

OFFICIAL NAME: United Mexican States

CAPITAL: Mexico City

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Federal Multiparty Republic

AREA: 1,972,547 Sq Km (761,605 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 105,146,900



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Mexico is located in the southern region of the North American Continent. It is bound by the United States of America to the north, the Gulf of California to the northwest, the Pacific Ocean to the west and southwest, Guatemala and Belize to the south as well as the Gulf of Mexico to the east. Around 66% of the country is mountainous and the terrain rises steeply from the Pacific Ocean and Gulf of Mexico coastal plains to a central plateau which is bound by the Sierra Madre Occidental to the west and the Sierra Madre Oriental to the east. In the north the Sonoran Desert covers most of the region which lies west of the Sierra Madre Occidental. The Central Meseta in the northern plateau region contains three great desert basins, called Bolsons. Central Mexico consists of rolling hills interspersed by broad basins and valleys. South of the plateau the Sierra Madre de Chiapas extends to the Guatemalan border. In the southeast limestone lowlands or broad plains of the Yucatan Peninsula reach the Gulf of Mexico. There are a few large rivers and a number of smaller ones and the country's largest lake is Lake Chapala. Major Cities (pop. est.); Mexico City 9,815,800, Guadalajara 1,650,000, Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl 1,255,500, Monterrey 1,069,000, Puebla 1,007,200, Leon 872,500, Juarez 789,300, Tijuana 698,800 (1990). Land Use; forested 26%, pastures 39%, agricultural-cultivated 13%, other 23% (1993).

CLIMATE: Mexico has a tropical and temperate climate depending on altitude, winds and cool Pacific Ocean currents. A tropical climate is experienced along the coastal region of the Yucatan Peninsula and the lower areas of southern Mexico while a temperate climate is experienced in areas with an elevation higher than 900 metres (3,000 feet). Most of Mexico is dry with about 14% of the land area receiving adequate rainfall in all seasons. During summer and autumn both the east and west coasts are subject to hurricanes. Average temperature ranges in Mexico City are from 6 to 19 degrees Celsius (43 to 66 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 12 to 26 degrees Celsius (54 to 79 degrees Fahrenheit) in May.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Mestizos who account for around 55% of the population and are of mixed AmerIndian and European (Spanish) descent. The AmerIndians account for 29% of the population while 15% of the population is divided among the Whites and a small number of Black Africans. Other ethnic minorities include Mulattoes, who are of mixed Black and Spanish descent, and the Chinese.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 42 persons per sq km (109 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 72.6% urban, 27.4% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 49.2% male, 50.8% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 66.5 years male, 73.1 years female (1990). Age Breakdown; 36% under 15, 32% 15 to 29, 18% 30 to 44, 9% 45 to 59, 4% 60 to 74, 1% 75 and over (1990). Birth Rate; 31.5 per 1,000 (1990). Death Rate; 5.3 per 1,000 (1990). Increase Rate; 26.2 per 1,000 (1990). Infant Mortality Rate; 46.6 per 1,000 live births (1988).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Christians with 93% of the population Roman Catholic. Other religious minorities include Protestants and Jews.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Spanish which is spoken by the majority of the population while 7% of the population speak various AmerIndian languages only.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 38.0%, incomplete primary 31.7%, primary 17.3%, incomplete secondary 8.1%, higher 4.9% (1980). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 87.3% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWI TO 1993: In 1929 the last military revolt of the country's Revolution saw the formation of the National Revolutionary Party (PNR). In 1934 Pres. Gen. Lazaro Cardenas implemented further land reforms, cooperative farms and the nationalization of US and British oil companies. In 1938 the PNR was renamed the Mexican Revolutionary Party (PRM) and in 1946 the PRM was renamed the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). During the 1940's Mexico experienced an "Economic Miracle" after receiving a boost to the economy, resulting from US collaboration during World War II. In 1953 women received the right to vote in all elections and in 1968 the Olympic Games were held in Mexico City. During the 1970's major new petroleum deposits were discovered on the Gulf of Mexico coast and due to a slump in world petroleum prices combined with the end of agricultural self sufficiency the economy declined. In 1982 Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado was elected President and embarked on an anti-corruption program. In Aug. 1982 the government announced that it could no longer meet its foreign debt of \$80 Billion which resulted in the devaluation of the Peso several times and the nation's banks being taken over by the government. In 1984 the country eased its foreign investment policies and in 1985 a severe earthquake struck Mexico City killing around 7,000 people. In May 1987 a former executive of the state-owned petroleum concern, Pemex, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for the embezzlement of \$54 Million. In 1988 Carlos Salinas de Gotari was elected President. In May 1990 Norma Corona Sapienz, President of the Commission for the Defense of Human Rights was assassinated. In June 1990 Pres. Salinas created a National Commission of Human Rights to curb abuses and promote human rights. During 1991 negotiations were held for a North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA) that culminated with meetings between US Pres. Bush and Pres. Salinas at Camp David in Dec.

1991. In Jan. 1991 Pres. Salinas established a Integral Program to Fight Atmospheric Pollution with a budget of US \$2.5 billion and in March 1991 due to a record breaking increase in Mexico City's pollution levels shut down the 18 de Marzo refinery which was responsible for 4% of the city's pollution. In June 1991 the government began to re-privatise the country's banks while the government also finalized the privatization of the state-owned telephone company, Telmex. In Aug. 1991 the ruling PRI won midterm Chamber of Deputies' elections taking nearly all 300 directly elected seats. In Sept. 1991 Mexico and Chile signed a free-trade agreement while Mexico also signed agreements in 1991 with five Central American nations that would allow them to negotiate bilateral trade agreements. Also in 1991 a series of reforms aimed at improving Mexico's human rights record was introduced, although a report from Amnesty International claimed the reforms had failed to halt the torture and ill-treatment of civilians by law enforcement agents. In March and April 1992 schools were closed in Mexico City after pollution levels reached dangerous levels while industry was order to cut output to 75% and 300,000 cars were forced to stay off the roads. On April 22, 1992 a series of sewer explosion rocked the city of Guadalajara destroying some 20 blocks, resulting in some 200 deaths and 1,500 injuries. Following the disaster 11 officials from the local government, the water board and Pemex were charged for criminal negligence for not taking the necessary precautions after residents had complained of strong petrol odors coming from the sewers several days earlier. On Aug. 12, 1992 agreement on a NAFTA was reached by Mexico, the US and Canada with Jan. 1, 1994 as the target implementation date, although it still required ratification by the three governments. In July and Aug. 1992 state elections resulted in the PRI winning all but one state that fell to the right-wing National Action Party (PAN). On Aug. 29, 1992 some 40,000 demonstrators, led by PRD leader Cuauhtemoc Cardenas Solorzano, protested in Mexico City's main square against the controversial elections and demanding electoral reforms. Also in Aug. 1992 the government announced plans for the privatization of some 60 enterprises, included mining, gas, petrol and fertilizer companies that resulted in union-led strikes in several of the industries throughout the year. Also in 1992 the government announced plans to convert 144,000 transport and freight vehicles to natural gas or liquefied petroleum gas by 1994. In 1993 the government continued with its privatization program with the introduction of new regulations to open up the electricity sector, water-supply system and maritime port authorities to private companies. In Aug. 1993 amendments to NAFTA were made that included trade sanctions against any member for breach of national laws that included wage levels and standards, the environment or human rights while in Nov. 1993 the governments of the US and Mexico ratified the treaty. In Oct. 1993 the Pres. Salinas announced economic measures agreed upon by the government, labor unions and the private sector that include company tax cuts and an increase in the minimum wage. In the same month the government also introduced radical agricultural reforms that included direct cash grants versus price subsidies. In Nov. 1993 the PRI announced Luis Donaldo Colosio Murrieta as the next Presidential candidate and Pres. Salinas' successor for the planned 1994 elections. Under Mexico's constitution a President is not allowed to hold two consecutive terms in office. Also in 1993 electoral reforms were introduced that included donation ceilings, increased independence for electoral institutes and regulations on access to the media.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the New Peso (MexP) divided into 100 Centavos.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$324,951,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$85,960,000,000 (1993). Imports; USD \$65,366,500,000 (1993). Exports; USD \$60,882,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; USD \$6,167,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; MexP -80,166,000,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 33,651,812 or 38.9% of total population (1993). Unemployed; 2.4% (1993).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the USA, the EU and Japan.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Aluminum, Barley, Beans, Cattle, Coal, Coffee, Copper, Cotton, Fruit, Gold, Iron, Lead, Maize, Oil and Natural Gas, Phosphates, Rice, Silver, Sorghum, Sugar, Uranium, Wheat, Zinc.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Aluminum Refining, Cement, Iron and Steel, Machinery, Mining, Oil and Natural Gas Production and Refining, Pottery, Services, Textiles, Transportation, Vehicles.

MAIN EXPORTS: Chemicals, Coffee, Cotton, Fruit and Vegetables, Machinery and Industrial Goods, Oil and Gas, Shrimps.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 26,361 km (16,380 mi) (1991), passenger-km 5,404,000,000 (3,358,000,000 passenger-mi) (1991), cargo ton-km 34,000,000,000 (23,287,000,000 short ton-mi) (1991). Roads; length 242,294 km (150,554 mi) (1991). Vehicles; cars 6,941,104 (1989), trucks and buses 2,828,479 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 640 (1990), deadweight tonnage 1,803,313 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 16,439,900,000 (10,215,277,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 1,526,635,000 (1,045,592,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 392 with a total circulation of 11,256,000 (1986). Radio; receivers 21,000,000 (1994). Television; receivers 13,100,000 (1992). Telephones; units 7,620,900 (1993).

MILITARY: 175,000 (1995) total active duty personnel with 74.3% army, 21.1% navy and 4.6% air force while military expenditure accounts for 0.5% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).