

Ecuador in Brief: Overview and U.S. Relations

August 14, 2026

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

R49188



R49188

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Ecuador in Brief: Overview and U.S. Relations

Ecuador is an ethnically and geographically diverse country of 18.1 million people, encompassing parts of South America's Pacific coast, Amazon basin, and Andean highlands. Following a period of bilateral tensions under former President Rafael Correa (2006-2017), U.S.-Ecuador ties have strengthened, including under current President Daniel Noboa (2023-present) of the right-leaning National Democratic Action movement. During the second Trump Administration, the United States and Ecuador have expanded bilateral security cooperation and initiated joint military operations to curtail drug trafficking and other illicit activity linked to transnational criminal organizations (TCOs). Since roughly 2021, TCO-linked illicit activity has contributed to a security crisis in Ecuador, with gangs fighting for control of drug trafficking routes and prisons and attempting to influence politics. The U.S. and Ecuadorian governments also have expanded cooperation on trade and migration issues through the signing of new nonbinding bilateral agreements.

Congress, at times, has sought to shape the executive branch's approach to U.S.-Ecuador relations. In 2022, for example, Congress enacted the United States-Ecuador Partnership Act of 2022 as Title LV, Subtitle B, of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for FY2023 (P.L. 117-263). Authorized until December 2027, the act includes measures aimed at strengthening bilateral security cooperation and commercial ties to promote democracy and regional stability and to counter malign foreign influence.

In the 119th Congress, Members have expressed a range of views on Ecuador and U.S. policy. Some Members have commended President Noboa as a strong U.S. ally and called for an expansion of bilateral security cooperation to dismantle TCOs. Some Members have voiced concern about human rights conditions amid Ecuador's security crisis and possible democratic erosion under President Noboa; those of this view have called on the Trump Administration to suspend joint U.S.-Ecuador military operations and to ensure U.S. security assistance does not contribute to potential human rights abuses. The 119th Congress may assess security, economic, and human rights conditions in Ecuador—including any implications for regional security efforts—and consider legislative and other measures to shape bilateral relations.

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Ecuador is an ethnically and geographically diverse country of 18.1 million people, encompassing parts of South America’s Pacific coast, Amazon basin, and Andean highlands (see **Figure A-1**). Following a period of bilateral tensions and policy differences under former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa (2006-2017), U.S.-Ecuador ties have strengthened, including under Ecuador’s current President Daniel Noboa (2023-present). During the second Trump Administration, the United States and Ecuador have expanded cooperation, including conducting joint security efforts to curtail drug trafficking and other illicit activity linked to transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), which have contributed to a security crisis in Ecuador since roughly 2021.

In the 119th Congress, Members have expressed a range of views on U.S. engagement with Ecuador. Some Members called for an expansion of U.S.-Ecuador security cooperation to dismantle illicit drug and other TCO-linked operations. Some Members have voiced concern about human rights conditions amid Ecuador’s security crisis and possible democratic erosion under President Noboa. Those of this view have called on the Trump Administration to suspend joint U.S.-Ecuador military operations and to ensure U.S. security assistance does not contribute to potential human rights abuses. The 119th Congress may assess security, economic, and human rights conditions in Ecuador and consider legislative and other measures to shape bilateral relations.

Political and Economic Conditions

President Daniel Noboa of the right-leaning National Democratic Action (ADN) first took office in November 2023. Ecuadorians elected Noboa to complete the term of former President Guillermo Lasso (2021-2023), who had called snap elections held in August 2023. In April 2025, Noboa won a full four-year presidential term after obtaining 55.6% of the vote in a presidential runoff election against Luisa González of the left-of-center Citizen Revolution (RC).¹ Although González alleged voter fraud in the election, international observers expressed confidence in the results, while noting concerns about “conditions of inequity during the campaign” that favored Noboa’s candidacy.²

In February 2025 Ecuador held legislative elections to elect all 151 members of the unicameral National Assembly. Support was largely divided between ADN (66 seats) and RC (67 seats) blocs. Noboa’s ADN has forged an informal legislative majority with the support of smaller parties. Intraparty disagreements since the elections have reduced RC’s legislative bloc to 62 seats.³

President Noboa’s policymaking priorities have included addressing Ecuador’s public security crisis (see “Security Crisis”) and pursuing economic reforms. President Noboa issued executive orders in 2025 and 2026 that aimed to reduce government spending and improve efficiency by eliminating 5,000 public sector jobs and reducing the number of executive ministries from 14 to 10.⁴ His administration also initiated a phased removal of fuel subsidies, which have been in

¹ CRS Insight IN12530, *Ecuador’s 2025 Elections: Implications for U.S. Policy*.

² Organization of American States (OAS), *2025 Presidential Runoff in Ecuador: Preliminary Report OAS Electoral Observation Mission*, April 15, 2026, p. 2. The OAS electoral observation mission has not released a final electoral observation report.

³ See Emerson Rubio, “Las Bajas de la Asamblea Nacional,” *GK*, August 18, 2025.

⁴ República del Ecuador, *Decreto Ejecutivo 60, Registro Oficial*, No. 93, July 31, 2025; and Decretos Ejecutivos 425, 426, 427, *Registro Oficial*, No. 312, June 24, 2026.

place since the 1970s, triggering some public protests.⁵ President Noboa has sought to implement portions of his agenda through national referendums, with mixed results.⁶ In April 2024, voters approved nine reforms aimed at addressing deteriorating security conditions—including measures that formalized the armed forces’ role in public security functions and enabled the extradition of Ecuadorian citizens—and rejected two economic proposals. In November 2025, voters rejected four Noboa-backed proposals, including measures that would have reversed a constitutional ban on foreign military bases in Ecuadorian territory and established a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution.

Governance and Human Rights Concerns

Some observers have voiced concerns about an erosion of democratic norms under the Noboa administration. In August 2025, the National Assembly passed a law that increased government control of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), which President Noboa argued was necessary to detect and prevent possible illicit financial flows tied to money laundering and tax evasion.⁷ In late 2025, U.S.-based NGO Human Rights Watch asserted that Noboa administration officials used the law to freeze the bank accounts of Indigenous and environmental groups that had protested the government’s removal of diesel subsidies.⁸ Some observers have asserted that President Noboa has used combative rhetoric to increase political pressure on Ecuador’s Constitutional Court—potentially undermining judicial independence—after the court ruled in mid-2025 to suspend some Noboa-backed security legislation.⁹ Some groups are raising alarms about deteriorating press freedoms, pointing to increased violence against journalists by criminal groups and pressure from government officials.¹⁰

The political opposition has reportedly accused Noboa of coopting independent electoral institutions following several decisions that seemingly favored ADN ahead of subnational elections; Noboa has reportedly rejected the claim.¹¹ In March 2026, a judge on Ecuador’s Electoral Dispute Tribunal (TCE) imposed a nine-month suspension on RC, the largest opposition party, amid an ongoing illicit campaign finance investigation.¹² The suspension prevents RC from fielding candidates in upcoming regional elections originally set for February 2027 to select provincial government heads, mayors, and other elected officials. Later that month, electoral authorities announced that the regional elections would be held in November 2026 to avoid potential weather disruptions related to an anticipated El Niño weather phenomenon.¹³ Some critics argued that the move was a politically motivated attempt to reduce the time available for

⁵ The government spent about \$3 billion on fuel subsidies in 2024. Banco Central del Ecuador, *Análisis de la Proforma del Presupuesto General del Estado Año 2026*, November 2025, p. 39.

⁶ Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), Resolución PLE-CNE-1-8-5-2024 and Resolución PLE-CNE-3-1-12-2025.

⁷ Amnesty International, *Impact of Restrictive Laws on Civil Society Organizations in the Americas*, March 23, 2026; and Robel Revelo, “Noboa Expide Reglamento de la Ley de Transparencia Social, que Regula el Financiamiento de las Fundaciones,” *Primicias*, October 27, 2025.

⁸ Human Rights Watch, “Ecuador: Government Freezes Groups’ Bank Accounts,” December 9, 2025.

⁹ See, for example, UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, “Ecuador: Interference with Constitutional Court Threatens Rule of Law and Safeguards Against Abuse of Power,” August 15, 2025.

¹⁰ See, for example, Reporters Without Borders, “The Americas: Rather than Helping Hard-pressed Journalists, Authorities are Threatening Them,” *2026 World Press Freedom Index*, April 30, 2026.

¹¹ “Ecuador: Suspended Opposition Party Warns of Encroaching ‘Dictatorship,’” *LatinNews Daily*, March 10, 2026.

¹² The investigation is one of several initiated by Ecuador’s acting prosecutor general, which RC representatives argue is politically motivated. Tribunal Contencioso Electoral, Causa Nro. 029-2926-TVE, Boleta de Notificación, March 9, 2026.

¹³ CNE, “Resolución de Actualización del Calendario Electoral,” PLE-CNE-1-27-3-2026, March 30, 2026.

RC-affiliated candidates to change party affiliation ahead of the elections.¹⁴ In April 2026, electoral officials dissolved two other opposition political organizations, alleging insufficient membership, which the organizations have disputed; the TCE reversed one party's dissolution following a legal challenge in June.¹⁵

Security Crisis¹⁶

Ecuador's dollarized economy (since 2000), road and port infrastructure, and entrenched corruption make the country vulnerable to organized crime. Violence has risen since roughly 2021, primarily because of increased competition among Ecuadorian gangs affiliated with TCOs, including Mexican cartels. These gangs fight for control of drug trafficking routes, primarily in Ecuador's coastal provinces, that are used to ship Colombian and Peruvian cocaine through Ecuador's ports to international markets. In March 2026, a U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) official stated that about 70% of the world's cocaine is shipped from Ecuadorian ports.¹⁷ For decades homicide rates in Ecuador were among the lowest in Latin America; from 2023 to 2025, Ecuador reportedly had the highest homicide rate in the region.¹⁸ High-fatality riots in prisons, from which criminal groups reportedly run their operations, have plagued Ecuador since 2020. Ecuador also has faced increased violence tied to TCO-linked illicit mining operations. Some TCOs appear to have infiltrated Ecuadorian government institutions. In late 2024, for example, a judge convicted 20 people—including former judges, government officials, and police—for their roles in a corruption network linked to organized crime.¹⁹

Since January 2024, President Noboa has repeatedly asserted that his government is engaged in an "internal armed conflict," designated 22 local criminal groups as terrorist organizations, enabled the armed forces to conduct public security functions, and enacted numerous states of emergency to address the violence.²⁰ Noboa's approach has led to the arrest of some high-profile gang leaders, although violence remains pervasive.²¹ Several human rights groups have alleged that some security forces have committed human rights violations, including enforced disappearances.²²

¹⁴ Pedro Labayen Herrera, "Ecuador News Round-Up No. 26: Noboa's Authoritarianism Deepens amid Growing U.S. Support," Center for Economic and Policy Research, June 23, 2026.

¹⁵ See Roger Vélez, "Jueza del TCE Deja Sin Efecto Cancelación de Unidad Popular tras Aceptar Recursos de Partido," *Primicias*, June 3, 2026.

¹⁶ Unless otherwise noted, this section draws from International Crisis Group, *Paradise Lost? Ecuador's Battle with Organised Crime*, Report No. 109, November 12, 2025; and U.S. Department of State (DOS), *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* (INCSR), Vol. I: Drug and Chemical Control, March 2025, pp. 193-197.

¹⁷ U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), "FBI Opens Permanent Office in Ecuador," March 19, 2026.

¹⁸ See data from InSight Crime's *Homicide Round-Up* for 2023, 2024, and 2025, <https://insightcrime.org/news/special-series/yearly-homicide-round-up/>.

¹⁹ Fiscalía General del Estado, "Metastasis Case: Prosecutor's Office Obtains Sentences Against 20 Defendants for Organized Crime," November 26, 2024.

²⁰ Presidente Daniel Noboa, *Decreto Ejecutivo 111*, January 9, 2024 and *Decreto Ejecutivo 424*, June 18, 2026.

²¹ For example, José Macías Villamar, the leader of Ecuador-based *Los Choneros* gang—a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization—was extradited to the United States in July 2025. U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of New York, "José Adolfo 'Fito' Macías Villamar, Leader of Los Choneros Transnational Criminal Organization Extradited to Brooklyn Federal Court to Face International Drug and Gun Charges," July 21, 2025.

²² UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, "UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances Publishes Findings on Ecuador, Iraq, Malawi, and Samoa," March 25, 2026.

Economic Conditions

After three years of declining economic growth amid security challenges and seasonal energy shortages driven by drought and aging energy infrastructure, Ecuador's economy rebounded with 3.7% gross domestic product (GDP) growth in 2025; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects 2.5% GDP growth in 2026.²³ Ecuador's growth in 2025 was aided in part by low inflation, an improved labor market, and strong non-oil exports.²⁴ Although Ecuador is a net energy exporter, which may allow it to benefit somewhat from increased international oil prices tied to the 2026 U.S.-Israel conflict with Iran, elevated energy prices also have increased government expenditures on remaining fuel subsidies that the Noboa administration has not yet phased out.²⁵ Fluctuations in rainfall tied to the El Niño weather phenomenon could also disrupt agricultural production and increase food prices, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit.²⁶

A priority for the Noboa administration is to improve Ecuador's fiscal situation in line with a \$5 billion IMF financing agreement originally approved in May 2025.²⁷ President Noboa also has sought to boost foreign investment in Ecuador, including from the People's Republic of China (PRC, or China), which reportedly has served as a key source of financing and investment since roughly 2009.²⁸ A free trade agreement between the two countries entered into force in May 2024.

U.S.-Ecuador Relations: Issues for Congressional Consideration

U.S.-Ecuador relations have strengthened since roughly 2017. In May 2026, President Noboa met with Vice President JD Vance during a visit to Washington, DC, where they reaffirmed cooperation on security, trade, migration, energy, and other issues, according to a readout from the Ecuadorian government.²⁹ Ecuador also has joined U.S.-led regional efforts, including the Americas Counter Cartels Coalition, a security initiative composed of ideologically aligned Western Hemisphere governments.³⁰

Congress, at times, has sought to shape the executive branch's approach to U.S.-Ecuador relations. In 2022, Congress enacted the United States-Ecuador Partnership Act of 2022 as Title LV, Subtitle B, of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for FY2023 (P.L. 117-263). Authorized until December 2027, the act includes measures aimed at strengthening the bilateral partnership between the United States and Ecuador in support of democratic institutions and rule of law, sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and conservation.

Security Cooperation

Successive U.S. Administrations have expanded security and law enforcement cooperation with Ecuador to support the country's efforts to counter TCO-driven violence. In February 2024,

²³ Gross domestic product data in this section are drawn from International Monetary Fund (IMF), *World Economic Outlook* database, April 2026.

²⁴ IMF, *Fifth Review Under the Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility*, April 22, 2026.

²⁵ "Subsidios a Combustibles Aumentan Pese a Baja de Precios en Ecuador," *El Oriente*, July 15, 2026.

²⁶ Economist Intelligence Unit, *One-Click Report: Ecuador*, July 31, 2026.

²⁷ IMF officials expanded the agreement by \$1 billion in July 2025. IMF, *Fifth Review Under the Extended Arrangement Under the Extended Fund Facility*, April 22, 2026.

²⁸ Sebastián Hurtado, "Noboa's Balancing Act Between China and the U.S.," *Americas Quarterly*, July 2, 2025.

²⁹ Gobierno del Ecuador, "Noboa Se Reúne con JD Vance para Fortalecer la Cooperación en Seguridad, Comercio e Inversión," May 13, 2026.

³⁰ The Department of Defense (DOD) is "using a secondary Department of War designation," under Executive Order 14347 of September 5, 2025. DOD, "Americas Counter Cartel Conference Joint Security Declaration," March 5, 2026.

President Noboa ratified a status of forces agreement to allow U.S. military personnel to operate in Ecuador and an agreement to allow for joint naval operations to combat drug trafficking and other illicit activities.³¹ In June 2026, Noboa issued an executive decree stating that foreign personnel participating in security operations would “enjoy immunity” in accordance with international agreements Ecuador has signed.³² In March 2026, the FBI opened a permanent office in the capital city of Quito to enhance law enforcement cooperation on investigations related to drug trafficking and other TCO-related activity.³³ Since August 2025, the U.S. government also has designated three Ecuadorian gangs (*Los Choneros*, *Los Lobos*, and *Chone Killers*) as foreign terrorist organizations and specially designated global terrorists.³⁴ Some Members of Congress have called for an expansion of bilateral security cooperation to dismantle TCOs.³⁵ In August 2026, for example, five Members requested that the U.S. State Department designate Ecuador as a major non-NATO ally, which would make Ecuador eligible for certain cooperative agreements and priority delivery of U.S. transfers of excess defense articles.³⁶

Although the National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2026 (P.L. 119-75, Division F), did not provide an aggregate amount for bilateral aid in Ecuador, the act and its explanatory statement specified \$30 million in International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) assistance; \$10 million in Foreign Military Financing for Ecuador; and an additional \$20 million in INCLE aid to combat illegal mining in Ecuador, Colombia, and Peru.

Some Members of Congress have voiced concern about reported U.S. military action in and around Ecuador. On March 3, 2026, U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) announced that U.S. and Ecuadorian military forces conducted an operation in Ecuador against “Designated Terrorist Organizations.”³⁷ Although Ecuador’s Ministry of Defense stated that the joint operation in northern Ecuador destroyed a property used by Colombia-based armed group *Comandos de la Frontera*, media reports indicated that the strike targeted a dairy farm.³⁸ Some Members of Congress have called for a suspension of joint military operations pending an investigation into the incident.³⁹ Some Members also have expressed concern about reports from media and a local human rights group that between January and March 2026, U.S. forces allegedly attacked three Ecuadorian fishing vessels in the Pacific Ocean.⁴⁰ SOUTHCOM and the U.S. Coast Guard

³¹ DOS, *Ecuador (24-223.1) – Status of Forces Agreement*, signed at Quito October 6, 2023, entered into force February 23, 2024; and *Ecuador (24-223) – Agreement Concerning Counter Illicit Transnational Maritime Activity Operations*, signed at Washington, September 27, 2023, entered into force February 23, 2024.

³² Presidente Daniel Noboa, *Decreto Ejecutivo 424*, June 18, 2026.

³³ FBI, “FBI Opens Permanent Office in Ecuador,” March 19, 2026.

³⁴ DOS, “Foreign Terrorist Organization Designation of Los Choneros and Los Lobos,” 90 *Federal Register* 43020, August 6, 2025, published September 5, 2025; “Foreign Terrorist Organization Designation of Chone Killers,” 91 *Federal Register* 40651, June 12, 2026, published July 2, 2026.

³⁵ See, for example, Letter from Senator Bernie Moreno to U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth (who is using “Secretary of War” as a “secondary title” under Executive Order 14347 dated September 5, 2025), May 27, 2026.

³⁶ Letter from five Members of Congress to U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, August 4, 2026, <https://files.constantcontact.com/1849eea4801/65fdda74-b521-46b2-925e-74fed441c9cd.pdf>.

³⁷ U.S. Southern Command (@Southcom), March 3, 2026, <https://x.com/Southcom/status/2029011785567572285>.

³⁸ Luis Ferré-Sadurní et al., “The U.S. Said It Helped Bomb a Drug Camp. It Was a Dairy Farm,” *New York Times*, March 24, 2026.

³⁹ See, for example, Letter from 20 Members of Congress to U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, May 13, 2026, <https://chuygarcia.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/chuygarcia-evo.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/letter-to-dod-re-ecuador-final-5.13.26.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Two of the ships’ crews were allegedly detained and transferred to El Salvador before being released in Ecuador (continued...)

reportedly have denied involvement in or knowledge of the reported attacks.⁴¹ In August 2026, the *Washington Post* reported that the attacks may be linked to a covert U.S. Central Intelligence Agency program aimed at countering narcotics trafficking.⁴²

Trade Ties

The United States is Ecuador's largest goods trading partner. U.S.-Ecuador goods trade reached \$17.6 billion in 2025, with the United States running a \$543 million trade deficit. Petroleum oils and gases (e.g., liquefied propane and butane) accounted for more than 60% of total U.S. goods exports, while top U.S. imports from Ecuador included crude oil, shrimp, and cocoa beans.⁴³

In March 2026, the U.S. and Ecuadorian governments signed an agreement on reciprocal trade (ART).⁴⁴ The nonbinding ART aims to reduce tariff and nontariff barriers to trade and to increase national security alignment by cooperating on investment security and export control measures. The agreement, inter alia, would set a new tariff schedule for some U.S. imports from Ecuador. Nevertheless, U.S. imports from Ecuador may continue to face additional tariffs. In July 2026 the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) imposed tariffs, with some exceptions, on goods imported from 60 countries, including Ecuador, after an investigation into the countries' alleged "failure to impose and effectively enforce a prohibition on the importation of goods produced with forced labor."⁴⁵ Ecuador was one of 17 countries that received a 10% tariff rate compared to 12.5% imposed for most of the other investigated countries. Some Members of Congress also have called for USTR to investigate alleged unfair acts, policies, and practices in several countries' seafood sectors, including Ecuador's, arguing that they undermine domestic seafood producers.⁴⁶

Migration Cooperation

The Noboa administration has cooperated with the United States on migration issues. In July 2025, the two governments entered into an agreement allowing the transfer of some third-country nationals from the United States to Ecuador.⁴⁷ Although the agreement text does not specify requirements for such transfers, Ecuadorian officials reportedly have stated that Ecuador has agreed to receive a maximum of 300 adult Spanish-speaking asylum seekers with no criminal

without criminal charges; one ship remains unaccounted for as of August 2026. See, for example, House Committee on Armed Services, "Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act Markup," 119th Cong., 1st sess., June 4, 2026; and Comité Permanente por la Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, "Desaparición Forzada de Pescadores por Militares de Estados Unidos," April 21, 2026.

⁴¹ Joseph Gedeon and Cate Brown, "U.S. Claims It Is Not Responsible for Strikes on Ecuadorian Fishing Boats—So Who Is?," *The Guardian*, June 13, 2026.

⁴² Imogen Piper et al., "Covert CIA Program Said to Be Behind Mysterious Attacks on Galápagos Boats," *Washington Post*, August 13, 2026.

⁴³ U.S. Census Bureau data, as reported by *Trade Data Monitor*, accessed July 20, 2026.

⁴⁴ Unless otherwise noted, this paragraph draws from U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), "Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Ecuador on Reciprocal Trade," signed March 13, 2026.

⁴⁵ Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, "Notice of Actions in Section 301 Investigations of Acts, Policies, and Practices of Various Economies Related to the Failure of Each Economy to Impose and Effectively Enforce a Prohibition on the Importation of Goods Produced with Forced Labor," 91 *Federal Register* 47318, July 28, 2026.

⁴⁶ Letter from 20 Members of Congress to USTR Ambassador Jamieson Greer, May 11, 2026, <https://troycarter.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/troycarter.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/section-301-seafood-letter.pdf>.

⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Homeland Security, "Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Ecuador Relating to the Transfer of Third-Country Nationals to Ecuador," 90 *Federal Register* 51376, exchange of diplomatic notes dated July 16, 2025, and July 23, 2025, November 17, 2025.

records from the United States per year to pursue their protection claims in Ecuador.⁴⁸ Between January and July 2026, Ecuador reportedly has received 121 migrants of various nationalities (with Venezuelan, Cuban, and Honduran nationals accounting for the majority) from the United States pursuant to the agreement.⁴⁹

Some NGOs have argued that Ecuador is not equipped to receive asylum seekers, in part due to the country's security challenges, which have contributed to emigration from Ecuador.⁵⁰ According to UN data, an increasing number of Ecuadorians have sought asylum abroad since 2020, including over 122,000 in 2025 (with 93% of claims made in the United States).⁵¹ Violence also has driven increased internal displacement. One NGO recorded 132,000 internal displacements due to conflict and violence in Ecuador in 2025, a 31% increase from 2024 and the third-highest level recorded among countries in the Americas, after Haiti and Colombia.⁵²

⁴⁸ See, for example, Carlos Cuevas, "Este es el Acuerdo con el que Ecuador Recibirá Desde EE.UU. Migrantes que Solicitan Asilo," *Bloomberg Línea*, November 14, 2025.

⁴⁹ "Decenas de Migrantes Llegan a Ecuador en Vuelos desde Estados Unidos," *Ecuavisa*, July 17, 2026.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Center for Gender & Refugee Studies, "The U.S.-Ecuador Asylum Cooperative Agreement: Why It Fails the Law and Endangers Asylum Seekers," March 25, 2026.

⁵¹ UN High Commissioner on Refugees, *Refugee Data Finder*, accessed July 20, 2026, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics>.

⁵² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement*, May 2026, p. 49.

Appendix. Ecuador at a Glance

Figure A-1. Ecuador at a Glance



Land Area: 98,982 sq. miles (WB)

Population: 18.1 million (IMF, 2025 est.)

Ethnic Makeup: Mestizo (mixed Spanish and Indigenous descent): 77.5%; Montubia (coastal ethnic group): 7.7%; Indigenous: 7.7%; Afroecuadorian: 4.8%; White/Other: 2.3% (INEC, 2022)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP)/GDP per Capita: \$138.2 billion/\$7,199 (2025, current prices, IMF)

Real GDP Growth: 1.8% (2023), -1.9% (2024), 3.7% (2025, constant prices, IMF)

Poverty: 21.4% (INEC, December 2025)

Key Trading Partners: United States (22.9%), China (20.7%), Panama (9.3%) (2025, total trade, TDM)

Key Trade Goods: Exports: shrimp, crude oil, bananas. Imports: petroleum, motor vehicles, medicines (2025, TDM)

Sources: Map created by CRS using data from U.S. Department of State, Database of Global Administrative Areas, and Esri. International Monetary Fund (IMF); *World Economic Outlook Database*, April 2026; World Bank (WB); Ecuador's Central Bank data via *Trade Data Monitor* (TDM); and Ecuador's *Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos* (INEC).

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