



Freedom in the World 2020

Mexico

62
/100

PARTLY FREE

<u>Political Rights</u>	27 /40
<u>Civil Liberties</u>	35 /60

LAST YEAR'S SCORE & STATUS

63 /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 2019

- President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who took office in 2018, maintained high approval ratings through much of the year, and his party consolidated its grasp on power in June's gubernatorial and local elections. López Obrador's polling position began to wane late in the year, as Mexico's dire security situation affected voters' views on his performance.
- In March, the government created a new gendarmerie, the National Guard, which officially began operating in June after drawing from Army and Navy police forces. Rights advocates criticized the agency, warning that its creation deepened the militarization of public security.
- The number of deaths attributed to organized crime remained at historic highs in 2019, though the rate of acceleration slowed. Massacres of police officers, alleged criminals, and civilians were well-publicized as the year progressed. The challenge to state authority was illustrated dramatically in October, when soldiers and police were forced to release an accused drug kingpin in Sinaloa after a violent running battle with cartel members.
- Mexico bowed to American pressure and agreed to detain, deter, and deport asylum seekers and migrants traveling through Mexico to its border with the United States in May and June, after President Donald Trump threatened to impose punitive tariffs. The government ordered nearly half the new National Guard to enforce this policy, partially diverting it from its crime-fighting mandate.

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

The president is elected to a six-year term and cannot be reelected. However, a constitutional amendment, which was not fully ratified as of the end of 2019, may allow citizens the opportunity to recall a president halfway through their 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 the outgoing administration of President Enrique Peña Nieto and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI); the party's candidate, José Antonio Meade, took just 16 percent of the vote.

The election campaign was marked by violence and threats against candidates for state and local offices, with a final tally of at least 145 election-related deaths. 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

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. 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 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

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, and ballot stealing, and to ensure transparent campaign finance. Subsequent steps by MORENA

to cut the INE's budget and shorten the terms of its directors while writing Mexico's 2020 budget prompted accusations that the administration sought to lessen electoral oversight and give itself an advantage in future elections.

President López Obrador has extolled the use of referendums known as citizen consultations, which are not supervised by the INE. A series of consultations in 2018 and 2019 on infrastructure and social spending offered few protections against fraud, and featured the participation of a small proportion of Mexican voters. As 2019 progressed, Congress incorporated those consultations into a new constitutional reform package, including a mechanism to allow for the recall of the president. Opponents criticized the measures, particularly the presidential recall, which they claimed was a way for López Obrador to boost MORENA candidates in the 2021 midterm elections or even rule beyond his own mandate. The amendments were amended in the Senate to address opposition concerns before the chamber approved them in November 2019. The amendments awaited state-level ratification at year's end.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

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?

4 / 4

Mexico's multiparty system features few official restrictions on political organization and activity. Although the 2018 elections left the opposition moribund at the national level, opposition parties are competitive in some states, and independent candidacies are becoming more common. President López Obrador's victory also reflected the political system's growing

openness to pluralistic competition, and ended fears on the left that powerful actors would block their electoral path to power.

Victories in the gubernatorial races in 2019, 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 2019, analysts, MORENA opponents, and the INE sharply criticized a law passed by the Baja California legislature that retroactively extended the term of its new governor, Jaime Bonilla, to five years from the two-year term he won in June. The law was swiftly challenged, with the Federal Electoral Tribunal unanimously finding it unconstitutional in a written opinion delivered to the Supreme Court in December.

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. 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

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, religious, gender, LGBT, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

3 / 4

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 traditional community customs in electing leaders, and parties that serve indigenous communities often compete in states with large indigenous populations. However, indigenous people remain underrepresented in political institutions.

The 2018 election confirmed the success of gender requirements for candidacies and party lists: female representatives increased their share of seats in the Chamber of Deputies to 48 percent and in the Senate to 49 percent.

C. Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

2 / 4

Organized crime and related violence have limited the effective governing authority of elected officials in some areas of the country. 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 Iguala in 2014 was linked to a deeply corrupt local government collaborating with a drug gang, as well as a group of corrupt soldiers residing in a nearby barracks. 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

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 pursued corruption more actively than recent administrations, and Transparency International recorded a slight improvement in Mexicans' perceptions of corruption in 2019 over the previous year. Notably, the NGO also found that 34 percent of study participants reported paying a bribe for public services in 2019, while 51 percent reported the same in 2017. Several prominent figures from the Peña Nieto administration were also indicted or arrested on graft charges during the year. In May, an arrest warrant was issued for the former head of state oil company PEMEX, Emilio Lozoya, along with his mother, wife, and sister. Lozoya remained free at year's end, but his mother Gilda was arrested in Germany mother and agreed to return to Mexico to mount a legal defense in November. In addition, former urban development minister Rosario Robles was arrested on corruption charges in August; Robles was suspected of wrongdoing throughout her tenure in the Peña Nieto administration.

As 2019 progressed, the former president himself was accused of accepting bribes, notably in proceedings taking place in the United States and not in Mexico. In January, Colombian drug trafficker Alex Cifuentes testified in a US court that Peña Nieto accepted a bribe from Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, who was then on trial for murder. In June, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) received an allegation that Peña Nieto accepted bribes from Emilio Lozoya to allow PEMEX to acquire the operator of a fertilizer plant at an inflated price in 2015.

In December, Genaro García Luna, a feared public security secretary under former president Felipe Calderón, was charged with trafficking cocaine in the United States; García Luna was often accused of collaborating with the Sinaloa cartel during his tenure. However, critics have charged the government with selective prosecution, pointing to the administration’s absolution of Federal Electricity Commission chairman and veteran politician Manuel Bartlett following allegations of questionable asset accumulation.

C3 0-4 pts

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 Iguala. Since 2017, Mexican authorities have also remained sluggish in publicizing contracts with the NSO Group, an Israeli firm that sold spyware used to target journalists, lawyers, and activists. In February 2019, the Institute for Transparency, Access to Information, and Protection of Personal Data, a privacy watchdog in Mexico, accused the federal attorney general of stonewalling its investigation for over a year.

However, in October 2019, transparency advocates succeeded in obtaining a list of beneficiaries of tax amnesties between 2007 and 2015; the status of many beneficiaries and the large amounts forgiven prompted allegations of politicized tax practices by previous administrations.

Civil Liberties

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media?	2 / 4
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The security environment for journalists remains highly challenging. Reporters probing police issues, drug trafficking, and official corruption face an increasingly high risk of physical harm. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) recorded the deaths of five journalists in Mexico in 2019; this represents over half of all murders recorded by the CPJ worldwide that year. Self-censorship has increased, with many newspapers in violent areas avoiding publication of stories concerning organized crime. Press watchdog groups hailed the 2012 federalization of crimes against journalists, as well as a 2015 law in Mexico City aimed at protecting journalists and human rights defenders. However, they have also decried the slow pace of the federal government's special prosecutor for crimes against freedom of expression since the office gained authority in 2013.

In 2012, pressure from journalists and NGOs prompted former president Felipe Calderón to create a Federal Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists within the federal Interior Secretariat. Hundreds of activists and journalists have been successfully protected by this scheme, which has provided safe houses, panic buttons, and bodyguards to

enrollees. However, journalists have recently found themselves left out of the underfunded mechanism; the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) counted 122 journalists in the federal protection scheme in 2017, but the number fell to 27 by 2019.

Despite improvements in legal status, community radio stations continue to face occasional harassment from criminals and state authorities.

News coverage in many media outlets is affected by dependence on the government for advertising and subsidies. In 2017, the Supreme Court ordered Congress to regulate the distribution of government advertising. Congress complied with new legislation in April 2018 and President López Obrador promised to cut public spending on advertising during his election campaign that year, but media watchdogs criticized a subsequent 2019 guidance as inadequate. Throughout the year, López Obrador has also used daily morning news conferences to dominate news cycles, using the bully pulpit to chastise and denigrate specific reporters and news outlets.

Broadcast television has been dominated by the duopoly of Televisa and TV Azteca since the 1990s, but efforts to liberalize this market resumed in 2013 with the establishment of the Federal Economic Competition Commission and the Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT). In 2015, the IFT issued licenses for two free-to-air broadcast operators; of these, Imagen Televisión still broadcasts in Mexico.

Mexico has been at the forefront of citizen-led efforts to ensure internet access. The government amended Article 6 of the constitution in 2013 to make access to the internet a civil right. However, gangs have targeted bloggers and online journalists who report on organized crime, issuing threats and periodically murdering online writers.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

4 / 4

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

The government does not restrict academic freedom, though university students and some academics are occasionally threatened for their political activism.

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

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

Constitutional guarantees regarding free assembly and association are largely upheld, and protests are frequent. However, political and civic expression is restricted in some regions, and in recent years have resulted in violence against protesters which at times has been deadly. Human rights

watchdogs expressed concern that the National Use of Force Law, which enabled the creation of the National Guard in May 2019, would allow members to abuse protesters. Concerns about the law were voiced again in October, when Amnesty International criticized it in an *amicus curie* brief to the Supreme Court.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?

2 / 4

Although highly active, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) sometimes face violent resistance; the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights counted 13 activist deaths by October 2019. Environmental activists and representatives of indigenous groups contesting large-scale infrastructure projects have been particularly vulnerable; the February murder of Samir Flores, an opponent of thermoelectric and pipeline construction in Morelos, produced outrage and demonstrations in Mexico City.

The Federal Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists has provided physical security for activists since its 2012 inception, protecting hundreds of individuals since its launch. However, rights groups consider it sluggish and subject to government neglect. The protection scheme has also run low on funds, nearly exhausting its budget in 2017 and 2018.

Revelations emerged in 2017 that a number of civil society activists had been the victims of attempts to spy on their electronic communications, presumably by government agencies. Although the investigation remains active, there was little visible progress toward accountability for the spying in 2019.

Civil society members are able to freely criticize state policies, but López Obrador's penchant for dismissing criticism and insulting perceived opponents has generated rising tension between the president and NGOs.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations?

2 / 4

Trade union membership has diminished significantly in recent decades. In May 2019 a major labor reform took effect, bringing hope of an end to the rampant use of informal, nontransparent negotiations between employers and politically connected union leaders that resulted in “protection contracts” never seen by workers. In a sign that the law would facilitate increased pressure on the old guard, longtime oil workers' union chief Carlos Romero Deschamps resigned in 2019 while under investigation for corruption.

F. Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary?

2 / 4

Mexico's justice system is plagued by delays, unpredictability, and corruption, leading to impunity. A 2008 constitutional reform replaced the civil-inquisitorial trial system with an oral-adversarial one. Although implementation has slowly proceeded and some elements of due process have improved, human rights groups have raised concerns about ongoing deficiencies, including questions about judicial impartiality and training. Implementation of the new system was technically completed in 2016, but deficient training and a lack of commitment to the initiative by authorities have produced poor prosecutorial results. The Supreme Court is generally regarded as independent, but several 2019 appointments of justices viewed

as close to the government raised concerns about diminished autonomy. One appointment was to replace Justice Eduardo Medina Mora, who resigned in October while under investigation for corruption.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters?	1 / 4
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Lower courts—and law enforcement in general—are undermined by widespread bribery and suffer from limited capacity. According to a government survey released in September 2019, the vast majority of crimes committed in 2018 went unreported, in large part because the underpaid police were viewed as either inept or in league with criminals. Even when investigations are conducted, only a handful of crimes end in convictions.

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 several actors, including individual criminals, drug cartels that operate with impunity, and police officers who are often susceptible to bribery. Mexicans are particularly vulnerable to enforced disappearances, which remains a tremendous challenge for the government despite efforts to address the missing-persons backlog in recent years. In addition, Mexicans in police custody are at risk of torture by the authorities, and must also navigate a prison system where due process and physical safety are in short supply.

Abuses during criminal investigations are rife; in 2015, a UN special rapporteur released a report characterizing torture as “generalized” within Mexican police forces. In 2017, a comprehensive General Law on Torture established a prohibition on the use of torture and disqualified evidence obtained through its use. Rights advocates suggest it has contributed to mild

progress in excluding torture-based confessions from prosecutions, but remain concerned about gaps in implementation.

Human rights advocates have consistently expressed concern about a lack of accountability for rights 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. In recent years, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) has gained the government some credibility on this subject, in part by issuing reports implicating state security forces in grave human rights abuses. In November, the Senate named a close ally of the president as the CNDH's new leader, generating fears for the agency's independence. The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) also voiced concerns for human rights in Mexico, criticizing the country for its inability to adopt a National Program on Torture and criticizing the use of soldiers in public security operations in a May 2019 statement.

Forced disappearances and killings remain a pervasive problem in Mexico, despite recent efforts to combat the problem. In 2017, Congress passed a General Law on Disappearances, which removed the statute of limitations on missing-persons crimes. The new law also established a national mechanism for investigating such cases, which numbered over 40,000 as recently as March 2019. The National Search Committee, which was established in 2018, announced the discovery of over 4,800 bodies in graves throughout the country when it released its first tally in August.

The kidnapping and presumed deaths of 43 students in rural Iguala in 2014 remains controversial, with President López Obrador creating a presidential commission to investigate the case after taking office. More assistance came in April 2019, when the OHCHR agreed to support for the presidential commission. In June, a new special prosecutor was also assigned to manage the case. Nevertheless, the government was unable to close the matter by year's end. Instead, at least 77 of the 142 detained in connection

with disappearances were released by September, often because they were subject to torture while in custody.

As in previous years, the government's primary response to insecurity was the deployment of militarized forces to hotspots. In the spring of 2019, President López Obrador introduced a new gendarmerie that would draw from the Army, Navy, and federal police, and would rely on military officers for its top ranks. The new National Guard was sharply criticized by rights advocates when it launched in June, fearing it would lead to the militarization of public security. Amnesty International also criticized its enabling legislation when it was passed by the Senate in May, for allowing the National Guard to determine whether any encountered protests are of "legitimate purpose" and whether to respond with force.

Nevertheless, the number of deaths attributed to organized crime remained at historic highs in 2019, though the rate of acceleration slowed. Violence remained acute in Colima, Baja California, Chihuahua, Morelos, Guanajuato, and Michoacán. Several mass killings sparked widespread outcry, including the murder of 14 people attending a family party in the southeastern city of Minatitlán in April, the deaths of at least 26 patrons at a bar set ablaze in the port city of Coatzacoalcos in August, and the deaths of 14 Michoacán state police officers in October.

An effort to capture drug kingpin Ovidio Guzmán, a son of cartel leader Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, in the Sinaloa state capital of Culiacán caused particular controversy in October 2019. After a National Guard patrol captured Guzmán, they were surrounded by heavily armed cartel members, who overpowered the patrol and forced them to surrender Guzmán. At least 13 people were killed and 49 prisoners escaped in the fighting, generating widespread anguish over the government's failure to keep Culiacán secure.

The November 2019 killing of nine members of the LeBarón family, who live in a Mormon community in Sonora State, garnered attention in the United States and Mexico. The LeBarón family, many of whom maintain dual citizenship, has been targeted by local drug cartels for at least a decade, with

a drug lord allegedly previously ordering the murder of two members in 2009. By year's end, federal prosecutors detained seven suspects in the 2019 killings, one of them a local police chief allegedly in the pay of the La Linea drug gang.

The year closed with another violent running battle, this time in the northern town of Villa Union in late November 2019. Cartel members arrived in armored trucks and attacked the town hall, prompting an army counterattack. When the battle ended, at least 21 were dead, including 13 fighters and 2 civilians kidnapped by the cartel.

Mexican prisons remain unsafe, with inmates commonly engaging in criminal activity while incarcerated. In November, inmates affiliated with the Sinaloa cartel orchestrated a string of violence from their prison in Juárez; 91 people in Ciudad Juárez were subsequently murdered in a two-week span. The Topo Chico prison, the site of a string of riots and escapes during its operation, was closed in September 2019, but inmates remain at risk elsewhere. In August, three inmates died when a fire swept through a Mexico City jail. Another six were killed during a riot in a prison in Morelos State in October.

Several alternative approaches to the violence epidemic, including amnesty for low-level offenders, an end to the strategy of targeting kingpins, and drug law reform, remained under discussion during by year's end.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population?	1 / 4
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Mexican law bans discrimination based on ethnic origin, gender, age, religion, and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, the large indigenous population has been subject to social and economic discrimination, and at least 70 percent of indigenous people live in poverty. Southern states with high concentrations of indigenous residents suffer from particularly deficient

services. Indigenous groups have been harmed by criminal violence. In recent years, communities in Guerrero and Michoacán have formed self-defense groups, some of which were subsequently legalized.

Mexican law has strong protections for LGBT+ people, 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 when the United States threatened to seal its border with Mexico and institute punitive tariffs in the spring of 2019. In response to the Trump administration's threats, Mexico deployed its National Guard to arrest the northern flow of migrants, established immigration checkpoints along major roads, and raided migrant shelters in the country.

The government also cooperated with the implementation of Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP), a US policy that forces asylum seekers to remain in Mexico until their cases are processed. As a result, as many as 56,000 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.

Score Change: The score declined from 2 to 1 because threats of border closure from the United States prompted Mexico to close migration pathways and limit migrants' ability to seek asylum in the United States, resulting in an increase in abuses against them.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

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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.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

2 / 4

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 have been accompanied by corruption and rights-related controversy in recent years, exemplified in 2019 by disputes over high-priority López Obrador initiatives to develop a new airport at a military base north of Mexico City and a train line that would primarily serve 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?

3 / 4

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 failed to stem rising violence. As of November, seven states, including Baja California, have declined to issue these alerts. López Obrador's government was nevertheless criticized women's rights activists in 2019 when it cut funding for women's shelters.

In August, several reports of rape by Mexico City police officers led to a series of large demonstrations protesting violence against women, the second such round of protests by women in the capital in three years. In November, Mexico City's government promised to increase its local budget for women's care centers, while the federal government unveiled a plan to combat violence and promote gender equality the same month.

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, but in September 2019 Oaxaca became the second state to decriminalize first-trimester abortions. President López Obrador's amnesty bill, which was sent to Congress that same month, would cover women who sought abortions, along with the doctors who performed them.

Mexico has taken significant steps toward LGBT+ equality, beginning with a 2015 Supreme Court ruling overriding state laws defining the purpose of marriage as procreation; by 2019, Mexico City and 18 other states have legalized same-sex marriage. LGBT+ rights have continued to expand in 2019 through judicial review: in May, the Supreme Court also ruled that a same-sex couple should be allowed to register their child in the Aguascalientes State. In July, a federal judge in Querétaro State ruled that transgender residents had the right to change their names and gender identities with the state's civil registry, making Querétaro the eighth state to legally recognize these rights.

G4 0-4 pts

2 / 4

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

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. 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.

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 was exacerbated in 2019 when the United States began denying entry to asylum seekers presenting themselves at the border, forcing as many as 56,000 to wait in nearby cities like Ciudad Juárez.



On Mexico

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Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

62/100 Partly Free

Internet Freedom Score

60/100 Partly Free

Other Years

2019

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