

UPDATES: THE INVASION OF UKRAINE



FREEDOM IN THE WORLD 2021

Mexico

61

/100

PARTLY FREE

<u>Political Rights</u>	27 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	34 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

62 /100 **Partly Free**

Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale. See the methodology.



Overview

Mexico has been an electoral democracy since 2000, and alternation in power between parties is routine at both the federal and state levels. However, the country suffers from severe rule of law deficits that limit full citizen enjoyment of political rights and civil liberties. Violence perpetrated by organized criminals, corruption among government officials, human rights abuses by both state and nonstate actors, and rampant impunity are among the most visible of Mexico's many governance challenges.

Key Developments in 2020

- With over 125,000 deaths and 1.4 million cases, people in Mexico were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The government initially hid the virus's true toll from the public, and the actual numbers of cases and deaths caused by the coronavirus are unknown.
- In July, authorities identified the bone fragments of one of the 43 missing Guerrero students, further undermining stories about the controversial case told by the Peña Nieto administration.
- Also in July, former head of the state oil company PEMEX Emilio Lozoya was implicated in several multimillion-dollar graft schemes involving other high-ranking former officials. Extradited from Spain, he testified against his former bosses and peers, including former presidents Calderón and Peña Nieto.
- In December, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) named Mexico the most dangerous country in the world for members of the media. At least nine reporters were killed in Mexico this year—including three in a 10-day span in November—which accounts for one third globally of all journalists killed during the year.

Political Rights

A. Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?	3/4
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The president is elected to a six-year term and cannot be reelected. However, a 2019 constitutional amendment enables citizens to initiate a recall referendum halfway through the president's term.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the left-leaning National Regeneration Movement (MORENA) won the 2018 poll with a commanding 53 percent of the vote. His closest rival, Ricardo Anaya—the candidate of the National Action Party (PAN) as well as of the Democratic Revolution Party (PRD) and Citizens' Movement (MC)—took 22 percent. The results of the 2018 poll represented a stark repudiation of outgoing president Enrique Peña Nieto and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which took just 16 percent of the vote.

The election campaign was marked by violence and threats against candidates for state and local offices; at least 145 people died because of election-related violence. Accusations of illicit campaign activities remained frequent at the state and municipal level.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?	3/4
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Senators are elected for six-year terms through a mix of direct voting and proportional representation, with at least two parties represented in each state's delegation. In the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the bicameral Congress, 300 members are elected through direct representation and 200 through proportional representation, each for three-year terms. Under 2013 electoral reforms,

current members of Congress are no longer barred from reelection and candidates are permitted to run as independents. For legislators elected in 2018, senators will be eligible to serve up to two six-year terms, and deputies will be permitted to serve up to four three-year terms.

In the 2018 elections, MORENA achieved a 255-seat majority in the Chamber of Deputies, and with the support of its coalition allies, the Workers' Party (PT) and the Social Encounter Party (PES), held just over 300 seats, enough to amend the constitution. The PAN won 79 seats, while the PRI plummeted from winning 202 seats in the 2015 midterms to just 47 seats in 2018. Similarly, the MORENA-led coalition now commands a clear majority in the 128-member Senate with 70 seats, compared to 24 for the PAN and 15 for the PRI.

Accusations of illicit campaign activities are frequent at the state and federal level, and violations including vote buying, ballot stealing, and misuse of public funds were reported in 2018.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?	3/4
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Mexico's National Electoral Institute (INE) supervises elections and enforces political party laws, including strict regulations on campaign financing and the content of political advertising, although control is uneven in practice. While the 2018 elections were generally considered free and fair, the INE and the Federal Electoral Tribunal (TEPJF) struggled to comprehensively address problems including misuse of public funds, vote buying, ballot stealing, and ensuring transparent campaign financing. Frequent verbal attacks by MORENA, along with steps to cut the INE's budget, prompted accusations that the administration sought to lessen electoral oversight and give itself an advantage in future elections, though new INE officers selected in 2020 were regarded as professional. Campaign finance issues were prominent in scandals in 2020, including evidence that the president's brother accepted \$90,000

in cash for use in campaigns in Chiapas. In November, the Financial Intelligence Unit found no wrongdoing on his part.

President López Obrador has extolled the use of informal, extralegal referendums—known as citizen consultations—which are not supervised by the INE. A series of consultations since 2018 on infrastructure and social spending have been criticized as skewed toward the president’s preferred outcomes, and they have featured the participation of only a small proportion of Mexican voters. In March 2020, a consultation in Mexicali regarding construction of a large brewery featured participation of less than 5 percent of the electorate.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

<p>Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?</p>	<p>4/4</p>
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Mexico’s multiparty system features few official restrictions on political organization and activity. Though moribund at the national level, opposition parties are competitive in many states, and independent candidacies are becoming more common. President López Obrador’s victory reflected the political system’s openness to pluralistic competition, and ended fears on the left that powerful actors would block their electoral path to power. MORENA includes a wide range of ideological and political currents, and tensions were visible throughout 2020 as various factions competed in a bitterly fought campaign for party head, with legislator Mario Delgado declared the winner in October. In September, the INE denied registration to the party Mexico Libre led by former president Calderón and his wife, Margarita Zavala, on the basis of opaque funding sources.

No gubernatorial elections occurred in 2020. Victories in the 2019 gubernatorial races in Baja California and Puebla reinforced MORENA's gradually growing strength at the subnational level. MORENA officials now govern six states and Mexico City, and control 20 of the 32 state legislatures.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

4/4

Power has routinely changed hands at the national level since 2000. The dominant victory of López Obrador and MORENA in 2018 followed six years of government control by the PRI, which had ruled Mexico without interruption from 1929 to 2000, before losing consecutive presidential races to the right-leaning PAN in 2000 and 2006.

In May 2020, the Supreme Court struck down a widely criticized law passed by the Baja California legislature that retroactively extended the term of its governor, Jaime Bonilla, to five years from the two-year term he won in June 2019.

Because of MORENA dominance at the federal level, leadership of the political opposition increasingly devolved to state governors in 2020. The López Obrador administration's budgetary austerity measures prompted non-MORENA governors, particularly in northern Mexico, to label themselves the Federalist Alliance and advocate for a renegotiation of basic fiscal structures.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people's political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

2/4

Criminal groups, while increasingly fragmented, exert powerful influence on the country's politics through threats and violence against candidates, election officials, and campaign workers, particularly at the local level. At least 145 politicians were

murdered between fall 2017 and election day in July 2018. Scores of politicians are believed to have withdrawn 2018 candidacies due to fears of violence.

Separately, in states and municipalities with lower levels of multiparty participation, locally dominant political actors often govern in a highly opaque manner that limits political activity and citizen participation.

B4 0-4 pts

<p>Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?</p>	<p>3/4</p>
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Mexico has a large indigenous population, and Indigenous people and groups are free to participate in politics. There are some provisions for the integration of Indigenous community customs in electing leaders in some states, though only for local authorities. Parties serving Indigenous communities' interests often compete in states with large Indigenous populations. However, in practice, Indigenous people remain severely underrepresented in political institutions. Mexico's small Afro-Mexican population is similarly underrepresented in national politics, though they are recognized in the constitution.

The 2018 election confirmed the success of gender requirements for candidacies and party lists: 48 percent of representatives in the Chamber of Deputies and 49 percent in the Senate are women. In December 2020, the Federal Electoral Tribunal ruled that each party must have at least seven women among their candidates in the 15 gubernatorial elections in 2021.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

<p>Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?</p>	<p>2/4</p>
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Organized crime and related violence have limited the effective governing authority of elected officials in some areas of the country, as well as of the federal government. Members of organized crime groups have persisted in their attempts to infiltrate local governments in order to plunder municipal coffers and ensure their own impunity. The notorious and still unsolved mass disappearance of 43 students in Guerrero in 2014 was linked to a deeply corrupt local government collaborating with a drug gang, as well as corrupt or complicit members of various state security forces. In the most violent regions, the provision of public services has become more difficult, as public-sector employees face extortion and pressure to divert public funds.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?	1/4
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Official corruption remains a serious problem. The billions of dollars in illegal drug money that enter the country each year from the United States profoundly affect politics, as does rampant public-contract fraud and other forms of siphoning off state funds. Attempts to prosecute officials for alleged involvement in corrupt or criminal activity have often failed due to the weakness of the cases brought by the state.

The López Obrador administration has made the pursuit of corruption a priority, and several prominent figures from the Peña Nieto administration have been indicted or arrested on graft charges. However, critics have seen López Obrador's anticorruption efforts as heavily politicized. Emilio Lozoya, the former head of state oil company PEMEX, was accused of involvement in several multimillion-dollar graft schemes involving high-ranking officials and was extradited from Spain in July 2020. Upon his return to Mexico, he provided testimony regarding corruption among his former bosses and peers, including former presidents Calderón and Peña Nieto and multiple prominent officials from the PRI and the PAN. In August, Lozoya's testimony from the Attorney General's Office was leaked, potentially tainting the legal process.

C3 0-4 pts

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Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

2/4

Despite some limitations, several freedom of information laws passed since 2002 have successfully strengthened transparency at the federal level, though enforcement is uneven across states. In recent years, the government has failed to release relevant information on some of the country's most controversial issues, including abuses by the security forces and the investigation into the missing 43 students in Guerrero. The military, assigned ever-expanding roles under López Obrador, is one of the least transparent state institutions. President López Obrador has been openly critical of the system that enables the public to access information about his administration.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, government officials were accused of inadequate and incompetent management, including opacity about the virus's true toll, which was estimated to be far higher than the official figures.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?

2/4

The security environment for journalists remains highly challenging. Reporters probing police issues, drug trafficking, and official corruption face serious, sustained risk of physical harm. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) named Mexico the deadliest country for journalists in 2020, and recorded the deaths of at least nine journalists in Mexico in connection with their work in 2020, with another five killings

of reporters under investigation. Self-censorship has increased, with many newspapers in violent areas avoiding publication of stories concerning organized crime. Press watchdog groups have decried the slow pace of the federal government's special prosecutor for crimes against freedom of expression since the office gained authority in 2013. Several convictions in cases of murdered journalists occurred in 2020, though 90 percent of cases of journalists who are murdered are unresolved. In October, the CPJ noted that no new cases had been federalized since López Obrador took office.

The Federal Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists within the Interior Secretariat, created in 2012, has successfully protected hundreds of activists and reporters, providing them safe houses, panic buttons, and bodyguards. However, the mechanism is underfunded—in October 2020 the trust fund financing was dissolved—and has been unable to include many journalists.

Diversity of viewpoints in print and online media remains high, but broadcast television has been dominated by the duopoly of Televisa and TV Azteca since the 1990s. Media outlets depend on government advertising and subsidies. Congress enacted legislation to regulate the distribution of government resources in 2018 and President López Obrador cut spending on state advertising in July 2020. However, media watchdogs note continued opacity and politicization of government media support. Throughout 2020, López Obrador continued his daily morning news conferences, dominating news cycles and often chastising and demeaning specific reporters and news outlets.

Mexico has been at the forefront of citizen-led efforts to ensure internet access. The 2013 amendments to Article 6 of the constitution made access to the internet a civil right. However, gangs have engaged in threats and violence against bloggers and online journalists who report on organized crime. In July 2020, state-owned news outlet Notimex was accused of exacerbating the polarized online environment by sponsoring and coordinating online troll attacks on reporters and outlets perceived as hostile to the administration.

The COVID-19 pandemic deeply affected journalists' safety throughout 2020. Article 19 registered 52 media workers who died of the disease, and numerous others who were exposed to the infection due to a lack of protective gear.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?	4/4
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Religious freedom is protected by the constitution and is generally respected in practice, though religious minorities, particularly Indigenous Evangelical communities in Chiapas, face occasional persecution by local authorities.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?	4/4
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The government does not restrict academic freedom, though university students and some academics are occasionally threatened for their political activism. University research was expected to be subject to cuts following the controversial October 2020 rescission of dozens of public trust funds that included funding for research centers, many of which are housed within universities.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?	3/4
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While there are no formal impediments to free and open discussion, fear of criminal monitoring restricts citizens' willingness to converse publicly about crime in some areas of the country.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly?	3/4
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The constitution guarantees the right to peacefully assemble. Protests are frequent, though political and civic expression is restricted in some regions, and police frequently use excessive force and detain protesters arbitrarily. Human rights watchdogs expressed concern that the 2019 National Use of Force Law, which enabled the creation of the National Guard, would increase the abuse of protesters. As of the end of 2020, the Supreme Court had not ruled on challenges to the law.

Several instances of protest-related violence caused controversy in 2020. In March, tens of thousands of women protested against violence against women and other forms of gender discrimination in Mexico City and initiated a one-day strike. In November, police fired live ammunition at a feminist protest in Cancún, resulting in at least 10 injuries; the police chief and state security minister were subsequently forced out of their jobs.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?	2/4
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Although highly active, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) sometimes face violent resistance; the Office of the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights counted seven activist deaths by September 2020. Environmental activists and representatives of Indigenous groups contesting large-scale infrastructure projects have been particularly vulnerable. Revelations emerged in 2017

that government agencies had allegedly attempted to spy on the electronic communications of a number of civil society activists.

The Federal Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists has provided physical security for hundreds of activists since its 2012 inception, though rights groups consider it sluggish and subject to government neglect. The trust fund that finances the mechanism was eliminated in October 2020, prompting concern that its efficacy will further diminish.

Civil society members freely criticize state policies, but López Obrador’s penchant for dismissing criticism and insulting perceived opponents generated tension between the president and NGOs throughout 2020.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?	2/4
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Trade union membership has diminished significantly in recent decades. In 2019 major labor reform brought hope of an end to the rampant use of informal, nontransparent negotiations between employers and politically connected union leaders in creating “protection contracts” never seen by workers. Several important provisions of the law took effect in 2020, but the June arrest in Tamaulipas of labor leader Susana Prieto, one of the country’s most visible trade unionists, prompted both domestic and international criticism.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?	2/4
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The Supreme Court (SCJN) has been regarded in recent years as generally independent, but several 2019 appointments of justices viewed as close to the government raised concerns about diminished autonomy. Such concerns were amplified by the SCJN's approval of a national citizen consultation in 2021 on whether to open investigations into potential misdeeds during the administrations of López Obrador's five immediate presidential predecessors. The ruling condoned a constitutionally illegitimate exercise intended to gain political advantage. A December 2020 judicial reform bill intends to improve judicial careers and competence, though observers warn that it concentrates the judiciary's power in the SCJN.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?

1 / 4

Mexico's justice system is plagued by delays, unpredictability, and corruption, which often lead to impunity for perpetrators of crimes. A 2008 constitutional reform replaced the civil-inquisitorial trial system with an oral-adversarial one. Implementation of the adversarial system was technically completed in 2016 and did show some improvements, but it needs more capacity to fulfill the project's goals. A lack of political commitment to prosecutorial autonomy and the attorney general's resistance to reform, has limited the efficacy of the 2018 overhaul of the prosecutorial agency.

Widespread bribery, limited capacity, and weak coordination undermine the lower courts' and law enforcement's integrity. According to a December 2020 government report, the vast majority of crimes committed in 2019 went unreported, largely because underpaid police were viewed as either inept or in league with criminals. When investigations were conducted, only a tiny handful of crimes ended in convictions.

Widely publicized raids often result in the release of accused criminals due to grave procedural deficiencies. Rather than improve investigative and prosecutorial

competence and efficacy, however, the López Obrador administration's legislative initiatives have mostly sought to harden penalties and limit defendants' rights.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies?	1/4
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Mexicans are subject to the threat of violence at the hands of multiple actors, including individual criminals, criminal gangs that operate with impunity, and police officers who are often susceptible to bribery. A missing-persons registry—which continues to grow despite increased government efforts in recent years—reflects an epidemic of enforced disappearances. Mexicans in police or military custody are at risk of torture by the authorities, and must also navigate a prison system that respects neither due process nor physical safety.

Abuses during arrests and criminal investigations are rife, and detainees report routine physical abuse while being held. The 2017 comprehensive General Law on Torture established a prohibition on the use of torture and disqualified evidence obtained through its use. Though it has contributed to mild progress in excluding torture-based confessions from prosecutions, impunity remains almost universal. A series of deaths in police custody in 2020 sparked protests, and the fatal beating of a Jalisco man led to violent clashes between police and protesters in Guadalajara in June.

Human rights advocates consistently express concern about a lack of accountability for abuses committed by members of the military, including torture, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial executions. Only a handful of soldiers have been convicted in civilian courts for abuses against civilians, despite myriad NGO and National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) reports implicating state security forces in grave human rights abuses. Rights advocates and elected officials have criticized the leader of the CNDH, a close ally of the president, for passivity and mismanagement.

Forced disappearances and killings remain a crisis in Mexico, despite recent efforts to be more responsive to victims. The 2017 General Law on Disappearances removed the statute of limitations on missing-persons crimes. In August 2020, a new protocol took effect to abet the search and identification of disappearance victims; cases in the national registry numbered over 73,000 as of July.

The kidnapping and presumed deaths of 43 students in Guerrero in 2014 remains controversial. President López Obrador created a presidential commission to investigate the case after taking office, and in 2019 a new special prosecutor was assigned to manage it. Multiple arrest warrants were issued in 2020, though the missing students' fates remained unknown at year's end. The identification of one student's bone fragments in July 2020 further undermined the story presented by the Peña Nieto administration.

The government's primary response to insecurity hotspots was the deployment of militarized forces. In 2019, President López Obrador established a nominally civilian-led gendarmerie that would draw from the Army, Navy, and federal police, and would rely on military officers for its top ranks. This new National Guard has been sharply criticized by rights advocates for reinforcing the militarization of public security. Reform advocates and rights groups, as well as the local office of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, denounced the May 2020 announcement that regular military troops would remain actively deployed in a policing role, and questioned the increasing reliance on the military to carry out a broadening array of tasks.

Deaths attributed to organized crime remained at historic highs in 2020. Violence was particularly acute in Guanajuato, where a multi-year battle to control gasoline theft and drug trafficking routes continued. While large organizations like the Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) and the Sinaloa Cartel continue to drive insecurity in some areas, the splintering of other criminal groups, along with the diversification of their revenue sources, has made efforts to combat the violence even more daunting. Over 500 police were killed during the year; in June, an attack attributed to the CJNG targeted the police chief of Mexico City, who was wounded.

Mexican prisons remain highly unsafe, with inmates commonly engaging in criminal activity while incarcerated. As of mid-October, the CNDH had registered 232 confirmed and 236 suspected deaths of COVID-19 in prisons. Fears about the spread of disease in overcrowded prisons provided impetus to pass an Amnesty Law in April 2020, but the measure was limited in scope and no prisoners were released under its provisions during the year. The prison population increased by nearly 14,000 inmates in 2020, and the percentage of prisoners in pretrial detention rose from 37 to 42 percent.

F4 0-4 pts

<p>Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?</p>	<p>1/4</p>
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Mexican law bans discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, lighter-skinned Mexicans enjoy substantial social advantage compared to Indigenous people and other distinct groups. The large Indigenous population experience social and economic discrimination, and approximately 70 percent of Indigenous people live in poverty. Southern states with high concentrations of Indigenous residents suffer from deficient services, a problem that had particularly negative health and educational consequences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because Indigenous groups are in particular danger from criminal violence, communities in Guerrero and Michoacán have formed self-defense groups, some of which were subsequently legalized. Afro-Mexicans face discrimination, though the 2020 census included an option for Afro-Mexican self-identification for the first time.

LGBT+ people have strong legal protections, but they are not uniformly enforced. Transgender women in particular face discrimination and violence.

Migrants from Central America, many of whom move through Mexico to reach the United States, have long faced persecution and criminal predation. The López Obrador administration initially sought to protect migrants, but reversed course in 2019 when the United States threatened to seal its border with Mexico and institute

punitive tariffs. In response, the National Guard was ordered to arrest migrants moving northward—a policy that led to complaints of rights abuses throughout 2020—established immigration checkpoints along major roads, and raided migrant shelters in the country.

The government cooperated with the implementation of Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), a United States policy forcing asylum seekers to remain in Mexico until their cases are processed. Tens of thousands have been forced to wait in border cities like Ciudad Juárez and Nuevo Laredo for their hearings, finding themselves at risk of kidnapping and extortion in the interim, with near-total impunity for their attackers. These policies remained in place in 2020; the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the harsh migrant shelter conditions. The government has made some remediation efforts, including a November 2020 reform to protect child and adolescent migrants and the firing of hundreds of allegedly corrupt migration agents.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

3/4

Citizens are generally free to change their place of residence, employment, or education. However, criminals have impeded freedom of movement by blocking major roads in several states in recent years, and ordinary citizens avoid roads in many rural areas after dark. Although some states restricted freedom of movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions were less harsh than most countries suffering outbreaks of similar severity.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish

2/4

private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?	
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Property rights in Mexico are protected by a modern legal framework, but the weakness of the judicial system, frequent solicitation of bribes by bureaucrats and officials, and the high incidence of criminal extortion harm security of property for many individuals and businesses. Large-scale development projects, including high-priority López Obrador initiatives, have been accompanied by corruption and rights-related controversy in recent years, exemplified in 2020 by the dispute over a train line, primarily serving tourists, in the Yucatan Peninsula.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?	2/4
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Sexual abuse and domestic violence against women are common, and perpetrators are rarely punished. Implementation of a 2007 law designed to protect women from such crimes remains halting, particularly at the state level, and impunity is the norm for the killers of hundreds of women each year. State authorities can issue “gender alerts” that trigger greater scrutiny and an influx of resources to combat an epidemic of violence against women, but the mechanism has proven ineffective. Femicides rose in the first half of 2020, and the COVID-19 pandemic led to a spike in domestic abuse complaints.

The government has made some efforts to combat violence and promote gender equality, but López Obrador has also cut funding for women’s services and dismissed feminist protesters as aligned with the political opposition.

Abortion has been a contentious issue in recent years. Many states reacted to Mexico City’s 2007 liberalization of abortion laws by strengthening their own criminal bans on the procedure. In September 2019 Oaxaca became only the second state to decriminalize first-trimester abortions.

Mexico has taken steps toward equality for LGBT+ people, though significant cultural and legal barriers persist. A 2015 Supreme Court decision overruled state laws defining the purpose of marriage as procreation. The passage of legislation in Puebla in November 2020 and Tlaxcala in December, Mexico City and 21 other states had legalized same-sex marriage. In October 2020, Sonora became the tenth state to allow gender changes on identification documents.

Score Change: The score declined from 3 to 2 because the government has resisted calls to address gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, and cut funding for related services despite significant increases in the scale of the problem.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?	2/4
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Economic opportunity is limited in Mexico, which maintains a high rate of economic inequality. Migrant agricultural workers face brutally exploitative conditions in several northern states, and the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a spike in workers' rights abuse complaints. In 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that Mexico's millions of domestic workers—the vast majority of whom are women—must be incorporated into the formal sector and receive social security and health benefits. The López Obrador administration has increased some forms of redistributive spending, and in recent years has sharply increased Mexico's minimum wage.

Mexico is a major source, transit, and destination country for trafficking in persons, including women and children, many of whom are subject to forced labor and sexual exploitation. Organized criminal gangs are heavily involved in human trafficking in Mexico and into the United States. This danger has been exacerbated since 2019 by the United States' denial of entry to asylum seekers presenting themselves at the border under the MPP program, which has forced thousands of migrants to wait in nearby cities like Ciudad Juárez.





On Mexico

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60/100 Partly Free

Internet Freedom Score

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