters.

According to data from the DGME, a total of 12,689 refugee applications were received in 2020, 2,723 of which were granted or recognized, 3,155 were denied, and the remaining 6,811 were still pending a decision. This means that the DGME is receiving more applications than it can process, such that the waiting time for a decision can be more than four years.

Of the total number of decisions issued (5,878), 61 percent pertained to people of Nicaraguan origin. This was followed by applications from Venezuelans (21.4 percent), Salvadorans (9.3 percent) and Colombians and Cubans (3.3 percent each). The remaining 1.8 percent were submitted by people from other countries (see table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of applications for refugee status by decision type and place of origin of the applicant population in Costa Rica, 2020 (percentages)

Country or continent of origin	Resolution		Total applications*
	Applications granted	Applications denied	
Nicaragua	49.1	50.9	61.0
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	49.6	50.4	21.4
El Salvador	67.9	32.1	9.3
Colombia	92.8	7.2	3.3
Cuba	75.4	24.6	3.3
Other countries	73.8	26.2	1.8
Total	54.0	46.0	100.0

Source: Authors based on data from the Migration and Alien Affairs Authority.

Note: The percentages shown in the table are based on a total of 5,878 applications submitted. The first two columns contain the percentages by row, and the last shows percentages calculated by column.

As can be seen in table 4, the countries that obtained the highest approval rates for applications for refugee status in 2020 were Colombia (92.8 percent), Cuba (75.4 percent) and El Salvador (67.9 percent), while rates were much lower for applications from nationals of Nicaragua and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, around half of which were approved.

2.1.3. Permanent residents

The final category of migrants who are residing in Costa Rica are those who have settled in the country permanently. This is the largest of the three categories and so it will be examined in greater detail.

The number of immigrants in this category trended downward in recent years: in 2010 there were 88 permanent resident immigrants for every 100 foreigners, falling to 79 in 2015 and 71 in 2020.

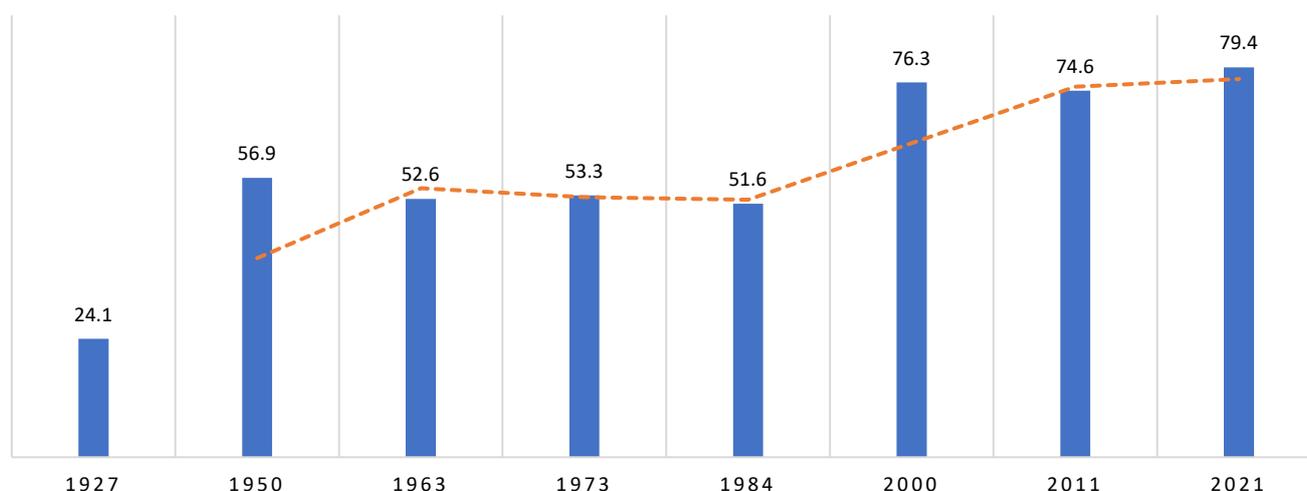
⁴ More information on the requirements is available at migracion.go.cr/Paginas/Refugio.aspx.

In terms of the origins of those in the permanent resident category, the largest share are Nicaraguan migrants, which owes to the fact that Nicaragua has historically been by far the largest source of immigration to Costa Rica. According to data from the DGME, in 2020, the Nicaraguan population accounted for 79 percent of immigrants who were permanent residents in Costa Rica, more than any of the other 64 countries of origin of the foreign population in the country.

The second-largest group in this category are people of Colombian origin (4 percent), followed by the US population (3 percent). Immigrants from both these countries have been part of Costa Rica’s migration dynamics in recent decades. However, their share of the total foreign population is very low in comparison with that of Nicaraguans.

Data from the censuses conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC) of Costa Rica—the first of which took place in 1927 and the most recent in 2011—show the evolution of the Nicaraguan immigrant population that settled in the country during this period (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Evolution of the share of the Nicaraguan immigrant population in relation to the total foreign population residing in Costa Rica, 1927–2021 (percentages)



Source: Authors based on data from national censuses and the National Household Survey 2021 (ENAH0, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

According to data from the 1927 census, there were only 24 Nicaraguans for every 100 foreigners in Costa Rica. Between 1950 and 1984, the percentage of Nicaraguan migrants ranged from 57 percent to 52 percent, but the start of the 21st Century brought a significant increase in their numbers, and they came to represent 76 percent of the migrant population in 2000 and 75 percent in 2011. As a reference, figure 1 includes data for 2021 (from the 2021 National Household Survey), according to which Nicaraguans accounted for almost 80 percent of the migrant population residing permanently in Costa Rica.

The National Household Survey is the survey conducted by the INEC every year to measure the socio-economic situation of households in Costa Rica based on the following aspects of social development: employment, health, education, housing, income, migration and poverty. The survey includes some indicators that allow the

circumstances of the native-born population to be compared with those of the foreign population, even though it is not a migration-specific survey. Given that the last national census for which data is available was conducted in 2011 and that the 2022 census is still in the final stages of data collection, the 2021 National Household Survey was the main source used for this paper.

As mentioned above, although the National Household Survey does not focus on migration, it includes some indicators that may be relevant to this and that allow comparisons to be drawn between the native-born and immigrant populations. Regarding the survey's coverage, the INEC notes that the sampling design is such that "results may be produced for other subpopulations of interest; however, their level of disaggregation will depend fundamentally on the precision with which the data is estimated and the resulting sample size in each case" (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2019). The study domains included in the sampling design are the entire country, urban and rural areas, and Costa Rica's six planning regions.

Statistical calculations were thus performed to determine sampling errors to measure the representativeness of the foreign population by means of the coefficient of variation. The latter "is a clearer indication of the precision of an estimate. In household surveys, experience has shown that estimates with a coefficient of variation up to 5 percent are very precise; estimates remain precise if the coefficient increases to 10 percent; coefficients of up to 20 percent are acceptable, while those over 20 percent are [...] unreliable and should thus be used with caution" (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, 2019).

The estimations of sampling error yielded coefficients of variation of 0.3626 percent for the native-born population and 4.409 percent for Nicaraguan immigrants, indicating that the National Household Survey estimates for this population are highly accurate. However, this accuracy varies according to the level of disaggregation, so the data included in tables 5 to 12 and figures 2 and 3 was subjected to coefficient of variation tests to estimate their representativeness.⁵

As can be seen in figure 1, 79 percent of the foreign population residing in Costa Rica in 2021 was of Nicaraguan origin, so the results presented in this paper focus on this group because it is the most representative immigrant population. The data extracted from the National Household Survey included a sample of the foreign population of other nationalities. However, this was not representative, so the data on these groups of foreigners may not be as accurate as is the case for Nicaraguans.

Figure 1 also shows that there has been a significant increase in the immigration of Nicaraguans to Costa Rica since 2000. According to data from the First National Survey on Immigration and Emigration, which was conducted in 2016 (ENIE, 2016), economic factors continue to be the main reason for this migration (49 percent). Next on the list of reasons were family reunification (22.7 percent), which has contributed to the Nicaraguan migrant population deeming Costa Rica to be their habitual place of residence and applying for permanent residence status.

Furthermore, the reasons prompting Nicaraguans to migrate have changed over time in response to the situation in their country of origin. However, the largest flows of Nicaraguan migrants to Costa Rica have been associated with the economic and political situation in Nicaragua over the last 30 years, particularly developments since the Sandinista Government came to power.

⁵ Only tables with results below 20 percent were used (i.e. those containing sufficiently accurate information).

Table 5 shows data on the resident foreign population and native-born population in Costa Rica, disaggregated by country of origin, sex and age.

Table 5. Distribution of the foreign population residing permanently in Costa Rica by place of origin, sex and age group, 2021 (percentages)

		Country of origin			
		Nicaragua	Total foreign population	Costa Rica	Total population (native-born and foreign)
Sex	Men	43.9	45.2	48.4	48.1
	Women	56.1	54.8	51.6	51.9
	Total	100	100	100	100
Age group	0 to 17	7.3	8.1	24.7	23.3
	18 to 34	31.2	30.1	25.2	25.6
	35 to 49	37.2	34.7	18.9	20.3
	Over 50	17.1	18.1	18	18
	Over 65	7.2	9.1	13.2	12.8
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Compiled by the authors based on data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAHU, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

Table 5 also shows that the majority of the population of Nicaraguan origin are women (56.1 percent). This is in contrast with the native-born population, in which men and women are almost evenly distributed. With regard to the age distribution of the population, half of the native-born population is between 0 and 35 years of age (49.9 percent), while the majority of the Nicaraguan population is concentrated in the group aged 18–49 (68.4 percent).

Immigrants with permanent residence status are geographically distributed throughout the national territory. However, data from the 2021 National Household Survey show that vast majority of the migrant population (60.1 percent) live in the Central Region, where 56.9 percent of Nicaraguan immigrants and 72.7 percent of other foreigners reside. Table 6 shows the distribution of the foreign population residing permanently in Costa Rica according to their country of origin and place of residence (planning regions).

Most of the migrants that Costa Rica receives are Nicaraguan, so it follows that the northern regions of the country (Huetar Atlántica and Huetar Norte), which are closer to Nicaragua, have the largest populations of Nicaraguan origin. In particular, 14.4 percent of the resident population in the Huetar Norte Region are of Nicaraguan origin, while in the Central Region, Nicaraguans represent 6.4 percent of the total (see table 6).

Table 6. Distribution of the foreign population residing permanently in Costa Rica by country of origin and planning region, 2021 (percentages)

Planning region	Country of origin			
	Nicaragua	Total foreign population	Costa Rica	Total population (native-born and foreign)
Central	6.4	8.5	91.5	100.0
Chorotega	6.5	7.6	92.4	100.0
Pacífico Central	8.2	10.3	89.7	100.0
Brunca	0.9	2.9	97.1	100.0
Huetar Caribe	8.1	9.2	90.8	100.0
Huetar Norte	14.4	14.9	85.1	100.0
Total	6.9	8.7	91.3	100.0

Source: Authors based on data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAH0, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

As was mentioned above, the National Household Survey is conducted every year to provide vital information on Costa Rican households and social and economic aspects of their living conditions. The survey enables users to distinguish between data concerning households where native-born individuals reside and data on households that include foreigners with permanent residence status. The following section analyses the permanent resident migrant population's access to housing, education, work, health and income and their poverty levels.

Access to housing

According to international standards, access to housing that provides adequate conditions for the coexistence of the people who make up a household is a fundamental right. Housing conditions are measured in terms of the building materials used for the floor, roofing and walls of each dwelling and the conditions that these are in. The number of people living together in a given space is another relevant factor. The household's access to certain services, such as internet access, is also considered. Table 7 lists some of the variables used to define the housing conditions of the population of Costa Rican and foreign origin residing permanently in the country.

Table 7. Distribution of households in Costa Rica by housing standard indicators and country of origin, 2021 (percentages)

	Country of origin			
	Nicaragua	Total foreign population	Costa Rica	Total population (native-born and foreign)
Roof or floor in bad condition	21.0	18.3	14.8	15.1
Outside walls in bad condition	14.1	12.2	9.4	9.6
Overcrowding	25.4	21.8	9.7	10.7
No internet use	8.6	7.2	5.1	5.3

Source: Authors based on data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAH0, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

According to the data shown in table 7, 21 percent of the dwellings inhabited by migrants of Nicaraguan origin have floors or roofs that are in poor condition. In other words, in relative terms, the dwellings inhabited by the Nicaraguan population are in worse condition than those inhabited by migrants of other nationalities or the Costa Rican population. Likewise, some 14.1 percent of the dwellings inhabited by people of Nicaraguan origin have outside walls that are in bad condition, meaning that they are also worse off than other population groups in this regard.

The 2021 National Household Survey defines overcrowding as follows: two people living in less than 30 square metres, three to six people in less than 40 square metres, or seven or more people in less than 60 square metres. Single-person households are not taken into consideration, regardless of the size of the dwelling in which the individual is living.

According to the data in Table 7, a quarter of Nicaraguan households live in overcrowded conditions, and the percentage of Nicaraguan households that are overcrowded is higher than that of Costa Rican households.

The internet use indicator refers to people in the household aged between 6 and 65 who have not used the internet in the last three months. The data show that almost 9 percent of Nicaraguan households do not have internet access, while the same is true of only 5 percent of Nicaraguan households.

In conclusion, the data analysed indicate that Nicaraguan migrant households experience worse housing conditions than the native-born population and also experience more disadvantages than the migrant population from other countries.

Access to education

This dimension of social development is also a human right, as it is one of the main factors in upward social mobility. States must therefore ensure that they create the necessary conditions and opportunities to guarantee that all people residing in their territories have access to education. Furthermore, education must be inclusive, equitable and high-quality; it must begin in childhood and continue through adolescence, at least.

According to data provided by the Department of Statistical Analysis at the Ministry of Public Education, in 2021, the foreign population constituted 5 percent of Costa Rica's student body at the primary level and 4 percent of all secondary students. Although the overall share remains low (4.5 percent), it has increased by almost one percentage point in the last five years. This change may be due to the growing share of students of Nicaraguan origin in the total number of foreign students: the former increased by almost 5 percentage points, going from 73 percent in 2016 to 78 percent in 2021.

The National Household Survey data on Costa Rican households' access to education allows us to compare the situation of native-born and immigrant households. Four aspects relating to household educational achievement were analysed. First, we looked at households that include people between 5 and 17 years of age who do not attend the formal education system, even if they have access to informal education. This is true of 2 out of every 100 households for the native-born population, but 5 out of every 100 households for the Nicaraguan population. In other words, the percentage of Nicaraguans without access to formal education is 2.5 times higher than that of the native-born population (see table 8).

Table 8. Distribution of households in Costa Rica by education indicators and country of origin, 2021 (percentages)

	Country of origin			
	Nicaragua	Total foreign population	Costa Rica	Total population (native-born and foreign)
Not attending formal education	4.8	3.8	1.9	2.1
Education gap (behind at school)	9.7	8.4	4.2	4.5
Have not finished high school	21.9	18.4	9.0	9.8
Low human capital	48.8	41.2	27.3	28.5

Source: Authors based on data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAH0, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

We also looked at the education gap: that is, households with people between 7 and 19 who are at least two years behind at school. This is true of 3.8 of every 100 Costa Rican households and 9.7 out of every 100 Nicaraguan households. That is, the share is 2.3 times higher for the latter.

Likewise, 9 percent of native-born households and 22 percent of Nicaraguan households include people between 18 and 24 years of age who have not finished high school. Again, the share of Nicaraguan households for which this is true is more than double that of native-born households.

Finally, we examined low human capital development by looking at the numbers of households with members between 25 and 38 who had finished high school or had a technical qualification of some sort, members between 39 and 60 who had finished middle school, or people between 61 and 64 who had finished primary school or had an informal qualification of some sort. The data shows that 27.3 percent of native-born households include at least one person with low human capital development. In comparison, this share increases to almost half (48.8 percent) among Nicaraguan households (see table 8).

In conclusion, households of Nicaraguan immigrants in Costa Rica have less access to education than native-born households, whose conditions are more favourable.

The DGME's National Integration Plan for Costa Rica 2018–2022 states that as far as university education is concerned:

Migration Act 8764 recognizes [university] students as a specific migration category entailing certain rights and obligations. In 2009, the new Regulations for the Organization and Functioning of Student Councils and the Student Electoral Code (Executive Decrees No. 35333-MEP and No. 35337-MEP) were passed. These promote and recognize foreign students' right to participation, among other things.

Similarly, in 2013, the regulation that prevented non-Costa Ricans from serving on the Boards of Education (primary education) and Administrative Boards (secondary education) was overturned by Executive Decree No. 38249-MEP. This established that the requirement for being a member of these boards was "to be Costa Rican or to hold a valid residence permit". Although these practices facilitate the inclusion of immigrants, the [Ministry of Public Education] does not have any specific programmes on migration, with the exception of its involvement in the Migration Social Fund. (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, 2017, pp. 73–74).

In other words, although progress has been made on the regulations in this area, the recent data shows that there are still challenges to overcome to improve access to formal education and the scholarship system for the resident immigrant population, particularly the migrant population of Nicaraguan origin.

Access to work

Work is people’s main means of supporting themselves. In economic terms, there is unpaid work and paid work. On the matter of paid work, States must ensure that labour laws and regulations are enforced and that people have access to decent work, as this promotes social development.

According to data from the INEC’s Continuous Employment Survey (ECE), in the first quarter of 2022, foreigners represented 11.5 percent of the EAP. The economic activities carried out by migrants residing in Costa Rican territory are mainly in the tertiary or services sector (66.0 percent) (see table 9). They also work in retail (16.3 percent), as domestic workers (15.6 percent), in primary or agricultural activities (14.2 percent) and in the secondary sector—mainly construction (9.9 percent) and industry (9.8 percent).

Table 9. Employed population in Costa Rica by area of activity and country of origin, 2022 (percentages)

	Country of origin			
	Nicaragua	Total foreign population	Costa Rica	Total population (native-born and foreign)
Primary sector (agriculture, livestock, forestry and fisheries)	16.6	14.2	10.2	10.7
Secondary sector (industry, construction, energy and water supply, mining)	19.4	19.8	18.0	18.2
Services sector	64.0	66.0	71.8	71.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors based on data from the Continuous Employment Survey 2022 (ECE, 2022) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

The main areas in which resident immigrants of Nicaraguan origin are employed are domestic work (17.8 percent), followed by retail (16.9 percent), agricultural activities (16.6 percent), hospitality (11.5 percent) and construction (10.8 percent).

Immigrants residing in Costa Rica make significant contributions to the country’s labour force. A joint report published in 2018 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) states that resident migrants (including the special, temporary and permanent categories) make a positive contribution to economic growth. More precisely, they account for between 11.1 percent and 11.9 percent of value added, and 12 percent of the country’s GDP (Organización para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo Económicos and Organización Internacional del Trabajo, 2018).

On the other hand, and as mentioned above, the State must ensure that all working conditions meet the country’s regulations and in line with international ILO standards.

The data collected through the 2021 National Household Survey illustrates the labour situation in Costa Rica. The first indicator regarding each household's work situation measures the number of people aged 15 and over who are not students, have been unemployed for more than one year and were looking for work during the week before the survey. It also includes discouraged workers (those who have given up looking for work). This indicator stands at 7.5 percent for households of Nicaraguan origin but it is at 5.7 percent for households of Costa Rican origin (see table 10).

Table 10. Distribution of households in Costa Rica by labour market indicators and country of origin, 2021 (percentages)

	Country of origin			
	Nicaragua	Total foreign population	Costa Rica	Total population (native-born and foreign)
Long-term unemployment and discouraged workers	7.5	7.7	5.7	5.9
Non-compliance with minimum wage	21.9	19.1	11.8	12.4
Non-compliance with other labour rights	45.3	41.1	25.3	26.7
Informally self-employed	17.0	16.6	16.0	16.0

Source: Authors based on data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAH0, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

Three indicators were taken into account in connection with the employed population. The first concerns the minimum wage established in chapter 5 of the Labour Code of 1943 (Law No. 2).⁶ According to the Continuous Employment Survey 2022, workers in 21.9 percent of Nicaraguan households are not paid the minimum wage, while this is true of 11.8 percent of Costa Rican households, such that there is a significant difference between the two groups (10 percentage points), to the detriment of immigrants.

Another indicator was also considered: decent work, which measures non-compliance with other labour rights also contemplated in the Labour Code, such as a Christmas bonus, paid holidays, occupational hazard insurance, employer's pension contributions and overtime pay. One alarming finding is that almost half of Nicaraguan immigrant households do not enjoy the right to decent work (45.3 percent). Among the Costa Rican population, this is true for around a quarter of households (25.3 percent). Once again, immigrant households are more vulnerable.

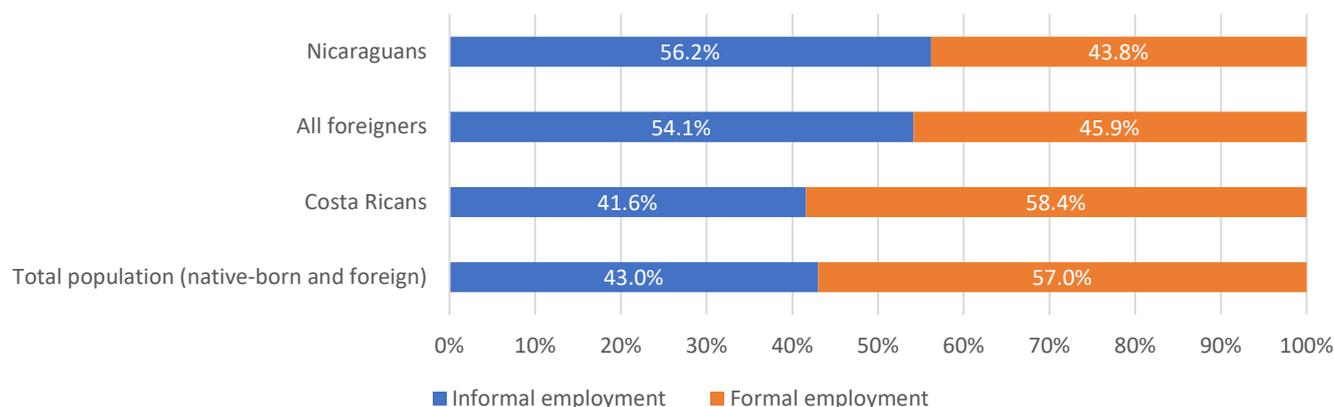
The last of the work-related indicators refers to households in which an employed person declares that they are the main income provider and engage in an independent informal economic activity (in other words, they are self-employed and are not registered with any public institution nor do they keep accounting records). This is true of 17 percent of Nicaraguan migrant households and 16 percent of native-born households.

Furthermore, the 2022 Continuous Employment Survey reveals that 43 percent of the country's EAP are in informal employment.⁷ However, informal employment is markedly more prevalent among resident immigrants. Figure 2 provides a comparative illustration of labour informality in Costa Rica.

⁶ The minimum hourly wage of at least one salaried private-sector worker, according to the wage categories established by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security.

⁷ Informal employment comprises the total number of jobs with the following characteristics, depending on the specific position: i) salaried employees without employer-financed social security, that is, whose wages do not include social security deductions; ii) employees who only receive payments in kind or who have received a one-off payment and who, due to the nature of their employment, are not subject to social security deductions; iii) unpaid assistants, who are deemed to be in informal employment regardless of where they work; iv) self-employed workers and employers that have unincorporated businesses, that is, businesses that are not registered with the National Property Registry and do not keep formal accounting records on a regular basis, and v) self-employed workers with occasional jobs (those lasting less than one month), who are not registered or do not keep formal accounting records on a regular basis due to the nature of their work.

Figure 2. Employed population in Costa Rica by employment status and country of origin, 2022 (percentages)



Source: Authors based on data from the Continuous Employment Survey 2022 (ECE, 2022) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

As figure 2 shows, informal employment rates in Costa Rica are particularly high among foreigners: some 54.1 percent of the foreign population is informally employed, while this is true of 41.6 percent of the native-born population. The informal employment rate is even higher among people of Nicaraguan origin (56.2 percent).

In conclusion, resident migrants make a significant contribution to the country’s GDP and labour force and therefore contribute to Costa Rica’s economic and social development. However, despite the fact that the country has a Labour Code, the data from the 2022 Continuous Employment Survey shows that there are shortcomings in the enforcement of the law regulating decent working conditions. The data also shows that Nicaraguan migrant households are more affected by non-compliance with labour laws than Costa Rican households.

Long-term unemployment and discouragement due to the lack of opportunities in the labour market also affect the immigrant population slightly more than the native-born population. However, immigrants from other countries are impacted more by this than those of Nicaraguan origin.

The following section provides a comparative analysis of access to health care for the migrant population. The National Integration Plan for Costa Rica 2018–2022 (2017, p. 69) states that “the law makes it clear that the DGME seeks to monitor the flow of migrant workers and is advised on this by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The regulations for the Law (Executive Decree No 37112-Gob.) specify the working conditions for these workers and the wages they must make, which include compulsory contributions to the CCSS [Costa Rican Social Security Fund] and the INS [National Insurance Institute]. Likewise, it discusses the renewal of migrant worker permits, a process that requires applicants to keep up their insurance contributions and make the appropriate payments (arts. 229 and 230)” (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, 2017, p. 69).

This means that one of the major obstacles faced by migrants, especially those of Nicaraguan origin, relates to the regularization of their migration status, which is a condition for accessing insurance from the CCSS or the INS. The following section analyses access to health care for migrants residing in Costa Rica in 2021.

Access to health care

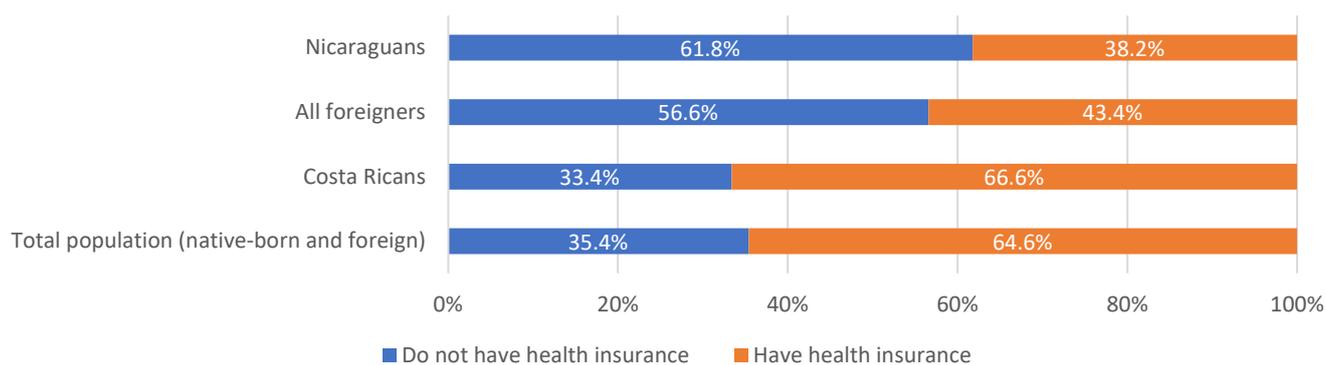
The promotion of health is indispensable for social development, which is why efforts must be made to ensure that all people can lead a healthy life. At the international level, the World Health Organization (WHO) is responsible for maintaining and promoting public health. Costa Rica's Law on Public Health Protection (Law No. 72) was passed in 1923; the Ministry of Public Health was established by executive decree in 1927; and the aforementioned Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) was created in 1941 through Law No. 17. People wishing to change their migration category with the DGME are required to join the CCSS system, which they can do by making voluntary insurance contributions or as salaried workers subsidized by their employer.

The Health Insurance Regulation (Regulation No. 7082) of 1996 establishes the care that the health system must provide to migrants in vulnerable situations, including minors, pregnant women, the elderly and people with disabilities. This includes assistance or care in the event of pandemics, disasters or emergency situations, in which case the migrant population must subsequently repay the costs of any care they are provided (although they may be exempted from repayment if they live in extreme poverty).

Gatica López (2017a, p. 85) found that heads of migrant households and the migrant labour force in general make significant contributions to the country's social security system. Based on data from the 2011 National Population and Housing Census, the author notes total resident immigrants contribute an average of 26 percent to social security, as compared to 22.3 percent for the native-born. In other words, migrants contribute relatively more to the CCSS than the Costa Rican-born population.

Data from the 2021 National Household Survey reveals an alarming lack of access to health insurance among migrants, especially those of Nicaraguan origin. The data presented in figure 3 illustrates the share of households in which at least one person does not have health insurance, be it public (CCSS) or private.

Figure 3. Households in Costa Rica by access to health insurance and country of origin, 2021 (percentages)



Source: Authors based on data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAH0, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

The indicator for access to health insurance considers whether any person in the household does not have health insurance, be it public or private. It was found that the relative percentage of Nicaraguan immigrants in this predicament is almost double the respective share of people of Costa Rican origin. The results show that 61.8 percent of the Nicaraguan immigrant population do not have health insurance, compared to one-third of the native-born population.

This situation increases the vulnerability of immigrants vis-à-vis the native-born population in terms of human rights and social development. It is worth noting that the data shows that immigrants are not a burden for the country—on the contrary, they contribute to the social and economic development of Costa Rica, which debunks some of the myths surrounding this population.

Income distribution

The National Household Survey was also used to measure poverty in Costa Rica. The data from the survey allowed us to analyse income distribution and, subsequently, poverty. Table 11 shows the distribution of net per capita income by quintile, according to the country of origin of the people that make up the households: the income of Nicaraguan immigrant households is mostly distributed among the first three quintiles (79.9 percent), with 29 percent of the income concentrated in the first quintile, where net monthly per capita household income is CRC94,640 or less. The income of the native-born population is also mostly distributed among the first three quintiles, although the distribution appears to be somewhat more equitable.

Table 11. Distribution of net per capita household income in Costa Rica by income quintile and country of origin, 2021 (percentages)

Quintile of monthly net household per capita income	Country of origin			
	Nicaragua	Total foreign population	Costa Rica	Total population (native-born and foreign)
1Q: CRC94,640 or less	29.0	25.3	22.1	22.4
2Q: CRC94,641 to CRC165,000	26.8	24.2	21.7	21.9
3Q: CRC165,001 to CRC280,734	24.0	24.0	20.8	21.1
4Q: CRC280,735 to CRC520,000	16.1	17.2	18.7	18.6
5Q: More than CRC520,000	4.0	9.3	16.6	15.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors based on data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAH0, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

Poverty

The INEC measures poverty using two methods. The first is the unidimensional method, which looks at household income in relation to the poverty line. The second is the multidimensional method, which is based on the multidimensional poverty index, which determines whether households are deprived based on five indicators: i) housing and internet use, ii) education, iii) work, iv) health, and v) state protection. These dimensions are also used to measure countries' development levels and make policy decisions.

Table 12 presents data from the 2021 National Household Survey to measure household poverty in Costa Rica for both the immigrant and native-born populations.

Table 12. Households in Costa Rica by level and type of poverty by country of origin, 2021 (percentages)

		Country of origin			
		Nicaragua	Total foreign population	Costa Rica	Total population (native-born and foreign)
Poverty level	Extreme poverty	10.4	9.3	7.1	7.3
	Non-extreme poverty	24.1	21.3	18.7	18.9
	No poverty	65.5	69.3	74.2	73.8
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Multidimensional poverty	No multidimensional poverty	60.2	66.4	80.7	79.5
	Multidimensional poverty	39.8	33.6	19.3	20.5
	Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Authors based on data from the 2021 National Household Survey (ENAH0, 2021) conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INEC).

According to data on the distribution of monthly per capita household income, almost a quarter of Nicaraguan immigrant households live in non-extreme poverty and 10.4 percent live in extreme poverty. Among households of Costa Rican origin, these two shares are 18.7 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively. Thus, the data shows that the share of households living in poverty is higher among immigrants than the native-born population.

Turning to the multidimensional poverty index, 39.8 percent of Nicaraguan immigrant households live in conditions of multidimensional poverty. This is only true of half as many households of Costa Rican origin (19.9 percent). In short, regardless of the method used to measure poverty, it affects households made up of Nicaraguan immigrants more than those made up of Costa Ricans.

Compared to the native-born population, immigrants of Nicaraguan origin residing permanently in Costa Rica face more difficulties in terms of social inclusion, which is expressed in all the indicators (housing, education, work, health, income distribution and poverty).

According to the National Integration Plan for Costa Rica 2018–2022: most social programmes and services targeting the low-income population receive funding [from the Family Development and Allocation Fund (FODESAF)], which is the main selective social policy instrument for addressing poverty in Costa Rica. However, the FODESAF Act puts limits on migrants’ access to programmes and services that are financed using these resources, with the exception of minors, people with disabilities or those with chronic or terminal illnesses. Article 2 of FODESAF Act (Law No. 8783 of 2009, which reforms Law No. 5662) states that “The beneficiaries of this Fund are Costa Ricans, foreigners residing legally in the country, and minors in a situation of poverty or extreme poverty regardless of whether their migration status is regular, in accordance with the requirements established in this and other laws in force and their regulations.” (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, 2017, p. 49)

As noted above, the main factor limiting access to social services is having an irregular migration status. The exception to this are socially vulnerable irregular migrants, who are permitted to access certain programmes and services.

This analysis of the migration context in Costa Rica covered the situation of temporary, special and permanent resident migrants. The following section examines that of migrants in transit.

2.2 Migrants in transit

In addition to the three migrant categories contemplated by the DGME that were the focus of section 2.1, the situation of migrants in transit also needs to be explored. As mentioned above, migration flows in the Americas are mainly south to the north, specifically to the United States. Costa Rica's location in Central America makes the country a transit route for many migrants. Indeed, Costa Rica is deemed to be an intra- and extracontinental migration corridor that forms part of a cross-border route that runs across the region and is used by migrants moving towards the United States. According to data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), it is estimated that an average 157 extraregional migrants in transit enter the country every day through the Paso Canoas migration post (*Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2021b*).

There are mixed intracontinental migration flows to the United States, mostly from countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Haiti and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. There are also extracontinental flows from countries in Africa (such as Cameroon, the Republic of Congo and Senegal) and Asia (India, among other countries identified).

According to Mora-Izaguirre (2020), the movement of extracontinental migrants in transit became evident in Costa Rica in 2016, when the presence of thousands of people from Africa and South Asia was recorded. This population was on their way to the United States and did not meet the requirements to enter Costa Rica that were in force at the time.

The presence of Haitian migrants in similar conditions was also observed, which is why the DGME established a temporary entry and stay permit for humanitarian assistance, with the aim of providing these groups with the assistance they need to continue their journey.

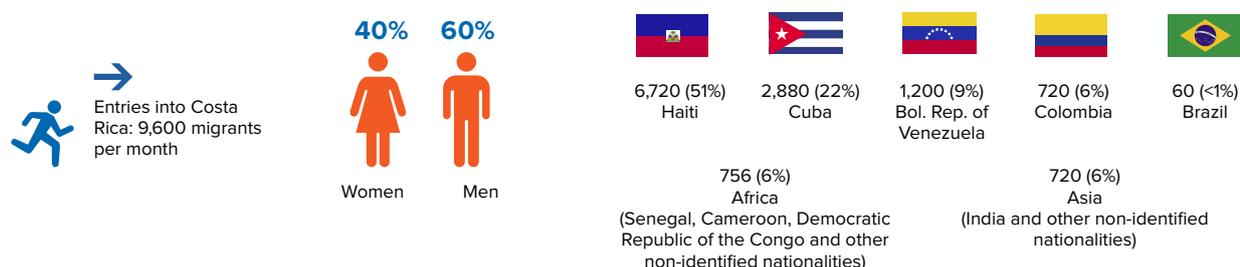
Table 13. Number of people who received a temporary entry and stay permit for humanitarian assistance in Costa Rica, by sex, 2016–2019

2016		2017		2018		2019		2020	
18,301		5,815		8,963		241,021		241,021	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
13,302	4,999	5,284	531	7,754	1,209	16,137	7,965	2,787	1,958
Origin of largest group of migrants									
Congo Brazzaville		Nepal		India		Haiti		Haiti	
10,613		2,098		2,931		8,717		3,462	

Source: Mora-Izaguirre (2020, p. 103, table 1). The data for 2020 was added by the authors and was obtained from the DGME.

It should also be noted that the migration status of migrants in transit may be regular or irregular, which makes it harder to identify them, acquire data on them and assist them. According to IOM estimates based on data provided by key informants for the evaluation of irregular migration flows, around 9,600 people enter Costa Rica irregularly every month (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2021b). These migrants are deemed irregular because they enter and leave the country via unofficial border crossings (see diagram 2).

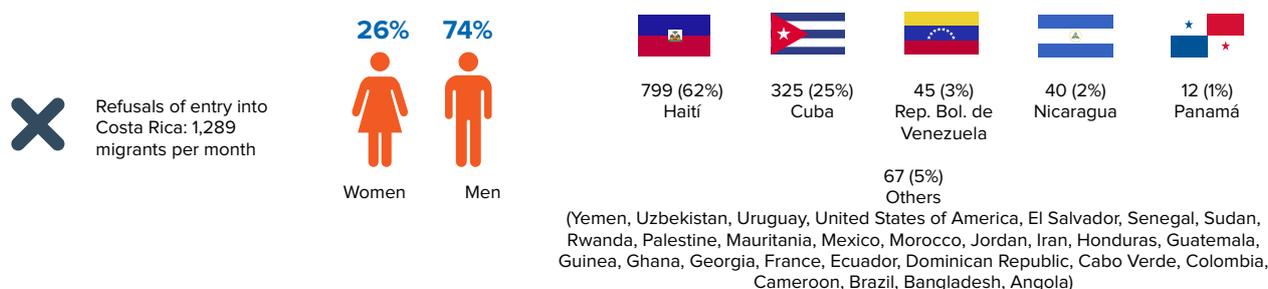
Diagram 2. Estimated irregular migration flows in Costa Rica by sex and nationality, June 2021



Source: Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2021.

According to the IOM, the DGME deports or refuses the entry into Costa Rica of approximately 1,289 persons per month, for different reasons. Diagram 3 shows the distribution of people refused entry to Costa Rica each month by nationality and sex (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2021b).

Diagram 3. Refusals of entry to Costa Rica by sex and nationality, June 2021



Source: Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2021.

It is also estimated that around 20 people per month are stranded at the Paso Canoas checkpoint. These are people who cannot continue their journey but cannot return to their country of origin for various humanitarian or security reasons.

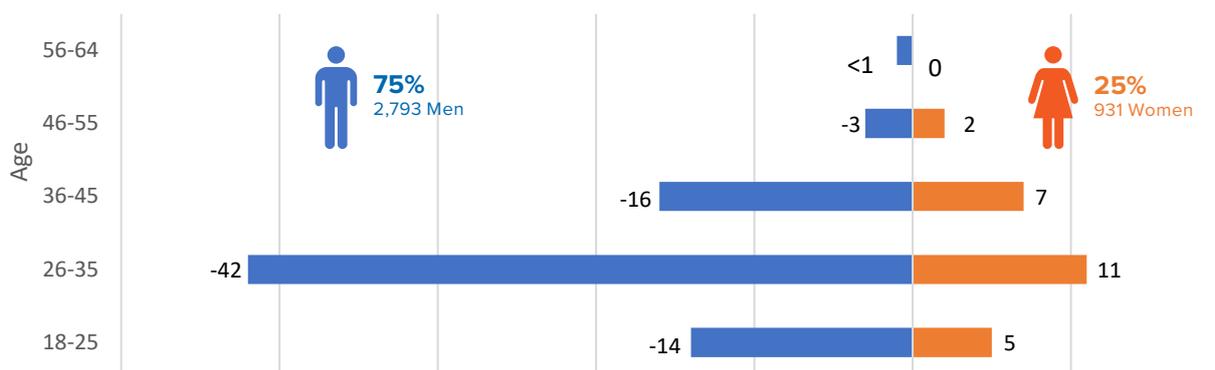
To assist migrants in transit through the Americas, such as those described above, the DGME set up Temporary Assistance Centres for Migrants (CATEMs) on the country's northern and southern borders. These have the capacity to attend 1,500 and 1,000 people per month, respectively.

The CATEMs were created to provide migrants in transit with assistance in the form of health services, shelter, translation services or food. The assistance provided is of the utmost importance for the migrant population, who are generally extremely vulnerable, and helps them to continue their transit. The service provided by the CATEMs is managed in coordination with the CCSS and the Red Cross.

Additionally, according to a monitoring exercise conducted by the IOM between the Migrant Reception Station in Los Planes, Gualaca, Panama, to the Peñas Blancas border checkpoint, the majority of migrants in transit in January 2022 came from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (43 percent), followed by Cuba (15 percent), Haiti (14 percent) and Senegal (9 percent), while the remaining 19 percent were from other parts of the world. Some 75 percent of these migrants stated that the United States was their final destination, and 91 percent said that they were travelling in the company of family members (Organización Internacional para las Migraciones, 2022).

In January 2022, the irregular entry of 3,724 persons in transit in Costa Rica was recorded. The sociodemographic characteristics of these migrants are shown in figure 4.

Figure 4. People in transit through the Americas in Costa Rica in 2022 by age and sex (percentages)

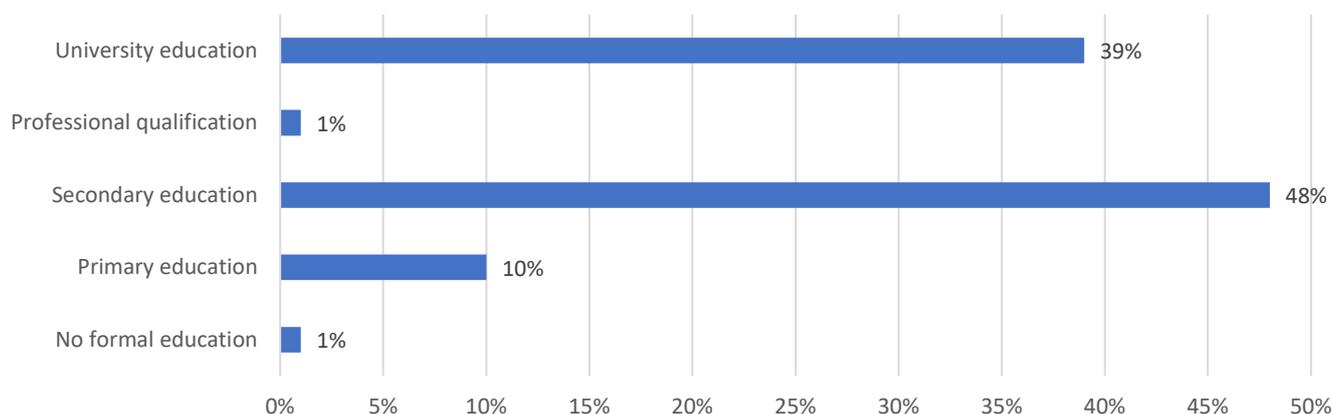


Source: Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (2022, figure 3).

Note: The percentages presented in the table are based on a total of 3,724 people.

The data presented in figure 4 shows that the vast majority of migrants in transit (three-quarters) are men. Of these, 42 percent are aged 26–35 and less than 1 percent are aged 56–64.

Figure 5. People in movement across the Americas by educational level in Costa Rica, 2022 (percentages)



Source: Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (2022, figure 4).

Note: The percentages presented in the table are based on a total of 3,724 people. The graph shows the highest level of education that the person has completed.

The data presented in figure 5 shows that almost half (48 percent) of the migrants in transit in Costa Rica have completed a secondary education and 39 percent have a university education. Some 10 percent have a primary education and only 1 percent have no formal education at all. Migrants from Cuba and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela have the highest percentages of completed secondary education (93 percent and 92 percent, respectively), while 23 percent of people from Haiti have not finished secondary school and 12 percent of people from Senegal have no formal education.

3. Institutional and regulatory framework: migration policies in Costa Rica

The migration dynamics of Costa Rica are such that it is migrant-receiving country, a migrant transit country and also expels migrants. As a result, the Costa Rican State has developed an institutional and regulatory framework that seeks to respond to the assistance and protection needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Among the main institutions that the country has in place to address migration issues are the following:

- i) The Migration and Alien Affairs Authority (DGME), founded through Law No. 6812 in 1982, is the institution attached to the Ministry of Interior and Police that is responsible for enforcing migration legislation and policies. In other words, it regulates and manages the entry, stay and exit of foreigners. It also establishes migration categories for migrants, receives applications for refugee status, approves residency applications and decides whether migrants are deported or expelled from the country.
- ii) The Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) is an autonomous state institution that is responsible for managing health insurance and pensions for workers. For the DGME to regulate the status of migrants, one of the requirements of the General Law on Migration and Aliens (Law No. 8764) is affiliation with the CCSS system.
- iii) The Ombud's Office, created in 1992 through Law No. 7319, is an oversight body that is part of the Legislative Branch and serves as the technical secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Migrant and Refugee Populations. The latter is made up of government institutions, international agencies, civil society organizations, academic

institutions and other organizations dealing with migration-related issues. The Ombud's Office plays an important role in ensuring respect for the human rights of both the native-born and migrant populations in Costa Rica.

iv) The Ministry of Labour and Social Security is responsible for monitoring and ensuring that labour legislation is properly implemented and enforced, as well as educating the population on the rights and duties of workers and employers. It also mediates during dispute settlement processes between these two parties and grants work permits to certain categories of migrants to meet the temporary demand for skilled labour.

v) The Ministry of Public Education is the governing body for public education in Costa Rica. Article 78 of the Constitution states that preschool education and general basic education are compulsory and free of charge. In addition, article 2 of the General Law on Common Education states that education is compulsory up to the age of 15, so that immigrant children can and should have access to it on equal footing with the native-born population.

vi) The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship came into being through the Political Constitution of 1847. Its functions include defining foreign policy, defending sovereignty, overseeing the diplomatic service and managing relations with the governments of other countries and foreign institutions. It is also responsible for approving or denying applications for refugee status. If such an application is approved, the DGME only provides documentation proving that the applicant has special resident status.

The Costa Rican State has implemented other initiatives that constitute progress in terms of the regulations in force on migrant issues. These actions or instruments are listed below.

(i) The General Law on Migration and Aliens (Law No. 8764). This law was passed in 2009. Article 1 states that it regulates foreigners' entry into, stay in and exit from Costa Rican territory, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and international treaties and conventions that have been duly signed and ratified and are in force in the country, making particular reference to international human rights instruments. It also defines exit requirements for Costa Rican nationals.

(ii) National Migration Council. This institution was created in 2010 by the General Law on Migration and Aliens (Law No. 8764). It brings together various government institutions that are responsible for managing and coordinating migration-related initiatives and actions. Its remits include making migration policy recommendations to the Office of the President and taking the actions needed to implement these.

iii) Comprehensive Migration Policy for Costa Rica. In 2013, the National Migration Council published the Comprehensive Migration Policy for Costa Rica, the general objective of which is to establish an inter-institutional coordination system that promotes the effective management of migration by the Costa Rican State, in accordance with the nation's comprehensive development needs, national security and respect for human rights.

iv) National Integration Plan 2018–2022. This was created based on the Comprehensive Migration Policy for Costa Rica. It puts forward an approach to the migration situation in Costa Rica and analyses the specific features of migration flows, as well as their causes, effects and impacts. By undertaking a diagnostic review of the situation of migrants, it seeks to address their needs through the Integration and Human Development Department, which is the authority responsible for guiding migration-related initiatives in the country, under the guidance of the DGME. This plan is organized around six strategic areas (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, 2017):

- The recognition of diversity: to achieve this, “equal rights and interaction between immigrants and Costa Ricans need to be guaranteed to mitigate the anti-immigration stance that is reflected in the social imaginary of a homogeneous Costa Rica, which encourage xenophobia, racism and discrimination” (Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería, 2017, p. 46).
- Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in vulnerable situations: this strategy seeks to address migrants in extreme poverty, returning migrants, asylum seekers, indigenous peoples, women, unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking and smuggling, and LGBTI populations.
- Migration and work: the objective is to ensure compliance with Costa Rican regulations regarding migrant workers, who must be able to work on equal footing with Costa Ricans.
- Migration and health: the objective is for all migrants seeking to obtain Costa Rican nationality to enrol with the CCSS system.
- Migration and education: the aim is to include all migrants, not just children, in the education system.
- Institutional strengthening: this cross-cutting area is included to implement the migrant integration policy more effectively.

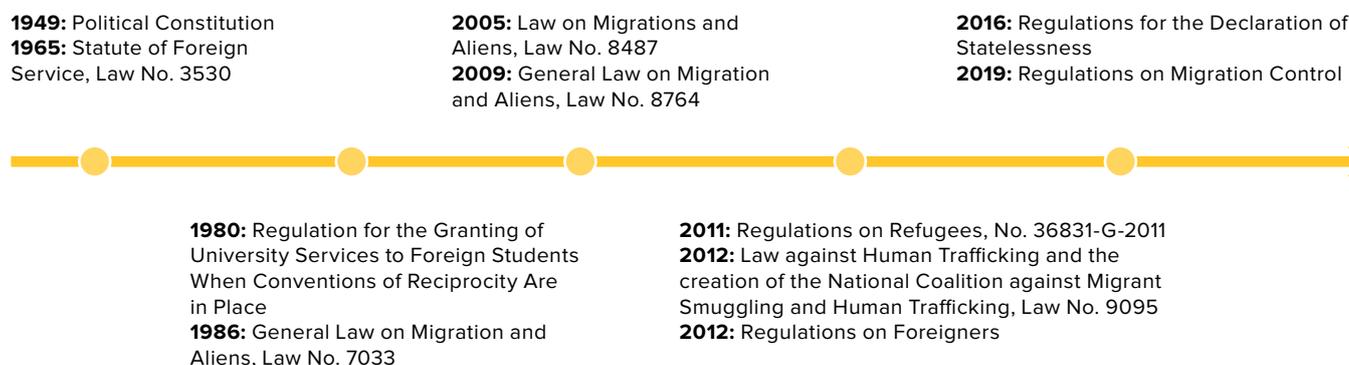
v) Comprehensive Plan for the Management of Mixed Migration Flows. As part of the Comprehensive Migration Policy for Costa Rica, the National Migration Council is implementing the Comprehensive Plan for Assisting Mixed Migration Flows. The objective of this plan is to provide comprehensive assistance through all relevant Costa Rican state institutions for migration flows entering or remaining in the country under special or exceptional circumstances—such as transit migration, irregular migration, asylum-seeking, migrant smuggling or human trafficking—to promote orderly, regular migration and guarantee border security.

vi) Law against Human Trafficking and the creation of the National Coalition Against Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking (CONATT) (Law No. 9095). In 2012, Law No. 9095 created this authority to coordinate migration policies. It is made up of the senior officials heading 22 state bodies (various institutions and ministries), which are monitored by international bodies such as the IOM, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the ILO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).⁸ Its main objectives, listed in article 1 of the law, are to “promote public policies for the comprehensive fight against human trafficking” and related activities and “define a specific, complementary framework to provide protection and assistance to victims of human trafficking and their dependents”. They also include establishing agreements with other States to strengthen international cooperation against human trafficking (Asamblea Legislativa, 2012).

Below is a timeline summarizing the progress on national migration regulations, which includes the instruments mentioned above, as well as other relevant instruments created from the second half of the 20th Century onwards.

⁸ Details of the law can be consulted in the Costa Rican Legal Information System, www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=74132&nValor3=0&strTipM=TC.

Diagram 4. Advances in national migration regulations in Costa Rica, 1949–2019



Source: Authors based on data from Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería (2018).

The country's key migration-related initiatives include the implementation of regularization programmes or processes, which have benefited migrant groups by favouring improvements to their living conditions (see table 14).

Table 14. Programmes and processes to regularize the status of the migrant population in Costa Rica, 2019–2022

Process	Reason for regularization	Beneficiaries	Validity
First-time application for permanent residence	Family ties	Foreigners related by first degree of consanguinity to a Costa Rican citizen, be they parents of these, adult children with disabilities, underage siblings or adult siblings with disabilities. It also contemplates foreigners, their spouses, and their relatives by first degree of consanguinity who have been temporary residents in the country for three consecutive years.	From 2019 to the present
Application for residency on humanitarian grounds	Humanitarian reasons	Migrants whose status is irregular and who need to have this regularized for humanitarian reasons to address a situation of vulnerability in which they find themselves.	From 2019 to the present
Law No.9710 on the Protection of the Right to Costa Rican Nationality for Indigenous Persons and Guaranteeing the Integration of Cross-Border Indigenous Persons	Specific nationality	Cross-border indigenous persons in the country who do not have a nationality or whose status is irregular.	From 2019 to the present
Special category for temporary workers in the agricultural, agro-export, and agro-industrial sector (CETTSA)	Work	Foreigners who entered Costa Rican territory between 15 January 2016 and 15 January 2020 and who work or intend to work in the agricultural, agro-export or agribusiness sectors. Foreigners whose migration status has not been regularized or who requested the regularization of their stay in the country between the dates in question and whose request is pending a decision may opt for this special category.	From 22 June 2020 to 22 December 2020
Special Temporary Category of Complementary Protection for Venezuelan, Nicaraguan and Cuban nationals whose refugee applications have been denied	Time and specific nationality	People from Nicaragua, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Cuba who have been issued a final decision denying refugee status between 1 January 2016 and the date on which the decision expires, who were physically present in the national territory before 18 March 2020 regardless of whether their status is regular or irregular, and who applied for asylum between 1 January 2016 and 18 March 2020.	18 December 2020 to 15 December 2021

Source: Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (2021, pp. 28–29, table 2).

Our analysis of the regulatory framework on migration shows that Costa Rica is a country that has sought to develop institutional tools to guarantee compliance with the human rights of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, stateless people or victims of trafficking or smuggling in recent years.

The country has made concrete progress on developing its migration policy, within the framework of a vision that takes into account the dynamics of the country's development and a human rights approach. However, there are still difficulties around the implementation and enforcement of these policies. They also need to be constantly evaluated, and a forward-looking vision needs to be deployed that contemplates the future challenges that will arise as a result of the difficulties of managing migration and the changes that will gradually result from migration and the country's population dynamics.

At the institutional level, it is important to make the effects of the policy visible through concrete actions that show the progress that has been achieved thanks to regulations that aim to guarantee the protection of these populations.

3.1. Public impressions of the migrant population in Costa Rica

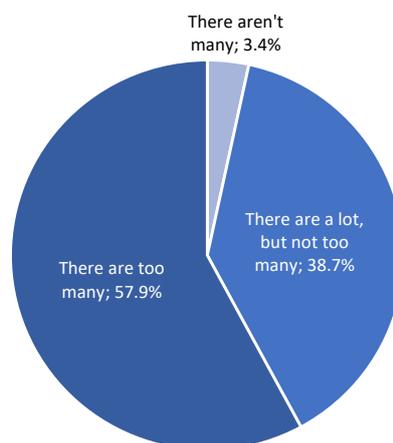
One of the most important aspects of assistance for the migrant population has to do with building relations based on social harmony and inclusion in the receiving country. It is thus important to analyse the impressions that prevail in Costa Rican society regarding the migrant population residing in the country. In social terms, one of the main challenges that need to be overcome is that certain segments of Costa Rican society continue to view migrants in light of myths and stereotypes that influence the native-born population's perceptions of them.

A report published by the Institute of Social Studies on Population in 2019, based on a telephone survey of 1,002 people, inquired about the Costa Rican population's perceptions of the migrant population⁹ (Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población, 2019).

One of these perceptions is based on a myth surrounding the number of Nicaraguans residing in the country, which was overestimated by part of the population: 53.3 percent of respondents said that there might be more than 1 million Nicaraguans in Costa Rica, which contrasts with official INEC data. Furthermore, according to the survey data cited above, more than half of respondents said that there are too many migrants residing in Costa Rica, which reflects a need to address this idea to promote improved inclusion and social harmony (Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población, 2019).

⁹ The survey had a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of ± 3.1 percent.

Figure 6. Percentage distribution of the Costa Rican population interviewed regarding their views on the number of migrants residing in Costa Rica, 2018



Source: Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población (2019).

Note: The percentages presented in the table are based on a sample of 998 people. The survey interviewed Costa Ricans aged 18 and older.

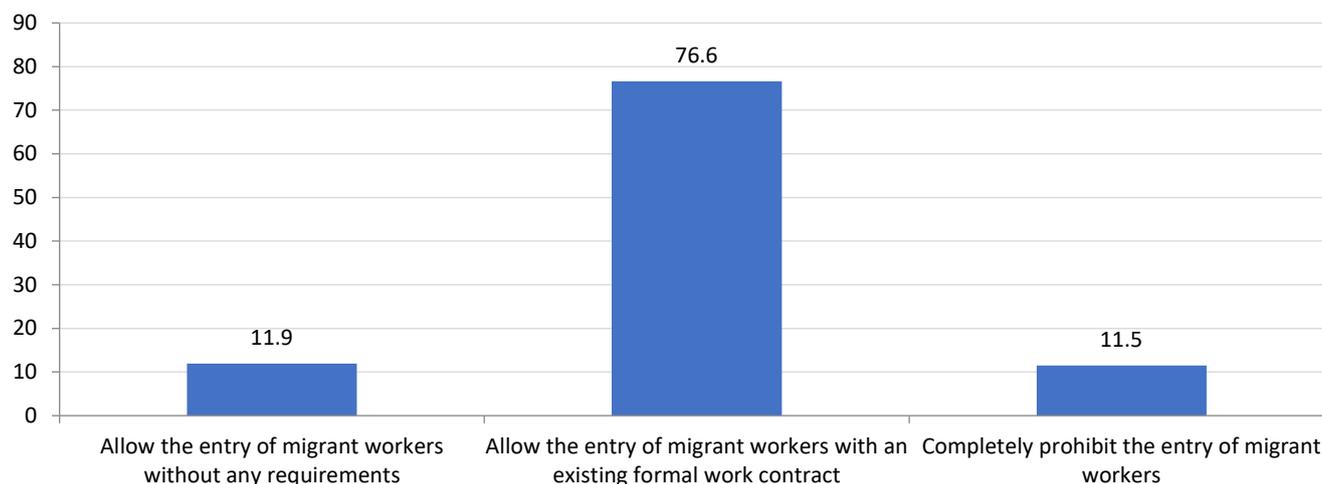
The study conducted by the Institute for Social Studies in Population also underlines the need to continue working on stereotypes associated with the migrant population. It identified negative ideas about this population, such as the belief that migrants bring problems, a statement with which more than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed (55 percent).

There were other statements with which a large proportion of the respondents agreed. Some 56.4 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: “in general, the socio-economic conditions of the Costa Rican population get worse when people from other countries come to live in Costa Rica”. Some 66.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the idea that, “in general, the arrival of people who come to live and work here jeopardizes the finances of poor or unemployed people more than those of wealthy people” (Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población, 2019).

The above results show that actions need to be implemented to promote effective inclusion and social harmony. The fact that a segment of the Costa Rican population underlines the negative qualities of migrants is an indication that they may engage in acts of discrimination against them, which greatly affect the quality of life of the migrant population and their chances of development.

In keeping with the above, it should be remembered that Costa Rica’s migration dynamics mean that it has a diversity of migration flows, as mentioned above, and that the migration status of people residing in the country also varies. This is why it is also possible to identify differences in the Costa Rican population’s perceptions of the migrant population, as is reflected in the survey mentioned above. Indeed, the Costa Rican population’s perceptions of the migrant population vary depending on the conditions in which migrants enter the country. On the matter of migrants who arrive in Costa Rica to work there, the majority of respondents (76.6 percent) answered that migrant workers should only be granted permission to enter the country if they have a formal work contract (Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población, 2019).

Figure 7. Percentage distribution of Costa Rican respondents' views on the most appropriate policy for migrant workers residing in Costa Rica, 2018



Source: Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población (2019).

Note: The percentages presented in the table are based on a sample of 1,001 people. The survey interviewed Costa Ricans aged 18 and older.

This reveals that the migrant population are perceived differently depending on their migration status, which puts people whose migration status is irregular at a disadvantage. This is true not only structurally but also socially since, as mentioned in previous sections, there are particular situations that may prevent the migrant population from completing regularization procedures.

This obviously influences social relations due to the construction of perceptions of migration phenomenon and the imaginary around the resident migrant population and those in transit through the country. This points to the need to promote actions to raise awareness among the Costa Rican population and further the inclusion of migrants.

4. Challenges for the implementation of migration policy in the country

This section begins by exploring the main migration policy challenges that Costa Rica is facing. It then puts forward recommendations to promote the appropriate implementation of migration policy in the country. A study on migration policy and integration in Costa Rica published by the Migration Policy Institute in 2021 is an interesting contribution to identifying the main challenges facing the country in this regard (Chaves-González and Mora, 2021).

The study developed an index to assess different areas, such as registration and regularization, health, employment and education, based on the principles of accessibility, outreach and communication, coordination and social harmony, which are described in table 15.

Table 15. Conceptual definitions of the principles of accessibility, outreach and communication, coordination and social cohesion.

<p>Accessibility</p> <p>This principle is based on the recognition of migrants' rights. It entails treating migrant and refugee populations with dignity and providing them with effective assistance.</p>	<p>Coordination</p> <p>This considers how each institution coordinates with others to design, implement, evaluate and follow up on the different forms of care offered to migrant and refugee populations in the country.</p>
<p>Outreach and communication</p> <p>In addition to creating assistance programmes and projects to support migrant inclusion, States must effectively share relevant information about these offers with potential beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Social harmony</p> <p>This dimension examines social and attitudinal dynamics around migration and whether the Government sets realistic expectations among members of the public about the costs and benefits of migration.</p>

Source: Chaves-González and Mora (2021, p. 17).

Each of the dimensions assessed is made up of five variables. The same weighting values were used for all of them: high, medium-high, medium, medium-low and low, with low being the weakest score and high being the strongest. Table 16 shows the results obtained for the four areas mentioned above (registration and regularization, health, employment and education), in terms of the four principles contemplated in the analysis (accessibility, outreach and communication, coordination and social harmony).

Table 16. Index of integration policies and practices by policy sector in Costa Rica

Dimension	Variable	Registration, Regularization	Health	Employment	Education
Accessibility	Institutional framework	Medium high	Medium	High	Medium
	Legal avenues	Medium	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low
	Entry barriers	Low	Medium low	Medium	Medium low
	Financial barriers	Medium low	Medium low	Medium	Medium low
	Attitudinal barriers	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low
	Barriers to training civil servants	Medium	Medium low	Medium low	Low
	Subtotal	Medium	Medium low	Medium	Medium low
Coordination	Between national entities	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium low
	Between national and provincial entities	Medium	N/A	N/A	Low
	Between national government, NGOs and international cooperation agencies	High	High	Medium high	High
	Subtotal	Medium high	Medium high	Medium high	Medium
Outreach and communication	Outreach strategies	Medium	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low
	Barriers to information	Medium	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low
	Differentiated approaches to outreach to different audiences	Medium	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low
	Subtotal	Medium	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low
Social Cohesion	Existence of strategies	Medium	Medium	Medium low	N/A
	Social obstacles	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low
	Attitudinal barriers	Medium low	N/A	Medium low	Low
	Subtotal	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low	Medium low
Total for each policy sector		Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium low

Source: Chaves-González and Mora (2021, p. 18, table 2).

Note: Scores were established using the following ranges: low (0.00000–0.14999); medium-low (0.15000–0.34999); medium (0.35–0.54999); medium-high (0.55000–0.74999); and high (0.75000–1.00000). "N/A" indicates that there was insufficient data to produce a score.

The data generated in the Migration Policy Institute (2021) study mentioned above is relevant to analysing migration policy in the current context, as it uses recent data and evaluates different aspects that could be used to prioritize the issues to be addressed by migration policy. Table 17 details the main findings of this study by topic by score. It also lists factors that could be associated with the main strengths and weaknesses of each topic.

Table 17. Strengths and weaknesses of integration policies and practices in Costa Rica, 2021

	Main strengths	Main weaknesses
Registration and regularization	<p>The institutional framework for the registration and regularization of the migrant population in Costa Rica is above average.</p> <p>There is a wide range of migration categories that allow access to regularization.</p> <p>The Costa Rican Government has implemented several strategies to increase access to information, regularize the irregular migrant population and combat xenophobia.</p> <p>One strategy worth highlighting is Migramóvil, a DGME initiative. Migration officials travel by bus to the most remote corners of the country to provide information to potential beneficiaries on the requirements of regularization schemes. This has the potential to reduce information gaps and make integration services more accessible to migrants residing in rural areas who do not have the means to travel to San José, where most of these services are located.</p>	<p>In practice, there are barriers that limit access to regularization. Barriers to entry such as application fees and documentation requirements were identified as the largest obstacles in this area. These obstacles may be more relevant for migrants of specific nationalities, such as the Central American population.</p> <p>The support provided to the migrant population to ensure they have access to information may be limited. The language used by the Government to present migration regulations also limits access. In many cases, particularly among those applying for refugee status, migrants often do not have legal representation and the information provided by the authorities tends to be basic.</p> <p>Civil society organizations have implemented actions to fill these information gaps but they fail to provide support for the entire migrant population.</p>
Health	<p>The Costa Rican Social Security Fund (CCSS) is governed by the principles of universality and solidarity. Contributing to the CCSS is a prerequisite for acquiring legal migration status, so all regular migrants should have access to state health care (which entails three levels of care).</p>	<p>However, the principle of universality in health care does not extend to a large majority of migrants.</p> <p>Costa Rica's migration regulations state that one of the basic prerequisites for applying for legal migration status is to have CCSS insurance. The DGME thus issues migrants with provisional residency documents to enable them to use the CCSS.</p> <p>However, the high irregularity rates in the country mean that those seeking refugee status are not legally entitled to medical care and need to obtain insurance through the CCSS to access health services. Some exceptions are made to ensure care for minors, regardless of their status and for pregnant women, for whom prenatal or emergency care is provided.</p> <p>There are significant legal, institutional and practical barriers that prevent migrants from accessing health care, even when they have the right to demand it.</p>
Work	<p>The legal framework makes institutions such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Security responsible for overseeing migration and guaranteeing the protection and social integration of the migrant population.</p>	<p>One major challenge that the migrant population faces is just finding work but accessing quality jobs and the formal labour market.</p> <p>The refugee or asylum-seeking population have the right to work or engage in a legal economic activity but there are various barriers that limit access, including the fact that they must wait 90 days after submitting an application for refugee status before they can apply for a work permit.</p> <p>Refugees aspiring to work can only do so in professions that are authorized in the formal employment sector and are also required to be members of a professional association to work in certain professions.</p> <p>Given the conditions in which humanitarian migrants leave their countries, it is difficult for many to authenticate their educational or professional qualifications.</p> <p>The demographic and skills profile of migrants by nationality should also be considered, as this variable influences their labour market inclusion significantly.</p> <p>Consequently, any evaluation of how to improve the labour market inclusion of the country's migrant population must take into account the specific features and needs of each group.</p>

<p>Education</p>	<p>Access to education is officially guaranteed for the migrant population, as Costa Rica's legal framework establishes that minors cannot be refused enrolment in primary or secondary schools because they lack a legal migration status or academic records. The Government has taken measures to improve the foreign population's access to all levels of education (primary and secondary).</p> <p>This is why the Ministry of Public Education seeks to guarantee the right to education by integrating refugees, asylum seekers and migrants into the country's education systems.</p> <p>The State issued a decree outlining measures and guidelines on how the education sector should proceed in terms of placement testing, psychosocial assistance and initiatives to prevent students from dropping out.</p> <p>Another important point is that this decree enables the migrant population to submit affidavits in place of identity documents if they do not have these and also establishes that educational establishments are obliged to promote intercultural education, which promotes knowledge of foreign cultures.</p> <p>One of the objectives identified in the 2015–2021 Agenda for Children and Adolescents was to develop a coordination protocol between the Ministry of Public Education and the DGME to regularize migrant children within the public education sector. If approved, this initiative would allow them to obtain regular migration status through a special category for students.</p>	<p>The foreign population faces other barriers to accessing education, and migrants enrolled in schools may experience challenges in completing their studies. These barriers take different forms in basic and higher education.</p> <p>In practice, the lack of standardization of inclusion measures can lead to inconsistent decisions that are detrimental to migrant children. For example, there are many unfavourable stereotypes among the Costa Rican population about the intelligence and education levels of Nicaraguans. There have been documented cases in which school principals have sought to deny access to certain students because they called into question the level of education they had acquired in Nicaragua. Migrant children's access to adequate education may be limited by leaving enrolment decisions in the hands of school administrators, whose actions may be unconsciously shaped by prevailing prejudices. Cases were also reported in which parents were asked to comply with unnecessary requirements, such as presenting apostilled official documents. One study showed that validating educational qualifications and certificates is a barrier to access and that migrant families have been asked to present banking, legal and educational documents.</p> <p>Ambiguity surrounds the debate on how to integrate migrants and those seeking refugee status into higher education programmes.</p> <p>The relative lack of initiatives targeting migrants seeking access to higher education is partly rooted in the stereotype that Central American migrants, especially Nicaraguans, are uneducated. This has given rise to the view that such initiatives are unnecessary. The migrants that have arrived in more recent years have more diverse socio-economic profiles and levels of education. There is thus a growing need for inclusive measures in higher education.</p>
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Source: Authors based on data from Chaves-González and Mora (2021, p. 17–42).

Table 17 lists Costa Rica's migration policy achievements and strengths but also notes the clear challenges that the country must face to guarantee that migrants are given adequate assistance and ensure their well-being and respect for their rights.

5. Recommendations for migration policy in Costa Rica

By analysing the overall situation of migration in the country, its regulatory and institutional framework, and the key aspects of assistance for the migrant population, it was possible to identify key points that can be framed as migration policy recommendations for Costa Rica. These are listed below.

- i) More mechanisms need to be implemented to provide information on and raise awareness around the regulations that have been established to regularize migrants. In addition to assessing the costs of this procedure, the possibility of establishing some sort of economic subsidy for this purpose could be considered.
- ii) The functioning of the DGME should be strengthened so that it can provide rapid responses to requests for regularization and manage changes in the migrant population's migration status to alleviate the overload that it is currently experiencing.
- iii) The Costa Rican State needs to promote better inter-institutional coordination, mainly among the institutions that assist the migrant population, such as the DGME, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the CCSS. Actions also need to be coordinated with civil society institutions that provide support to the migrant population, as the work they carry out is extremely important for this population and the country as a whole.

- iv) The greatest challenge to the social inclusion of immigrants is obtaining a regular migration status since this allows them to improve their living conditions. Migrants can access various programmes, the education system and the scholarship system and can participate in social assistance programmes such as FODESAF. They could get a decent formal job that complies with labour rights, join a health and pension system, and be paid the minimum legal wage, but this access is quite limited when people's migration status is irregular.
- v) Initiatives to regulate migration processes should be coordinated to be able to respond promptly to migrants' applications, because regularizing their migration status gives them access to formal employment and decent jobs that comply with the legislation and public health. Those that do not know how to go about the application process also need to be provided with information and support.
- vi) The overwhelming number of refugee applications and the large number of requirements that must be met to apply may cause the migrant population to decide not to submit applications, mainly due to a lack of knowledge of the requirements in question and financial limitations.
- vii) The number of years it takes to obtain regular migration status contributes to Nicaraguan migrants' decision to settle permanently in the country. Therefore, despite the large number of applications that are denied, many migrants choose to remain in the country even though their migration status is irregular. There is thus a need for procedures to be simplified to make it easier to regulate migration.
- viii) There are multiple economic limitations that foster irregularity, including the high costs of regularization procedures, the fact that applicants must make uninterrupted insurance contributions to the CCSS, the low level of access to formal employment while waiting for a decision from the DGME and the cost of the migrant identity document for foreigners when the application is approved. We thus recommend that specific cases be analysed to identify whether they merit economic support or the provision of a subsidy for the regularization process.
- ix) The requirements for applying for a work permit include joining the CCSS, which implies a monthly insurance payment, another expense that the immigrant population seeking to settle in the country must cover. Migrants often decide not to make these insurance payments due to the financial restrictions that the outlay implies, which put them in a more vulnerable position. It is worth noting that half of the migrants in Costa Rica work in the informal labour market.
- x) Labour informality is high among migrants of Nicaraguan origin. It is therefore recommended that the Costa Rican State implement measures to regulate employment conditions, ensuring compliance with the country's labour regulations and respect for labour rights.
- xi) We recommend that the Costa Rican State recognize the importance of access to health insurance for the migrant population, as this allows them to receive timely care in the event of illness and during childbirth and enables them to contribute to the pension system. We also recommend that both employers and workers be provided with information on the procedures in question and that these be made more flexible, regardless of individuals' migration status, with a view to increasing health insurance coverage among migrants.
- xii) Incentives should also be implemented to enable the migrant population to enter and remain in the education system (e.g. measures to encourage students at all education levels to regularize their migration status). Above all, initiatives need to take university students into consideration and promote their access to scholarship systems, as higher education is still seen as a mechanism for upward social mobility in Costa Rica.

- xiii) Improvements need to be made to the information provided by the Ministry of Public Education on procedures to assist migrant students. The ministerial administrative and teaching staff also need to receive better training regarding these procedures. In addition, the immigrant population have the right to understand the domestic and international legislation relating to their human rights.
- xiv) Greater access to education for the Nicaraguan immigrant population could help them make greater socio-economic contributions to Costa Rican society by expanding the skilled labour force.
- xv) All governments need to address xenophobia, which particularly impacts the migrant population in Costa Rica. The country needs to implement actions to better inform the local population and debunk myths about migrants, particularly those of Nicaraguan origin. Various perception studies suggest that stereotypical images of the migrant population persist in Costa Rica (Instituto de Estudios Sociales en Población, 2019).
- xvi) It is important to inform the native-born population of the contributions that the immigrant population makes to society in both demographic and economic terms (for example, by providing skilled labour for national production). This would help debunk certain myths and stereotypes that are reproduced in Costa Rican society and that encourage xenophobia and discrimination.
- xvii) To ensure the effective labour market inclusion of the migrant population, migrant workers' access to information on their rights and duties needs to be improved so that they have a better understanding of their working conditions. Particular attention needs to be paid to parts of the country where there are more migrant workers, regardless of their migration status.
- xviii) Official statistics should be used as a key input for decision-making on public policy issues. The analysis in this paper was based on an examination of various social integration indicators concerning the migrant population. This data revealed that migrants, especially those of Nicaraguan origin, are more vulnerable than the Costa Rican population. This demonstrates that there are various asymmetries in the country's circumstances in terms of access to housing, education, work, health and income.
- xix) Costa Rica clearly has a solid institutional framework for assisting the migrant population, but this assistance continues to be financially dependent on international cooperation agencies. To ensure that policies are properly implemented, effective communication and outreach programmes need to be implemented to inform the population in general about the provisions of national and international regulations and inter-American instruments on the rights of migrants. This would promote better access to regulations, health, work and education.
- xx) Local governments should develop initiatives to provide assistance for the migrant population and identify their main needs, as data from the 2021 National Household Survey shows that there continue to be significant gaps in economic status and access to rights between the native-born population and the migrant population, especially those of Nicaraguan origin.
- xxi) We recommend that the national Government work with local governments to generate a joint strategy to strengthen assistance mechanisms and further the development of Costa Rican communities that are constantly receiving migrant populations, including both those in transit and those seeking to settle in the country. This would improve the conditions for social harmony and integration.

These points respond to our analysis of various factors and indicators relating to social development in Costa Rica. Although the country has a robust institutional and legal framework, there are certain structural limitations that hinder inter-institutional work, such as the DGME's lack of resources. Other limitations slow the provision of direct assistance to the migrant population, which hinders the completion of procedures and compliance with requirements and responses. This, in turn, jeopardizes the social inclusion process for migrants.

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