

MEXICO (*México*)



QUICK FACTS

Population: 107,029,000

Area: slightly less than three times the size of Texas, 14th largest land area in the world

Capital: Mexico City (19.319 million)

Languages: Spanish (official) only 92.7%, Spanish and indigenous languages 5.7%, indigenous only 0.8%, other 0.8%

EDUCATION

The literacy rate in Mexico has drastically improved through public education programs. Today, 24.3% of the national budget is used for education programs. However, rapid population growth made it difficult to reduce the absolute rate of literacy in Mexico. The grading system in Mexico consists of a scale from 0-10 (10: Excellent 9: Very good 8: Good 7: Average 6: Sufficient 0-5.9: Fail). In indigenous communities, because students are bilingual, the material is taught in both Spanish and the local language. The government provides free textbooks to children of pre-primary, primary and first grade of secondary school. Because of large number of students, public schools divide into two time-tables.



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Triqui people of Mexico

Several theories exist about the origin of the word *México*. One of which says that *México* comes from the name of the Aztec tribe "Mexico." Another popular theory is that the country was named after their God, Mexitli also known as Huitzilopochtli.

RELIGION

There is no official state religion, however the Roman Catholic Church has been the dominant religion since the 19th century. Although many Mexicans profess their Roman Catholic faith, many indigenous people include their strong pre-Hispanic elements in their beliefs. Since the end of the Mexican Revolution, anticlericalism in the country has reduced. Full diplomatic relations have been settled in 1996 with the Vatican. Roman Catholic 82.7%, Protestant 1.6%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1.4%, other Evangelical Churches 5%, other 1.9%, none 4.7%, unspecified 2.7% (2000 census)

ETHNICITY

The largest ethnicity group in Mexico are the "mestizos," who often have a mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry. The Mexican government recognized 56 different indigenous groups, the largest one being the Nahuatl speakers who descended from the Aztecs. Other indigenous groups include the Mayas, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Otomi, Totonac and Tzotzil, and others.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Family is very important in Mexican life. Some homes have three generations of families living under the same roof. Because family is so important, get-togethers in general and specifically during holidays are an important aspect of the Mexican family. One of the most famous Mexican celebrations is Día de los Muertos, or Day of the Dead, which is celebrated on November 1 and 2. It is a day where families remember and honor those relatives who have passed on. Festivities take place in the local cemetery and in the home; and offerings of food ("bread of the dead"), flowers (marigolds), and a photo of the departed are placed on an altar in the home. Another famous Mexican tradition is a party on a teenager's fifteenth birthday called Quinceañera. This celebration is a ceremony where a young girl is "escorted to womanhood" and her family and friends join her as witnesses—first in a church and then at a reception. Other occasions for family gatherings include Christmas, New Year, Independence Day and Semana Santa. Christmas is particularly an important holiday where the extended family gathers to have dinner. It is common to greet families and friends with a kiss on the cheek. Men often greet each other with a handshake.



CONTEMPORARY MEXICO

Mexico fought a war for independence from Spain from 1810-1821 under the leadership of Miguel Hidalgo, Vicente Guerrero and others. However, in 1846 was at war with the U.S., after which it lost almost half of its territory. France invaded Mexico from 1861-1867. What followed was a period of political chaos during which Mexico was governed by its first indigenous president, Benito Juarez. Following Juarez, Porfirio Díaz ruled the country as a dictator from 1876-1910. In 1910 the Mexican Revolution broke out in response to Díaz's dictatorship. Famous leaders of the Mexican Revolution include Francisco I. Madero and Emiliano Zapata.

After 1929, the center-left party known as the PRI or Partido Revolucionario Institucional was in control of national and state politics; they went on to govern for seven decades. In 1994 Mexico signed the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and the U.S.A. Since NAFTA, trade with the U.S. and Canada has increased. However, many Mexicans have objected to economic inequalities generated by NAFTA. For instance, the indigenous Zapatista movement of Chiapas, Mexico, started a war with the Mexican government on the day that NAFTA was enacted.

Vicente Fox of the Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) won the presidential election of 2000, which ended seven decades of rule by the PRI. However, the PAN but did not bring about much change and the PRI was back in power in December 2012 with its newly elected president Enrique Peña Nieto. Mexico is currently in the face of extremely violent drug wars.



Día de los Muertos Face Makeup

MEXICANS IN THE USA

Mexicans are the largest immigrant group in the U.S.A. 33.7 million Hispanics of Mexican origin lived in the U.S. in 2012. 11.4 million were born in Mexico, and 22.3 million were born in the US-born Mexican Americans. Mexican groups tend to settle in "traditional" states such as California and Texas. Over half of all Mexicans residing in the U.S. are in the US without legal authorization. Since 2007 Mexican immigration has decreased significantly.



The flag of Mexico was first adopted in 1823 and had its last modification in 1995; green represents hope, the white unity among the Mexican people and the red the blood of the Mexican soldiers



Oaxaca Basket Weaving

NAMES

Mexican first names are carefully chosen because parents believe names influence people. They are many times inherited from older generations and symbolize tradition and history. Names for the Mexican people carry a legacy or traits parents want their children to have. Their names tend to be longer since they include their mother's maiden name. Oftentimes, the first son is named after the father.

FAMOUS MEXICANS

A few famous Mexicans include: Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Octavio Paz, Emiliano Zapata, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz, Pedro Infante, Carlos Slim Helu, Mario Molina and Gael Garcia. Many more famous Americans have roots in Mexico including: Lila Downs, Jessica Alba, Robert Rodríguez and George López.

SPANISH WORDS

Hi	<i>Hola</i>
Bye	<i>Adiós</i>
Good morning	<i>Buenos días</i>
Yes	<i>Sí</i>
No	<i>No</i>
Please/You're welcome ..	<i>Por favor/De nada</i>
Thank you	<i>Gracias</i>
How are you?	<i>¿Cómo estás?</i>
I do not understand	<i>No entiendo</i>
Do you understand?	<i>¿Me explico?</i>
What is your name?	<i>¿Cómo te llamas?</i>
My name is	<i>Me llamo...</i>
Where are you from?	<i>¿De dónde eres?</i>

USEFUL LINKS

[World Factbook: Mexico](#)

[National Geographic Profile: Mexico](#)

[US Department of State: Mexico](#)

[Visit Mexico](#)