



Guatemala Human Rights Commission / USA

Fact Sheet

Immigration from Guatemala

Latino Migration to the US:

- ❖ The Latino population has tripled since 1980 to over 48.3 million in 2009.
- ❖ There are approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US; 75% are Latino.
- ❖ 1.6 million Guatemalan immigrants (an estimated 960,000 undocumented) live in the US.

Remittances:

- ❖ Approximately 1.3 million Guatemalans send remittances home.
- ❖ One third of families receive remittances sent by family members in other countries: 97.7 % of this money comes from Guatemalans living in the US.
- ❖ 57% of recipients of remittances live in rural areas while 43% live in urban areas.
- ❖ 63% of recipients are women while 71.5% of those sending remittances are men.

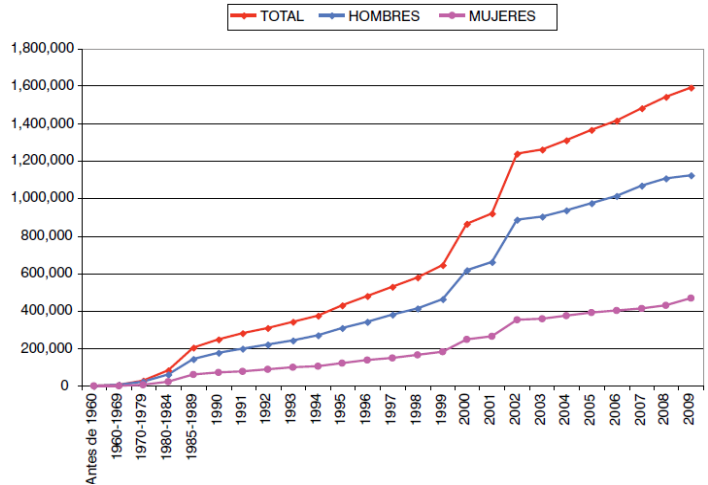
Why Do Guatemalans Come to the US?

- ❖ Historically, Guatemalans fled to the US to escape violence and persecution during the internal armed conflict.
- ❖ Today, people often migrate because of the lack of economic opportunities at home.
- ❖ Although the internal armed conflict has been over for more than a decade, Guatemalans still come to the US to escape violence. Recent increases in organized crime and gang activity have led to violence and instability in many Guatemalan communities.

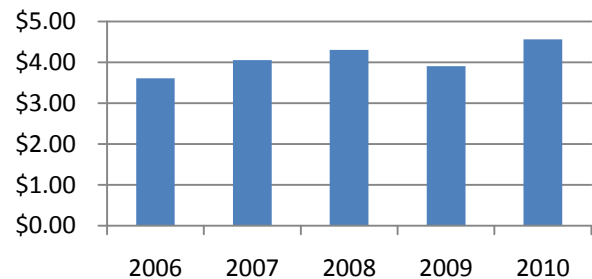
Deportation:

- ❖ The number of Guatemalans deported from the US is rising each year.
- ❖ In 2010, there were 29,095 Guatemalans deported, an increase of 2,000 people from 2009.
- ❖ Many deportees have families and young children in the US and have no criminal record.

Guatemalan Population in the US



Remittances Received (in billions)



Immigration Policies and Reform

Current Policies that Negatively Affect Immigrants:

- ❖ **The Secure Communities Program and 287(g), utilized by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE):** Secure Communities allows ICE to access local jails throughout the United States to identify immigrants subject to removal. 287(g), the precursor to Secure Communities, allowed ICE to delegate immigration enforcement powers to local police.
- ❖ **Anti-immigrant bills at the state level (i.e. Arizona and Virginia):** Various state laws are being considered or have been passed that explicitly require local law enforcement officials to inquire about immigration status during any interaction with a person, allow officers to detain a person to make inquiries into immigration status, and mandate that an officer may not release a person from custody until immigration status has been verified.
- ❖ **Criticisms:** These initiatives increase the potential for costly mistakes, racial profiling, and discrimination; they place a strain on already-limited police resources; they make communities less safe because immigrants (legal and undocumented) become fearful of reporting crimes to the police or coming forward as victims or witnesses; and they create a series of potentially unconstitutional, costly, and confusing laws that do nothing to fix the immigration system.

Recent Legislation in US Congress:

- ❖ In December 2009, Congressman Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) introduced his Comprehensive Immigration Reform bill. This piece of legislation prioritized family unity and recognized the significant contributions immigrants make to the economy.
- ❖ In March 2010, Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) outlined a bipartisan immigration reform proposal that differed from Gutierrez's bill in that it focused on punitive measures and strengthening border security.
- ❖ The House and the Senate did not vote on their immigration reform proposals during the 111th Session of Congress.

Immigration Reform should include:

- ❖ An immediate halt to disruptive and ineffective raids, detention, and deportation until Congress approves a comprehensive immigration policy.
- ❖ A clear division between the duties of local authorities and federal immigration authorities.
- ❖ A pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants currently residing in the US.
- ❖ Respect for immigrant workers' rights and an end to discrimination against immigrant workers.
- ❖ A list of locations such as colleges, cemeteries and churches, that ICE would not be allowed to detain undocumented immigrants in or near.
- ❖ The suspension of the E-verify Employment Eligibility Verification System which presents serious problems including database errors resulting in legal immigrants and US citizens being denied work, high costs for small businesses, and misuse of the system by some employers.

Sources: The Pew Hispanic Institute, The International Organization for Migration, Prensa Libre, Bank of Guatemalan, and the Immigration Policy Center.
<http://www.migracion.gob.gt>.