

## **COUNTRY FACT SHEET**

### **MEXICO**

**June 2007**

Research Directorate  
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

**3. POLITICAL PARTIES**

**4. ARMED GROUPS AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS**

**5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

**ENDNOTES**

**REFERENCES**

## **1. GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Official name:** United Mexican States (Estados Unidos Mexicanos)

### **Geography**

With a total area of 1,959,248 km<sup>2</sup>, Mexico is located south of the United States (US) and north of Guatemala and Belize. It is bordered by the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea to the east and by the Gulf of California and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The climate is varied, due to its significant north-south extension and differences in elevation. In particular, the southern tropical region and coastal lowlands are hot and wet, the central highlands are temperate and the northern desert region is arid.

### **Population and density (2005 estimate)**

Population: 103,088,021

Density: 52.5 persons per km<sup>2</sup>

### **Principal cities and populations (2005 estimate)**

Mexico City (Federal District) 8,795,000; Guadalajara 1,645,000; Tijuana 1,474,000; Ciudad Juarez 1,454,000; Puebla 1,428,000; Leon 1,183,000; Monterrey 1,132,000; Chihuahua 743,000; Acapulco 682,000; Mexicali 616,000; Veracruz 481,000.

### **Languages**

Spanish is the official language and is spoken by more than 90 % of the population. Other languages include various indigenous languages such as Mayan and Nahuatl.

### **Religions**

Roman Catholic 89 %, Protestant 6 %, other 5 %.

### **Ethnic groups**

Mestizo (Amerindian-Spanish) 60 %, Amerindian 30 %, White 9 %, other 1 %.

### **Demographics**

Population growth rate: 1.16 %

Infant mortality rate: 20.26 deaths/1,000 live births

Life expectancy at birth: 75.41 years

Fertility rate: 2.42 children born/woman

Literacy: 92.2 % of people 15 years of age and older can read and write

### **Currency**

Mexican peso (MXN)

MXN 9.79 = CAD 1.00<sup>1</sup>

### **National holidays**

#### **2006**

1 January (New Year's Day), 5 February (Constitution Day), 21 March (Birthday of Benito Juarez), 13 April (Maundy Thursday), 14 April (Good Friday), 1 May (Labour Day), 5 May (Anniversary of Battle of Puebla), 16 September (Independence Day), 12

October (Discovery of America), 1 November (All Saints' Day), 2 November (All Souls' Day), 20 November (Anniversary of the Mexican Revolution), 12 December (Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe), 25 December (Christmas), 31 December (New Year's Eve).

## **2007**

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## **Head of state and government**

Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa has been president since 1 December 2006.

## **Form of government**

Mexico is a federal republic, where the president is the chief of state and head of government. There is no vice-president and every state is an autonomous unit within the federation, each with its own constitution, elected governor and legislative authority.

## **Legislative structure**

The legislature is a bicameral National Congress (Congreso de la Union) consisting of the Senate (Camara de Senadores) (made up of 128 seats: 96 of which are designated by popular vote and 32 elected by proportional representation) and the Federal Chamber of Deputies (Camara Federal de Diputados) (made up of 500 seats: 300 of which are elected by popular vote and 200 via proportional representation).

## **Administrative divisions**

Mexico is divided into 31 states and the Federal District (Distrito Federal). 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.

## **Judicial system**

Mexico's legal system includes federal and state-level judiciaries. Divided into 29 judicial circuits, the judicial system consists of 172 Collegiate Circuit Courts (Tribunales Colegiados), 62 Unitary Circuit Courts (Tribunales Unitarios), and 285 District Courts (Juzgados de Distrito). The 21-member Supreme Court is the highest judicial body and deals with administrative, civil, criminal and labour law. With consent from the Senate, the President appoints Supreme Court judges.

## **Elections**

Universal suffrage exists for those 18 years of age and older. Voting is compulsory although this is not enforced. The president serves a non-renewable 6-year term, while

federal deputies serve a 3-year term and senators complete a 6-year term. On 2 July 2006, Mexicans voted for a new president and for members of Congress. Felipe Calderon of the National Action Party (Partido Accion Nacional, PAN) was elected president with 35.89 % of the vote; Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolucion Democratica, PRD) received 35.31 %; Roberto Madrazo of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) took 22.26 %, and the remaining 6.54 % of votes went to other candidates.

### **Defence**

The age of eligibility for compulsory military service is 18 years, however, with appropriate authority, citizens aged 16 or 17 may apply for voluntary enlistment. Military service is a part-time duty requiring about four hours per week for one year and conscripts are generally selected by lottery. Figures from 2004 indicate that Mexico had 192,700 active armed forces personnel and 300,000 reservists. The active-duty personnel are divided into different branches: the army, 144,000; navy, 37,000 (including 8,000 marines); and air force, 11,770. The 2005 budget for defence was USD 3.1 billion or approximately 0.4% of the country's gross domestic product.

Paramilitary forces:

The Federal Preventive Police (Policia Federal Preventiva, PFP), which reports to the Ministry of Public Security (Secretaria de Seguridad Publica, SSP), is assigned to, among other duties, combat organized crime and address internal conflicts. Counting on approximately 11,000 personnel, the PFP is expected to gradually increase its ranks to between 15,000 and 20,000 agents.

### **Media**

Article 7 of the constitution states that the "freedom to write and publish documents on any subject is unrestricted".

Notimex, Agencia de Informacion Integral Periodistica (AIIP), Agencia Mexicana de Informacion (AMI) are chief news agencies.

In 1997 there were an estimated 31 million radios in Mexico. In 2004, Mexico had about 1,300 radio stations and between 460 and 658 television stations, most under private ownership. Regarding telecommunications services, problems with fixed-line services have resulted in an increase in mobile telephone use. Mobile telephone accounts increased from 14 million in 2000 to over 40 million by mid-2005.

Mexico had as many as 300 daily newspapers in 2004. Some of the major Spanish-language publications in Mexico City include: *El Universal*, *La Jornada*, *La Cronica de Hoy*, *Diario de Mexico*, *El Economista*, *Milenio Diario*, *Reforma*, *El Sol de Mexico*, *Excelsior*, *El Heraldo de Mexico*.

In 1997, there were an estimated 25.6 million televisions and, in 2005, an estimated 18.622 million Internet users in Mexico. In 2004, approximately 137 per 1,000 residents had personal computers (PCs) in their households.

### **United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and Country Rank<sup>i</sup>**

Value: 0.821/1

Rank: 53 out of 177 countries

### **United Nations Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Country Rank<sup>ii</sup>**

Value: 0.812/1

Rank: 89 out of 136 countries

### **Population below the national poverty line**

40 % (2003 est.)

### **Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)<sup>iii</sup>**

Score: 3.3/10

Rank: 70 of 163 countries surveyed (9 countries tied for 70<sup>th</sup>)

### **Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)<sup>iv</sup>**

Political parties 4.4, parliament/legislature 4.3, business/private sector 3.7, police 4.5, legal system/judiciary 4.2, media 3.5, tax revenue 3.8, medical services 3.0, educational system 3.2, military 3.2, utilities 3.5, registry and permit services 3.9, NGOs 3.2, religious bodies 3.2.

**[Information compiled from: *The Europa World Year Book 2006 2006, 2967-2997; Mexico August 2005; PHW 2007 October 2006, 803-812; Transparency International (TI) 2006; UN 2006; US 15 March 2007; ibid. February 2007; ibid. July 2006]***

## **2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND**

The July 2000 presidential election was an important political turning point in Mexican history, as a candidate from a party other than the PRI won for the first time in 71 years.<sup>2</sup> President Vicente Fox Quesada of the PAN, leading a coalition of parties known as the Alliance for Change, promised to, among other things, reduce poverty, foster peace and reconciliation within the country and advance foreign relations with the US.<sup>3</sup> Fox took office on 1 December 2000 with high public approval ratings; however, since Fox's ambitious agenda was eventually thwarted by his inability to obtain support

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<sup>i</sup> The HDI is a composite measurement of human development in a country, based on life expectancy, levels of literacy and education, and standard of living. Values are: 0.800 and higher (high human development), 0.500-0.799 (medium human development) and 0.500 and under (low development index). Countries are ranked in descending order by their HDI value.

<sup>ii</sup> The GDI adjusts the rating of the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women.

<sup>iii</sup> The Transparency International CPI is based on composite survey data from 16 polls and 10 independent institutions. The data reflects the perceptions of resident and non-resident business people and country analysts. Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean). According to their score, countries are ranked in order from least corrupt (1) to most corrupt (163).

<sup>iv</sup> The Transparency International GCB is a public opinion survey used to gauge people's perceptions of corruption within their own state.

for his reforms from the Congress, his approval rating plummeted at the end of his tenure.<sup>4</sup>

The July 2006 presidential elections resulted in a win for PAN candidate Felipe Calderon by a margin of less than one percent over PRD presidential candidate and former mayor of the Federal District, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.<sup>5</sup> Lopez Obrador challenged the electoral results, claiming the elections were tainted by fraud and appealed the outcome to the Federal Electoral Tribunal, which subsequently declared the election valid on 5 September 2006.<sup>6</sup> Lopez Obrador has since rejected this decision and maintains he was illegally denied the presidency.<sup>7</sup>

Despite ongoing protestations by Lopez Obrador and his supporters, on 1 December 2006, president elect Felipe Calderon officially took office in a ceremony marred by physical and verbal confrontations in the Congress.<sup>8</sup> Upon taking office, Calderon pledged to bring unity within the Congress and set out three major initiatives: to fight poverty, violent crime, tax evasion and corruption, to create employment and to develop major infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges.<sup>9</sup>

### **3. POLITICAL PARTIES**

The July 2000 elections marked the opening up of the Mexican political system; three major parties now compete for power in federal elections, as opposed to the former one-party domination of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI).<sup>10</sup>

#### **Governing party:**

The National Action Party (Partido Accion Nacional, PAN) was founded in 1939 and is a conservative party that is pro-business<sup>11</sup> with connections to the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>12</sup> The PAN boasts a membership of 150,000.<sup>13</sup> In the 2006 election, the PAN won 52 seats in the Senate and 206 seats in the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>14</sup> The PAN leader is President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa.<sup>15</sup>

#### **Other parliamentary parties:**

The Party of the Democratic Revolution (Partido de la Revolucion Democratica, PRD) was established in 1989<sup>16</sup> when ousted PRI members combined with other leftist parties to form the PRD.<sup>17</sup> The PRD is a centre-left party<sup>18</sup> that won 36 Senate seats and 160 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in 2006 as part of the Alliance for Change coalition.<sup>19</sup> The PRD leader is Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.<sup>20</sup>

The Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) was originally founded under the moniker of the National Revolutionary Party (Partido Nacional Revolucionario, PNR) in 1929 and ruled the country for 71 years.<sup>21</sup> With its roots firmly set within Mexico's revolutionary history, the PRI has amended its early social democratic ideals to become a more centre-right party.<sup>22</sup> The PRI won 39 seats in the Senate and 121 seats in the Chamber of Deputies in the 2006 election as part of the Alliance for Mexico, which included other parties.<sup>23</sup> The new PRI leader as of February 2007 is former Tlaxcala governor Beatriz Paredes.<sup>24</sup>

### **Other parties<sup>25</sup>:**

New Alliance Party (Partido Nueva Alianza, PANAL), Mexican Green Ecologist Party (Partido Verde Ecologista de Mexico, PVEM), Labour Party (Partido del Trabajo, PT), Democratic Convergence (Convergencia por la Democracia, CD), Mexico Citizen (Mexico Ciudadano, MC), Nationalist Society Party (Partido de la Sociedad Nacionalista, PSN), Social Alliance Party (Partido Alianza Socialista, PAS), Party of the Democratic Center (Partido del Centro Democrático, PCD), Cardenist Party (Partido Cardenista, PC), Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution (Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana, PARM), Mexican Social Democratic Party (Partido Social Democrata Mexicano, PSDM), Popular Socialist Party (Partido Popular Socialista, PPS), Revolutionary Workers' Party (Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores, PRT), Social Democracy Party (Partido Democracia Social, PDS), Citizen Force (Fuerza Ciudadana, FC), Mexican Liberal Party (Partido Liberal Mexico, PLM), Mexico Possible Party - New Politics (Partido Mexico Posible-La Nueva Política, PMP-NP), Popular Unity (Unidad Popular, UP), Social Democratic and Farmer Alternative Party (Partido Alternativa Socialdemocrática y Campesina, PASC).

## **4. ARMED GROUPS AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS**

### **Zapatista National Liberation Army**

Founded in 1993, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, EZLN) is a left-wing rebel group located in the state of Chiapas whose main goal is to fight for indigenous rights.<sup>26</sup> Numbering between 1,000 members<sup>27</sup> and 5,000 members,<sup>28</sup> the EZLN's presence is mainly contained to the south-western region of Mexico, though their influence is national in scale.<sup>29</sup> In 2005, the group's leader, Subcomandante Marcos, claimed that the "EZLN was entering mainstream politics".<sup>30</sup>

### **Popular Revolutionary Army**

The Popular Revolutionary Army (Ejército Popular Revolucionario, EPR) is a socialist group that was created in 1996 with the goal of toppling the government of Mexico.<sup>31</sup> The EPR's main region of influence is the southern states of Guerrero, Oaxaca and Chiapas; however, more recently the group has splintered into a number of smaller groups operating in the south of Mexico.<sup>32</sup> According to the Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), the EPR's strength stands at more than 100 members.<sup>33</sup> Information on the EPR's leadership could not be found among the sources consulted.

### **Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army**

The Insurgent People's Revolutionary Army (Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo Insurgente, ERPI), is a group that splintered off from the EPR in 1998.<sup>34</sup> The ERPI primarily differs from the EPR in the tactics it uses, not ideologically, with the ERPI supporting armed rebellion.<sup>35</sup> The ERPI also operates in the southern areas of Mexico, in particular, in Guerrero and Oaxaca.<sup>36</sup> The leader of the ERPI is Jacobo Silva Nogales who was reportedly arrested in 1999.<sup>37</sup> Information on ERPI strength could not be found among the sources consulted.



## **Popular Insurgent Revolutionary Army**

The Popular Insurgent Revolutionary Army (Ejercito Revolucionario Insurgente Popular, ERIP) was created in 1996 and espouses similar goals to the EZLN and EPR, focussing on the rights of "peasants, Indians, workers, and businesspeople".<sup>38</sup> While it was reported that the ERIP operates in northern and central Mexico,<sup>39</sup> information about its strength or leadership could not be found among the sources consulted.

## **5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

As of April 2007, one of President Calderon's major goals is to address the growing challenge of drug-trafficking and its impact on public security.<sup>40</sup> In this context, the president has sent the military into various regions of the country to combat this problem directly.<sup>41</sup> Early efforts of this campaign have achieved mixed results.<sup>42</sup> While some key leaders have been captured, violent confrontations resulting in deaths and injuries continue to occur frequently as the gangs defend their operations.<sup>43</sup> Calderon has reportedly acknowledged that the fight to subdue the drug cartels will likely exceed his six-year mandate.<sup>44</sup> Calderon's efforts in obtaining the support of Congress in order to push through important reforms have seen positive developments.<sup>45</sup> For example, in March 2007, both the Federal Chamber of Deputies and the Senate approved a reform of the state pension system, which Calderon declared was "the most important reform in the past 10 years".<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Canada. 24 Apr. 2007.

<sup>2</sup> PHW 2007, 805

<sup>3</sup> *Europa*, 2969

<sup>4</sup> PHW 2007, 806

<sup>5</sup> US Feb. 2007, 4

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Economist* 7 Apr. 2007, 33; BBC 1 May 2007, 2

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> US July 2006, 19

<sup>11</sup> PHW 2007, 807

<sup>12</sup> *Political Parties of the World*, 411

<sup>13</sup> *Europa*, 2983

<sup>14</sup> AS/COA 25 July 2006

<sup>15</sup> PHW 2007, 807

<sup>16</sup> *Europa*, 2983

<sup>17</sup> PHW 2007, 808

<sup>18</sup> *Europa*, 2983

<sup>19</sup> AS/COA 25 July 2006

<sup>20</sup> PHW 2007, 808.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 807

<sup>22</sup> *Political Parties of the World*, 410

<sup>23</sup> AS/COA 25 July 2006

<sup>24</sup> *San Diego Union-Tribune* 20 Feb. 2007

<sup>25</sup> PHW 2007, 808-810; *Political Parties of the World*, 412

<sup>26</sup> *Europa*, 2983; PHW 2007, 810

<sup>27</sup> PHW 2007, 810

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- <sup>28</sup> MIPT n.d.a  
<sup>29</sup> PHW 2007, 810  
<sup>30</sup> MIPT n.d.a  
<sup>31</sup> Ibid., n.d.b  
<sup>32</sup> PHW 2007, 810-811  
<sup>33</sup> MIPT n.d.b  
<sup>34</sup> PHW 2007, 811  
<sup>35</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>36</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>37</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>38</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>39</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>40</sup> AP 7 Mar. 2007; *Miami Herald* 21 Mar. 2007  
<sup>41</sup> Ibid.; AP 7 Mar. 2007  
<sup>42</sup> Ibid.; *Miami Herald* 21 Mar. 2007  
<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; AP 7 Mar. 2007  
<sup>44</sup> BBC 1 May 2007  
<sup>45</sup> *Latin American Regional Report: Mexico & NAFTA* Apr 2007, 1; *Economist* 7 Apr. 2007, 33  
<sup>46</sup> *Latin American Weekly Report* 29 Mar. 2007, 12

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