

MEXICO OVERVIEW



BASIC STATISTICS

- **Total population:** 101,879,171 (Ranked 11th in the world by the US Census Bureau).
- **National GDP:** US \$815.3 billion (1998).
- **GDP per capita:** US \$8,300.
- **Median Age:** 23.1.
- **Infant Mortality:** 23.43 per 1,000 live births.

GEOGRAPHY

- **Location:** Southern North America.
- **Borders:** Belize, Guatemala, and the United States.
- **Area:** 761,600 square miles.
- **Topography:** The Sierra Madre Mountains split near Mexico City into the Occidentals, which run northwest to southeast, and the Orientals, which run near the Gulf of Mexico. Between the two lies the dry central plateau that slowly rises towards the south from 5,000 to 8,000 feet.
- **Climate:** Varies from tropical on the coast to desert on parts of the central plateau.
- **Capital:** Mexico City.
- **Major cities and population:** Mexico City, 8,489,007; Guadalajara, 1,633,216; and Puebla, 1,222,569.
- **31 states:** Aguascalientes, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campeche, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila de Zaragoza, Colima, Durango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Mexico, Michoacan de Ocampo, Morelos, Nayarit, Nuevo Leon, Oaxaca, Puebla, Queretaro de Arteaga, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosi, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Tamaulipas, Tlaxcala, Veracruz-Llave, Yucatan, Zacatecas.
- **1 federal district:** Distrito Federal.

DEMOGRAPHY

- **Population density:** 132 per square mile.
- **Children 0-14:** 33.3%—33,947,658.
- **Teenage 10-19:** 21.5%—21,925,908.
- **Youth between 15-24:** 20.5%—20,846,274.
- **Seniors Over 70:** 2.6%—2,699,711.
- **Male to female ratio:** 97.1 males per 100 females.
- **Birth rate:** 23.15 per 1,000 population.
- **Life expectancy at birth:** 69.34 for males and 75.56 for females.
- **Infant mortality rate:** 23.43 per 1,000 live births.
- **Official language:** Spanish.
- **Other principal languages:** Mayan dialects.
- **Ethnic Groups:** 60% Mestizo, 30% Amerindian, and 9% Caucasian.
- **Religious affiliations:** 96.3% Christians (95,169,034) and 3.1% Non-religious (3,068,920). The following groups represent less than one percent of the total: Muslims, Jews, Atheists and Ethno-religionists.
- **Education:** Free and compulsory from ages 6-12.
- **Literacy rate:** 90%.

ECONOMY

- **Currency:** New Peso.
- **GDP per capita:** US \$8,300.
- **National GDP:** US \$815.3 billion (1998).
- **Major Industries:** Steel, food & beverages, chemicals, consumer durables, textiles, and tourism.
- **Chief crops:** Cotton, coffee, wheat, rice, beans, soybeans, corn.
- **Electricity production:** (1998) 176.055 bil kWh.
- **TV Sets:** 257 per 1,000.
- **Radios:** 329 per 1,000.
- **Telephones:** 10,926,800 main lines.
- **Daily newspaper circulation:** 97 per 1,000 people.

POLITICS

- **Government type:** Federal republic.
- **Head of state and government:** Presidente Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de Leon.
- **International organization memberships:** United Nations, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Group (APEC), Organization of American States (OAS), and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).
- **Historical Background:** Mesoamerican civilization, those in the area of modern Mexico and Central America, included the most advanced ancient communities in the western hemisphere. From 1500 to 600BC, the Olmec

people flourished and are considered to be the ancestors of later Mesoamerican civilizations. Some of their early accomplishments include developing mathematics, a solar calendar, and jade figurines. The Olmecs were destroyed by 400 BC. The evolution of civilization led to the dominance of Mayan culture from 250 to 900 AD. The Toltecs came to power in the 10th century and were the first to leave a written history, but by the 12th century, the Toltecs were overcome by the Aztecs, an alliance of Nahuatl-speaking tribes. Led by the primary tribe Mexica, the Aztec Empire established itself until the Spanish invasions of the 16th century. After extremely bloody battles between the Aztecs and the Spanish, Spain subdued Mexico, made it its colony, and rebuilt the Aztec capital as Mexico City. Spanish culture spread through Mexico as the Roman Catholic Church expanded its influence by setting up hospitals, monasteries, schools, and missions. As the two cultures merge, so also did ethnic identities. During this time, the Mestizos—the ethnic mix of Europeans and Native Americans—began to increase and today is the largest of the population. Increased taxation, Spanish defeats, removal of the Jesuits, the Enlightenment, the success of the French and American revolutions all influenced Mexican colonists and natives to seek independence. From 1810 to 1822, various colonial leaders rose up to overthrow the Spanish. After a short-lived Mexican Empire in 1822, the Mexican republic was formed in 1823 and the Central American states broke from Mexico. The new nation found itself embattled by a civil war with Texas. Texas eventually seceded from Mexico in The Texas Revolution. Soon thereafter, Mexico found itself at war with its northern neighbor, the United States, and by 1848, lost the lands north of the Rio Grande. Instability continued as the French tried to assert its power in the region in the 1860s. In 1867, presidential elections restored the republic. From 1877 until 1917, the rule of Porfiro Diaz led to factional fighting and rebellion. The new constitution of 1917 brought social reform. Beginning in 1929, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) dominated politics but in the 1990s recession, rebellions and political uprisings brought the opposition party into power.

TRENDS AND SOCIAL ISSUES

Understanding the trends and social issues of a particular country should always take into consideration the opinions of persons within the country. The Center for Youth Studies is looking for contributors from each country to add to our appreciation and understanding of its culture, potential, trends and critical issues. If you have insight as to what is important to Mexicans, please contact us.

We look forward to hearing the insights on what insiders consider the most important issues facing them. From an outsider's perspective current issues would include the role of Mexico in NAFTA, the Rebel uprisings, economic

recovery after the recession of the 1980s and 1990s, social reform and government leadership. What are the most important issues for Mexican's today? This will be added as we receive this information.

SOURCES

TEXT

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[US Census Bureau, International Database.](#)

[US Central Intelligence Agency. *World Factbook*.](#)

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. How important do you see Mexico's role in the Americas and in the world?
2. What most impresses you about the above information?
3. Do you take issue with any of the above? If so, how would you express it differently?
4. What strikes you most about the population of children in Mexico? What implications does this have on developing programs, infrastructure, and social needs?
5. What do you see as the historical and cultural contributions of Mexico to the world?
6. How has Mexico handled its part in North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)?
7. What can we learn from Mexico and the Mexican people?

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