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Elections in Mexico

2018 General Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Americas

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by Mexico’s election authorities as of June 25, 2018 to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

Mexico's presidential, legislative, and local elections will be held on Sunday, July 1, 2018. It will be the country's largest election to date, with more than 3,400 local and federal races throughout the country.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

In the upcoming elections, Mexicans will be choosing:

- A new president;
- 128 senators;
- 500 deputies;
- 8 governors;
- The mayor of Mexico City; and
- 1,596 municipal councils.

How is Mexico's political system structured?

Mexico is a presidential republic. The president is elected by simple majority in a plurality-voting system and appoints his or her cabinet ministers. The members of the National Congress (Senate and Chamber of Deputies) are elected from a mix of single-member districts by majority vote and proportional representation.

President (*Presidente*) – The president is both head of state and of government. Candidates must be at least 35 years old; Mexican citizens by birth, as must be at least one of his or her parents; residents of Mexico for at least 20 years; and must not have been governors of a state or of Mexico City (or held other specified offices) for at least six months prior to the election. The main functions of the presidency include directing Mexico's foreign policy and commanding the Mexican armed forces, as well as proposing laws and issuing decrees.

- **Senate (*Cámara de Senadores*)** – The Chamber of Senators is the Upper House of Mexico's National Congress with three senators elected from each of Mexico's 31 states and the Federal District of Mexico City and 32 elected from national districts through proportional representation. In each state, two senators are elected from the party which receives the most votes, and one senator from the runner-up party, for a total of 96 senators elected at the state level. Each of the 128 senators is elected for a term of six years, with those elected in 2018 eligible to serve another consecutive term. Senators must be at least 25 years old, Mexican citizens by birth, and have been born in the state in which they run, or a resident of that state for at least six months. Their responsibilities include approving treaties and appointments and authorizing the use of troops abroad.
- **Chamber of Deputies (*Cámara de Diputados*)** – Deputies are elected for a three-year term and those elected in 2018 may be elected for up to four consecutive terms. Candidates must be at least 25 years old, Mexican citizens by birth, and have been born in, or a resident for at least six months in, the state in which they run. Three hundred deputies are elected by plurality from single-member districts, while 200 deputies are elected through proportional representation in

districts comprising multiple states. One party cannot hold more than 300 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Responsibilities of the Cámara include approving the budget, declaring the president-elect, and together with the Senate, declaring war, raising an army, and revising the penal code.

- **Governors (*Gobernadores*)** – Eight governors and the head of government for the Federal District of Mexico City will be elected on July 1, 2018. Each of Mexico’s 32 states is led by a governor (except for the Mexico City, which has a head of government) elected to a single six-year term. Candidates must be Mexican citizens by birth and have been born in the state in which they run or a resident for at least five years. Responsibilities include upholding the Constitution of the state and general administration.
- **Municipal Council (*Ayuntamientos*)** – Each Mexican state is divided into a number of municipalities, each run by a municipal council. Councilors are elected every three years and, depending on state laws, may be re-elected after 2018. Municipal councils are responsible for the provision of public services, public safety, and, depending on the state, can also be involved in areas such as education in cooperation with higher levels of government.
- **State Congress (*Congreso del Estado*)** – Every state in Mexico has a unicameral legislature with deputies elected through both proportional representation and through plurality in single-member districts. Deputies serve three-year terms and will be eligible for re-election following the 2018 election. The Congress of each state assumes the legislative powers ascribed to it under each state’s constitution.

What are Mexico’s electoral authorities?

The body responsible for organizing and overseeing elections is the National Electoral Institute ([Instituto Nacional Electoral](#), INE). Since the 2014 electoral reforms, the INE has assumed responsibility over federal and local processes, but it also delegates local processes to Local Public Electoral Bodies ([Organismos Públicos Locales Electorales](#), OPLEs).

The INE is also responsible for overseeing public financing of political parties and political parties’ spending. The oversight process is under the responsibility of the following entities:

- INE’s General Council (*Consejo General*);
- Oversight Commission (*Comisión de Fiscalización*);
- Oversight Technical Unit (*Unidad Técnica de Fiscalización*); and
- OPLEs, when and if the INE delegates this responsibility to them.

The Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judicial Power ([Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación](#), TEPJF) is the supreme jurisdictional body for electoral matters, responsible for resolving election-related disputes and guaranteeing the legitimacy of electoral processes.

The decisions and actions taken during different stages of electoral processes are subject to strict control or judicial revision by local electoral tribunals and the TEPJF. The TEPJF is composed of a Superior Chamber and six Regional Chambers, distributed strategically according to the order of circumscriptions.

The Superior Chamber (*Sala Superior*) is composed of a president magistrate and six other magistrates, while the Regional Chambers (*Salas Regionales*) are composed of three magistrates each.

The third organization working to guarantee the integrity and legitimacy of electoral processes in Mexico is the Office of the Special Prosecutor for Electoral Offenses ([Fiscalía Especializada para la Atención de Delitos Electorales](#), FEPADE). The FEPADE investigates and presents criminal charges for electoral offenses according to the General Law on Electoral Offense Matters (*Ley General en Materia de Delitos Electorales*), which lists around 65 different types of illegal activities related to the electoral process. The law also establishes different sentences for each offense, according to whether it is committed by citizens, electoral authorities, party officials, public servants, candidates, or members of the clergy.

Who is running in these elections?

For the first time since 1994, Mexico's presidential election will not be limited to a contest between the heretofore dominant Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), [Partido Acción Nacional](#) (PAN), and [Partido de la Revolución Democrática](#) (PRD) parties. With new electoral laws allowing for independents to run for president, voters will be able to choose among traditional and new candidates:

- **Ricardo Anaya Cortés**
 - Party: *PAN*
 - Coalition: *Por México al Frente*

Por México al Frente is a coalition of the PAN, PRD, and [Movimiento Ciudadano](#) (MC). PAN and PRD have long been considered traditional opposition parties to the dominant PRI, which ruled Mexico from 1929-2000, and again from 2012-18. While PAN and PRD have long fielded separate candidates and competed against one another, the two have united to contest the 2018 elections. While PAN has often been considered center-right, and PRD and MC center-left, the three have formed a big-tent coalition aimed at appealing to both left and right.

- **Andrés Manuel López Obrador**
 - Party: *Movimiento Regeneración Nacional (MORENA)*
 - Coalition: *Juntos Haremos Historia*

López Obrador ran in both 2006 and 2012 with the PRD. Now, at the head of his own political party, [MORENA](#), López Obrador hopes to defeat the three traditionally dominant parties in the presidential race. MORENA has followed López Obrador's line and taken a more nationalist and populist stance, with a platform appealing to center-left and leftist voters. López Obrador is also viewed as having positioned himself as the candidate most in opposition to U.S. President Donald Trump.

- **José Antonio Meade Kuribreña**
 - Party: *PRI*
 - Coalition: *Todos por México*

The PRI has dominated Mexican politics since it first came to power in 1929. It has held the presidency since that time except from 2000-12. The current president of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, is a member of the PRI, and the party hopes to replicate its 2012 electoral success. Traditionally, the PRI is considered a center-left party, though in recent years it has embraced free market reforms and other neoliberal measures.

- **Jaime Rodríguez Calderón**
 - Party: Independent
 - Coalition: None

Rodríguez is one of several independent candidates who have attempted to enter the 2018 presidential race. Rodríguez initially failed to gather enough signatures to appear on the ballot but, upon judicial intervention, was registered by the National Electoral Institute. Rodríguez has been characterized as a populist law-and-order candidate. Another independent candidate, Margarita Zavala also gained access to the ballot but announced her withdrawal from the race on May 16.

How are campaigns funded?

Candidates for political office in Mexico are eligible to both receive public funds and accept private contributions. Private funding for parties in Mexico can come from three sources: party members, supporters, and candidates. Party members can donate up to 2 percent of public funding for ordinary activities in the previous year, which in 2018 is about \$4.17 million. Contributions from supporters and from candidates cannot exceed 10 percent of the total amount spent in the last election, which in 2018 means each party can accept about \$1.6 million from supporters, and the same amount again from candidates. In total, parties can accept about \$7.49 million in private contributions in 2018. Independent candidates, however, can raise up to 100 percent of the total amount spent in the last election due to a recent supreme court decision, as they are completely deprived of public funding.

The amount of public funding to be split between all parties and coalitions is set at the number of registered voters multiplied by 65 percent of the minimum wage. Thirty percent of these funds are allocated equally between all parties, and 70 percent are allocated based on each party's share of the vote in the last election for the Chamber of Deputies. In presidential election years the amount of public funding is increased by 50 percent. The total amount of public funds available in 2018 is estimated at \$325 million.

Mexico, however, faces a large illegal campaign finance problem. It has been estimated that for every peso spent legally in the 2018 Mexican elections, 15 are spent illegally without being [reported](#). While Mexican law places strict limits upon private campaign finance, enforcement remains a problem. Accusations of both vote buying and illegal campaign contributions are common.

Who can vote in these elections?

A total of 89,978,701 people, approximately 72.7 percent of the Mexican population, have applied for the required ID. All Mexican citizens, by birth or naturalization, who are 18 years of age or older on

Election Day, are eligible to vote. Voters must possess an ID card issued by the National Electoral Institute.

Youth will represent a large group of eligible voters this year, as 29 percent of voters are between the ages of 18 and 29. Disaggregating by gender, 52 percent of eligible voters are women, and 48 percent are men.

How will they vote?

Mexican voter ID cards list the municipality and section to which a voter belongs. With this section number, voters can call, for free, to determine where they will vote. In addition, the National Electoral Institute has partnered with Google Maps to [direct voters to their polling place](#).

Citizens can vote from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at their specific voting locations. In addition, special polling places have been established so that those who are, on Election Day, outside of their normal section may vote. Voters will mark their choices on paper ballots and deposit these ballots in marked containers.

In total, there will be over 150,000 polling places across Mexico. Mexicans living abroad who applied for a voter ID before March 30, 2018, at a Mexican consulate will receive mail-in ballots. Mexicans living abroad, however, may only vote for president.

When will the newly-elected government take office?

The new president will take office on December 1, 2018, replacing Enrique Peña Nieto, the current president. His mandate will expire on October 1, 2024.

How will votes be counted?

Once the polls have been officially closed, the preliminary results (PREP) are calculated and taken to a National Electoral Institute (INE) office. Should there be no nearby INE office, special centers are available to receive results. PREP results are uploaded to the internet but do not serve as official results. The original ballots and forms travel with the PREP results to INE offices, so that another count can be conducted.

All officials must sign their names to the results tabulated at a polling place. Preliminary results are compared against district counts conducted on the Wednesday following the election. The results produced by district counts serve as the official outcome of the election.

Poll workers are selected at random in each of the 300 electoral districts throughout Mexico. Over [11,694,618 people](#), 13 percent of each district's population, were invited to be poll workers. Among them, 10 percent will meet all requirements, receive training, and work on July 1. In 2018, [for the first time](#), persons with disabilities will be able to serve as poll workers.

Are there any quotas?

Yes. The Mexican Constitution specifically calls for parties to promote gender parity (50/50), and quotas have been established to that effect. Parties are required to establish rules that guarantee parity between men and women, and party lists must alternate between genders in their rankings. The National Electoral Institute has the authority to reject any lists submitted by a party which are not corrected to remove a gender imbalance.

How are the electoral authorities guaranteeing equal access to the electoral process for persons with disabilities?

The National Electoral Institute has [said](#) that it hopes that more than 150,000 polling places throughout Mexico will be equipped to assist voters with disabilities.

Can Mexicans who reside abroad vote in the elections?

Yes. Since 2005, Mexicans living abroad have been able to vote in Mexican presidential elections. Mexico has produced a very complete [website](#) with out-of-country voting instructions. The National Electoral Institute (INE), upon application through a Mexican consulate, provides these voters with a sealable mail-in ballot. Completed ballots must be received by the INE by 8:00 a.m. on June 30, 2018. It is free to request a voter ID card and ballot from the INE.

Per the INE, 200,000 Mexicans had registered by February 16, 2018 to vote abroad, more than a month before the cutoff date of March 30, 2018. This is a dramatic increase from the 42,000 Mexicans abroad who registered prior to the 2012 elections.

Is electoral observation allowed?

Yes. Citizens can apply to be electoral observers and may act as such provided they receive training from the National Electoral Institute (INE). International organizations such as the Organization of American States have announced plans to deploy observers and provide support to the INE's own observation programs.

Other interesting facts about the Mexican elections

These are the first Mexican presidential elections to be held under the reformed electoral code enacted in 2014. Under the amended electoral code, deputies, senators, governors, local council members, and mayors will be eligible to serve consecutive terms in office for the first time since the establishment of democracy in Mexico. Deputies will be allowed to serve up to four consecutive terms, and senators will be allowed to serve two consecutive terms, a total of twelve years in both instances.

The July 1, 2018, elections are also the largest in Mexico's history. The National Electoral Institute coordinated with regional governments to align local and state level elections with federal elections for the presidency and Congress. More than 3,400 positions will be filled through these elections, including the governorships of seven states and the head of government for the Federal District of Mexico City.

Unfortunately, these have also been the [most violent elections](#) Mexico has experienced in its recent history. The murder rate throughout the country has continued to rise and many political assassinations have been reported in the country over the course of the year.

Unlike many other presidential systems of government, Mexicans have no vice president. Instead, the minister of the interior is designated as a caretaker while Congress either elects a substitute president to fill the remainder of the original six-year term or an interim president to serve while new elections are organized. No Mexican president has died or been incapacitated in office since the 1930s, leaving the process of filling a presidential vacancy (revised in 2012) largely untested in modern times.

Resources

- [Americas Society/Council of the Americas](#)
- [Central Electoral \(Election Center\) - Spanish](#)
- [Constitution of Mexico \(Translated\)](#)
- [“El año electoral más letal de México: 90 personas asesinadas al día”](#)
- [Fondo de Apoyo a la Observación Electoral \(Funds for Electoral Observation\) - Spanish](#)
- [Freedom House](#)
- [“Gender and Constitutionalism in Mexico: From Quotas to Parity”](#)
- [Instituto Nacional Electoral \(National Electoral Institute\) - Spanish](#)
- [Ley General de Instituciones y Procedimientos Electorales \(Electoral Code\) - Spanish](#)
- [Manual de la y el funcionario de casilla \(Election Worker’s Guide\) - Spanish](#)
- [“Mexico Seeks to Empower Women in Politics”](#)
- [“¿Sabes dónde te tocará votar? Ubica tu casilla en Google Maps”](#)
- [The Electoral Knowledge Network](#)
- [“Vote from Abroad: 2018 Mexican Elections” - Spanish](#)
- [Voter Roll Statistics - Spanish](#)
- [Voto Extranjero \(Vote Abroad\) - Spanish](#)
- [Women’s Leadership as a Route to Greater Empowerment: Mexico Case Study](#)