



# Mexico Report

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## Sustainable Governance Indicators 2020

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## Executive Summary

Considering Mexico's experience with military and corporatist autocratic rule, the country has made significant progress over the last three decades with regard to electoral competition and its overall regulatory environment, including market-oriented reforms. Economic and political elites, as well as an increasing share of the middle-class, are technically well qualified, and have gained knowledge on how best to organize the country's political, economic and social frameworks. Mexican policymakers at both the national and regional levels are often well trained, internationally experienced and regularly equipped with high-level qualifications from high-quality universities. Mexico's tertiary-education system is increasingly competitive internationally as are several major firms, including an increasing number in the manufacturing sector.

At the same time, Mexico suffers from structural problems that are uncommon among many other OECD countries. These challenges mainly relate to the extremely unequal distribution of social benefits and services among the population, such as security and social opportunities. The resulting cleavages between geographic regions, especially north and south Mexico, rural and urban areas, and social classes are among the most pressing barriers to further socioeconomic progress. In addition, uneven state capacity, both geographically and across policy sectors, often undermines the effective and coherent implementation of policies.

In comparison to many other OECD countries, Mexico's GDP growth over the last decade was rather slow, the socioeconomic situation was marked by considerable inflation, the lowest tax-to-GDP ratio of any OECD country, and persistently high levels of poverty and inequality. The renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) constituted the main challenge in 2018 given the country's dependence on U.S. markets. Doubts were reduced following the trilateral agreement reached between Mexico, the United States and Canada (USMCA) in the fall of 2018. In addition to USMCA, Mexico renewed the free trade agreement with the European Union.

Despite these encouraging signs, the microeconomic picture is less positive. There is a lack of competition in key domestic sectors, while the labor force remains low skilled, and the economy is heavily export-oriented and tied completely to the U.S. economy.

Internationally, Mexico has been oriented toward multilateral arrangements, in economic and political terms, and is committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Climate Agreement, and cooperation with international financial institutions. However, Mexico lacks the capacity and influence to promote its own global governance initiatives.

Within the last generation, Mexico has made significant progress with regard to strengthening political competition and ensuring macroeconomic stability. These major achievements were accompanied by an increase in educational attainment among economic and political elites as well as segments of the middle and lower classes. However, the benefits of economic and social modernization have been unevenly distributed, and high disparities between regions and social groups remain. In this context, the pace of economic development has been too slow in recent years. In addition, Mexico has experienced a very serious deterioration in domestic security due to failures in the rule of law, including systemic violence and corruption. In particular, the war on drugs has led to a situation of high state fragility and even state failure in several Mexican regions.

In his first year in office, President Manuel Andrés López Obrador made some efforts to address the issues raised. He has initiated an ambitious government program to lead the country in his six-year term in reference to previous development steps in the so-called Fourth Transformation. Even though the components of this fourth transformation have not been explicitly stated, it can be assumed that the main focus will be on combating corruption and organized crime, reducing social inequality and poverty, as well as general reforms of the state apparatus.

In the economy, President López Obrador initiated social programs and raised the minimum wage, efforts to improve the social situation of the poor. Austerity measures have kept the budget and inflation under control. The most controversial measures in this realm include the cancellation of the construction of the international Mexico City Texcoco Airport and the simultaneous initiation of prestigious large-scale infrastructure projects in the poor south of Mexico, such as the Tren Maya rail project that aims to promote tourism in the region.

Concerning security matters, Manuel Andrés López Obrador is attempting to demilitarize the “war on drugs.” His approach was labelled “hugs instead of bullets.” Regarding the massive surge of violence in his first year in office, this strategy has clearly failed so far and was heavily criticized for its naivety. The creation of a national guard to improve the security situation has been controversial and widely debated, and has to be seen as part of a new anti-corruption approach. Anti-corruption and transparency is a main focus of President López Obrador.

In a daily press conference broadcast live every morning at 7 a.m., President López Obrador’s addresses the Mexican public. The press conference aims to improve transparency, but is also used in a populist manner to communicate directly with the public. Additionally, institutions of horizontal accountability like the Supreme Court, the anti-corruption office SNA and the Ombudsman’s Office have been filled with affiliates of MORENA. Holding a majority in congress, this has led to criticism from the opposition that Manuel Andrés López Obrador is undermining democracy in a populist manner. However, it is too early to evaluate the outcomes of these measures.

Citation:

Greene, K. (2018). Mexico’s Party System Under Stress. *Journal of Democracy* 29, 4, October: 31-42.

## Key Challenges

The elections on 1 July 2018 led to considerable changes in the political landscape. The PRI candidate for the presidential elections, José Antonio Meade, achieved only a distant third place, while the candidate of the unusual left-right PRD-PAN alliance, Ricardo Anaya, was also defeated. The clear winner was Andrés Manuel López Obrador (often referred to by his initials, AMLO) of MORENA with 53% of the popular vote. The new president holds a majority in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, the first unified majority government since democratization. Though this majority is several votes shy of the supermajority needed to pass constitutional reforms.

AMLO has reversed the previous government’s controversial educational reforms and has promised to improve the socioeconomic situation. He started several infrastructure projects in the poor south of Mexico, including the so-called Tren Maya rail project, and increased social spending in order to reduce

poverty and inequality, and expand access to education. On the other hand, AMLO remained fiscally prudent and follows a course of strict austerity, cutting budgets and public spending in many areas. For example, AMLO has stopped the building of a new airport, which saved the government billions of U.S. dollars. However, this created distrust among entrepreneurs and investors, which has led to a decline in investment. Construction, for example, dropped by more than 10%. After the first year of AMLO's administration, according to recent data, Mexico is on the verge of recession.

The main challenge for AMLO's administration will be the deteriorating security situation. Human Rights Watch warned of the "human rights catastrophe" that the new president has inherited. In his first year in office, the number of homicides increased to the highest level since the state began keeping systematic records on crime and violence. More than 36,000 homicides were reported. Violence and organized crime substantially restrict press freedoms and political rights. Mexico has one of the highest homicide rates of journalists of any country in the world, surpassed only by Iraq and Syria. In addition, 133 candidates were killed during the 2018 elections, most of these murders are presumed to have been carried out by organized criminal gangs. AMLO's attempt to pacify the war on drugs through his "hugs instead of bullets" strategy has thus far been a complete failure. As part of an effort to reduce corruption and militarization, AMLO created a new national guard which is, however, led by former military officers.

The disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa teacher-training college is indicative and remains unresolved. Although President Andrés Manuel López Obrador has established a truth commission, the commission has made no progress.

The rule of law continues to be characterized by an ineffective judicial system. Violence and crime, and corruption and impunity continue to undermine the rule of law. In corruption-related crimes, impunity reaches 98% and for homicides impunity reaches 97%.

Corruption is widespread in Mexican politics, the judiciary and the police, and the new government has made anti-corruption efforts a central issue. In Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, Mexico ranked 138 out of 180 countries in 2018, a significant deterioration in the country's ranking compared to 2012. The AMLO administration has intensified the government's fight against corruption. The SNA has been filled with MORENA allies and is currently developing an inclusive consultative process with citizens, institutions, business, academia and subnational governments to improve national anti-corruption policies. Additionally, the government has

further integrated corruption into the criminal law system, increasing punishments and detention while awaiting trial. The Unidad de Inteligencia Financiera (UIF), a government agency focused on detecting and preventing financial crimes, has been the key actor so far in fighting corruption. High-ranking politicians, like the former Pemex CEO or the head of Pemex's workers' union, are the target of corruption charges related to the Odebrecht corruption scandal in Latin America. In the context of rampant corruption, impunity and the weak rule of law, the security crisis in Mexico is the current administration's toughest challenge.

Furthermore, there are serious problems related to migrants entering Mexico from Central America, with most seeking entry to the United States. However, these migrants stress not only Mexican politics, but especially Mexico's relationship with the United States.

President López Obrador began an ambitious government program to lead the country in its six-year term in reference to previous development steps in the so-called Fourth Transformation. Even though the components of this fourth transformation have not been explicitly highlighted, the main focus is on combating corruption and organized crime, reducing social inequality and poverty, as well as general reforms of the state apparatus. It remains to be seen whether these initiatives bear fruit.

The new AMLO administration is facing several inordinate challenges simultaneously, of which violence and corruption are primary. Mexico, a country whose GDP is among the top 20 in the world, is affected by issues that normally plague the poorest countries of the world that have been devastated by wars.

## Party Polarization

At the time of this writing, Mexico has seven recognized political parties. Registration barriers for new parties are high. On the national level, three party blocs have dominated politics in recent years. The main political parties are the right-of-center National Action Party (PAN), the centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party, the left-wing party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and National Regeneration Movement (MORENA). In addition, several smaller or regionally affiliated parties play a modest role, such as the Labor Party (PT) and Mexican Green Ecological Party (PVEM).

Although there are substantial ideological differences between the parties (especially on economic issues), cooperation, alliances and coalitions are not uncommon, especially after the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) lost its hegemonic position following democratization.

For the 2018 elections, PAN and PRD presented a joint candidate, Ricardo Anaya. MORENA formed an alliance with PT and the right-wing evangelical Social Encounter Party (PES), “Juntos Haremos Historia” (“Together we will make history”). PRI and its presidential candidate José Antonio Meade formed a coalition with PVEM and the New Alliance Party (PANAL). These alliances show the possibilities of inter-party cooperation, cross-cutting ideological differences.

Following the 2018 elections, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, holds a majority in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, the first unified majority government since democratization in 2000. Though this majority remains several votes shy of the supermajority needed to pass constitutional reforms.

The three dominant party blocs are MORENA on the left, PAN on the right and PRI in the center. A centrist PRI could play a pivotal role as a coalition partner between the left and the right in future negotiations. (Score: 6)

Citation:

Greene, K. (2018). Mexico's Party System Under Stress. *Journal of Democracy* 29, 4, October: 31-42.

# Policy Performance

## I. Economic Policies

### Economy

Economic Policy  
Score: 5

Economic and financial stability in the last decade represents a real achievement given the frequency and depth of macroeconomic crises in the 1980s and 1990s. The Finance Ministry and the central bank (Banco de México) benefit from a considerable wealth of technical expertise with many Mexican officials having internationally recognized qualifications in economics. In addition, the high rate of inflation, which was the second highest in the OECD in 2017 and 2018 due to various factors, dropped significantly in 2019.

Mexico has the OECD's lowest tax-to-GDP ratio. For decades, the country's low fiscal capacity was mitigated by oil revenues. The 2014 tax reform aimed to reduce the country's dependency on oil revenues by cutting expenditures and raising non-oil revenues. The public debt anticipated in the reform, however, assumed an ambitious GDP growth rate, which did not materialize. Furthermore, the government assumed that an increase in oil prices would compensate for any revenues not collected. While this was a reasonable assumption at the time of the reform, it did not accomplish the goal of increasing fiscal autonomy from oil revenue. Nevertheless, the debt-to-GDP ratio decreased slowly from 56.76% in 2016 to 53.57% of GDP in 2018.

In comparison with most of the other OECD countries, Mexico's GDP growth over the last decade has been rather slow. This situation – and national and international organizations' downward revision of economic growth forecasts – was due to the fall in international oil prices and the increasing uncertainty over Mexico's future of economic relations with the United States. In particular, the renegotiation of the NAFTA added major doubts to this difficult situation. These doubts were finally addressed when Mexico reached a trilateral agreement with the United States and Canada in the summer and fall



of 2018. In June 2019, Mexico ratified the new trade agreement, the United States, Mexico and Canada Agreement (USMCA), which will replace NAFTA. However, the trade agreement will require major change, especially in the automotive sector, which is so important for Mexico. In the future, more automotive parts will be produced in the United States and wages in the sector in Mexico will increase.

In addition to the USMCA, Mexico renewed the free trade agreement with the European Union in 2018. This agreement guarantees, with a few exceptions, the free circulation of goods and services between Mexico and the European Union.

Already in February 2019, the new president, López Obrador, announced the founding of the Consejo para el Fomento a la Inversión, el Empleo y el Crecimiento Económico, which will act as a contact forum for entrepreneurs, government and civil society, and will discuss how Mexico can develop economically. López Obrador, who is a proponent of economic nationalism, has pledged to achieve an average growth rate of 4% in each year of his presidency until 2024. Despite this, in the first half of 2019, the Mexican economy grew at the slowest rate since 2009.

Despite ongoing reforms geared toward boosting productivity, the microeconomic picture is less positive. There is a lack of competition in key domestic economic sectors. Mexico remains a low-skilled, export-oriented economy tied to the U.S. market. The uneven distribution of income is among the worst in the OECD. High levels of corruption and violence are also severe impediments to inclusive economic development. Though the travel and tourism sectors, which account for 7.4% of the GDP, are growing, despite the high rate of violence in some parts of the country.

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## Labor Markets

Labor Market  
Policy  
Score: 6

The crucial challenge for Mexico's labor economy is the division of the labor market into formal and informal sectors. The informal sector consists of companies and individuals that are not legally registered for taxation and

national insurance, and that largely escape both the advantages and disadvantages of legal regulation. According to government estimations, this segment of the workforce accounts for 57% of the economically active population. By OECD standards, the size of the informal sector is very large. Moreover, Mexico is the only OECD country without a national system of unemployment insurance. Many small companies inhabit a twilight world in which they have both lawful and extra-legal features. Informality is also heterogeneous across regions, with the southern regions of the country generally performing worse.

According to the national statistics institute, the unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2019 was 3.5%, signaling a recovery from the financial and global economic crisis of 2008. However, employed people as a share of the population is still below pre-crisis levels of 2007, and unemployment rates are significantly higher among youth and elders. Furthermore, average pay in Mexico is the lowest among the 35 OECD countries.

As a major project of the Mexican government, a labor market reform was initiated. Its intentions are to strengthen workers' rights and democratize workers' organizations. The adoption of such a reform was a U.S. condition in the negotiations for the USMCA. Mexico has a big problem with the existence of "ghost unions," which are organizations set up by and answer to employers, and act at the expense of the workers.

Citation:

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## Taxes

Tax Policy  
Score: 4

Tax policy, tax reform and the insufficiency of tax collection have been on the political agenda in Mexico for at least the past 50 years. During this long period there has been little progress either in collecting more tax revenue or making the tax system more equitable. While some may argue that the low level of taxation has been helpful for Mexico's international competitiveness, increasing taxation is necessary for improving public good provision by the Mexican government.

While some taxes are collected at the state and municipal levels, the most important tax collector is the federal government. A new tax-reform law was

passed under President Peña Nieto and took effect on 1 January 2014. While well-targeted and effective within its limited scope, the reform was rather modest given the challenges that Mexico faces. The government expected the new law to increase the national government's tax revenues by around 2.5% of GDP. According to a new OECD study, the reform did indeed increase tax collection by 3% in 2015 and 2016, thus contributing to a reduction in the borrowing requirements of the public sector.

Nonetheless, according to observers, Mexican tax collection remains between six and eight percentage points of GDP short of where it should be given the country's current level of development. Tax evasion and tax avoidance in the formal sector is one cause, as is the large size of the informal sector, which is notoriously tax resistant. Most Mexicans distrust their government and do not believe that money paid in taxation will be spent wisely. Additionally, the market-reforming economists who have run Mexico over the past 30 years have not prioritized raising revenue, putting more emphasis on controlling government spending in order to decrease the size of government. It has been asserted that as an oil-exporting country, Mexico should earn a significant amount of public revenue by taxing oil income. However, Mexico's exportable oil surplus has declined due to falling production, a collapse in global oil prices and an increase in domestic oil consumption. Furthermore, the new president, López Obrador, announced that the government would reduce the fiscal burden on Pemex, the state-owned oil company, which is highly in debt. The plan is to reduce Pemex tax contributions from 65% to 58% in 2020 and to 54% the following year.

Overall, further efforts are needed to better coordinate income tax collection with social security, improve the use of property taxes and broaden the overall tax base.

In his election campaign, the new president promised not to increase taxes in the first three years of his term. Nevertheless, in the fall of 2019, the Finance Minister Arturo Herrera announced a future tax reform, with the main aim of eradicating tax evasion. Some of the proposed measures include an obligation that independent sellers and landlords pay income tax. The president also announced a plan to increase excise taxes on cigarettes and sugary drinks, and new taxes on services delivered by digital platforms.

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## Budgets

Budgetary Policy  
Score: 6

Given the country's history of severe macroeconomic imbalances until the 1990s, fiscal stability has been a very strong policy priority for the past several administrations, primarily in order to avoid a repetition of the 1982 debt crisis or the "Tequila Crisis" of 1994. Consensus among the major political actors is significant on this matter. In fact, all the major parties in Mexico support policies of fiscal stability. In 2008, Mexico accepted a domestic recession as the necessary price to pay for avoiding inflation.

However, Mexico's fiscal stability continues to be under threat as a result of the collapse in global oil prices through 2014 and 2015. Although most oil production is consumed domestically, oil exports are a significant source of public revenue given the state-owned structure of Mexico's oil industry. The recent fall of oil prices have motivated tax changes and the reduction of energy subsidies. This has been partially relieved with financial instruments that guarantee a minimum price.

One key shortcoming of the current administration is the lack of consistency between planning and implementation. In 2015, the government announced a spending cut but actual spending increased 5% in real terms. There are few reasons to believe that spending cuts for the coming years will be implemented: according to Mexican researchers, public spending has increased more than 4% every year in real terms since 2012. Even when the goal has been to maintain a primary surplus at the beginning of the year, the trend is reversed by the end of the same year. That is, spending surpasses revenues even before interest payments. During the period under review, the new president, López Obrador, announced a balanced budget for 2019. Though the budget for 2019 had been drafted by the outgoing administration.

A second key shortcoming of Mexican budgetary policy is the opacity surrounding spending decisions. More than half of spending increases have gone to subsidies and transfers, surpassing the amount approved by Congress by more than 10%. Of this increase, around 40% was spent on programs that lacked adequate monitoring, auditing or impact evaluations. This opacity allows for the political use of resources, which may partly explain state-level variations on per-capita spending that seem to be associated with changes in party control of the executive office. Opacity in public spending was partially addressed in 2016 with the creation of the National Anti-corruption System, a set of laws that requires federal and local authorities to prosecute and punish acts of corruption. In 2017, the Ley General de Responsabilidades

Administrativas (General Law of Administrative Responsibilities) was published, which increases sanctions and oversight on private actors that participate in public biddings. However, it remains to be seen if public officials will adequately enforce this law in the coming years, especially as next year's election campaigns will further reduce transparency around public budget allocations.

In September 2019, the new government announced its first self-drafted budget plan for 2020. Under the new plan, Finance Minister Arturo Herrera promised to “generate macroeconomic stability, financial certainty, and to strictly adhere to fiscal discipline.” This statement stands for a general austerity policy that was maintained by the Mexican government in 2019. Furthermore, due to the estimated low crude oil production, the government may have to announce further spending cuts in the future. However, on the other side, local business groups are demanding greater state investment to animate the weakened economy.

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## Research, Innovation and Infrastructure

R&I Policy  
Score: 4

Overall, national spending on research and development (R&D) continues to be very low in comparison with other OECD countries and is inadequate for an economy the size of Mexico. Over recent years, public spending remained stable but the more important private sector spending on R&D has been very low and is the lowest of any OECD country. The private spending is dominated by large companies in a small number of sectors. A very large number of “micro” firms have little or no institutionalized access to state R&D spending, while large and efficient firms undertake their own R&D spending. There is growing awareness of this problem within Mexico itself, but it still ranks below most OECD member countries on indices relating to R&D. The OECD has stated that R&D spending in Mexico is quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate. Mexico has by far the lowest number of researchers per 1,000 employees of any OECD country.

In 2019, Mexico was ranked 54 out of 190 countries on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index, featuring low performance in components such as paying taxes, registering property, getting credit and having access to electricity. These conditions play against the attractiveness to create and fund startups in the new economy.

The 2016 election of Donald Trump and his anti-immigration policies motivated speculation about increased opportunities in Mexico for starting innovative businesses in the IT sector, offering the economic and political environment to attract startups and human capital. Though the number of venture capital institutions and other organizations have generally increased (especially in Guadalajara and Monterrey), most of the country has yet to see the potential benefits of IT investments.

In a non-binding referendum in October 2018, a majority voted against the continued construction of the already partially built Mexico City Texcoco Airport. Following the referendum, the project was canceled by López Obrador, despite opposition from the business sector. In April 2019, the president presented plans for the construction of a new airport at the Santa Lucía air base, 50 kilometers from Mexico City.

The Consejo Coordinador Empresarial has demanded greater state investment in the energy sector, infrastructure and production chains. However, the president has also announced his support for the construction of the Dos Bocas refinery by the state-owned company Pemex. Shortly after assuming office, President López Obrador announced the start of construction of Tren Maya, a new 1,525-kilometer train line in the southeast of the country. The rail project aims to connect the most popular tourist destinations in five states via two routes.

In general, Mexico's electronic infrastructure (e.g., cable and wireless networks) is above average. Likewise, Mexico has a good system of highways.

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## Global Financial System

Stabilizing  
Global Financial  
System  
Score: 6

Given its experience with severe financial crises, Mexican governments over the last two decades have been keen to improve the regulation of the domestic financial sector. As a consequence, domestic financial regulation improved substantially, though it remains far from optimal. Mexican governments have

also embraced an international effort to halt financial flows related to illegal drug production and trafficking. As part of its anti-drug smuggling policies, for example, money laundering has become more difficult. Yet as the prevalence of destabilizing domestic drug-related conflicts shows, the government is far from achieving its internal goals related to drug production and money laundering.

Despite government efforts, dealing with major financial inflows from illegal drug-related activities remains a major challenge in Mexico. On the positive side, the performance of Mexican banks (e.g., regarding the percentage of non-performing loans or banks' risk-weighted assets) is currently in the midfield of the OECD average, according to IMF statistics. There may indeed be a danger of going too far the other way, since the lending policies of the country's largest financial institutions have sometimes been criticized as being too conservative, constraining domestic economic growth.

The government has also more actively participated in international trade negotiations in an attempt to diversify the Mexican economy and reduce its dependence on the United States. While the government has had some success in this respect, the Mexican economy remains heavily dependent on its northern neighbor. Following doubts regarding the continued existence of the North American free trade area (which have subsequently been dispelled with the new announcement of a revised free trade agreement between Mexico, the United States and Canada), this situation will not change in the foreseeable future.

The new president, López Obrador, said in March 2019: "We formally declare the end of neoliberal policy, coupled with its economic policy of pillage, antipopular and surrender. Both things are abolished." While such a statement would mean a substantial reversal of Mexico's relationship with international markets, there has been no sign of a turnaround in practice.

Citation:

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## II. Social Policies

### Education

Education Policy  
Score: 5

Mexico's education system is relatively weak despite significant public investment in the sector. According to the 2017 OECD's Overview of the Education System, education spending in Mexico in 2014 (last year with available data) was 5.4% of the country's GDP. While this is slightly over the OECD's average of 5.2%, it is below other Latin American countries like Argentina, Chile and Colombia. Moreover, the per student expenditure of Mexico (,611 in 2015) is the lowest of all OECD countries. This can explain to a great extent why student performance is lower than in most other OECD countries, including Chile (the other Latin American OECD member). Also, there are strong regional differences in education and some states (e.g., Guerrero) are continuously failing to cope with national minimum standards in education at the primary and secondary levels.

The problem, therefore, appears to be related to resource allocation rather than funding per se. Too much is spent on salaries in contrast to capital spending, where further investment in different types of infrastructure is urgently needed. Aiming to mitigate the strong political influence of the teachers' union on the Education Ministry, the outgoing Peña Nieto government's recent reforms aimed at facilitating a meritocracy in the teaching profession. However, the reform still lags behind expectations. It created the Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación (INEE), a national organization that would implement periodic teacher performance evaluations. Some critics argued that the reform's goal was to undermine teachers' unions across the country and further centralize education. On the other hand, the teachers' union has been criticized for its control over the allocation of teaching positions. What is clear is that rising student numbers will require an increase in overall funding.

There is evidence of the union collecting salaries for nonexistent teachers. One of the provisions of the reform requires the National Statistics Institute to ascertain how many teachers are actually employed by the Mexican state. Mexico's new president, López Obrador, promised during his campaign that he would replace the current reform proposal with his own and increase public education spending. Nevertheless, the new draft of the education reform retained a major part of his predecessor's reform. As a result, he made the powerful Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE),



which had supported him in the election campaign, a political opponent. Elba Esther Gordillo, the long-time president of the other major teachers' union Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (SNTE), described the new reform as “old wine in a new bottle.” After lengthy negotiations, however, the education reform was passed in May 2019. The reform eliminates the INEE, it establishes that initial education (from 0 to 3 years) is mandatory and that the state must guarantee access to higher education.

Higher education is faces several major challenges. Mexico's student population increased from 2 million students in 2001 to 4.5 million in 2018. Universities need to adapt to this higher demand, and align study programs with the needs of a developing and diversifying economy. Nevertheless, the tertiary enrollment rate is still far below those of other major Latin American countries. As in most other countries in the region, private education is generally of much higher quality in Mexico. At every level, privately educated students typically outperform students enrolled in public schools.

Citation:

<https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/9789264312548-en.pdf?expires=1574424513&id=id&accname=ocid49018577&checksum=4CF0AF65E466B51A5304F1B33F2DE855>  
[https://www.latinnews.com/component/k2/item/79850.html?archive=33&Itemid=6&cat\\_id=816958:mexico-new-ally-and-old-foe-give-lopez-obrador-headache](https://www.latinnews.com/component/k2/item/79850.html?archive=33&Itemid=6&cat_id=816958:mexico-new-ally-and-old-foe-give-lopez-obrador-headache)  
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[https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/02/08/mexico/1549581066\\_521979.html](https://elpais.com/internacional/2019/02/08/mexico/1549581066_521979.html)  
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## Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion  
Policy  
Score: 4

Mexico is a socially hierarchical society along a number of dimensions: educational, racial and financial. While democratization has somewhat reduced the most flagrant social divisions, Mexican governments have not been capable or willing to bring substantial change. Moreover, the Mexican state is too weak to carry out major social reforms and there is strong resistance against wealth redistribution. Among OECD countries Mexico has one of the highest income concentration indexes, with a Gini coefficient of 0.48 in 2016 (according to the World Bank).

Nevertheless, there is some evidence that public policy has improved the distribution of income in Mexico during the last two decades. The Gini coefficient has come down slightly.

A government policy to address extreme poverty and the lack of adequate sources of food has been effective since 2012, called the Cruzada Nacional Contra el Hambre with its Food Support Program. The policy was intended to reach more than seven million people and has been praised for its

effectiveness. It created a database of beneficiaries who were not receiving cash transfers through other government agencies. Nonetheless, in an official report from 2018, National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) noted that the number of poor people had increased from 49.5 million in 2008 to 52.4 million in 2018. Nevertheless, the poverty rate decreased from 44.4% to 41.9% of the population. The organization has warned that the total of 6,491 social programs – which are carried out by national, regional and local administrations – should be critically reviewed. Poverty is highly concentrated among indigenous and rural populations, indicating another layer of inequality in Mexico. For this reason, there are generally strong regional inequalities in terms of the extent of poverty. Though recently there have been major achievements in fighting poverty in the northern half of Mexico, while the poverty rate has risen in southern states such as Chiapas, Oaxaca and Veracruz. Overall, extreme poverty has decreased over the last 10 years from 11% to 7.4%.

Improving the social situation of many Mexicans can be interpreted as a key goal of the new Mexican government. However, the government often has its hands tied in this regard. As such, a change would require stronger state tax revenues, which at present seems unlikely.

Citation:

<http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/sociedad/aumenta-la-cantidad-de-pobres-en-mexico-coneval>

<https://data.oecd.org/inequality/income-inequality.htm>

<https://www.animalpolitico.com/2018/08/paridad-genero-congreso-mujeres/>

[https://www.latinnews.com/component/k2/item/81197.html?archive=33&Itemid=6&cat\\_id=818713:tracking-trends](https://www.latinnews.com/component/k2/item/81197.html?archive=33&Itemid=6&cat_id=818713:tracking-trends)

<https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/mexicos-presidents-have-failed-address-poverty-will-amlo-do-better>

## Health

Health Policy  
Score: 5

Overall, public spending on healthcare is comparatively high but the quality of healthcare varies widely across Mexico, with different regions showing broad variation in the quality and variety of services available. Some U.S. citizens come to Mexico as health tourists, taking advantage of cheaper healthcare south of the border. Private, self-financed healthcare is largely limited to middle-class and upper-class Mexicans, who encompass roughly 15% of the total population, but receive about one-third of all hospital beds. Around one-third of the population (most of whom work in the formal sector) can access healthcare through state-run occupational and contributory insurance schemes such as the Mexican Social Security Institute (Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social, IMSS) and the State Employees' Social Security and Social Services Institute (Instituto de Seguridad y Servicios Sociales de los Trabajadores del

Estado, ISSSTE). These are based on automatic contributions for workers in the formal sector and, in practice, work reasonably well, although with some variation across different parts of the country. The system has been decentralized to the states. In 2016, a National Agreement Toward Health Service Universalization was signed, which aims to ensure portability across providers.

Public health issues are aggravated by the lack of access to quality health services. Though most Mexicans are affiliated with the different sources of healthcare providers, including public and private, there are still issues of quality that negatively affect public health. For example, with some 13 million Mexicans suffering from diabetes, the country has one of the highest rates of diabetes among all OECD countries. The lack of sufficient healthcare and infrastructure means that diabetes patients suffer from several complications.

The government has been attempting to make healthcare more affordable and extend it to more people outside the formal sector. In order to extend the insurance principle, in 2003 the government has set up the so-called Popular Insurance (Seguro Popular) program, which is open to contributors on a voluntary basis, with means-tested contributions from citizens supplemented by substantial government subsidies in order to encourage membership. According to experts, the program was widely successful. By 2017, the percentage of uninsured people had decreased from 50% to 21.5%. However, there are still substantial problems in terms of funding and serious transparency deficiencies persist.

In the first year of López Obrador's new presidency, healthcare sector representatives and workers repeatedly complained about the austerity measures imposed by the government. This led among other things to the resignation of the head of the IMSS. Even though the government responded by increasing the healthcare sector's budget, Health Minister Alcocer made it clear that the government would continue to fight against excessive prices and resource waste. Although he received broad support for this, patient representatives advocated for maintaining the current system and improving the supply of medication. However, it does seem that López Obrador's austerity measures will hit the most vulnerable in society and people who live in remote areas the hardest.

In August 2019, President López Obrador announced a new program to improve the healthcare system. Furthermore, the Instituto de la Salud para el Bienestar was founded. This new institution is supposed to improve healthcare provision for citizens that are unable to access existing social security systems.

Citation:

<http://www.oecd.org/mexico/Health-Policy-in-Mexico-February-2016.pdf>

<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/95/6/17-020617/en/>  
[https://www.latinnews.com/component/k2/item/80361.html?archive=33&Itemid=6&cat\\_id=817617:mexico-rowing-back-on-healthcare-sector-austerity](https://www.latinnews.com/component/k2/item/80361.html?archive=33&Itemid=6&cat_id=817617:mexico-rowing-back-on-healthcare-sector-austerity)  
<https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/amlos-false-sense-austerity>

## Families

Family Policy  
Score: 4

As in most other areas of Mexican social policy, social divisions are pronounced in the area of family policy. On the one hand, educated and urban Mexicans are broadly supportive of women's rights, as is the political class. Recent political reforms require registered political parties to have a quota of women included as a part of their election slates. In addition, educated women are increasingly participating in the labor market and quite a large number of professionals are women. However, women are strongly underrepresented in top business positions. Less than 10% of seats on boards are held by women, a low level compared to other OECD countries, providing a strong argument in favor of at least temporary gender quotas.

With regard to the poorer segments of the population, gender equality is progressing even slower. Poorer Mexicans tend to have larger families and face fewer opportunities for women in the labor market. Also, old-fashioned "macho" and conservative Catholic attitudes from the past make it harder for lower-class women to progress. Moreover, lower-class women are more active in family businesses and in the informal economy, where incomes tend to be lower, and where it is hard for them to access state benefits. The main problems facing working class women have to do with dysfunctions in public services including health, education and transportation. There is a huge demand for expanding early childcare and preschool coverage and extending the length of paternity and maternity leaves. In 2014, Congress approved a bill reforming the Federal Law of State Workers, giving state employees a five-day paternity leave. While this reform aimed to promote gender equality, it has not been welcomed by Mexican feminist organizations, as it is far from the number of days currently afforded for maternity leave (60 days). Moreover, paternity leave policies are more an exception than a rule in Mexico and still regarded as unnecessary by most businesses and organizations. This reinforces a gender bias in child rearing and discrimination of women in the workplace.

In the early 2000s, SEDESOL created a program aimed at early childhood development that provide childcare for children of men and women in poverty five days a week. Though the program is not universal, there is some evidence that it provides advantages to enrolled children, even if the extent of childcare in comparison to OECD countries is quite low.

According to official records, more than 60% of women 15 years and older have experienced some type of violence in their lifetime. On average, seven women were killed in Mexico every day. It must be assumed that the number of unreported cases is much higher. The problem is concentrated in a few regional states. The exceptionally high number of disappeared women in the northern state of Chihuahua and the central state of Estado de Mexico, many of whom are presumed to have been murdered, has led to the international use of the term “femicide” to describe this form of disappearance. Many of these disappeared women were likely the victims of sex crimes, but many more have been victims of family honor killings.

In autumn 2019, President López Obrador presented a plan to tackle femicide. However, there are doubts that it is largely a statement of intent that lacks concrete measures. Meanwhile, the Proigualdad program, which includes far-reaching measures to achieve effective equality between men and women, and will be given a concrete budget, is still being prepared.

Citation:

[http://www.inegi.org.mx/saladeprensa/aproposito/2016/violencia2016\\_0.pdf](http://www.inegi.org.mx/saladeprensa/aproposito/2016/violencia2016_0.pdf)

<http://www.animalpolitico.com/2014/03/permiso-de-paternidad-en-mexico-unas-mini-vacaciones-pagadas-de-5-dias/>

[https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1665114616301617/1-s2.0-S1665114616301617-main.pdf?\\_tid=be22bb40-e2cf-11e7-ae06-00000aab0f27&acdnat=1513476933\\_1b3cb11d76a482e57d9c4f638c2232f8](https://ac.els-cdn.com/S1665114616301617/1-s2.0-S1665114616301617-main.pdf?_tid=be22bb40-e2cf-11e7-ae06-00000aab0f27&acdnat=1513476933_1b3cb11d76a482e57d9c4f638c2232f8)

<https://justiceinmexico.org/femicidesinmexico/>

[https://elpais.com/sociedad/2019/11/21/actualidad/1574372158\\_615125.html](https://elpais.com/sociedad/2019/11/21/actualidad/1574372158_615125.html)

## Pensions

Pension Policy  
Score: 5

Mexico is slowly shifting from a pensions system based on contributions and corporate identity to one that is more universalistic in character, operated by government-approved financial agencies called Afores. Some Mexican states have in recent years introduced noncontributory old-age pensions based on universal eligibility. Mexico is in a relatively advantageous position to introduce reform in that its birth rate peaked in the 1970s, which has led to a reduction in children’s demands on the public sector. At the other end of the demographic balance, Mexico still has a relatively low proportion of old people. As a result, Mexico’s dependent population is fairly small, indicating that a window for reform will open up in the coming years. As this comparatively privileged position will eventually change for the worse, the pressure to reform soon will increase. Conscious of this dynamic, Mexican governments have been continuously attempting to reform the pension system to increase coverage and quality. Due to a political blockade in the Senate such previous efforts have so far not been rewarded.

While improving, the current system is far from being sufficiently robust to be able to cope with the growing population of elderly people. Historically, Mexico's pensions policy has been based on the principle of contributions, which has not provided any, let alone an adequate, safety net for the elderly poor. However, some parts of Mexico, notably the capital district, now have a limited old-age pension system based on a universal entitlement.

One of the key problems with the current pension system in Mexico is its low coverage: in 2016, only 27% of the working age population had a pension account, a rate below that of countries like Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay. Moreover, increasing mandatory contributions is not a viable solution in the Mexican context, as it would further incentivize informal employment. An increase in mandatory contribution would have to be accompanied by more comprehensive measures that account for the complexity of the Mexican labor market and the government's fiscal capacity. The new government announced a reform of the pension system that will be introduced during the new government's six-year term.

Citation:

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<http://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/economia/gobierno-de-amlo-promete-reforma-en-pensiones-en-cuatro-anos>

<https://www.forbes.com.mx/se-acerca-el-dia-d-para-el-sistema-de-pensiones/>

## Integration

Integration Policy  
Score: 3

Mexican integration policy remains weak to nonexistent. The dominant cultural narrative in Mexico tends to assume that migration means emigration. Mexico was and remains a major source of emigration, but has not effectively addressed problems related to immigration that have been steadily increasing during the last 15 to 20 years. There are serious problems related to migrants entering Mexico from Central America, but also from Haiti, and many Asian and African countries, with most seeking entry to the United States and a minority wanting to stay in Mexico. Few are able to acquire formal documentation. In their desperation, such people are often preyed upon by criminals or even recruited into local drug gangs. Homicide rates are also high among this group. The Mexican authorities mostly do not welcome this kind of immigration and do their best to discourage it. However, there is no effective integration, transit or migration policy to deal with these issues. Mexican authorities also downplay the incidence of criminal attacks on Central American immigrants, although the international media has cast a spotlight on this population's predicament.

The newly created National Guard was deployed to various highway checkpoints across Mexico to stop the transit of illegal immigrants on their way to the United States. Human rights organizations have complained about “practices outside the law,” which are applied to migrants.

Contrary to what emerges from the media, more Mexicans have been leaving the United States since 2008 than have emigrated to the United States. A particular problem is that of “returnees” (i.e., young Mexican nationals or children of Mexican nationals who come to Mexico after living in the United States, either voluntarily or through deportation). This issue becomes particularly relevant as the Trump administration decided to terminate DACA. Many of these students are not fluent in Spanish and have problems integrating into Mexican schools since they have studied under a different school system utilizing different teaching and evaluation methodologies. The Mexican education system is not ready to provide sufficient resources to improve these students’ language skills and their sense of belonging. As the Trump administration tightens migration policies, Mexico can expect an increase in young returnees. It must be ready to successfully integrate them in the education system through specialized programs and resources.

Citation:

<https://apnews.com/4b37a351ad294a52b3834ba0c4a23e27>

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/extracontinental-migrants-latin-america>

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/protection-and-reintegration-mexico-reforms-migration-agenda>

### Safe Living

Internal Security  
Policy  
Score: 2

Mexico has been among the most dangerous countries in the world and there have been no substantial improvement in recent years. The main reason for this high homicide rate is that Mexico has become a major center for the transit of illegal drugs to the United States. In brutal competition with one another, Mexico’s criminal gangs or cartels, have carried out horrific acts and killed thousands. Moreover, violence has become increasingly intertwined with local, regional and national politics. From a regional perspective, Mexico has only a slightly lower homicide rate than Honduras and Venezuela, and the worst homicide rate of any OECD country. In Mexico, on average 96 murders happen per day, with more than 36,000 people killed in the first year of the presidency of López Obrador and a total of 250,000 people killed since the war on drugs began in 2006.

To solve the problem, Mexican governments have been actively fighting the drug mafia with military and security forces. However, the so-called war on

drugs has actually contributed to an increase in the murder rate. Mexico has improved the bureaucratic efficiency of some of its crime-fighting operations, but there are still huge problems. These problems include a lack of bureaucratic cooperation, rampant corruption within the security apparatus, the immense scale of criminal activity in Mexico and the infiltration of law enforcement agencies by organized crime. The National Security Commission has argued that the low wages paid to the security forces is one reason for this situation. Thus, one can say that internal security policy does not effectively protect citizens. This explains the proliferation of self-defense groups throughout the country and a lack of trust in the authorities, which are – especially at the local level – frequently infiltrated by organized crime.

More worrying still, the judicial system is not designed to convict powerful and wealthy criminals. It is too difficult to convict criminal suspects in Mexico who can afford expensive lawyers. Additionally, Mexico has suffered several public scandals which have further damaged public confidence in the authorities. These scandals include prison escapes by high-profile criminals and unexplained massacres in rural areas. In at least part of its territory, Mexico is a failed state.

During the election campaign, the incoming government promised to gradually reduce the militarization of the fight against the drug cartels. Nevertheless, in November 2018, López Obrador announced a plan to create a national guard, which will number 150,000 armed men at the end of his term in 2023. Consequently, the expected militarization of the conflict triggered numerous criticisms. After a wave of protests and a compromise with the Senate, the government announced that it would create a new police institution, the National Guard, which would be placed under civilian control, and act as an “inter-institutional coordination body” between the military and police. One of the first orders of the National Guard was to deploy guards along the border with Guatemala in order to control the flow of migrants into Mexico. However, it seems that despite the reform, the security situation under López Obrador has not improved and may get even more out of control in the near future.

Citation:

[http://secretariadodjejecutivo.gob.mx/docs/pdfs/cifras%20de%20homicidio%20doloso%20secuestro%20etc/HDSECEXTRV\\_062017.pdf](http://secretariadodjejecutivo.gob.mx/docs/pdfs/cifras%20de%20homicidio%20doloso%20secuestro%20etc/HDSECEXTRV_062017.pdf)

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<https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-50100518>



Global Social  
Policy  
Score: 6

### Global Inequalities

Regarding free trade, Mexico is supportive of open trade agreements and actively seeks good relations with any country that might counterbalance its heavy economic dependence on the United States. Mexico has also been active in financing international development, providing modest levels of foreign aid and investing in triangular cooperation. Moreover, foreign policy continues to embrace the topic of south-south-cooperation and supports regional development projects. The Mexican government has also been a supporter of the U.N. Global Goals (Sustainable Development Goals) and Agenda 2030, launched in 2015.

However, Mexico could do more to promote and advance social inclusion beyond its borders. The treatment of Central American immigrants needs to be greatly improved. Diplomatic relations between Mexico and its southern neighbors are very good, but there is room for improvement in trade treaties in the region and Mexico could lead efforts to increase the economic integration and global competitiveness of Latin America. An excessive dependence on trade with the United States has prevented Mexico from looking south.

However, apart from free trade and good relations with the southern neighbors, international relations and Mexico's actions in multilateral organizations do not play a major role in Mexican politics. For that the internal problems of the country are too urgent. So far, it does not seem that there will be any substantial changes in this regard under the new government.

Citation:

<https://www.proceso.com.mx/518235/mexico-ante-la-situacion-internacional-de-2018>

## III. Environmental Policies

### Environment

Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 5

Mexico is a signatory of the Paris Agreement and has shown every sign of taking environment policy seriously. However, it continues to face several very serious environmental challenges. The provision of clean water to Mexico City, air pollution in the capital and other major cities, deforestation and erosion in rural Mexico are some of the most pressing problems. While a marked decrease in population growth is relieving some environmental

pressure, policies aiming to conserve the environment and reduce pollution should remain a top priority for ensuring sustainable development. While environmental policy has become more sophisticated, particularly in Mexico City and other major cities, the enforcement of environmental standards and regulations is often lacking. It is worth noting the substantial variation between government levels and across issues; the federal government is much more capable, with better and more efficient regulations and monitoring. This is not the case at the local level, where funds, human capital, and administrative resources are scarce; in particular, in the most ecologically rich but poorest regions of the country. In terms of environmental issues, Mexico has very strong air quality regulations and made significant progress over the last two decades. In contrast, norms regulating water consumption and pollution are far less advanced.

From a comparative perspective, the government's recent economic reforms were more diluted and slower to pass than its environment legislation, but implementation of policies and regulations remains a major challenge. Many companies do not comply with existing regulations and the high degree of informality in the economy is further aggravating the challenge of non-compliance. Despite an increasing awareness of environmental challenges among the broader population, particularly among the young, public pressure and support for environmental NGOs remains weak when compared to many other OECD countries. Business interest groups are much more powerful than their environmental counterparts. It is worthwhile noting that the Mexican Green Party is not as "green" as its name might imply in other countries; environmental interests are still weakly nested in the major political parties.

In addition to liberalizing energy prices for gasoline and natural gas, the energy reform of 2013, established provisions for an increasing participation of renewables in the energy mix in Mexico. Private power generators are now able to sell electricity, but the new regulations also provide incentives for the use of renewables and the reduction greenhouse-gas emissions by constraining the biggest consumers to get a proportion of their power from clean energy sources. The reform was fully implemented in 2018. It is considered to have been quite successful so far, since the framework of the electricity sector and especially the sector of renewable energy has become more stable and competitive.

President López Obrador was heavily criticized by environmentalists during his first year in government. In particular, criticisms have focused on his three major projects: the construction of a new Santa Lucia airport, the troubled Tren Maya railway project and the construction of the Dos Bocas oil refinery.

Citation:

[https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/mexico\\_renewable\\_energy\\_future\\_0.pdf](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/mexico_renewable_energy_future_0.pdf)

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## Global Environmental Protection

Global  
Environmental  
Policy  
Score: 6

Mexico relishes having an international profile that shows independence from the United States. International environmental protection contributes to such a profile. Mexico is a leading international actor on environmental policy within the region, even if its domestic policies are inconsistent: Mexico is still the second-biggest emitter of greenhouse gases in Latin America. Firewood remains the primary fuel used by poor Mexican families. Moreover, the importance of the oil industry for the Mexican economy creates substantial barriers to credible domestic action even as it seeks to position itself as a pioneer in international environmental protection.

Mexican authorities and the public are at least much more aware of environmental issues and their resulting problems than they were a generation ago. The country's climate-change law went into effect in October 2012, drawing international praise. There is an underfunded Climate Change Fund, created to finance adaptation and greenhouse-gas emissions-reduction initiatives. Its operating rules have apparently been completed, but have not yet been published. Additional challenges associated with implementing the law relate to the creation of a national climate-change information system, the effective reduction of greenhouse gases, and producing assessments of adaptation and mitigation measures. Mexico is also one of the main recipients of clean development mechanisms in Latin America. It has advocated for the continuation of this development and environmental cooperation mechanism in several environmental policy forums.

Overall, Mexico was one of the first countries in the world to pass a specific law on climate change. The law set an obligatory target of reducing national greenhouse-gas emissions by 30% by 2020. The country also has a National Climate Change Strategy, which is intended to guide policymaking over the next 40 years. However, only about half of the Mexican states had drawn up a state plan on climate change, just seven had passed their own laws and only 11 had begun measuring their CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Thus, on the one hand, Mexico has been very active in the preparation of the U.N. Global Goals (Sustainable Development Goals) agenda, reflecting the country's traditional multilateral approach to foreign policymaking. Mexico has been an active participant in

climate-change talks involving international organizations. During the most recent COP23 meeting in 2017, it was praised for its innovative policies on gathering data about electricity consumption in central Mexico.

Citation:

<https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/mexico/>

# Quality of Democracy

## Electoral Processes

Candidacy  
Procedures  
Score: 8

The electoral process is supervised by an autonomous agency, the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE), following a constitutional reform in 2014 and the creation in 1990 of the Instituto Federal Electoral. INE is responsible for the registration of parties, candidates and voters, and for administering elections.

While in principle the process for registering political parties is open and transparent, high registration requirements as well as a bureaucratic and lengthy registration process create a strong status quo bias. To meet the requirements for registering a new national political party, organizations must demonstrate a minimum of 3,000 members, representation in at least 20 of the 32 states, and a minimum of 300 members in at least 200 electoral districts. Historically, the high barriers for party formation have served to discourage new and small political groups from challenging the established parties.

Since 2015, independent candidates have been allowed to run for office in national elections but the requirements for participating are high. To appear on the ballot, independent presidential candidates must collect more than 850,000 signatures nationally and obtain the support of at least 1% of registered voters in 17 states. In the 2018 elections, 48 independent candidates announced their candidacy for the presidency, but only two, Margarita Zavala and Jaime Rodríguez Calderón, managed to fulfill the requirements. After Zavala withdrew in May 2018, Rodríguez Calderón was the only independent candidate left, receiving 5.23% of votes in the presidential elections. María de Jesús Patricio Martínez – an independent candidate who was supported by indigenous groups and the Zapatista movement, but who failed to fulfill the criteria – criticized the process for being unfairly biased against the poor.

Close linkages between some candidates and organized crime, especially at the subnational level, as well as violence and corruption continue to undermine the integrity of the political system and the electoral process. Under the current government, this structural challenge is unlikely to change.

Citation:

Harbers, Imke and Matthew C. Ingram “On the engineerability of political parties: evidence from Mexico.” In: I. van Biezen, and H. M. ten Napel. *Regulating political parties: European democracies in comparative perspective* (2014): 253-277.

Media Access  
Score: 6

The electoral process in Mexico is subject to a comparatively high degree of regulation. During the transition to democracy during the 1990s, electoral laws were revised to ensure more equitable conditions for the main political parties.

Currently, all registered political parties are eligible for public financing, the volume of which corresponds to their electoral strength. There are restrictions on the amount of money parties are allowed to raise and spend. Media access during the official campaign period is regulated to ensure a measure of equality. Nevertheless, outside the tightly regulated political campaigns, news coverage is often heavily biased in favor of incumbents. Presidents as well as governors spend exorbitant sums on advertising and pro-government propaganda. Since news outlets rely on this income for their financial survival, they can often scarcely afford to criticize sitting administrations. The Peña Nieto administration has taken this long-standing practice to new levels. According to a report compiled by the think tank Fundar based on government data, his administration spent nearly \$2 on advertising in the past five years, substantially more than any previous administrations.

Broadcasting networks and newspapers depend on that money, the big television networks Televisa and Azteca receive around 10% of their advertisement revenue from the federal government. A Supreme Court ruling in November 2017 demanded further regulation and limitation, but the new provisions are yet to be implemented.

In the 2018 campaign, the winner, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, was challenged by the mainstream media, although his use of social media and the support he received from activists successfully overcame this. The oligopolized market of traditional media has lost political weight. Once in office, López Obrador started a daily press conference, which is broadcast live on YouTube. This approach enables the president to avoid immediate press criticism and promote his agenda.

Citation:  
New York Times (25 Dec 2017) “Using Billions in Government Cash, Mexico Controls News Media.”

Voting and  
Registration  
Rights  
Score: 8

Mexico has had universal suffrage since 1953 and male suffrage since 1917. Legally, Mexico by and large conforms to the standards of electoral democracies, especially on the national level. The organization and administration of elections is managed professionally by the National Electoral Institute (INE). In recent years, INE oversight over state-level electoral

institutions has increased. There is also a system of electoral courts, which are generally more professional and independent than the criminal courts. Citizens and party members can appeal to these courts if their political or electoral rights are violated.

Voters have to register through INE to receive a voter identification card. The same electoral register is used for federal and state or local elections. This may serve to discourage marginalized and less educated citizens from voting.

A total of 89,978,701 people, approximately 72.7% of the Mexican population, applied for the required ID in 2018.

Mexicans living abroad (about 10% of the population) are allowed to vote for the president, but turnout is extremely low, in part due to the difficult registration process. More than 11 million Mexicans live abroad, but only 100,000 participated in the 2018 elections.

In general, Mexican elections are considered mostly free and fair. Complaints concern vote-buying and some minor problems, such as the theft of 34 ballot boxes by armed groups. Violence is a major problem. During the 2018 elections, 133 candidates were killed, most of the candidates are presumed to have been murdered by organized criminal gangs.

Citation:

Miranda, Fernando (28 de junio de 2018). «Acaban campañas con récord en el nivel de violencia». El Universal.

Party Financing  
Score: 4

Mexico's elections are highly regulated by the state. This reflects a history of electoral fraud and rigged elections which resulted in distrust between parties and a desire to formalize rules. The National Electoral Institute (INE) is in charge of monitoring party compliance with electoral rules and regulations. It is also responsible for administering and auditing the public funding of parties. By international comparison, public funding of political parties in Mexico is extremely generous. Political parties are mostly financed by the state and there are restrictions on the amount of fundraising permitted. INE also coordinates campaign advertisements for parties. Electoral expenditures have been similarly controlled. INE can and does impose significant sanctions on political parties if they fail to comply with funding rules. However, oversight is incomplete and INE audits have revealed illegal undisclosed funding to parties.

In 2018, registered parties received more than MXN 2 billion for campaigning and more than MXN 4 billion for permanent activities, a total of more than

MXN 6.5 billion. PRI received more than MXN 1.6 billion, PAN more than MXN 1.2 billion, PRD a bit less than MXN 800 million, MORENA a bit more than MXN 600 million. The campaign 2018 was the most expensive in Mexican history.

While INE's bureaucracy is by and large efficient and impartial, the weak rule of law and ineffective criminal courts undermine the integrity of elections. According to media reports concerning illegal campaign financing, for every peso spent legally, an estimated MXN 15 was spent illegally. Funds are often misused for vote-buying. Shortly after the elections, INE fined MORENA MXN 197 million for misusing a solidarity fund for victims of the 2017 earthquake. Almost MXN 65 million were spent without records. Morena's main rivals, PRI and PAN, were also fined, although their fines were not as high. As previous examples of party financing scandals have shown (e.g., PRI MONEXGATE 2000, PAN AMIGOS DE FOX 2000 and PEMEXGATE 2012), illegal campaign financing had been proven and sanctioned years later, but without any effect on elections or campaigns.

Citation:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-44884993>

Popular Decision-  
Making  
Score: 5

There are no provisions for legally binding referendums or popular initiatives at the federal level in Mexico so far. Though, in October 2019, the Mexican Senate approved a constitutional change giving citizens the possibility to vote in a recall referendum. This could result in a president and provincial governors being recalled after half a term. The House of Deputies, in which MORENA holds a clear majority, still has to approve the new regulation. In general, Mexican citizens are more likely to influence public policy through demonstrations or legal action than through popular decision-making.

In October 2018, an NGO organized a referendum on a planned airport near Mexico City, scheduled to be the third largest in the world. About one million Mexicans participated, a majority of almost 70% rejected the new airport. A novelty in Mexico, it was not legally binding, but the new government adopted the decision.

#### Access to Information

Media Freedom  
Score: 4

Officially, freedom of expression is protected and the media is independent from the government.

While media freedom is not severely restricted by the government, substantial restrictions exist on what news outlets can cover without fear of reprisal.



Topics such as corruption or collusion between organized crime and public officials are particularly dangerous territory. According to data from the Committee to Protect Journalists, Mexico is one of the most deadly countries for journalists, surpassed only by Iraq and Syria. Between January and August 2019, 10 journalists were killed. Since 2000, 138 journalists have been killed, 24 have disappeared. These dangers particularly affect journalists working for subnational news outlets as well as those who report critically on corruption and linkages between politicians and organized crime. The federal government fails to act decisively to protect journalists. When journalists are murdered, there is broad impunity for their killers. Thus, even though press freedom is codified in national laws, in practice there are substantial restrictions on press freedom. Mexico ranked 144 out of 180 countries in the Press Freedom Index 2019.

Citation:

Reporter ohne Grenzen: <https://www.reporter-ohne-grenzen.de/mexiko/>

Artículo 19: <https://articulo19.org/periodistasasesinados/>

Media Pluralism  
Score: 6

The Mexican media is much more diversified and politically pluralist than it was a generation ago, but ownership is still highly concentrated. Despite Peña Nieto's telecommunication reform, broadcasting continues to be characterized by oligopolistic ownership. Two corporations, Televisa and TV Azteca, dominate more than 90% of the TV market. Regulators, like the Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT), are essentially toothless.

Mexicans take full advantage of internet-based media, which have grown in both size and significance and offer a wide spectrum of information. In the 2018 elections, the left-wing candidate, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, used social media as an alternative to mainstream media. The development of online media has done much to enhance pluralism through bypassing traditional, highly oligopolized media structures. On the other hand, however, internet-based media have also created new challenges. There are challenges regarding the journalistic quality of small and highly diverse media outlets. Furthermore, broadband and cellphone coverage is highly unequal, with rural and marginalized citizens unable to take advantage of these new sources of information. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador announced government plans on 11 May 2019 to create a public internet company, which will allow even those in the most remote areas of the country to access the internet, but it is unlikely to be carried out in the near future.

Access to  
Government  
Information  
Score: 6

Mexico's freedom of information act became law in 2002. The law was the first in Latin America to impose obligations on the state to publicly share information and increase the level of political transparency. INAI (Instituto Nacional de Transparencia, Acceso a la Información y Protección de Datos

Personales) is an autonomous body, which aims to promote government transparency, monitor developments in open government and access to information, and settle disputes between citizens and government bodies over freedom of information requests. Mexico's freedom of information act has proved to be a considerable success in increasing publicly available information. Scholars, journalists and bureaucrats have all made use of its provisions and a lot of new information has come to light.

Despite the progressive spirit of the law, however, the extent to which it is obeyed and enforced varies considerably. Powerful public and private actors can delay and obscure access to information, despite formal transparency laws. As is often the case in Mexico, there is a gap between theory and practice. The government response to the disappearance of a group of students in Ayotzinapa in the state of Guerrero, and the frustrated efforts by an international committee to investigate the role federal and local authorities and security forces played in their disappearance, is a case in point. President López Obrador installed in December 2018 a commission to conduct a new investigation into the case, fulfilling a campaign promise.

Citation:

AMLO creates super-commission to investigate missing 43 of Ayotzinapa, December 4, 2018, <https://mexiconewsdaily.com/news/commission-to-investigate-ayotzinapa/>

### Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights  
Score: 2

In principle, Mexico guarantees most civil rights via its legal and constitutional systems. Nevertheless, access to the court system and protection against violations are both highly unequal. Overall, the rule of law is weak, and there is widespread impunity the rule, which undermines the effectiveness of formally guaranteed rights.

The tension between formal rights and effective guarantees plays out especially forcefully in the field of security. Since 2006, more than 250,000 men and women have been killed in the “war on drugs,” with more than 36,000 killed in the first year of President López Obrador's term in office – an average of 96 murders per day. The government has lost control of many parts of Mexico.

The Mexican military and other security forces are notorious for violating human rights, and the courts do not provide adequate protection to citizens victimized by the military or police. Since the beginning of the drug war in 2006, Mexico's Human Rights Commission has received more than 10,000 complaints of abuse by the military. Federal prosecutors have opened more

than 9,000 investigations, without a single conviction. An anti-torture law, passed in April 2017, is yet to be implemented. A new internal security law, passed in December 2017, legalizing military involvement in domestic law enforcement, was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in November 2018. In 2017, in response to public pressure, Mexico adopted a new law against forced disappearances. This law, which promises more resources for the issue and a national registry of missing people, has also not been implemented so far. By mid-2019, around 40,000 people are reported to have disappeared.

The government has appointed a new ombudsman for human rights in the Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos (CNDH), Rosario Piedra Ibarra, a former member of the ruling party MORENA and a social activist. The opposition has been critical of the appointment and has accused Ibarra of not acting independently.

The security situation deteriorated markedly in 2018 and 2019, as the number of homicides has increased to the highest level since the state began keeping systematic records on crime and violence. More than 36,000 homicides were reported in 2018, while more than 14,000 were reported in the first six months of 2019. A total of more than 250,000 killings have been reported since the beginning of the so-called war on drugs. Against the background of escalating violence, it has generally been impossible to effectively hold the security forces to account for abuses. The disappearance of 43 Ayotzinapa teaching college students is indicative and remains unresolved, although President López Obrador has installed a special commission to investigate the case. Human Rights Watch has spoken of the “human rights catastrophe” that the new president has inherited and recent news coverage claims that Mexico is continuing to lose the battle against the cartels.

Citation:

<https://www.hrw.org/americas/mexico>

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/29/mexico-torture-and-historical-truth>

[https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2019-06-25/mexico-desaparecidos\\_2087378/](https://www.elconfidencial.com/mundo/2019-06-25/mexico-desaparecidos_2087378/)

Political Liberties  
Score: 4

Political liberties are guaranteed by law, and public debate and electoral competition are meaningful. If political rights are violated, citizens have access to electoral courts which are generally professional and effective. The National Electoral Institute (INE) is an independent body responsible for the administration of elections.

In many parts of the country, high levels of criminal violence undermine democracy. Public officials, especially at the local level, are kidnapped, harassed and even murdered with impunity. Between 2002 and 2018, 209

mayors, candidates and former mayors were killed, with 37 killed in 2018. Five regidores and 16 journalists were also killed in 2018.

While the lack of credible and capable legal investigations in such cases makes it impossible to know the true extent of the problem, there is considerable evidence that authorities are not merely inept. Rather, they are sometimes complicit in violating citizens' political liberties. The justice system has proven to be particularly ineffective in prosecuting powerful rights violators, impunity for corruption-related crimes is 98% and high-level politicians are rarely sentenced or impeached.

Hence, Latinobarometro polls indicate that satisfaction with democracy in Mexico has fallen from 41% in 2006 to 16% in 2018, while support for democracy has fallen from 54% in 2006 to 38% in 2018.

Citation:

Schedler, A. (2014). The criminal subversion of Mexican democracy. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(1), 5-18.  
<http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>

Non-  
discrimination  
Score: 5

While there is a societal norm against overt racial discrimination, there is a significant correlation between race and class. Light-skinned Mexicans are over-represented among the wealthy and powerful. Data from the Latin American Public Opinion Project shows that they have significantly higher educational attainment and more material wealth. Social discrimination varies by region and setting. In urban centers, there is growing awareness around issues of gender and sexuality. The local constitution adopted by the Mexico City constituent assembly includes a number of liberal and progressive provisions. Nevertheless, more traditional gender roles and the political and social marginalization of women continue to be the norm, particularly in rural and less affluent areas.

Worth mentioning are gender quotas for parties and elections, included in the 2014 constitutional reform. Women now hold 49% of seats in the Senate and 49.2% of seats in the Chamber of Deputies. In this respect, Mexico is the leading country in the OECD. Additionally, five women ran as candidates for mayor of Mexico City, with Claudia Sheinbaum (MORENA) becoming the first woman to govern the city.

A crucial problem in gender discrimination are femicides. Between 2015 and June 2019, more than 3,000 women were murdered in Mexico, which marks a rising tendency.

The courts are increasingly assertive in taking up cases of gender equality, and LGBT and transgender rights. The Supreme Court ruled in October 2017 in favor of a transgender person against the state of Veracruz after the state had

refused to change the person's name and gender on their birth certificate. Another court ruling found in favor of same-sex marriage. In 2015, Supreme Court recognized same-sex marriage. The government of López Obrador has taken further steps to strengthen LGBT rights. In May 2019, Foreign Affairs Secretary Marcelo Ebrard announced that Mexican consulates around the world would start conducting same-sex marriages for citizens. Marcelo Ebrard had been a strong supporter of same-sex marriage while mayor of Mexico City.

However, while there is more awareness of gender and LGBT rights, attention to indigenous rights and other forms of social stigmatization is more limited, and, as is often the case in Mexico, there is a considerable gap between formal rights, and their effective guarantee and enforcement.

Citation:

Human Rights Watch (2018). "Mexico Ruling Backs Same-Sex Couple." <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/11/01/mexico-ruling-backs-same-sex-couple>

Human Rights Watch (2018). "Mexico Transgender Ruling a Beacon for Change." <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/10/29/mexico-transgender-ruling-beacon-change>

Zizumbo-Colunga, D. and Iván Flores Martínez (2017). "Is Mexico a Post-Racial Country? Inequality and Skin Tone across the Americas." AmericasBarometer: Topical Brief #31, (<https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/ITB031en.pdf>).

<https://www.dw.com/de/gegen-den-strom-frauenmorde-in-mexiko-werden-mehr-und-brutaler/a-50084080>

### Rule of Law

Legal Certainty  
Score: 4

Legal certainty is formally guaranteed by the Mexican constitution. With the government of López Obrador holding a majority in Congress, legal procedures are formally well-respected. De facto, rule of law continues to be characterized by an ineffective judicial system. Violence and crime, corruption and impunity undermine the rule of law.

In corruption-related crimes impunity reaches 98% and in homicides 97%. Beyond the problem of corruption, the rule of law in Mexico has been seriously hampered by the increasing violence associated with the war on drugs. Criminal courts lack transparency, which further undermines trust and confidence in the judicial system. Overall, the system is particularly ineffective when it comes to prosecuting powerful individuals, such as former public officials. In this context, and also due to the security crisis, existing legal regulations often do not effectively constrain government and administration.

In other areas of the law, for instance in the realm of business and the broader economy, the situation regarding legal certainty is much less dire.

Judicial Review  
Score: 5

The Supreme Court, having for years acted as a servant of the executive, has become substantially more independent since the transition to democracy in the 1990s. Court decisions are less independent at the lower level, particularly at the state and local level. At the local level, corruption and lack of training for court officials are other shortcomings. These problems are of particular concern because the vast majority of crimes fall under the purview of local authorities. There is widespread impunity and effective prosecution is the exception, rather than the rule.

Mexico is in the process of reforming the justice system from a paper-based inquisitorial system to a U.S.-style adversarial system with oral trials. Implementation of the new system will most likely take a generation since it involves the retraining of law enforcement and officers of the court. So far, law enforcement has often relied on forced confessions, rather than physical evidence, to ensure the conviction of suspects. To make the new system work, the investigative and evidence-gathering capacity of the police will have to be significantly strengthened.

The government of López Obrador has initiated a judicial sector reform, with more than 50 new laws. This includes the creation of a unit in the Secretaría de Gobernación to promote the reform of criminal law.

Overall, the courts do a poor job of enforcing compliance with the law, especially when confronted with powerful or wealthy individuals. Concern is growing that the government will undermine judicial independence. In general, mistrust in the judicial system is widespread, 68% of Mexicans think judges are corrupt and 45% do not trust them.

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EFE México (2018). Sistema penal acusatorio en México, avance histórico frenado por corrupción. <https://www.efe.com/efe/usa/mexico/sistema-penal-acusatorio-en-mexico-avance-historico-frenado-por-corrupcion/50000100-3498116>  
Mexico Evalua 2019: Diagnostico inaugural, <https://www.mexicoevalua.org/diagnostico-inaugural/>

Appointment of  
Justices  
Score: 8

Mexican Supreme Court justices are nominated by the executive and approved by a two-thirds majority in the Senate. However, if no candidate achieves a majority, the president can appoint a justice without Senate approval. The system of federal electoral courts is generally respected and more independent and professional than the criminal courts. The situation is worse in lower courts, as judges are implicated in corruption or clientelist networks.

With the support of a majority in the legislative, AMLO has appointed two new judges to the Supreme Court, with a third one to follow soon, and three judges to the Consejo de la Judicatura Federal. The opposition has criticized

all the appointments arguing that the candidates are loyal allies of the president, which would undermine judicial independence. Until 2021, AMLO will be able to appoint at least one more judge. In addition, a reform project proposed the creation of a new anti-corruption chamber in the Supreme Court, giving AMLO the option to appoint a further five judges.

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DW 2018. México: “El sistema anticorrupción está entrampado.” <https://www.dw.com/es/méxico-el-sistema-anticorrupción-está-entrampado/a-42567912>

Mexico Evalua 2019: Diagnostico inaugural, <https://www.mexicoevalua.org/diagnostico-inaugural/>

Latin News 2019: Weekly Report – 10 October 2019 (WR-19-40), MEXICO: Judicial autonomy under threat?

Corruption  
Prevention  
Score: 4

Corruption is widespread in Mexican politics, the judiciary and the police. Anti-corruption efforts so far have failed. During his presidential campaign, AMLO promised to prioritize the fight against corruption. So far, it is unclear how that could happen. According to Transparency Mexico, the president is widely considered to be honest by the public, while a majority of 61% of Mexicans believe he is doing a good job in fighting corruption.

Corruption was a key topic in the 2018 elections following widespread corruption scandals that are shaken the political arena. At the same time, efforts to implement the National Anti-Corruption System (SNA), which had been signed into law by President Nieto in 2016, floundered. At the subnational level, not even half of Mexico’s states have approved the required secondary legislation to implement the SNA.

According to a May 2017 study by Corparamex, the Mexican confederation of business owners, corruption costs Mexico around 10% of its GDP. In Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index, Mexico ranked 138 out of 180 countries in 2018, a significantly deterioration in the country’s ranking compared to 2012.

The AMLO administration has intensified the fight against corruption. Nonetheless, the SPA, which is filled with MORENA allies, features only one position that has been subject to a proper nomination process: the head of the Special Prosecutor’s Office for Combatting Corruption. The SNA is currently developing an inclusive consultative process involving citizens, institutions, businesses, academia and subnational governments to improve national anti-corruption policies. A national SNA digital platform will provide information and improve coordination. In addition, the government has further integrated corruption into the criminal law system, increasing punishments and detention while awaiting trial. The Unidad de Inteligencia Financiera (UIF), a government agency focused on detecting and preventing financial crimes, has been the central actor in fighting corruption to date. High-ranking politicians,

like the former Pemex CEO or the head of Pemex's workers' union, are the target of corruption charges related to the Odebrecht corruption scandal in Latin America.

Citation:

Latin American Regional Report: Mexico & NAFTA (August 2017) "Anti-corruption reform fails to convince."

Transparencia Mexicana 2019: Barómetro Global de la Corrupción, <https://www.tm.org.mx/barometro-al-2019/>



# Governance

## I. Executive Capacity

### Strategic Capacity

Strategic  
Planning  
Score: 7

The Mexican president is required by law to produce a strategic plan in his first year in office. At a lower level, there are quite a few planning units within the Mexican government, though they do not all have decisive input in the policymaking process. Longer-term, Mexico has committed itself to the SDGs and created a specialized technical committee involving 25 federal agencies, which will collect the statistical information required to monitor progress.

Strategic planning was most prominent in the 1960s, 70s and 80s; in the latter decade no fewer than three former planning ministers moved up to the presidency of Mexico. In more general terms, a “passion for planning” stems from the origins of the Institutional Revolutionary Party regime and its corporatist structures within a mixed economy. Mainly as a consequence of market-oriented reforms, the role of planning entities has declined since the late 1980s. This was partly the result of Mexico becoming an export-oriented economy, but also because planning itself was a failure during this period, with Mexico too bound to international economic trends to successfully implement planning decisions.

Planning has seen a resurgence in popularity in recent years. The major challenge to planning in Mexico, and Latin America more generally, consists in creating sufficiently tight links between the agencies responsible for planning, the implementing agencies and powerful interest groups. The implementation of several highly significant recent reforms have put Mexico’s planning skills to the test. This includes the implementation of anti-corruption

laws and reforms in the social sector, education reform as well as in energy and telecommunications.

The current Mexican president has an extraordinarily high level of legitimacy. Elected by more than 53% of Mexicans, with a majority in Congress and high approval rates (67% in November 2019), he has initiated a wide-ranging transformation of Mexico. First, he repealed several reforms of the former government, such as the education reform. Second, he stopped infrastructure projects, like the new Mexico City Texcoco Airport. In addition, AMLO has created new social programs and announced plans to revive the Mexican oil industry. He has also pledged to demilitarize the war on drugs, a strategy which has so far failed. The strategic planning involved in these announcements has been concentrated in the presidency, less in strategic planning units and bodies.

Expert Advice  
Score: 7

In the Mexican political system, barriers between the government and scholars are comparatively low. It is quite common for a cabinet to include recruits from academia, and there are also substantial informal contacts between academics and high-level public officials. By the same token, former government officials often teach at universities.

The current Mexican government is keen to strengthen relationships with experts and activists from civil society, rather than economists and international professionals. In contrast to former governments, consultations with civil society actors and citizens enjoy high priority. Whether this results in better advice and/or improved legitimacy remains to be seen.

#### Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise  
Score: 8

The presidential office offers positions of high prestige in Mexico. It is involved with the legislative process to a decisive degree. Due to the absence of a high-level career civil service, both the cabinet and the presidential office are staffed with presidential appointments, which generally have the capacity to assess proposals from line ministries. Nevertheless, the independence of figures within the executive is thus questionable since everyone of influence in the presidential office is a political appointee.

Holding a majority in Congress and benefiting from a high degree of public legitimacy the initiatives of the president and MORENA are highly likely to be implemented.

Line Ministries  
Score: 7

Given Mexico's presidential system, cabinet ministers are respectful of and even deferential to the presidential office. Moreover, cabinet ministers dismissed by the president after disagreements rarely find a way back into

high-level politics, which tends to promote loyalty to the president and presidential staff. Accordingly, senior figures in the presidential office are very powerful, because they determine access to the president and can influence ministerial careers. At present, President López Obrador dominates Mexican politics, perhaps more than his predecessor.

Cabinet  
Committees  
Score: 6

Mexico is unusual, because the constitution does not recognize the cabinet as a collective body. Instead, Mexico has four sub cabinets, respectively dealing with economic, social, political and security matters. As a result, Mexico in practice has a system of cabinet committees each of them normally chaired by the president. The full cabinet never or hardly ever meets. Mexico's cabinet, as a collective, matters less than in most countries. The cabinet is not a supreme executive body as it is in, say, Britain. For one thing, there are a number of heads of executive agencies, with cabinet rank, who are not directly subject to a minister. There is a trend of governments to increase this process, partially out of the logic of depoliticizing and cementing programmatic decisions and views in social and economic policy fields. Under the current administration, cabinet reshuffles have frequently taken place, often in response to unpopular policy outcomes or political pressure. The central political figure has been and is the president.

Ministerial  
Bureaucracy  
Score: 5

Traditionally, there was little real distinction in Mexico between civil servants and politicians, though the relationship between them has significantly varied over time. The upper administration overly consists of presidential appointments, with only a limited number of career bureaucrats. Two exceptions are the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where bureaucratic expertise has always played a major role. The cabinet today is much more heterogeneous, however, with some figures personally close to the president and others more independent. The politicization of the cabinet, which has increased under the three recent administrations, is constraining its ability to coordinate policy proposals given the centrifugal tendencies. On the other hand, the previously mentioned independent agencies are often characterized by higher levels of bureaucratic professionalism.

Informal  
Coordination  
Score: 5

A number of informal mechanisms for coordinating policy exist, and given the lack of "formal" coordination capabilities within the Mexican administration, informal coordination often functions as a substitute. This is normal in a presidential system where only a few cabinet secretaries have independent political bases. Ministers retain their positions, for the most part, at the will of the president. It is important to note, however, that some cabinet secretaries are more equal than others. Since his election, President López Obrador has dominated Mexican politics, with interministerial coordination in the hands of the presidency.

Digitalization for  
Interministerial  
Coordination  
Score: 6

The Mexican government has adopted a National Digital Strategy and established a Change Management Plan in order to guide agencies in the development of projects. Furthermore, the Executive Council Interministerial Commission for e-Government Development (Comison Intersecretarial para el Desarrollo del Gobierno Electronico, CIDGE) has ensured the technical and operational coordination necessary to implement the strategy.

In July 2018, Mexico launched an online platform to track progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. President López Obrador has announced plans to create a public internet company, which will enable people in the most remote areas of the country to access the internet. Though this proposal is unlikely to be carried out in the near future.

However, as often in Mexico, implementation of digitalization is falling behind schedule, especially on the subnational level. This reflects the heterogeneity of digitalization within the broader Mexican society.

Citation:

SDG 2018. Mexico's SDG Portal Brings Functionality to Reporting. <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/mexicos-sdg-portal-brings-functionality-to-reporting/>

OECD Digital Government Studies Digital Government in Mexico Sustainable and Inclusive Transformation: Sustainable and Inclusive Transformation, OECD 2020.

### Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application  
Score: 8

Regulatory impact assessment (RIA) was introduced in Mexico in 1997. In 2000, RIA was implemented broadly through reform of the Federal Administrative Procedure Law. Thus, RIA in Mexico is established by law, and not by presidential or prime ministerial degree as in some other OECD countries.

In May 2018, the new General Law of Better Regulation was issued. A government agency, the Federal Commission for Regulatory Improvement (Comisión Federal de Mejora Regulatoria, COFEMER), is responsible for performing impact assessments on new proposals if they generate compliance costs. With the new law, COFEMER's mandate was broadened and the agency renamed the Comisión Nacional de Mejora Regulatoria (CONAMER). CONAMER assesses existing regulations. The law requires Mexico's 32 states to adopt RIAs for subnational regulatory projects and there are efforts to expand this further. Overall, RIA could be strengthened by involving stakeholders early on in the process.

Beyond RIA, evidence-based evaluations of several Mexican public policies in the social sector have gained international recognition and have had significant spillover effects to the international evaluation community. This is especially

true for social policies, where rigorous impact assessments based on experimental and quasi-experimental analyses of education, health, and nutrition programs (Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación, PROGRESA) can be perceived as an international showcase on how to evaluate large-scale social programs. In this area, the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) is responsible for carrying out rigorous impact evaluations in large social-sector programs. CONEVAL is an autonomous agency created by the 2007 General Law on Social Development (Ley General de Desarrollo Social).

Citation:  
 Reyes, R et al (2015). Regulatory Impact Assessment in Mexico: A Story of Interest Groups Pressure. *Law and Development Review* 8, 1: 99-122.

Quality of RIA  
 Process  
 Score: 7

RIA was introduced in Mexico in 1997 and its usage has spread from the federal government to some state governments. It has established itself as a legitimate part of the policymaking process. The relevant government agency, CONAMER (and its predecessor, COFEMER), is responsible to an interdepartmental committee that ultimately reports to the Ministry of Economy. CONAMER does not have a veto on new proposals, but it must be consulted and can express an opinion. Its position vis-à-vis the ministries was strengthened by the new law on regulation in 2018. It can prevent new regulations from coming into force until the consultation process is complete. CONAMER has also been active in negotiating the streamlining of procedures with individual Mexican states. This is significant, as much regulation is generated at subnational levels. After a quiet start, COFEMER/CONAMER has played a significant role in Mexico’s pro-competitive policy. Its annual reports are publicly available and provide critical assessments on regulatory projects. While input and output are clearly visible, the outcome of the RIA process cannot be assessed so far.

Sustainability  
 Check  
 Score: 6

So far, RIAs have often highlighted international benchmarking to reinforce their investigations. As one example, in a recent development, the Mexican government signaled its intention to become a world leader in sustainable tourism. Here, sustainability relates to energy efficiency, improved environmental performance and the protection of cultural heritage. The government partnered with the private firm EC3 Global to support the adoption of their trademark EarthCheck science and solutions for tourism operators and companies committed to sustainable practices and to align their performance with global benchmarks, endorsed by the World Tourism Organization. EarthCheck is an internationally recognized environmental management and certification program with more than 1,300 members in 70 countries. The program improves the operational performance of member organizations and reduces costs. However, like in most other OECD countries, RIAs in Mexico have up to now not fully embraced a multidimensional

Quality of Ex  
Post Evaluation  
Score: 6

sustainability perspective as is foreseen by the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. This is a particular challenge against the backdrop of the United Nation's Global Goals (Sustainable Development Goals), which were supported by Mexico and require a multidimensional perspective – including social, economic and ecological dimensions – in public policymaking. However, Mexican government elites at the national level often still appear more likely to be aware of the SDGs than government elites in other OECD countries, which might lead to an improvement in the coming years.

Overall, Mexican policies are supposed to be subjected to ex post evaluation and, at least at the national level, a comparatively strong culture of ex post evaluation has grown over the last two decades. This phenomenon is rooted in two different ideological streams. On the one hand, the traditional planning euphoria from a left-leaning, corporatist system has embraced the idea of ex post evaluation as an integral part of a well-mastered policy cycle. On the other hand, market liberal reforms and the influence of international finance organizations have introduced forms of new public management, with rigorous ex post evaluation seen as a crucial way to guarantee the efficiency and effectiveness of public policies.

Since 2012, mandatory guidelines require the use of ex post evaluations. As a consequence, Mexico has established one of the most developed evaluation policies in the field of social policy, which is executed by a constitutionally anchored evaluation agency, CONEVAL. Created in 2014, CONEVAL is established as an autonomous constitutional organization with a very high level of technical and management autonomy. Its task is to coordinate and manage the ex post evaluation of national social policies, and it does so with a very high level of sophistication. It consists of the head of the Ministry of Social Development, six well-known academics chosen by the National Social Development Commission and an Executive Secretary who is in charge of the council. In the international realm, CONEVAL has been an institutional innovation in poverty measurement and the evaluation of social public policies. So far, the independent provision of scientifically based evaluations has had a substantial impact on technically improving social policy programs in Mexico.

While CONEVAL represented a substantial move forward in the evaluation of social policies, a major setback occurred in mid-2019 when the head of CONEVAL was replaced after having criticized cuts to the agency's budget. Given his prior critiques on the governments' austerity policies, the replacement was perceived as a serious blow to the agency's independence. It remains to be seen whether CONEVAL will continue to act as a critical but constructive evaluation agency.

Beyond the field of social policy, however, other policy fields are subjected to far less scientific ex post evaluations and, at the subnational level, much more remains to be done. However, the ongoing presence of many organizations of international development cooperation in Mexico as well as promising dynamics at the subnational level is favorable to the development of an evaluation-friendly environment.

**Societal Consultation**

Public Consultation  
Score: 6

With a high degree of legitimacy following the presidential election, President López Obrador announced more possibilities for public consultation. Popular consultation was undertaken for the planned new airport as well as for infrastructure projects in the south. In addition, the president’s daily press conference is intended to “consult” the public. The new government is trying to integrate civil society actors and activists, although traditional business and trade union lobby groups remain outside. This is a clear break with the Institutional Revolutionary Party’s tradition of corporatism and clientelism, where participation has flowed mainly through corporatist and clientelist party channels rather than through independent civil society organizations.

Some participatory involvement occurs at the local and state level, in the form of experiments with participatory budgeting, roundtables with stakeholder consultation and so on. While these types of consultation processes are not as strong as in other Latin American countries, they have become more common in Mexico. Whether this results in a significant change in policymaking style remains to be seen.

**Policy Communication**

Coherent Communication  
Score: 7

The communication performance of the current administration is based on the communication skills of the new president. As a populist, AMLO relies heavily on public communication. The daily press conferences at 7 a.m. are not addressed to the press, but are rather a means of directly communicating with the public. So far, no other politician or ministry has engaged in strategic communication, and major contradictions in government communications have not occurred.

**Implementation**

Government Effectiveness  
Score: 4

The new president, López Obrador, has announced a highly ambitious reform agenda, aimed at transforming Mexico socially, economically and politically. New social programs are being implemented and projects targeting the poor south have been announced, while infrastructure projects like the Mexico City

Texcoco Airport have stalled. Tackling corruption and demilitarizing the war on drugs are key targets for the government. The government's reform agenda is so ambitious that it will be very difficult to achieve.

Nevertheless, the government's first social and anti-corruption policy steps seem promising. Though the aim of demilitarizing the war on drugs has so far failed.

Ministerial  
Compliance  
Score: 8

Whatever problems there may be with the Mexican system, it does deal effectively with the so-called agency problem, cabinet secretaries mostly have a strong incentive to avoid incurring presidential displeasure. The center of the Mexican government defines whole-of-government strategic priorities and has a unit in charge of tracking progress on the implementation of policy priorities.

Monitoring  
Ministries  
Score: 7

The presidential office can choose who it monitors and how. There are two caveats to this statement, however. First, Mexico is a federal system, and there are thus strong limits to the central government's power as many competencies fall, at least partially, to the states or even the local level. Second, independent agencies headed by individuals of cabinet rank have taken on an expanding role during the last two decades. Yet where the central authority has power, it uses it. In many instances, inadequate implementation is due to structural problems of capacity or a lack of political will, rather than insufficient monitoring.

Monitoring  
Agencies,  
Bureaucracies  
Score: 5

The process of monitoring tends to work better at the national level than at the subnational level, where the general process of accountability is more heterogeneously developed. Monitoring is considerable at particular times and places, but limited otherwise. Moreover, monitoring is selective due to uneven state capacity, which hampers greater coverage. Essentially, the commitment to monitoring depends on political constellations. Ministries can scrutinize bureaucratic agencies if they want to, but there are good reasons why they do not always do so. Decentralized agencies often try to exercise autonomy by going over the top of the governing secretariat and contacting the president directly. Monitoring and controlling Pemex, the police and the military has been one of the biggest coordination challenges for the new president during his first year in office.

Task Funding  
Score: 5

Mexico has three levels of government – central, state and municipal. In Mexican federalism, state governments are politically and economically more powerful than municipalities. The state governors' association is a powerful lobby group that bargains effectively with the central government. In general terms, Mexico's intergovernmental transfer system must reduce vertical imbalances and discretionary federal transfers. The latter are distributed from the center across states with political, rather than policy goals in mind and constitute a substantial share of government spending. Moreover, Mexican states need to increase their own revenues in order to become less dependent on central government transfers.



Due to government austerity, which has been a central issue of the AMLO administration, underfunded mandates and insufficient resources are a challenge for the successful completion of many government tasks and undermine the realization of the principle of subsidiarity in Mexico’s fiscal federalism.

Constitutional Discretion  
Score: 6

The Mexican constitution gives subnational entities, in particular states, considerable opportunity to influence policy. However, fiscal federalism in Mexico still relies heavily on transfers and thus gives the central government considerable leverage over states. The economic heterogeneity of states is so substantial that there is a need for a solidarity-oriented transfer system. In other words, fiscal federalism in Mexico cannot rely on the principle of market-based federalism with its focus on competition among subnational entities.

The current system is not in equilibrium between solidarity and market-based federalism. The federal government formally has substantial leverage over states, the federal government has generally refrained from reining in the illiberal practices of local elites. Considerable administrative capacity deficits therefore persist at the subnational level.

Citation:  
Diaz-Cayeros, Alberto, Fiscal Federalism and Redistribution in Mexico (December 16, 2016). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2886703>

National Standards  
Score: 3

Insufficient funding, corruption and inefficiency inhibit the effective implementation of nationwide public policy standards in many sectors.

Citation:  
Latin American Regional Report: Mexico & NAFTA (November 2017) “Solving higher education conundrum key to 2018 election success?”

Effective Regulatory Enforcement  
Score: 4

Insufficient funding, corruption and inefficiency inhibit effective regulation in many sectors. Additionally, fragmented responsibilities due to deficiencies in the federal Mexican system are prevalent. Vested interests often manage to block reforms or policy implementation. It remains to be seen whether the new government with its populist approach and its stronger relations to NGOs will be capable of overcoming traditional vested interest barriers.

**Adaptability**

Domestic Adaptability  
Score: 6

The Mexican governing elite have traditionally been very interested in adopting international standards and had a high degree of contact with international organizations and policy institutes. The major motivation for this

is that multilateralism has always provided a strategic avenue for counterbalancing the country's dependence on its northern neighbor. Moreover, many members of the policy elite have studied and/or worked abroad, mostly in English-speaking countries and sometimes in those international organizations that promote international norms. Mexico's presidential system, with its directing authority at the center of the administration, also allows the country to make swift changes. However, while adaptability of the Mexican government is comparatively high in formal terms, implementation of new approaches and policies is much weaker, particularly when it involves subnational entities, heavily unionized sectors or counters economic interests in society. In this regard, one of the most challenging tasks for the Mexican government is currently to transfer the ambitious U.N. Global Goals (Sustainable Development Goals) agenda into domestic policies, adapting them to national priorities. Progress, thus far, seems to be slow. While formulating action plans and monitoring strategies at the national level faces little or no capacity barriers, the implementation and mainstreaming of policies at the local and regional level will be the major challenge. In addition, while Mexico has signaled commitment to human rights in international arenas, within the country the protection of human rights and respect for the rule of law remain low. The current government, despite a tradition of paying attention to international initiatives, is rather inward looking because of increasing domestic challenges.

International  
Coordination  
Score: 3

The Mexican government has almost completely lost its international reputation. In his first year in office, AMLO has not left Mexico. He refused to participate in G20 meetings or U.N. assemblies. In an attempt to demonstrate to the Mexican population his commitment to domestic issues, this has undermined Mexico's position in the world.

Mexico has traditionally been supportive of international initiatives, and played an active role in the United Nations, OECD and other intergovernmental organizations. It also was an enthusiastic participant in multilateral organizations, including international financial organizations such as the World Bank, the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank. Numerous policy and organizational recommendations made by international bodies have been adopted in the Mexican policymaking process. Thus, it had a supportive role in many international attempts oriented toward the provision of global public goods. Whether this engagement will be revived again has to be seen.

## Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring  
Score: 6

Historically, Mexico has often found ways of dealing with the so-called agency problem in policy implementation, which explains why institutional arrangements need constant monitoring. Traditionally this agency problem was dealt with by a high degree of corporatist authoritarianism, which came at a high cost for controlling agents. In today's Mexico, democracy – even if sometimes insufficiently implemented – requires new models of overcoming this agency problem in an increasingly diversified and complex state structure. Particularly policymakers at the central level and in the more advanced states are becoming aware that effectively governing complexity requires different principles, including monitoring institutional governance arrangements. In July 2018, Mexico launched an online platform to track progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Yet, especially at the subnational level, pockets of authoritarianism, weak state capacity and widespread corruption result in uneven capacity for monitoring institutional arrangements and regulatory reforms. At the top of the political pyramid, the quality of self-monitoring still depends much on the personal engagement of the president. Mexican policymakers have tended to engage quite frequently in administrative reorganization, possibly to excess. President Peña Nieto was an ambitious, and perhaps excessive, but largely unsuccessful reformer. President López Obrador is even more ambitious and is attempting to radically transform Mexico. AMLO's new social programs and plans to revive the Mexican oil industry are intended to transform Mexico's socioeconomic structure. In addition, he wants to demilitarize the war on drugs, a strategy which so far failed. The very ambitious plans enjoy high support within the Mexican population. After one year in office, AMLO's approval ratings are very high. In November 2019, more than 67% of Mexicans supported AMLO.

Citation:

SDG 2018. Mexico's SDG Portal Brings Functionality to Reporting. <http://sdg.iisd.org/news/mexicos-sdg-portal-brings-functionality-to-reporting/>

Institutional  
Reform  
Score: 5

While Mexican policy elites are often receptive to new ideas and open to administrative reform, many of these reforms remain unimplemented and are abandoned before they can take root. This is especially true with regard to domestic security and law enforcement. Too often, the re-drawing of organizational diagrams has taken precedence over the implementation of desperately needed, but difficult structural reforms to strengthen the rule of law. Moreover, the most important challenge currently consists of improving the effectiveness of existing institutions.

The current Mexican president has an extraordinarily high level of legitimacy. Elected by more than 53% of Mexicans, with a majority in Congress and a high approval rating (67% in November 2019), he has initiated a transformation of Mexico. However, AMLO's first year in office has not been characterized by sustainable institutionalization, but rather by populist, anti-institutionalist approaches, with the judiciary under particular pressure.

## II. Executive Accountability

### Citizens' Participatory Competence

Political  
Knowledge  
Score: 6

Socioeconomically, Mexico is a very internally divided country, which translates into uneven policy knowledge across the population. Due in part to its poverty levels, Mexico has the lowest performing students in the OECD and up to a third of the population has little more than primary education. However, at the other end of the scale, literally millions of Mexicans attend universities, and hundreds of thousands of Mexicans have attended foreign universities. There is, therefore, a marked split between a highly educated Mexico, which is concerned with the finer details of politics and policy, and a less politically and intellectually sophisticated Mexico composed of people who are mostly trying to get by. While better educated Mexicans are well-informed, poor and less educated citizens lack knowledge and interest in politics.

In the latest survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (INEGI), 44.5% of respondents said that they were content with the quality of government services in 2017. In the latest National Survey on Political Culture (2012), 65% of respondents stated that they had little to no interest in politics, and 77% thought that government was an instrument of manipulation that benefits only politicians and wealthy people. More recent data is offered by the AmericasBarometer (2016/17): In Mexico, support for democracy fell from 70.2% in 2004 to 49.4% in 2017, while only 26.2% of Mexicans trusted the elections and only 13.8% of Mexicans trusted political parties. President Peña Nieto and his government left office with historically low approval ratings. The new president, López Obrador, enjoys a high level of popular support. In November 2019, 67% of Mexicans approved of President López Obrador. His approval ratings have exceeded 59% throughout his term so far. However, approval of democracy is low, consistently polling at 38% (Latinobarometro).

## Citation:

INEGI (2018). ENCUESTA NACIONAL DE CALIDAD E IMPACTO GUBERNAMENTAL (ENCIG) 2017. [http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/boletines/2018/EstSegPub/encig2018\\_03.pdf](http://www.beta.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/boletines/2018/EstSegPub/encig2018_03.pdf)

ENCUP (2012). National Survey on Political Culture. <http://www.encup.gob.mx/>

AmericasBarometer (2018). THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN MEXICO AND IN THE AMERICAS, 2016/17. [https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/mexico/AB2016-17\\_Mexico\\_Country\\_Report\\_English\\_V1\\_05.15.18\\_W\\_10.25.18.pdf](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/mexico/AB2016-17_Mexico_Country_Report_English_V1_05.15.18_W_10.25.18.pdf).

INFORME LATINOBARÓMETRO 2018, <http://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>

Open  
Government  
Score: 6

Mexico's access to information law from 2003 guarantees the public's right to request and receive information from the federal government. With the law, Mexico created the innovative Federal Institute for Access to Information (Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información Pública – IFAI), which helps citizens to collect data and information. The new government of President López Obrador is pursuing a more transparent policy toward citizens. The president's daily press conferences symbolize this new openness. On the other hand, government communication policies at the national and subnational levels regarding the war on drugs cannot be considered very transparent.

#### Legislative Actors' Resources

Parliamentary  
Resources  
Score: 5

The Mexican presidential system, with its emphasis on the presidential government, and the electoral system have systematically weakened parliament and members of parliament. Formally, Congress is well staffed and sufficiently financed to fulfill its duties. Members of Congress were until recently prohibited from running for re-election. This system was intended to bring legislators closer to civil society, but it had weakened the legislative role and increased the power of party bosses. The most senior members largely control Congress. They tend to control the careers of more junior congressional members because the effect of Mexico's strong no re-election rule prevents members of Congress from using their constituency as a political base. In turn, members tended to lack resources and legislative scrutiny was often perfunctory. Similarly, members have had little incentive to take a deep interest in lawmaking, because their term as incumbents was so short. Moreover, good legislative performance often went unrewarded in local or national politics.

However, since 2018, local representatives, city council members and mayors will be able to run for re-election. Senators and federal representatives will have to wait until 2024 and 2021, respectively, to run for a consecutive term.

Obtaining  
Documents  
Score: 7

The constitution invests Congress with significant powers. However, until recently, the independence of Congress was undermined by legislation that blocked congressional members from being immediately re-elected. This ban made congressional members dependent on a few powerful leaders who

controlled access to resources and increased traditional personalistic and clientelist party structures. For this political, rather than legal, reason congressional committees voted largely along party lines and legislative scrutiny was generally perfunctory. For example, congressional members are legally entitled to request and scrutinize government documentation under the Freedom of Information Act. While the ban on being immediately re-elected has been abolished, it is too early to assess the effect of this change on legislative scrutiny.

Summoning  
Ministers  
Score: 9

Under Article 93 of the constitution, parliamentary committees have the right to summon ministers, which happens quite a lot in practice.

Regarding the resources of legislators to monitor the government, it is worth noting that – through legislative committees – they can (and frequently do) conduct hearings where they summon ministers as well as other public officials, who have an obligation to attend. It is often the case that hearings are held right after Annual Presidential Reports to go over evidence and documents supporting the president’s claims on their respective offices (similar to the State of the Union Address in the United States). While these resources are relevant and useful for monitoring, they very rarely have meaningful consequences for public officials (positive or negative).

Summoning  
Experts  
Score: 9

Congressional committees frequently summon experts, including international ones, and often take their input seriously. Indeed, there is evidence that experts play a considerable role in the legislative process. This aspect of governance mostly works well, because it provides a source of independent scrutiny.

Task Area  
Congruence  
Score: 4

There are far more committees than members of the cabinet. This is negative from the point of view of effective monitoring. Yet there are more significant obstacles to the effectiveness of congressional committees than their official scope. The most notable limitation has been the one-term limit for legislators, which has now been changed. However, it is too early to assess the effect of this change.

## Media

Media Reporting  
Score: 5

The quality of the media is mixed. The quality of some Mexico City newspapers and magazines is high, but the majority of the press, and particularly radio and TV focus mainly on entertainment. This is particularly troublesome as there is a high degree of media concentration, with only two national TV companies (Televisa and TV Azteca) controlling 94% of commercial TV frequencies. These companies have similar programming and political inclinations, and account for 76% of the political news content consumed by Mexicans. The Mexican NGO Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social claims that the concentration of media ownership in only

a few hands undermines media pluralism. The new government is more critical of the media, with President López Obrador heavily criticizing mainstream media for supporting fraud in previous elections. Social media plays a more important role for the new government.

On the supply side, the quality of journalism remains a challenge. Particularly on security-related issues, increasing violence against critical and investigative journalism often results in self-censorship.

At the same time, media diversity (online media) has strongly increased in the last decade and Mexicans do have access to high-quality offerings if they are interested. Moreover, information on Mexican politics is easily accessible from United States and Latin American media outlets due to technical progress. However, this diversity in content and quality will hardly have an impact on the majority of the population as only a very small minority of Mexicans use the internet and newspapers as their main sources of political information.

Citation:

MOM (2018). Media Ownership Monitor Mexico: Who owns the media?. <http://mexico.mom-rsf.org/>

### Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party  
Decision-Making  
Score: 8

In terms of candidate selection, it is normal for the presidential candidate of each of the major parties to participate in some kind of primary election. The selection of candidates in all parties for the 2018 elections was unusual. The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) selected José Antonio Meade, a former finance minister, who was not a party member. The Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and the National Action Party (PAN) agreed to present a common candidate, Ricardo Anaya, following bitter internal debates because of the strange left-right-coalition. MORENA, a rather personalistic movement, selected former PRD-politician Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Candidate nomination for other mandates vary from state to state and from municipality to municipality because of the federal system. PRI, the governing party, tends to be rather secretive, clientelist and hierarchical. Meanwhile, MORENA tends to be heavily reliant on the personality of its leader, AMLO. PAN is much more of a members' party, with a degree of internal democracy, but an exclusionary attitude toward non-party members. The question of which party is in government is also crucial. Incumbent parties tend to be more internally authoritarian because of their greater patronage resources. In general, the PRI is probably the most controlled and authoritarian of the major parties.

In terms of candidates to both chambers of Congress, all parties are dominated by a leadership elite which makes all relevant decisions. They can operate in this exclusionary way because they are in control of the delegates' votes. When the candidate lists are chosen, delegates will vote as their respective leaders indicate.

The new governing party, MORENA, promised during the election campaign to change political culture and adopt a more open process of politics. It is too early to assess the promises, although one major change concerns the introduction of recall referendums in October 2019. This constitutional change enables voters to remove the president and governors after the mid of their term.

Citation:

Greene, K./Sánchez-Talanquer, M (2018). Mexico's Party System Under Stress. *Journal of Democracy*, 29, 4, October 2018: 31-42.

Association  
Competence  
(Employers &  
Unions)  
Score: 5

With regard to economic interest organizations, there is clear asymmetry. Trade unions are not sophisticated organizations in Mexico, while employers and business associations mostly are. However, these organizations tend to be dominated by a small group of empowered agents who guide most of their policy positions and decision-making processes. The collective interest of those supposedly represented by the association is seldom the one that prevails. A good example of this is the Employers Confederation of the Mexican (COPARMEX): it would be in their best interest to push for a tax consolidation (combined reporting) reform. However, because it is not in the interest of the most influential members of the organization (frequently owners of the largest companies in the country), this issue is almost completely out of the organization's agenda.

Due to the anti-corruption efforts of the new government, several union leaders are facing corruption charges, including the leader of Pemex's workers' union. In addition, the former CEO of Pemex is also facing corruption charges.

In contrast to its predecessors, the new government is cooperating more with NGOs, and social movements and activists, which has at least partly counterbalanced the traditional weight of established interest associations.

Association  
Competence  
(Others)  
Score: 6

Against the background of corporatist authoritarianism in 20th century Mexico, economic interest groups in democratic Mexico could draw on many associational experiences. Moreover, since the early 2000s, there has been a considerable increase in the quantity and the sophistication of non-economic



interest groups in Mexican civil society. Many talented graduates have found positions in domestic and international NGOs, and work to influence policy in Mexico via advocacy-oriented strategies. Several tertiary-education institutes (e.g., ITAM, Colmex, CIDE) both teach and conduct public-policy research, and some are highly influential in the political sphere as think tanks and/or advocacy institutions, often through the personal linkages to the government and its administration. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the number of national and international advocacy NGOs that, depending on the sector and the government in place, are also relevant in the agenda-setting process. Moreover, many grassroots organizations founded in the last 10 years aim to influence local and regional policymaking. Finally, the degree of movement of personnel between NGOs, think tanks and government is high compared to other OECD countries. While the capacity of most of these organizations to propose policy reforms in complex policy settings is rather restricted, it has been growing steadily and their role influencing public opinion is more relevant every year. Examples of these associations include IMCO, Mexico Evalua and Mexicanos Primero, which have been able to affect the policy agenda of the government in the last years on issues related to transparency, accountability and development effectiveness.

The record of the new government of President López Obrador and his party MORENA toward social movements and NGOs has been mixed so far. On the one hand, MORENA is associated with social movements and is trying to establish a new style in Mexican politics, away from traditional vested interests. On the other hand, the government's austerity measures have cut state subsidies for NGOs, for which NGOs have heavily criticized the government. Moreover, the populist legacy of the current government also indicates tensions between "popular consultation" on the one hand and top-down, populist decision-making on the other hand.

Citation:

El Universal (2018). Mexican NGOs to keep working on the development of civil society. <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/english/mexican-ngos-keep-working-development-civil-society>

### Independent Supervisory Bodies

Audit Office  
Score: 6

The federal Superior Audit Office (ASF) was set up in 2001 to help the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the National Congress, and it has technical and managerial autonomy. In practice, the audit office shows a high degree of independence, but little sanctioning power. The audit office is accountable to parliament exclusively. Over the last decade, the audit office has become stronger in technical terms, but remains incapable of fully covering all relevant topics. A central problem remains impunity, a challenge

which has become more and more severe over the last decade, and undermines the authority of the institution.

Citation:

OECD 2017: Mexico's National Auditing System. Strengthening Accountable Governance, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264264748-en>

Ombuds Office  
Score: 6

During its process of political liberalization, Mexico established an Ombudsman's Office in 1992. The office is generally respected, and the ombudsman can, and sometimes does, criticize government policy. In 2007, the ombudsman publicly advised President Calderón not to use the army in counter-narcotics activities. Calderón nevertheless sent troops in, which provoked an ongoing discussion on the army's domestic tasks. More recently, the limited de facto power of the institution has become visible particularly in the field of domestic security (e.g., drug crime, human rights abuses). In short, while Mexico has an independent and respected Ombudsman's Office, it is not necessarily powerful, particularly against the backdrop of an unprecedented spread of violence in recent years.

Under the new government of López Obrador, the ombudsman is a loyal MORENA supporter, which has led to criticism of the office's lack of independence.

Data Protection  
Authority  
Score: 5

Legislation on data protection in Mexico has been ineffective since 2010. The National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Personal Data Protection (INAI) is an autonomous constitutional body that oversees data protection. Implementation of data protection is limited, especially in remote areas, for poor and uneducated people, and where security issues are involved. Thus, while there is an adequate institutional framework and organizational setup, the reality of data protection, particularly at the lower levels of government, is sobering.

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