

## El Salvador Fact Sheet

**Size:** Area = 8,123 square miles (Smallest country in continental America, slightly smaller than the State of Massachusetts)

**Population:** Slightly over 7 million

**Language:** Spanish, Nahua (minority)

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 57%, Protestant 21%, Jehovah's Witnesses 2%, other religions 3%, none 17% (2003 est.)

**Capital:** San Salvador

**Independence:** 1821

El Salvador is divided into 14 States (Departamentos), and has 267 municipalities

**Chief of State/ Head of Government:** President Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez, in the final year of a single, 5-year term.

**Legislature:** Unicameral, consisting of 84 members elected to 3-year terms.

Political Parties: Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), National Conciliation Party (PNC), National Republican Alliance (ARENA), Christian Democratic Party (PDC).

**Judicial Branch:** Supreme Court consisting of 15 members elected by the legislative branch.

The Court is split into four sections: constitutional, civil, penal, and administrative conflict

**Elections:** Local and Legislative elections (January 18, 2009); Presidential elections (March 8, 2009)

**Corruption (Transparency International):** On a scale of 1-10 (1 being very corrupt) El Salvador is rated a 4, indicating that the level of corruption is perceived to be high among government officials and the business sector

**Freedom House Indices (scales of 1-7, 1 being very free):**

**Political Rights:** The political rights index indicates the extent to which citizens are able to participate freely in elections with distinct alternatives, join political parties, and run for office – El Salvador scored a 2.

**Civil Liberties:** The Civil Liberties Index measures freedoms of expression and belief, associational and organizational right, rule of law, and personal autonomy without interference from the state – El Salvador scored a 3.

**GDP:** \$20.21 Billion (2007)

**Per Capita Income:** \$3,547.21 (2007)

**Currency:** US dollar – Salvadoran law requires a bi-monetary system (U.S. dollar and Salvadoran colon), but colon taken out of circulation in 2002.

**Poverty:** 30.7% (2006)

**Unemployment:** 6.7% with a significant amount of underemployment.

**Remittances:** \$3.78 billion (2007)

**Major Industries:** Food processing, beverages, petroleum, chemicals, textiles, fertilizers, light metals, furniture

**Exports:** Offshore assembly exports, coffee, sugar, shrimp, textiles, chemicals, electricity

**Major Export Partners:** United States 47.2%, Guatemala 15.4%, Honduras 9.5%, Nicaragua 5.4%, Costa Rica 4.1%

**Signatory of the Central American Free Trade Agreement**

**Internal Conflicts:** Indigenous Uprisings in 1833 and 1932; Civil War 1980-1992

**Recent Natural Disasters:** Hurricane Mitch (1998); Earthquakes (January and February 2001); Volcanic eruptions (Ilamatepec, 2005); Flooding (frequent in Lower Lempa of Usulután)

El Salvador is the most densely populated country in the Western Hemisphere, and the second most deforested (just behind Haiti)

90% of all of El Salvador's lakes and rivers are highly contaminated

**Gangs:** It is estimated there are between 10,500-39,000 gang members, with the majority residing within Mara Salvatrucha and the 18<sup>th</sup> St. gang.

**Murder Rate (per 100,000):** 68.7 (2006) – The Pan American Health Organization considers a rate over 10/100,000 an endemic.

