



*Guanajuato, a most walkable city
Flickr / City Clock Magazine*

J U L Y 2 0 1 6

Spanish-Mexico Cultural Orientation



Spanish-Mexico Cultural Orientation

Contents

CHAPTER 1

Profile	1
Introduction	1
Area	2
Climate	2
Geographical Divisions and Topographical Features	3
<i>Scrub Lands</i>	3
<i>Pasture Lands</i>	4
<i>Forests</i>	4
Rivers and Lakes	5
Major Cities	6
<i>Mexico City</i>	6
<i>Ciudad Juarez</i>	6
<i>Guadalajara</i>	7
<i>Monterrey</i>	7
<i>Puebla</i>	8
History	8
<i>Early Mexico through Colonial Times</i>	8
<i>Independence</i>	9
<i>Post-revolutionary Mexico</i>	9
<i>Current Events</i>	9
Government	10
Media	11
Traditional Jobs and Economy	11

Ethnic Groups	12
<i>Mestizo</i>	12
<i>Amerindians</i>	13
Endnotes	14
Overview: Chapter 1 Assessment	20

CHAPTER 2

Religion	21
Introduction	21
Overview of Major Religions	22
Role of Religion in Government	23
Religion in Daily Life	24
Religious Conventions and Gender Roles	25
Religious Events and Holidays	25
<i>Semana Santa</i>	26
<i>Día de los Muertos</i>	26
<i>Día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe</i>	27
<i>Las Posadas</i>	27
Buildings of Worship	28
Behavior in Places of Worship	28
Endnotes	30
Overview: Chapter 2 Assessment	33

CHAPTER 3

Traditions	34
Introduction	34
Formulaic Codes of Politeness	35
Male/Female Interaction	36

Hospitality and Gift Giving	37
Eating Habits/Types of Food	38
<i>Eating Customs</i>	38
<i>Types of Food</i>	39
Dress Codes	40
Nonreligious Celebrations	41
Dos and Don'ts	42
Endnotes	44
Overview: Chapter 3 Assessment	48

CHAPTER 4

Urban Life	49
Introduction	49
Urbanization Issues	50
Work Problems in Urban Areas	51
Healthcare and Health Issues	51
Education and Schools in Cities	52
Restaurants	53
Marketplace and Street Vendors	54
Money and ATMs	55
Urban Traffic and Transportation	56
<i>Cars and Traffic Conditions</i>	56
<i>Buses, Peseros (Colectivos), and Micros</i>	56
<i>Taxis</i>	57
<i>Metros and Light Rail</i>	57
Street Crime and Solicitations	58
Endnotes	59
Overview: Chapter 4 Assessment	64

CHAPTER 5

Rural Life	65
Introduction	65
Land Distribution/Ownership	66
Rural Economy/Typical Sources of Income in Rural Areas	67
Rural Transportation Issues	68
Health Issues	68
Rural Education	69
Who is in Charge?	70
Border Crossings and Checkpoints	70
Landmines	71
Endnotes	73
Overview: Chapter 5 Assessment	76

CHAPTER 6

Family Life	77
Introduction	77
Typical Household and Family Structure	78
Male/Female Interactions Within the Family	79
Status of Elders, Adolescents, and Children	79
<i>Elders</i>	79
<i>Adolescents</i>	80
<i>Children</i>	80
Married Life, Birth, and Divorce	80
<i>Married Life</i>	80
<i>Birth</i>	81
<i>Divorce</i>	81

Family Social Events	82
<i>Weddings</i>	82
<i>Funerals</i>	82
<i>Quinceañera</i>	83
Naming Conventions	84
Endnotes	85
Overview: Chapter 6 Assessment	89
Spanish-Mexico Cultural Orientation: Final Assessment	90
Spanish-Mexico Cultural Orientation: Further Reading and Resources	95
<i>Books</i>	95
<i>Articles and Reports</i>	96
<i>Film and Video</i>	97



CHAPTER 1

*Ancient ruins in Mexico
Flickr / Sebastien Paquet*

Profile

Introduction

Mexico's 11,000-year-old history is the story of interaction between indigenous groups, European explorers and colonialists, and people from Asia and Africa. Its physical landscape and climate are stunningly diverse, encompassing arid desert regions, temperate mountains, and tropical rainforests. Bordered by major bodies of water, Mexico is strategically located, with access to global markets. The people are as diverse as the landscape. Although people are predominantly *mestizo* ("mixed"), numerous indigenous groups populate the country, with concentrations in the south. More than

280 languages are spoken in Mexico.¹ Even though Mexico's turbulence continues, it remains a vibrant, complex culture.²

Area

Mexico is located in Middle America and has a total area measuring 1,964,375 sq km (758,449 sq mi), approximately three times the size of Texas. Mexico's northern border is shared entirely with the United States, and is 3,155 km (1,960 mi) long. In the south, Mexico borders Guatemala for 958 km (595 mi), and Belize for 276 km (172 mi) along the southwest Yucatán Peninsula. Mexico has 9,330 km (5,797 mi) of coastline divided between the Gulf of California in the northwest, the Pacific Ocean to the west, the Gulf of Mexico along the eastern border, and the Caribbean Ocean on the eastern border of the Yucatán Peninsula.³



*Coastline of Tulum, Mexico
Flickr / Steven Benes*

Climate

The Tropic of Cancer divides Mexico, producing a wide range of climate conditions. More than 50% of the country lies below the Tropic of Cancer and air masses coming off surrounding bodies of water deposit heavy rainfall between May and August.⁴ Central and southern Mexico receives approximately 100 cm (40 in) during this time. Tropical



*Mexico has a range of climates
Flickr / Christian Fierro*

rainforests dominate further south on the Yucatán Peninsula and along the Gulf Coastal Plains—from Tampico to Villahermosa—where high levels of rain fall year-round. The area near Villahermosa, in the Tabasco State, receives up to 200 cm (79 in) of annual rainfall.^{5, 6, 7}

Seasonal temperatures south of the Tropic of Cancer vary little throughout the year, averaging about 5°C (9°F) difference between the cold and hot months. However, changes in elevation across the rest of Mexico affect the country's overall average yearly temperatures. These changes in elevation create five different climate zones above sea level. The *tierra caliente* (hot land) begins at sea level and rises to approximately 900 m (2,953 ft). Here, temperatures remain high throughout the year, averaging 25°C (77°F). The *tierra templada* (temperate land), lies between 900 m (2,953 ft) and 1,800 m (5,905 ft), where average daily temperatures hover around 19°C (66°F). Average daily temperatures of 15°C (59°F) are common in the *tierra fría* (cold land) between 1,800 m (5,905 ft) and 3,350 m (10,991 ft). The *páramos* (alpine pastures) and the *tierra helada* (frozen land) lie in an area of permanent snow beyond these zones. No communities exist in these two zones, which rise from 3,962 m (12,999 ft) to as high as 4,270 m (14,009 ft).^{8, 9}

Mexico's temperatures vary significantly north of the tropics throughout the year. Temperatures are hottest in the regions of Baja, California and the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts during July and August, often exceeding 43°C (110°F). Temperatures here seldom descend below 0°C (32°F), with low temperatures regularly falling below freezing in the winter. Rainfall is moderate in the mountainous regions of northern Mexico.^{10, 11, 12}

Geographical Divisions and Topographical Features

Scrub Lands

The arid/semiarid scrub and chaparral zone in Mexico covers almost 50% of the country. This zone lies along the entire northern border, encompassing Baja, California, western Sonora State, and the northeastern portion of the country. It reaches southward into the interior in an expansive westward arc. The Sonoran Desert lies



*Chaparral zone, Saguro Park
Flickr / Ken Lund*

in the northwestern section of this zone, extending eastward from Baja through the state of Sonora. This desert is home 560 plant species, which makes the Sonoran the most diverse place for desert vegetation in the world. A diverse range of cacti thrive throughout the region, along with many different desert plants and shrubs. Rodents, birds, reptiles, and game animals are also abundant. Big horn sheep, mountain lions, and mule deer share the region with Gila monsters, scorpions, and venomous snakes. In the north, temperatures often exceed 49°C (120°F), with less than 7.6 cm (3 in) in annual rainfall. The foothills of the Sierra Madre Occidental, in south central Sonora, rises between 1,000–2,000 m (3,281–6,562 ft), which results in cooler temperatures.^{13, 14, 15} The eastern part of the region rises slowly as it arcs southward. The landscape is predominantly arid and temperate as the elevation rises near the Sierra Madre Occidental and the Sierra Madre Oriental. These flank the region on west and east, respectively.¹⁶

Pasture Lands

Grass pasturelands are the smallest of Mexico's geographic divisions. These grass pasturelands are located in an area that extends from the northern border to the southern Jalisco State. This zone forms a strip between the eastern arid scrublands to the western temperate forests. This region accounts for just over 10% of the country, and transitions between the Mexican Plateau and the Sierra Madre Occidental. Grass pasturelands vary in elevation between 1,100 (3,609 ft) and 2,500 m (8,202 ft). Temperatures in the area are moderate and range between 12°C (54°F) and 20°C (68°F). Limited rainfall occurs in across this region, with a dry season that lasts between six and nine months. These heavily populated grasslands support a wide variety of wildlife.^{17, 18, 19, 20}

Forests

Mexico's temperate forest zone follows the Sierra Madre Occidental south from the northern border. It then turns east in central Mexico and follows the Neo-Volcanic Range, almost to the Gulf of Mexico. The mountains average 2,400–2,700 m in height (7,874–8,858 ft) and support forests of mixed pine and oak trees. The region sees moderate



*Mexican rain forest
Flickr / Mr. Theklan*

rainfall that peaks during the summer months. Excess water drains westward to the Pacific Ocean through a system of streams.^{21, 22}

The low forest zone in Mexico mostly follows the western coastal region. The region is sub humid, with coastal terraces, deltas, and small basins in the west. Leafy forests border the Sierra Madre Occidental in the northwest, and the Sierra Madre del Sur in the south. Rainfall peaks during the summer months, with temperatures ranging from hot along the coast, to sub humid in the mountains.^{23, 24, 25}

Along the eastern gulf coast and Yucatán Peninsula lies Mexico's tropical and subtropical rainforests. Rainfall is moderate because of a pronounced dry season. However, lagoons and swamps swell during the rainy season. Inland, leafy forests are lush. Residents use slash and burn techniques to clear land for coffee, cocoa, and pineapple plantations.^{26, 27}

Rivers and Lakes

Mexico's largest lake is Lake Chapala, which straddles the border between Jalisco and Michoacán in west central Mexico. It is approximately 1,080 sq km (417 sq mi) and lies at an elevation of 1,800 m (5,905 ft.). The lake is fed by the Lerma River, and has a constant shallow depth. Lake Chapala drains into the Santiago River in the northeast; this river flows to the Pacific Ocean. Fishing and tourism are increasing in the area; sewage from

numerous towns pollutes the lake via the Lerma River. Both pose serious threats to Lake Chapala's low biodiversity.^{28, 29, 30}

The Lerma River originates in the Mesa Central, and runs northwest for approximately 560 km (348 mi). The Lerma River feeds into Lake Chapala; this lake then drains into the Santiago River. The Santiago River runs northwest and is non-navigable; it stretches for 400 km (248 mi) and is used for irrigation. Extensive hydroelectricity plants also operate along the river.³¹ Three rivers drain into the Gulf of California through the pacific coastal lowlands in northwestern Mexico: Yaqui, Fuerte, and Culiacán. These three rivers are dammed to provide



Lake Chapala, Mexico
Flickr / vikisuzan

irrigation and form a system that supports the regional agricultural economy.³² The Balsas River is an extensive river system in southwestern Mexico and flows through the Sierra Madre del Sur to the Pacific Ocean. The river is dammed in the mountains to provide hydroelectricity. The Balsas River is one of the country's largest rivers; its many rapids make it unnavigable along its 771 km (479 mi) course, though it is used extensively for irrigation.³³ The Rio Grande River forms the border between Mexico and Texas. It begins in the Rocky Mountains in the United States and flows 3,060 km (1,901 mi) to the Gulf of Mexico.³⁴ The river helps to support agriculture and it is important for producing hydroelectricity along its main tributary, the Conchos River. The Rio Grande also supports mining operations and recreation.³⁵

Major Cities

Mexico City

Mexico City is the country's Federal District and is the largest city in Mexico. It has a total metropolitan population of approximately 16 to 24 million people, housing one-fifth of Mexico's total population. This makes it the largest metropolitan area in the western hemisphere.^{36, 37} The city sprawls across the Neo-Volcanic Range and its



Mexico City
Flickr / Merrick Brown

outlying basins, at an elevation averaging above 2,400 m (8,000 ft). The southern portion of the city sits at an elevation of 3,930 m (12,896 ft). It has an average yearly temperature of 14°C (57°F) that is maintained by the city's high elevation. Mexico City is home to a small elite class of people, though much of the city is made up of working class neighborhoods. Poverty is a problem, with shantytowns and squatter villages entrenched in the city's northwest and east.³⁸

Ciudad Juarez

Ciudad Juarez lies in the north central region of Chihuahua State, across the Rio Grande River from El Paso, Texas. The city supports an active cotton producing industry, and it is the northern hub of Mexico's national railway service. Ciudad Juarez remains an active tourist center and a major destination for truckers crossing the international

border. Beginning in the 1970s, the city experienced exceptional growth, which placed demands on the infrastructure that officials were unable to manage. Today, the city has a population of 1.5 million, and a large community of squatters. Violent crime in the city is a direct result of the wars between competing drug cartels, earning it the 2009 title for the most violent city in the world. The security situation in Ciudad Juarez has improved somewhat in recent years; however, it has a long way to go before it can be considered safe.^{39, 40, 41, 42}

Guadalajara

Guadalajara is the capital of Jalisco State in southwestern Mexico.⁴³ The city has a population of roughly 1.6 million, making it the fourth-most populous city in Mexico.⁴⁴ It sits outside the volcanic zone, approximately 640 km (398 mi) west of Mexico city, at an elevation of 1,570 m (5,150 ft). The climate of the city is mild, with moderate rainfall.

Guadalajara was founded in 1531 and was home to slave traders during the early colonial period. However, indigenous resistance forced the city to relocate several times.⁴⁵ Much of the colonial city was razed during the 1950s to make way for the construction of new modern buildings.

Today, the city is a major culture and commercial center. The city is the birthplace of Mexico's quintessential mariachi music, and the city is sometimes referred to as Mexico's Silicon Valley.⁴⁶ Guadalajara is also home to a major university and several important military schools.⁴⁷ It is also a commercial hub for the area in which the people raise livestock, and grow corn and beans.⁴⁸

Monterrey

Monterrey is the capital of Nuevo León State, located in northeastern Mexico. Monterrey is one of Mexico's larger cities, with 1.12 million people, and lies in the flood plain along the Sierra Madre Oriental.^{49, 50} The

city is home to diverse industries, including textiles, processed food manufacturing, chemicals, and iron and steel works. The agricultural industry is active, producing cotton, citrus fruits, and corn. Hydroelectric power is produced along area rivers. Monterrey is hailed as Mexico's most modern and wealthy city,

Monterrey, Mexico
Flickr / Lucy Nieto



with the third-largest economy in the nation. The city suffers drug-related violence and the corridor between the city and the Texas border is especially dangerous.^{51, 52, 53, 54}

Puebla

Puebla is the capital of Puebla State in central Mexico, with a population of fewer than 1.6 million people; thus it the fifth-most populous city in Mexico.⁵⁵ It is located on the plains just 130 km (81 mi) southeast of Mexico City, at the junction of the Sierra Madre Oriental and the Neo-Volcanic Range.⁵⁶ The city sits within the mountainous terrain between two volcanoes: Iztaccihuatl (sometimes known as La Malinche) and Popocatepetl. International investments in the city have diversified its economy, yet it remains primarily an agricultural center with some textiles, manufacturing, and service industries. Puebla is a modern city with a well-developed infrastructure that includes airways, railways, and highways.^{57, 58}

History

Early Mexico through Colonial Times

Violence, warfare, and revolution are themes that run throughout Mexico's history. The ancient civilizations of the Olmecs, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Mayas, Aztecs, and Toltecs fought neighboring groups, practiced human sacrifice, and often ruled with brutal and deadly force. Yet, they were also highly advanced in the sciences, mathematics, government, and architecture, they.^{59, 60, 61}

In the early 16th century, Hernán Cortéz vanquished the Aztecs from the city of Tenochtitlan, ushering in the era of Spanish domination of Middle America. Catholic priests set about converting indigenous populations, and Spanish colonizers introduced economic institutions—encomienda, repartimiento, and hacienda. These institutions served to enslave the indigenous population to Spanish overseers, concentrating wealth and power in the hands of landowners. Spanish colonial rule also angered the wealthy Mexican class who felt that economic policies had a negative impact on their wealth and limited their opportunities.^{62, 63}



*Statue of José María Morelos
Flickr / Aquarela 08*

Independence

Revolutionaries Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla and José María Morelos rallied the Mexican people in 1810 to fight Spain for their independence. By 1821, Mexico won its independence and formed a constitutional monarchy.⁶⁴ Mexico had established itself as a federal republic by 1824; yet, the new country continued to struggle through changing constitutions, presidents, and governments. During this time, the people continued their fight for political control, and for economic and government stabilization. By the 20th century, however, Mexico's economy and government were in a shambles. They had lost their northern territories to the United States, and the peasantry feared losing their livelihoods; in 1910, they revolted against the government. The revolution lasted until November of 1920, costing the lives of over one million people.^{65, 66, 67}

Post-revolutionary Mexico

Mexico courted communism after the revolution, while politicians on the left and the right continued to fight for political power. The *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) became the dominant political force. The PRI governed exclusively until opposition parties began to obtain power in the 1980s. Despite political, economic, and social turmoil, Mexico created a middle-income economy with modern services and manufacturing-based industries.^{68, 69} Still, economic imbalances left about 52% of the population living in poverty.⁷⁰

Mexico enacted a series of far-reaching electoral reforms in 1994. These reforms were aimed at promoting free and fair elections in the country, which for years had been plagued by allegations of rigged elections. Six years later, the PRI that had ruled Mexico for seven decades was defeated in national elections. Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (PAN) was elected president. Fox immediately began waging war against Mexican cartels, and promised to end corruption.^{71, 72}

The highly contentious 2006 elections brought another PAN candidate, Felipe Calderón, to the presidency. Calderón promised to increase jobs, to curb crime, and to restrain the drug cartels that were terrorizing Mexico. He launched a series of security operations against the cartels, which only escalated violence and led to the deaths of 47,000 people.^{73, 74, 75} By 2012, the drug cartels were still firmly entrenched and Mexico's economy was worsening. Mexicans were tired of unfilled PAN promises and elected the PRI candidate and former governor of the state of Mexico, Enrique Peña Nieto, as their new president.^{76, 77} Nevertheless, powerful drug cartels continue to flex their muscles in the 21st century, continuing their campaigns of murder, kidnapping, and government corruption.⁷⁸

Current Events

Peña Nieto quickly launched a series of reforms related to economic policy, telecommunications, publications, and energy. He pledged to reduce Mexico's

dependence on oil and gasoline by revitalizing the industry through foreign investment. The president also promised to bring the drug cartels under control. In 2012, Mexican security forces captured the head of the Sinaloa Cartel, Joaquín Guzmán.⁷⁹ However, Guzmán managed to escape with the help of prison officials through an elaborate series of tunnels. He remained at large until January 2016, which was a major embarrassment to the Mexican government.^{80, 81, 82}

Peña Nieto's administration has been marred by violence and allegations of abuse. His educational reforms have sparked massive protests throughout the nation; some protests have erupted in violence.^{83, 84, 85} The president found himself embroiled in a series of corruption scandals in 2014 and 2015, leading to a decline in popularity.^{86, 87, 88} Additionally, Peña Nieto was not able to create the strong economic growth he promised. This has resulted in a somber national mood. More than seven in ten people now feel that their country is going in the wrong direction, the largest number since 2011. Like his predecessors, Peña Nieto has not yet been able to create the needed changes to address the country's high crime rates, unemployment, corruption, and crime.⁸⁹

Government

Mexico is a federal republic, consisting of 31 states and a Federal District (Mexico City). The constitution was ratified in 1917; it provides for a three-branch system of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive branch is headed by a president, who is both chief of state and head of government. Elected by popular vote, presidents are allowed to serve one six-year term. Presidents appoint Supreme Court justices with senate approval, but have the freedom to appoint their own



*National Palace
Flickr / Dave Cooksey*

cabinets, attorney generals, and diplomats. The legislative branch consists of a senate and a chamber of deputies. The 128 senators serve one six-year term. The senate is made up of 96 senators, elected by popular vote, and 32 senators who represent the political parties proportional to popular votes. The judicial branch consists of a federal Supreme Court system and a state court system. Mexican trials are by judge, not by jury.^{90, 91, 92}

Media

Mexico's media has only recently become diverse, independent, and competitive. Until 2007, the dominant political party the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) controlled media. The PRI lost power when opposition groups were elected recently to the legislature.⁹³ Nevertheless, the 2015 Freedom of the Press report rated the country as "not free."⁹⁴ A new telecommunications act was signed in 2014 that allowed greater competition among media outlets. Yet, this act increasingly threatened freedom of expression; it allowed the government to close telecommunications to prevent crime, and to suspend the transmission of content the government deemed problematic.⁹⁵ Several television networks currently operate in the country providing local, satellite, and cable television.^{96, 97} Print media focuses on sensationalism, and two agencies dominate—one private and one state-owned.⁹⁸ Mexico has been described as a dangerous country for media; numerous journalists have been murdered for covering political corruption and recent drug wars.^{99, 100} Radio is the most popular media source.¹⁰¹ Approximately 1,400 radio stations currently operate. These stations are mostly privately owned and reach Spanish-language audiences throughout Mexico and the United States.^{102, 103}

Approximately 41-44% of the nation uses the internet.^{104, 105} Internet access varies by region, with significantly better access in the richer northern states.¹⁰⁶ Mexico has a poor record of internet freedom and currently ranks as "partly free" in a 2015 report.¹⁰⁷ The environment for online journalists and bloggers is considered hostile, and many face retaliation and/or violence from drug cartels or government officials. Mexico's government has also stepped up surveillance of internet content in recent years.¹⁰⁸



*Radio tower, Mexico City
Flickr / Richard Cawood*

Traditional Jobs and Economy

Mexico has one of the strongest economies in Latin America—second only to Brazil—and ranks high internationally.¹⁰⁹ Mexico has an open market economy with strong ties



*Textile factory
Flickr / Reuben Strayer*

to the American economy.¹¹⁰ Much of the economy is modernized, yet many outdated industries and low wage jobs keep approximately 52% of the population below the poverty line.^{111, 112} In recent years, the government has stepped away from its regulation of industry. Many of the state-owned agencies have been dismantled and private investment, both foreign and domestic, is now encouraged.¹¹³ In spite of these moves, however, Mexico's per-capita GDP is only one-third that of the United States.¹¹⁴ Agriculture, manufacturing, and services are the mainstays of Mexico's economy. Farmers mostly use traditional methods for subsistence farming, especially in the south.

Commercial agriculture is common in places where irrigation makes it possible: along the gulf coast, in the Chiapas highlands, and in the northwest. Agriculture is approximately 4% of GDP and 13% of total employment.¹¹⁵ Manufacturing accounts for approximately 38% of GDP and 24% of total employment.¹¹⁶ Key manufacturing activities are textiles, metals, chemicals, food and beverages, and automotive production. The major manufacturing centers are Mexico City, Monterrey, and Guadalajara.¹¹⁷ The largest sector of the economy is the service industry, making up approximately 63% of GDP and 62% of the total workforce.^{118, 119}

Ethnic Groups

Mestizo

Mestizos account for approximately 62% of Mexico's total population of roughly 122 million people.¹²⁰ *Mestizos* are contemporary Mexicans who share a mixture of European (primarily Spanish) and Amerindian (indigenous) ancestry. They are dispersed throughout the country, but *mestizos* are mainly concentrated in urban areas and northern Mexico.^{121, 122} *Mestizo* status transcends bloodlines. For example, many indigenous groups have adopted the dominant *mestizo* culture of Mexico; they typically speak Spanish, wear modern clothing, and have adopted dominant *mestizo* behaviors and values, so they too are considered *mestizo*.¹²³

Amerindians

The Nahua are descendants of the ancient Aztecs and number around 1.5 million, making them one of Mexico's largest indigenous groups. The Nahua are concentrated in central Mexico throughout the states of Puebla, Veracruz, Hidalgo, San Luis Potosi, the Federal district, Oaxaca, Tlaxcala, and Morelos. The Nahua speak their native Nahuatl language,

however, the many Nahuatl dialects are not all mutually intelligible.¹²⁴ Today's Nahua are predominantly subsistence farmers who raise livestock. They are mostly Christian, yet they retain many of their traditional beliefs in witchcraft and supernatural creatures.¹²⁵

Contemporary Maya occupy the Yucatán Peninsula region and the Chiapas highlands, where they are the majority rural population.¹²⁶ Different Mayan groups are divided

linguistically and geographically; there are numerous Mayan dialects, with the greatest division between the highland and lowland Mayans. They are subsistence farmers, growing corn, beans, and squash. Today's Maya are overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, yet retain elements of traditional Mayan cosmology.¹²⁷

The Zapotec are concentrated in Oaxaca in southwestern Mexico, where they are the largest indigenous group. They speak approximately 64 dialects that are not mutually intelligible.¹²⁸

Tarahumara basket weaver
Flickr / Vanessa Anaya



Nahua woman, Cuetzalan
Flickr / Russ Bowling



The Zapotec are principally farmers who grow both subsistence and cash crops; they also maintain their traditional pottery and weaving crafts. Contemporary Zapotec are Catholic, combined with elements of traditional ritual and myth.^{129, 130}

The Mixtec live in southwestern Mexico, mostly in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca. Their language consists of about 57 different dialects.¹³¹ The Mixtec are loyal and continue to support their home communities even when they no longer live there. Those who have remained, however, survive through subsistence farming, herding, and arts and crafts. They practice traditional religions alongside Roman Catholicism; they believe in shamans and the sacredness of the natural world.^{132, 133, 134}

The Tarahumara live in northwestern Mexico, near Copper Canyon in the Sierra Madre Occidental. They are subsistence farmers with small herds of goats and cattle. Their land is unsuitable for agriculture, so they must migrate seasonally. The Tarahumara engage in crafts, such as pottery, basket, weaving, and blanket weaving. The Tarahumara blend Roman Catholicism with traditional religious practices.^{135, 136}

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Overview

Chapter 1 Assessment

1. The Tropic of Cancer divides Mexico, producing a wide range of climate conditions.

TRUE

More than 50% of the country lies below the Tropic of Cancer and air masses coming off surrounding bodies of water deposit heavy rainfall between May and August.

2. Mexico City is a small regional capital.

FALSE

Mexico City is the country's Federal District and is the largest city in Mexico. It has a total metropolitan population of approximately 16 to 24 million people, housing one-fifth of Mexico's total population.

3. Mexico has a long tradition of protecting freedom of expression in the media.

FALSE

Mexico's media has only recently become diverse, independent, and competitive. Until 2007, the dominant political party the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) controlled media.

4. Mexico follows a democratic form of government.

TRUE

Mexico is a federal republic, consisting of 31 states and a Federal District (Mexico City). The constitution was ratified in 1917; it provides for a three-branch system of government: executive, legislative, and judicial.

5. The *mestizo* are the smallest ethnic group in Mexico.

FALSE

Mestizos account for approximately 62% of Mexico's total population of roughly 122 million people.



CHAPTER 2

*Votive or prayer candles
Flickr / Jonathan Cohen*

Religion

Introduction

The Catholic Church has played a major role in the history of Mexico's civil and political life. The Church's role dates back to Spain's 1519 New World conquest of Central America, when Hernán Cortés conquered New Spain in the name of the Church and the king.¹ From the beginning, the Catholic Church was deeply entrenched in the state's government and society. By the 19th century, the Church owned almost half the land in Mexico and it controlled all schools and hospitals.² In an effort to curtail the Church's influence, the government staged a number of confrontations, attempting to limit the Church's power. By 1917, the government succeeded through the adoption of

a new constitution that placed 130 restrictions on the Catholic Church. This officially limited the Church's role in Mexico's government, although, these restrictions have been challenged over the years.³

Not surprisingly, Roman Catholicism dominates Mexico's religious landscape. Approximately 76%–83% of the population practices Roman Catholicism, while roughly 10% of Mexico's population identify as Protestant.^{4, 5, 6} Many Protestants belong to Pentecostal or evangelical Christian denominations; they are mostly concentrated in the south, particularly in the states of Chiapas and Tabasco.^{7, 8, 9} According to church leaders, roughly half of all residents of Chiapas State are evangelical Christians.¹⁰ Approximately 5% are members of other religious groups.¹¹ Mexico also has a small population of Jews living mainly in and around Mexico City. Approximately 4,000 Muslims and 100,000 Mennonites also reside in the nation.¹²

The importance of religion and its practice have declined across the country in recent years. Today, only 44% of Mexicans say that religion is very important to them, making it one of the lowest levels in Latin America.¹³ Only 62% of Catholics attend church at least one a month. Mexico's new evangelical Christians, on the other hand, are much more outwardly religious with 83% attending church at least once a month. Mexican evangelicals are also more likely to engage in Bible study and to take the scriptural texts literally.¹⁴

Overview of Major Religions

Catholicism arrived in Mexico through Spanish conquest when Hernán Cortés defeated the Aztecs at Tenochtitlan in 1521.¹⁵ Catholicism in Mexico has since developed into a unique blend of traditional Catholic practices and indigenous beliefs. This is especially true in the south where a large indigenous population resides. Many of the syncretic elements of Mexico's Catholicism are based on the individual religious experiences of local Catholics.^{16, 17} For example, according to tradition, the Virgin Mary appeared in a vision to an Aztec convert, Juan Diego, in Guadalupe in 1531.



*Roman Catholic Cathedral
Flickr / Lal Beral*

Juan Diego's religious experience prompted Catholic veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe, one of the most popular devotions among Mexican Catholics.^{18, 19}

During the 1970s, Protestantism saw rapid growth in Mexico; it remains the country's second-largest religious group, although its growth has slowed.²⁰ Protestant groups receive the largest number of converts from poor urban poor areas and regions lacking a strong church or government presence.^{21, 22} Pentecostal and evangelical communities make up the largest percentages of Protestants, although Methodists, Lutherans, and Mennonites have strong followings. A tiny number of Jehovah's Witnesses live in Mexico, and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)—concentrated primarily in Chihuahua and Sonora States—number around 1 million.²³

Role of Religion in Government

Mexico's government is officially secular and the constitution guarantees religious freedom for all. The religious freedoms that Mexicans currently enjoy are the result of the 1992 constitutional reforms that amended the 1917 constitution.^{24, 25} Although religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, instances of religious intolerance and discrimination do occur (mostly at the local level). Consequently, the government has established the General Directorate for Religious Associates (DGAR) to arbitrate religious disputes; the DGAR also registers religious groups. New churches are not required to register with the state, but they cannot be granted legal status without registration.^{26, 27}

Exchange 1: May I enter the Church?

Visitor:	May I enter the Church?	pweydo entRaaR aa laa igleseeya
Local:	Yes.	see

Public education in Mexico is secular, but private schools may use faith-based curricula. Clergy are barred from public office, and they are forbidden from openly advocating political agendas or opposition to Mexican law. For example, Mexico's Interior Ministry approved sanctions against the Catholic Church in 2011 for encouraging



*Catholic Priest
with Bible
Flickr / Wonderlane*

parish members to vote against liberal political parties opposed to Catholic values.²⁸ The constitution also protects the practice of indigenous cultural traditions and religions, allowing for the special taxation and distribution of public utilities.²⁹

Religion in Daily Life

The panoply of Catholic saints closely corresponds to the pantheon of Mexico's indigenous gods and goddesses. This facilitated the conversion of indigenous Mexican populations to Catholicism.³⁰

For example, contemporary Mexicans venerate the Virgin de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe), the patron saint of Mexico, symbolizing the blending of pre-Catholic indigenous religions and Catholicism. Many Mexicans today remain faithful to the Virgin de Guadalupe, even as it has become increasingly intertwined with cultural practices.^{31, 32, 33}



*Virgin de Guadalupe street art
Flickr / Pulpolux !!!*

Folk history reveals the cultural aspect of Mexican religious practice through the story of Father

Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, who rallied the Mexican people to revolt against Spain with the cry “Viva la Virgin de Guadalupe!”³⁴ Additionally, each community in Mexico has its own patron saint to protect the people and offer life guidance. Communities celebrate their patron saint in fiestas and honorary processions.^{35, 36}

Exchange 2: When do you worship?

Visitor:	When do you worship?	kwaando aay oRaaseeyon
Local:	On Sunday.	los domeengos

The *narcotraficantes* (groups of narcotics traffickers) have also appropriated Catholicism. Yet in this instance, it is used as a means to aid drug traffickers' schemes. For example, they have created *La Santa Muerte* (Saint Death), a skeletal folk-Catholic “saint” who acts as the patron saint of narcotraffickers and other delinquents. The Catholic Church officially decries these folk saints, yet they continue to have a widespread following. *La Santa Muerte* is only one of many folk saints fashioned by the Mexican people.^{37, 38, 39}

Religious Conventions and Gender Roles

The Mexican Catholic Church wields great influence over the daily lives of parishioners, especially women; it deeply influences their roles and informs their practices and decisions. For example, women are strongly encouraged to follow a centuries old tradition of emulating the Virgin Mary, who is considered the highest role model for women. Through this practice, women are able to gain approval and honor within their communities and families.⁴⁰

Catholicism also reinforces the patriarchal structure within the home, whereby women are encouraged to treat their husbands as they would the clergy. In effect, this means a woman should obey her husband and never challenge his authority.⁴¹ Further, the church supports sexual intercourse for procreation only, and denounces birth control, abortion, and homosexuality; the church also denounced divorce in the past, but it has relaxed its stance in recent years.^{42, 43} Women in Mexico hold great sway within the church and within society; the Catholic Church relies on women to uphold Catholic morality within the home. Men, on the other hand, are encouraged to sustain Catholic morality within the larger community.⁴⁴



*Woman at church entrance
Flickr / Presagio*

Exchange 3: May I take photographs inside the Church?

Visitor:	May I take photographs inside the Church?	pweydo tomaaR fotogRaafeeyas dentro dey laa igleseeya
Local:	Yes.	see

Religious Events and Holidays

Religious events and holidays celebrating saints and Catholic milestones fill the Mexican religious calendar. Many holidays are uniquely Mexican celebrations, and provide a way to honor both pre-Columbian and European customs.

Día de la Candelaria, also known as Candlemas, is celebrated on 2 February, making it one of the first major religious celebrations of the year.⁴⁵ This holiday blends both

pre-Columbian and European traditions. The Christian aspect of this celebration “commemorates the presentation of Jesus in the temple 40 days after his birth.”⁴⁶ During this holiday, people dress figures of the Christ child and take it to the Church to be blessed.⁴⁷ The indigenous aspect of *Día de la Candelaria* is related to the annual solar cycle; it occurs midway between the winter solstice and spring equinox, thus marking the end of winter.^{48, 49} Cities and towns across Mexico decorate the streets with lanterns to celebrate *Día de la Candelaria*. People participate in processions filled with music and dancing, and share in abundant feasts. In some cities, bullfights are staged; a running of the bulls takes place in the streets of Tlacotalpan, Veracruz.^{50, 51}

Semana Santa

Semana Santa is one of Mexico’s most important religious celebrations; it is the celebration of the Holy Week (20-27 March 2016).^{52, 53} This holiday lasts from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday. Many Mexican schools and businesses close for the week after *Semana Santa*, during the period known as *Semana de Pascua*. The weeklong Easter celebration consists of parades, food, craft fairs, and passion plays that honor the final week of Jesus’ life. There are also other Biblical reenactments, as well as a ritual burning of Judas Iscariot’s effigy. Judas was the disciple who betrayed Jesus to the Romans for 30 pieces of silver. Each day of Holy Week—with the exceptions of Monday and Tuesday—commemorates a significant event.^{54, 55, 56, 57}

Día de los Muertos

Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is another Mexican celebration that blends indigenous and Catholic beliefs. From 31 October through 2 November, families throughout Mexico erect altars in their homes to honor their deceased family members.

However, *Día de los Muertos* is not a time for mourning; instead, it is a time for joyful celebration. This stems from a belief that dead family members are present as they are being honored. Families decorate their home altars with pictures of the deceased, as well as their favorite foods, presents, and incense. People also decorate their altars with marigolds and trail them from the gravesite to the



Día de los Muertos offerings
Flickr / Dave Cooksey

home altar, guiding their deceased family members home. People fill the streets to celebrate and decorate family graves. Food vendors bake loaves of bread to look like human bones, and candies and other sweets are fashioned into skulls.^{58, 59, 60}

Día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

This holiday is held annually on 12 December and pays homage to *La Virgen de Guadalupe* (the Virgin of Guadalupe), the patron saint of Mexico. History tells of the Virgin appearing to an indigenous man, Juan Diego in 1531. During the apparition, the Virgin beseeched Juan Diego to build a church in her honor in Tepeyac, a northern suburb of today's Mexico City. The tale relates that the Virgin Mary appeared with dark skin and spoke to Juan Diego in his native language, Nahuatl. Today the Virgin of Guadalupe is revered as a miracle-working saint who brought the indigenous people into the fold of Catholicism.^{61, 62} Each year, thousands of people flock to the Basilica of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City and honor her with a celebratory mass. People erect altars to her, they hold parades with music and dancing, and they hold feasts in her honor. Pilgrims come from all over Mexico—some on their knees—to kneel before the Virgin, asking for miracles. Loyalty to the Virgin of Guadalupe is pervasive in Mexico, and many Mexicans profess dedication to her above the Catholic Church. The “Cult of the Virgin” is so widespread that a website dedicated to her allows devotees to e-mail their petitions for miracles.^{63, 64}

Las Posadas

Las Posadas is celebrated from 16–24 December, during which Mexicans commemorate the journey of Mary and Joseph to Jesus's birthplace in Bethlehem. *Las Posadas* is observed by way of a nightly procession that is led by a child dressed as an angel. The child and the procession stop at houses along the way to ask for lodging; yet, like Mary and Joseph, they are turned away. Those in the procession sing Christmas carols and recite scripture. At the end of each nightly procession, children break star-shaped piñatas, representing the star that guided the three wise men to Jesus' manger. Breaking piñatas during *Los Posadas* signifies the necessity of sacrifice to earn rewards from heaven.^{65, 66, 67}



Las Posadas piñata
Flickr / Ryan Pikkell

Buildings of Worship

Catholic churches vary from small adobe structures mimicking 16th and 17th century buildings to huge cathedrals with Gothic or Baroque flourishes.⁶⁸ Many of the early churches were built as missions and resembled fortified castles with high stone walls and battlements, but they also featured large patios and courtyards. Ornate artwork visually illustrated Biblical stories, verses, and saints so that people could develop an understanding of the Catholic religion, even if they did not fully grasp the language of the priests.⁶⁹

Protestant churches in Mexico are far less ornate than Catholic churches and missions. These churches are a phenomenon of the 20th century and follow a simple modern design. Typically, small simple wooden structures are erected in rural indigenous areas so Protestant congregants can gather and worship—these are

the very places where many evangelical Christians focus their missionary work.⁷⁰ As Protestant conversions continue to grow, some churches in urban areas have acquired high membership levels and wealth. La Luz del Mundo (Light of the World) church in Guadalajara is a huge pyramidal structure illuminated by blue neon lights; it serves a congregation of approximately 10,000 worshippers.^{71, 72}



*Church, Mexico plaza
Flickr / phogel*

Behavior in Places of Worship

The Catholic Church requires parishioners to observe rituals both inside and outside the church building. Men customarily take off their hats and make the sign of the cross when passing by a church or an altar, while women make the sign of the cross. Devout Catholics will also offer a prayer as they pass by a church or altar.^{73, 74} Catholics entering a church use holy water to make the sign of the cross, and then genuflect before entering their pew. Church protocol encourages parishioners to be physically clean before they participate in the mass or take communion. They are also encouraged to be physically clean if they plan to remain in the sanctuary after mass—until after the priest has proceeded down the aisle and the recessional hymn has concluded.⁷⁵ Additionally,

parishioners are strongly encouraged to dress modestly. Women's blouses should rest near the throat and cover their arms, at least to the elbow. Short skirts or any type of revealing clothing should be avoided. Men should dress conservatively and somewhat formally. Shorts and sandals are frowned upon, and numerous Catholic officials have admonished their parishioners for violating the codes of modesty—specifically, the codified “Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit.”^{76, 77} Visitors to churches should maintain the same standard of dress and behavior as worshippers. They should dress conservatively, behave respectfully, and maintain a reverent demeanor at all times.⁷⁸

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Overview

Chapter 2 Assessment

1. Only a small number of Mexicans are Roman Catholic.

FALSE

Roman Catholicism dominates Mexico's religious landscape, accounting for approximately 76–83% of the population.

2. Saint veneration pervades many aspects of Mexican life.

TRUE

Contemporary Mexicans venerate the Virgin de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe), the patron saint of Mexico, symbolizing the blending of pre-Catholic indigenous religions and Catholicism. Each community in Mexico also has its own patron saint to protect the people and offer life guidance.

3. Women are very important to the Catholic Church in Mexico.

TRUE

Women in Mexico hold great sway within the church and within society; the Catholic Church relies on women to uphold Catholic morality within the home.

4. Mexicans celebrate few religious holidays and events.

FALSE

Religious events and holidays celebrating saints and Catholic milestones fill the Mexican religious calendar.

5. Protestant conversions are on the rise in Mexico.

TRUE

During the 1970s, Protestantism saw rapid growth in Mexico; it remains the country's second-largest religious group, although its growth has slowed.



CHAPTER 3

*Mexican family portrait
Flickr / Carlos Adampol Galindo*

Traditions

Introduction

Mexico is a land with many regional subcultures sharing a common history. Their shared past provides the core values that characterize Mexican culture, such as valuing loyalty to one's group and one's family.¹ Mexicans place emphasis on practices that strengthen the family unit, and families are deeply duty-bound to care for one another. They come to the aid of another family member if unemployment, money troubles, illness, death, or other life issues affect him or her.^{2,3} Their close familial ties thus support strong collectivist tendencies, in which the needs of the group outweigh the needs of the individual.⁴ Nuclear and extended family are equally important in Mexican culture.⁵

Society is highly stratified and hierarchical across Mexico, with high levels of inequality. Many accept this reflecting the inherent inequalities between individuals. However, much of this inequality is a legacy of colonial divisions that were based on money and power, and race and social class.^{6, 7, 8, 9}



Mexican family in Durango
Flickr / Ignatius244

Mexican society is also patriarchal and generally conservative, with a strong tendency to avoid uncertainty. One way Mexican society avoids uncertainty is by establishing rigid rules to regulate social practices and beliefs. While people do not always follow such rules, there continues to be a strong social consensus that they are necessary.¹⁰ It is likely that such rules enable Mexican society to avoid uncertainty, and suggests that rapid changes are uncomfortable and unwelcome.¹¹

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

Mexicans are polite and tend to be formal when greeting strangers. It is customary for people to introduce one another using titles of respect, or professional titles, followed by a surname. Mexicans often have two surnames—a paternal surname and a maternal surname—but it is customary to use the paternal surname when making introductions. Men shake hands when greeting another man and some will even bow slightly. On the other hand, women rarely shake hands. Instead, they will pat each other on the right forearm or shoulder.¹²



Handshake upon meeting
Flickr / Gobierno Federal

Exchange 4: How are you?

Visitor:	How are you?	komo estaa
Local:	Fine, very well.	moowee beeyen gRaaseeyas

Interactions between close acquaintances, close friends, and family members are much less formal. Close friends and family greet each other with a hug and a light kiss to the cheek. Frequent touching and closeness are common. Men backslap one another as a sign of friendship and closeness. Visitors and acquaintances should only use first names if they have been asked to do so.^{13, 14, 15}

Exchange 5: Hi, Mr. Reyes! (Informal)

Visitor:	Hi, Mr. Reyes!	olaa senyor Reyes
Local:	Hello!	olaa
Visitor:	Are you doing well?	estaa beeyen
Local:	Yes.	see

Etiquette is an important part of Mexican culture, and there is an expectation that people will follow the rules of behavior. The higher a person is on the social scale, the more society expects them to follow the rules of etiquette. On a practical side, etiquette helps to smooth social interactions, such as when greeting people who provide everyday services. Greeting restaurant staff, shop keepers, assistants, and other service providers demonstrates respect.^{16, 17, 18}

Male/Female Interaction

Mexican *machismo* literally means “masculinity,” and is an important social practice within the Mexican patriarchal social system. Mexican society values manliness as an important male attribute; public and private displays of *machismo* are a means for men to demonstrate this attribute. In this context, men often publicly whistle and wink at women, while making



Familisimo
Flickr / Javier Hidalgo

comments often considered sexist or offensive in other countries. Unaware visitors will often become angry by such displays of affection; yet, such emotions from visitors can lead to offending Mexican males and demeaning their masculinity. Mexican *machismo* should instead be understood as a practice centered on the appreciation of women. Across Mexican society, *machismo* is a deeply rooted practice that not only enables Mexican men to show physical and verbal posturing, it also requires men to care for and support their wives and families. Thus, *machismo* is thus a mechanism that men use to honor and protect their families.^{19, 20, 21} In this context, Mexican men possess what is termed “positive masculinity,” which produces a sense of self-sufficiency, bravery, politeness, and selflessness.²²

Mexican society also views *marianismo*, literally “femininity,” as an important female attribute. *Marianismo* encourages submissiveness within relationships, encouraging women to do their utmost for their families, ensuring everything is stable and functioning. In relationships, *marianismo* fosters affection, helpfulness, selflessness, generosity, and love.^{23, 24, 25}

Machismo and *marianismo* can potentially make for difficult relationships, however, especially when men become authoritarian and women become too dependent. Yet these traits can also blend and create *familismo*, which is the obligation to family and community. This has the positive effect of creating tight-knit Mexican communities. The roles of men and women, though different, continue to evolve in Mexican society, and hold equal value and importance.^{26, 27, 28}

Hospitality and Gift Giving

Visiting someone’s home is an honor and it is customary to bring a small gift for the host. Small, simple gifts are typically given; an expensive gift might not be well received as it could obligate the host to reciprocate.^{29, 30} Flowers, imported wines, chocolates, or a small gift representing the guest’s home country or region works well. Marigolds, which represent death, are not an appropriate gift.



Gifts for Día de los Reyes
Flickr / Andrés Nieto Porras

Red flowers should also be avoided because they are associated with casting spells. White flowers, however, are considered uplifting and are associated with the lifting of spells.^{31, 32} A gift of silver from another country should be avoided because Mexican silver is highly valued. Such a gift is likely to insult the receiver because it leaves the impression that the giver is challenging the quality of Mexican silver.³³

Exchange 6: I really appreciate your hospitality.

Guest:	I really appreciate your hospitality.	Reyaalmentey aapReseeyo soo ospeetaaleedaad
Host:	It's my pleasure.	es oon plaaseR

A host might give parting gifts to his guests as a way to thank them for accepting his family's invitation.³⁴ It is acceptable and polite to open a gift immediately, and to show enthusiasm for it.³⁵ Visitors should be wary, however, of overly admiring any personal possessions. This might obligate the host to give a personal possession to the admirer as a gift; under no circumstances should a guest offer to pay for possessions offered as gifts. Offering to pay is deeply disrespectful and it will cause the gift-giver to lose face.³⁶

Eating Habits/Types of Food

Eating Customs

Mexicans typically eat three meals a day.³⁷ Breakfast is eaten between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. It can range from a simple meal of coffee and a piece of toast, to a hot cooked meal of eggs and meat with a side of fruit.³⁸ Lunch is the main meal of the day and is eaten between 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Mexicans often return home during the lunch hour to dine with their families.^{39, 40, 41} An early evening snack of coffee and rolls—*la merienda*—precedes supper. Supper is served late in the evening around 8:00 or 9:00 p.m.^{42, 43, 44} Lunch and supper are considered social events. Guests are often invited for supper and socializing over coffee and drinks after the meal.^{45, 46}



*Typical lunch
Flickr / Daniel Lobo*

Exchange 7: The food tastes so good.

Guest:	The food tastes so good.	laa komeeda estaa moowee bw-eyna
Host:	Thanks for the compliment.	gRaaseeyas

Mexicans expect guests to arrive at least 30 minutes late for a meal. Arriving either on time or early is considered bad manners.^{47, 48, 49} When gatherings are small, the host is responsible for making introductions; at larger gatherings it is appropriate for people to introduce themselves to other guests.⁵⁰ Table manners are important to Mexicans. Guests must not sit down at the table until the host invites them to do so. Guests should also never begin eating until the hostess formally begins the meal, sometimes exclaiming “¡Buen provecho!”⁵¹

Mexicans observe European style formal dining, serving multiple courses. They cut their food with a knife held in their right hand and eat their food with a fork their left hand, and they do not switch their knife and fork while eating.^{52, 53, 54} Additionally, it is polite to always keep your hands visible at the table, and to rest your wrists on the edge of the table when not eating.^{55, 56, 57} Visitors should be aware that diners signal they are finished by placing their silverware across their plates, with the handles pointing to the right and the tines of the fork facing down. Silverware that is placed on the side of the plate could be understood as dissatisfaction with the meal.^{58, 59}

Types of Food

Typical foods in Mexico depend on the meal. Breakfast usually consists of bread, butter, jelly, and coffee. Lunch is the most substantial meal, and often consists of soup, a meat or fish dish, and dessert. Supper consists of foods like soup, cheese, tamales, burritos, and dessert. There are forty types of flour tortillas in northern Mexico, the birthplace of the burrito, and fresh tortillas are served at most meals.^{60, 61, 62} The husks or leaves used to wrap around some foods, such as tamales, are not edible.⁶³

Exchange 8: What type of meat is this?

Guest:	What type of meat is this?	key klaasey dey kaaRney es
Host:	Chicken.	poyo

Exchange 9: What is the name of this dish?

Guest:	What is the name of this dish?	komo sey yaamaa estey plaateeyo
Host:	This is <i>Pollo Encacahuatado</i> (Chicken in Peanut Sauce).	es poyo enkaakaaweytaado

Mexican food varies by region. The food of northern Mexico is unpretentious and comes from Mexico's ranchlands. Grilled meat dishes are common, such as *machaca* (shredded beef), *arrachera* (skirt steak), and *cabrito* (baby goat). Mexico's north Pacific coast is home to several specialties, such as *birria* (a meat stew with chilis and spices), and *pozole* (meat and hominy stew).^{64, 65, 66} The southern Pacific coast is heavily influenced by indigenous foods. Mole sauces made with chilies and chocolate are popular here.⁶⁷

Yucatan regional food is distinct from the rest of the nation. It shows strong Mayan influences, as well as inspiration from the Caribbean and Middle East. Tropical fruits such as tamarind, plums, and avocados are widely used in sauces. The main cooking method is called *pibil*, which is a method of wrapping food in a banana leaf, before cooking it in a pit oven.⁶⁸ Popular choices include *pollo pibil* (Yucatan-style chicken with achiote) and *cochinita pibil* (marinated pulled pork).^{69, 70} Afro-Cuban influences are inescapable on Mexico's Caribbean coast. Here, *pollo encacahuatado* (chicken in peanut sauce) and similar dishes are popular choices.^{71, 72}

Dress Codes

Indigenous Mexicans often wear ethnic or regional clothing in rural or sparsely populated regions. Ethnic or regional clothing is also a fixture of the tourist industry and festivals.⁷³ Mexicans adhere to the concept of *buena presentación*, literally "good presentation." This not only refers to the quality and style of a person's dress, it also refers to speech, diction, body language, and gait. Mexicans generally dress to suit their socioeconomic status, and well-groomed, smartly dressed people are respected and treated well.^{74, 75} Slovenly attire is considered disrespectful to one's self and to those nearby.^{76, 77}



*Business attire for men
Flickr / Tu Foto con el Presidente*

Exchange 10: Is this acceptable to wear?

Visitor:	Is this acceptable to wear?	esta Ropa es aseptable
Local:	Yes.	see

Mexicans generally prefer to wear more formal attire. Dark business suits made of high quality materials, wristwatches, cologne, and a well-groomed appearance are the norms for businessmen and marks of success. Casually dressed men will often opt for slacks and well-polished shoes, rather than jeans and sneakers. Mexican men also take great care not to appear effeminate. Pink, violet, peach, and other “feminine” colored shirts are avoided.^{78, 79} In some rural areas, overly formal attire carries negative connotations. Thus, people will typically dress smart, or in business casual attire, to avoid looking ostentatious.⁸⁰

Mexican women are also fashion conscious; they are meticulously groomed and dress up to run errands around town. Mexico remains a patriarchal society so women must look their professional best to earn respect in the workplace. Professional attire for women is slightly different from countries like the United States. Mexican women wear more makeup and wear their hair in more creative styles. They also typically wear several pieces of large jewelry. Business suits with pants may hold negative connotations for women in Mexico. Therefore, women tend to wear business dress suits with conservatively hemmed skirts, and conservative necklines.^{81, 82}

*Independence Day
celebration
Flickr / Gobierno
Federal*

Nonreligious Celebrations

Holidays and celebrations honoring Mexican pride and unity abound in Mexico. New Year's Day (1 January) is the first national holiday of the year and families gather on New Year's Eve to celebrate.⁸³ During the New Year's Eve countdown, people customarily

eat 12 grapes to symbolize 12 wishes for the New Year. Lentils are also spread around the door of the home to symbolize prosperity. Firework displays often light the night sky.⁸⁴

Constitution Day (5 February 2016) is the next national holiday of the year.⁸⁵ Street fairs, picnics, parades, and concerts take place throughout the country to mark the day.^{86, 87} Next is the Birthday of Benito Juárez (21 March 2016), which is a day of nationwide political events.⁸⁸

⁸⁹ Labor Day is celebrated on 1 May with large parades and rallies to promote Mexico's labor unions and worker's rights.⁹⁰ Many people take advantage of the day off to enjoy a movie or spend time with friends.⁹¹



El Grito de Dolores commemorates 16 September 1810, the day when Father Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla called upon the Mexican people to take up arms against their Spanish Colonizers. This began the Mexican revolt for independence and lasted until 1821. Each year on 16 September, Mexicans celebrate Father Hidalgo's call to arms as the beginning of their independence from Spain. People decorate their city squares—*zócalo*—with strings of colored lights and the Mexican flag, and across the nation at 11PM, people gather in their central squares to hear their mayors recite Father Hidalgo's *El Grito*. It begins with the cry "Viva Mexico!" The crowds join in the cry, which is punctuated by fireworks and festivities.^{92, 93, 94}

Exchange 11: Happy Independence Day!

Visitor:	Happy Independence Day!	feylees deeya dey laa eendependenseeya
Local:	Same to you, too!	eegwaalmentey

The last official holiday is Revolution Day (20 November 2016).⁹⁵ This holiday commemorates Mexico's decade-long revolution that began in 1920, and marks the successful overthrow of the dictator, José de la Cruz Porfirio Díaz Mori. The Mexican flag is widely displayed on Revolution Day, and people take the day off to enjoy outdoor festivals, parades, and bazaars.⁹⁶

Dos and Don'ts

Do respect churches when entering by removing sunglasses and hats.

Do dress respectfully by wearing business attire for business meetings, and smart casual or business casual for social gatherings.

Do open gifts immediately.

Do arrive at least 30 minutes late to social gatherings.

Do shake hands when meeting people.

Do bring small gifts for hosts when visiting.



*Saint Francisco Church, Guanajuato
Flickr / Russ Bowling*

Do not wear shorts or flip-flops outside of resort areas.

Do not sit down at dinner parties until you are told when and where.

Do not start eating at dinner parties until after the hostess begins.

Do not give red flowers or marigolds as gifts.

Do not arrive late to business meetings.

Do not wear revealing clothing.

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Overview

Chapter 3 Assessment

1. *Machismo* is viewed negatively in Mexico.

FALSE

Across Mexican society, *machismo* is a deeply rooted practice that not only enables Mexican men to show physical and verbal posturing, it also requires men to care for and support their wives and families.

2. Mexicans tend to be formal when greeting people for the first time.

TRUE

It is customary for people to introduce each other using titles of respect or professional titles followed by a surname.

3. In Mexico, relationships between close friends and families tend to remain formal.

FALSE

Interactions between close acquaintances, close friends, and family members are much less formal. Close friends and family greet each other with a hug and a light kiss to the cheek. Frequent touching and closeness are common.

4. Visitors are expected to bring gifts to their hosts.

TRUE

Visiting someone's home is an honor and it is customary to bring a small gift for the host. Small, simple gifts are typically given; an expensive gift might not be well received as it could obligate the host to reciprocate.

5. Dinner is the biggest meal of the day in Mexico.

FALSE

Lunch is the main meal of the day and is eaten between 1:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. Mexicans often return home during the lunch hour to dine with their families.



CHAPTER 4

*Urban life, Mexico City
Flickr / URBAN EARTH*

Urban Life

Introduction

Mexico's urban life is a rich blend of cultures, yet many problems exist. In 2014, urban poverty levels rose to 41.7%, widening the disparity between rich and poor. Almost half of the nation's urban population now struggles just to meet their basic daily needs.^{1, 2, 3} Such high poverty levels contribute to Mexico's high rates of urban crime, overcrowded living conditions, and congestion—producing an environment that is both unsafe and unhealthy.^{4, 5, 6} Economic hardship presents significant challenges to Mexico's economic development.⁷ High unemployment forces many to turn to the informal economy,

depriving the government of tax revenues. This contributes to ineffective social programs that leave many urban residents without jobs and in poverty.^{8, 9, 10, 11}

Urbanization Issues

Rural-to-urban migration remains steady as people migrate to cities looking for economic opportunity.¹² Today, roughly 79% of Mexicans live in cities, producing an urban sprawl that negatively affects socio-economic progress.¹³ Many urban immigrants end up living on the edges of cities in poorly constructed makeshift houses that are constructed of discarded and dangerous materials. In Mexico City, the highest concentrations of such settlements are on the northern and eastern edges of the city. These emergent communities have little to

no access to basic services.¹⁴ Poor living conditions promote a number of diseases, such as diarrhea and pneumonia. Both can lead to death.^{15, 16}

As people migrate to the cities, municipal governments are not equipped to provide basic services or infrastructure necessary to meet their needs. Solid waste collection is substandard and insufficient to clear the heavy loads of garbage left for collection. Landfills are also inadequate; citizens and waste management personnel use “clandestine” dumps for garbage, which only degrades the surrounding environment.^{17, 18} Additionally, the sewage system in Mexico City is so inefficient that tap water is unsafe to drink, threatening the health of millions of residents.¹⁹ Millions in urban and peri-urban areas have no access to safe piped water in their homes.²⁰ The multilayered top-down management of Mexico’s federal government has intensified this problem. It has exercised direct control over city services, aided by individual states. Municipalities thus have little control over their own management.²¹



*Urban trash problems
Flickr / ophelias*

Work Problems in Urban Areas

Mexico's high unemployment rate has made the large informal economy an attractive alternative for many urban poor. Currently this sector accounts for 26% of Mexico's GDP.²² Across Mexico, almost 60% of the population works in the informal sector, and some speculate that a full one-half of the jobs in Mexico City fall into this category.^{23, 24,}
²⁵ The Mexican central government has tried to find a solution to this by implementing a number of poverty reduction measures, but they have had little effect. Government funding channeled into cities mainly reaches recognized public and private enterprises, and does not reach the poor who work in the informal sector. This only serves to compound poverty, and widens the gap between Mexico's wealthy and poor.^{26, 27}

Healthcare and Health Issues

Two different systems provide public healthcare in Mexico: one is state funded and one is funded by the federal government. The state funded system provides healthcare to state employees. State hospitals are often poorly funded under this plan and lack equipment.^{28, 29} The second system is the federally funded universal healthcare system, which provides healthcare to approximately 50 million of the country's poor.³⁰



*Hospital, Nuevo León
Flickr / monocai*

Exchange 12: Is there a hospital nearby?

Visitor:	Is there a hospital nearby?	aay oon ospeetaal seRka
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	see, en el sentRo dey laa seeyoodaad

Additionally, Mexico's cities are renowned for their modern private medical facilities, delivering high quality medical care. However, socioeconomic disparities ensure that only those with enough money have access. Mexico's private healthcare facilities are commensurate with healthcare facilities in the United States, while public health facilities are generally of lower quality.^{31, 32, 33}

Exchange 13: Do you know what is wrong?

Local:	Do you know what is wrong?	saabey lo key teeyeney
Visitor:	No.	no

Mexico also suffers from a shortage of well-trained doctors, which presents a number of significant challenges for women in need of pre- and post-natal care.^{34, 35} Abortions are illegal in Mexico, and poorly trained doctors frequently misdiagnose pregnancy related problems. Miscarriages and stillborn birth complications are often confused with back-room abortion complications, putting women at risk for arrest and incarceration. This has created a state of fear, thus women are frequently reluctant to seek medical attention for pregnancy and childbirth complications.^{36, 37}

Exchange 14: I have pain, Doctor. Can you help me?

Patient:	I have pain, Doctor. Can you help me?	tengo doloR doktoR mey pweydey aayoodaaR
Doctor:	Yes, I can help you.	see see lo pweydo aayoodaR

Education and Schools in Cities

Mexican students are required to complete 13 years of education, which is free in public schools.^{38, 39} Kindergarten was made compulsory in 2004, and 3 years of upper secondary school was mandated in 2012.^{40, 41}



*School, San Luis Potosí
Flickr / Lucy María Nieto Caraveo*

Primary schools (grades 1-6) operate on two systems. The first is the general education system that follows a national curriculum and educates approximately 93% of Mexican children. The second is a community education system that serves children from poor and indigenous neighborhoods. This program is amended from the national curriculum to provide instruction and materials in the students' native language. It also provides courses in Spanish as a second language. Secondary school—grades 7–9—continues the general and indigenous curricula. It also adds a vocational curriculum for students who wish to follow technical career paths.^{42, 43} Grades 10–12 (upper secondary school) provide either advanced technical training, or college preparatory studies.^{44, 45}

Many students fail to complete their compulsory education, with most typically leaving after 8 years.⁴⁶

Enrollment is high during primary school (95%), but enrollment drops in secondary school to between 53 and 70%.^{47, 48, 49} Mexico's secondary school enrollment is much lower than most OECD countries and its dropout rates are significantly higher.^{50, 51} Only about 47% of upper secondary students actually graduate, many dropping out to enter the work force.⁵² Indigenous students drop out at much higher rates than mestizo children, often because of extreme poverty and language barriers.^{53, 54, 55} Mexico's public school system educates 92% of primary school students, 89% of lower secondary students, and 83% of upper secondary students.⁵⁶ There have been improvements in Mexico's education system over the past 40 years, yet the education system suffers huge inequalities based on socio-economic status.⁵⁷

Restaurants

Mexico's cities offer cuisine ranging from sophisticated fine dining to fast-food chains and pizza joints.^{58, 59} Fine dining and international restaurants are often too expensive for most people, so there is an overall preference for less expensive traditional eateries.⁶⁰

Small local restaurants offer a couple of breakfast options. Coffee shops (*cafeterias*) serve hearty cooked breakfasts (*desayuno*), while less expensive bakeries (*panderías*) sell bags of assorted breads.⁶¹



Mexican taqueria
Flickr / Theron LaBounty

Exchange 15: Are you still serving breakfast?

Customer:	Are you still serving breakfast?	todaabeeya estaa siRbeeyendo deysaa-yoono
Waiter:	Yes.	see

Lunch (*comida*) can be eaten at a lonchería (*cafeteria*) or a *cocina*. Found in or near local market places, they serve inexpensive breakfasts and lunches. Menus feature long lists of dishes that include local cuisine and Mexican foods common to the whole country. Generally, diners ask what the freshest dishes are for the day.⁶²

Exchange 16: Do you have dessert?

Customer:	Do you have dessert?	teeyeney postRes
Waiter:	Yes, we have <i>flan</i> .	see, tenemos flaan

Stalls and food vendors also abound in urban Mexico, and typically specialize in just one type of food. Chip stalls, fruit stalls, *taquerías*, and many other stalls are near markets and on main Mexican thoroughfares.⁶³ Taco shops (*taquerías*) are very popular. Such eateries are usually just a counter with a few tables and chairs near a cooking area, serving inexpensive tacos and other simple Mexican dishes.

Exchange 17: I'd like some hot soup.

Customer:	I'd like some hot soup.	mey goostaaReeya oona sopa kaaliyentey
Waiter:	Okay.	moowee beeyen

It is considered rude to offer the bill to a diner who has not finished eating. Thus, diners must request their bill in Mexican eateries and restaurants, A wave of the whole hand—never the index finger—calls a waiter.⁶⁴

Exchange 18: Please bring the bill to me.

Customer:	Please bring the bill to me.	tRaaygaamey laa kwenta poR favoR
Waiter:	Okay.	moowee beeyen

Many restaurants outside of tourist areas and resorts are closed on Sunday. They do not accept credit cards, and many are open late. Seafood restaurants are popular, but close by late afternoon. Reserving tables is common, and dress codes are often more formal than what many visitors are accustomed to at home.⁶⁵

*Mexico City
marketplace
Flickr /
Matthew Winterburn*

Marketplace and Street Vendors



Markets and street vendors are ubiquitous across Mexico's urban landscape. There are more than 35,000 vendors in downtown Mexico City alone.⁶⁶ Every city has at least one area where people go to shop for food, clothing, and household goods; and while many vendors and markets cater to tourists, the average market is geared towards locals. Markets and vendors sell a vast range of goods from fruits, vegetables, meat, poultry, and seafood to clothing, liquor, computer software, electronics, and automobile parts.^{67, 68, 69}

Exchange 19: Is the Artesanias nearby?

Visitor:	Is the <i>Artesanias</i> nearby?	aay aaRtesaaneeyas seRka
Local:	Yes, over there on the right.	see, aayaa aa laa deReycha

The marketplace is part of the informal economy, generating approximately 26% of Mexico's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).^{70, 71} Women and children make up approximately half of Mexico's 1.9 million street vendors.⁷² Organized crime operates large smuggling and counterfeit rings that supply goods to these markets and vendors, so a good deal of this merchandise is counterfeit, pirated, or illegal.⁷³

Exchange 20: May I examine this close up?

Buyer:	May I examine this close up?	pweydo beR esto dey seRka
Seller:	Sure.	klaaRo key see

To counter the growth of this sector, Mexico's government has invested in the development of centuries-old city markets. The government has made great strides towards mitigating the negative effects of the informal economy. Mexico's traditional city markets provide government tax revenues, and encourage national and international trade.⁷⁴ Mexicans of all socioeconomic levels purchase food products from such markets, as well as leather goods, meals, and traditional remedies.⁷⁵ Mexico City's Central Wholesale Produce Market (CWPM) provides food to more than 20 million people.⁷⁶

Exchange 21: Can I buy rug with this much money?

Buyer:	Can I buy rug with this much money?	pwedyo kompRaaR oon taapetey kon estey deeneRo
Seller:	No.	no

Money and ATMs

The peso (currency code: MXN) is Mexico's official unit of currency.⁷⁷ In January 2016, USD 1 traded for approximately MXN 17.9.⁷⁸ Changes to the law mean that individual merchants are no longer legally able to exchange foreign currency, but currency exchange offices are located throughout the cities. Many banks, but not all, also have currency exchange services. Nevertheless, the most practical way to acquire local currency is to use an ATM. Exchange rates are often better through ATMs, even though many charge a service fee.⁷⁹ Visitors should exercise caution, however, when withdrawing funds from ATMs. To lessen the possibility of being targeted by criminals when using an ATM, do not use machines in remote or dimly lit parts of the city. Instead, try to use machines in hotels or bank lobbies.⁸⁰ Credit cards are also widely

accepted at most midrange and high-end hotels throughout Mexico.^{81, 82} The most widely accepted cards are Visa, MasterCard, and American Express.⁸³

Urban Traffic and Transportation

Cars and Traffic Conditions

Main highways and toll roads (called *cuotas*) are relatively well maintained.⁸⁴ However, secondary highways and roadways are poorly maintained, and signs are often difficult to see. Driving in urban areas can be treacherous since traffic laws are poorly enforced. Drivers run red lights, speed, and drive the wrong way on one-way streets.

Pedestrian traffic can clog urban roadways, and vendors occupy medians and the sides of streets. Crimes against motorists occurs randomly in cities as well; the most common are carjackings and bus hijackings.^{85, 86} Be advised that police can seize a vehicle if the driver is not the owner, or if the owner is not in the vehicle when someone else is driving. Drivers involved in accidents can be taken into custody until a determination of fault and ability to pay is established.⁸⁷



Traffic in Mexico City
Flickr / Reid Gilman

Buses, Peseros (Colectivos), and Micros

Bus transportation is the cheapest way to travel around Mexico's urban areas.⁸⁸ A number of cities offer an intercity bus service that runs on a fixed schedule, although buses tend to be old, overcrowded, and unsafe. Many buses have faulty brakes and no lights, and onboard petty crime and hijacking are a constant threat. Bus-trucks—passenger seating built onto the chassis of trucks—also operate throughout the cities, seating as many as 75 passengers. These vehicles are dangerous and do not meet Mexico's safety standards. Additionally, buses to popular tourist destinations, including the pyramids outside Mexico City, are targeted by thieves.^{89, 90} Safer private bus services do operate in cities, but they are more expensive. Private buses offer safe service and comfortable seating; travelers are advised to use only first-class buses and to avoid bus travel after dark.^{91, 92, 93}

Exchange 22: Will the bus be here soon?

Visitor:	Will the bus be here soon?	baa aa yeygaaR pRonto el aawto-boos
Local:	Yes.	see

Peseros (also known as *colectivos* or *micros*) are also available in many Mexican cities. These small buses do maintain set routes and charge low fares, but they are also private unregulated vehicles that are often in need of repairs. *Peseros* drivers can be fiercely competitive for passengers, which makes them dangerous and unpredictable.^{94, 95}

Taxis

Taxis are common in Mexican cities, and hotel-recommended taxi services are the safest option. Some hotels even offer their own taxi services. It is safe to call a taxi company for service or to use a taxi stand, but be aware that both registered and unregistered taxis operate throughout cities. It is unsafe to use an unregistered taxi, especially if it is hailed from the street. Older



Taxis in Mexico City
Flickr / Steve Cadman

green taxis—sometimes referred to as gypsy taxis—should be avoided completely as they are often in poor condition. Green taxi drivers are frequently involved in criminal activities, including elaborate schemes to kidnap and mug passengers.^{96, 97}

Metros and Light Rail

Mexico City has a large subway system that is cheap and clean. The system has 12 major lines covering much of the city.^{98, 99, 100} It can get exceptionally busy at peak times and rush hour, and passengers with bulky packages may not be allowed to board during peak times. Passengers should be alert to their surroundings because petty crimes, such as pickpocketing, are common.^{101, 102} Special cars are reserved during peak travel times just for women and children.¹⁰³ Mexico City operates a light rail system as an extension of its subway system. The city's light rail system is confined to the southern sections of the city.¹⁰⁴

Street Crime and Solicitations

Urban street crime is a serious problem in Mexico, and crimes are often violent. Victims have been beaten, stabbed, shot, and sexually assaulted during crimes.^{105, 106} The risk of crime is higher in the northern half of Mexico, especially the states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas.^{107, 108} Bag snatching, pickpocketing, and other forms of petty theft occur in all areas, including airports, bus stations, buses, resorts, hotels, and on Mexico City's metro. ATMs and legitimate businesses are also areas of concern. Muggings occur at ATMs, and credit card information can be "skimmed." Cashiers often steal credit information from customers using card readers, cameras, or other means. They will then use the information for cash withdrawals and other unauthorized purchases.^{109, 110, 111, 112} Warring drug cartels contribute to heightened rates of criminal activity.¹¹³

Kidnappings regularly occur in urban Mexico. "Express" kidnappings are on the rise, in which criminals target wealthy or middle class victims, including foreigners, and force them to make credit or ATM cash withdrawals to secure their release. "Virtual" kidnappings occur frequently as well. Criminals gather personal information about family members, sometimes by telephone or luggage tags. They then use this information to report a fake kidnapping and demand ransom money to secure their victim's release.^{114, 115, 116, 117}

Sexual assault has become a serious issue in Mexico. Numerous reports concern women being assaulted on bus services in Mexico City, but the highest concentration of sexual assaults occur in resort areas. Date rapes occur frequently, with bar and nightclub patrons particularly vulnerable. Criminals are frequently known to drug patrons and rob or assault them.^{118, 119, 120, 121}



*Street patrol, Juárez
Flickr / scazon*

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Overview

Chapter 4 Assessment

1. Approximately half of all Mexicans live in cities.

FALSE

Rural-to-urban migration remains steady as people migrate to cities looking for economic opportunity. Today, roughly 79% of Mexicans live in cities, producing an urban sprawl that negatively affects socio-economic progress.

2. Mexico also suffers from a shortage of well-trained doctors.

TRUE

Mexico also suffers from a shortage of well-trained doctors, which presents a number of significant challenges for women in need of pre- and post-natal care. Miscarriages and stillborn birth complications are often confused with illegal abortion complications, putting women at risk for arrest and incarceration.

3. Mexico, like the United States, requires children to complete eight years of formal education.

FALSE

Mexican students are required to complete 13 years of education, which is free in public schools.

4. Pre-arranged taxis are generally a safe transportation alternative.

TRUE

Hotel-recommended taxi services are the safest option. Phoning taxi companies for service or using taxi stands is safe, but it is unsafe to use unregistered taxis.

5. Violent crime rates are highest in the northern states of Mexico.

TRUE

The risk of crime is higher in the northern half of Mexico, especially the states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas. The heightened rates of criminal activity are due in large part to the warring cartels.



CHAPTER 5

Rural village
Flickr / Lucy María Nieto Caraveo

Rural Life

Introduction

Mexico is classified as an upper middle-income country. Yet, disparities in wealth distribution have produced a class of citizens living in dire poverty. Across Mexico, approximately 46-52% of the population lives in poverty.^{1,2} For the 21% of the population living in rural villages the situation is even worse, with 63.6% living in poverty.^{3,4} Of the extremely poor (defined as living on approximately USD 50 a month), 61% live in rural Mexico.⁵ Nearly three in four indigenous people (72%) live below the poverty line in rural areas, and lack access to basic health, education, and sanitation.^{6,7}

Over half of all rural household incomes are derived from just two sources: paid nonfarm work (32%) and remittances (20%).⁸ Agriculture is also an economically important activity in rural Mexico, yet it accounts for just 28% of rural household incomes (including livestock).⁹

The harsh conditions of rural life have forced many to migrate to cities or abroad in an effort to find work to support their families. Crime and a lack of infrastructure have left many rural people struggling to survive, despite the government's efforts to eradicate poverty, corruption, and outdated labor laws.^{10, 11, 12}

Land Distribution/Ownership

Spanish colonization redistributed indigenous lands to powerful Spanish landowners. This served to create a class of landless peasant farmers, working on lands they no longer owned. By the early 20th century, however, farmers began to agitate for the return of their land. The Mexican constitution, adopted towards the end of the Revolution (1910–1920), finally reformed national land ownership and distribution laws. This served to redefine rural land ownership as either *comunidades* or *ejidos*, which resulted in the return of rural land to local communities.^{13, 14, 15}

Exchange 23: Do you own this land?

Official:	Do you own this land?	es sooya esta teeyeRa
Local:	Yes.	see

Under the constitution, the Mexican government returned land to indigenous people called *comunidades*. These lands are protected, however, and cannot be

privatized, sold, or developed and they can only be used by indigenous groups for communal farming. Development of *comunidades* remains virtually nonexistent due to constitutional restrictions on land use. Consequently, *comunidades* development and economic growth has stagnated for years, unlike privately developed agricultural land. Yet since the 1992, in special circumstances, *comunidades* can collaborate with private companies to help indigenous people convert their land to ejido status, if they wish.^{16, 17}

Ejidos are rural lands used predominantly for agriculture. *Ejidos* are communally owned and administered by locals who divide the land into small individual family parcels. Parcel land use rights are



*Cactus plantation on ejido land
Flickr / Javier Hidalgo*

given to the male head of the household and are mostly used to support subsistence farming. Up until 1992, Mexican law restricted privatization of these lands and their use for credit, collateral, or for sale. After 1992, restrictions were eased and families were able to privatize their land and offer it up for sale. Critics of the 1992 land reform laws claim that privatization of *ejido* land will encourage their sale during economic downturns (which happen frequently in Mexico), enlarging the landless classes and increasing poverty in already impoverished regions.^{18, 19, 20, 21}

Rural Economy/Typical Sources of Income in Rural Areas



Chihuahua, Farm to you
Flickr / Ted McGrath

Across Mexico, agriculture comprises 3.5% of GDP and employs fewer than 14% of the total workforce.²² In rural Mexico, a larger percentage of the workforce is employed in agriculture, with roughly half of the country's agricultural lands held by *ejidos*.²³ The majority of farmers engage in small-scale subsistence farming on plots averaging 5 hectares (12 acres) or less.^{24, 25}

Mestizo farms on *ejidos* are small and usually produce corn or beans, staples of the rural diet. Indigenous farmers primarily use traditional farming methods, focusing on the staples of corn, beans, and squash.²⁶

Exchange 24: What crops do you grow?

Official:	What crops do you grow?	key koolteeva
Local:	I grow corn.	maa-ees

Mexico's different rural agricultural economies are largely influenced by the country's varying geography and climate conditions. In the north, the dry, arid to semi-arid climate is suitable for grazing. Desert shrub land, native grasses, and forestland provide enough forage for some cattle and sheep farming. The densely populated region of central Mexico is well suited for corn and bean farming. The sub-humid, temperate climate also provides for raising small herds of goats for meat. Family dairy farms are common in the central region, as well as small flower producing farms. Southern Mexico is humid and tropical, and is home to the largest populations of indigenous communal farms, or *comunidades*. Subsistence farming is most frequent in this area, which has dense forestland.²⁷

Rural Transportation Issues

Road conditions vary throughout Mexico. The federal government maintains approximately 72% of the main roadways in rural areas, keeping them in good



*Rural road and donkeys
Flickr / Lucy María Nieto Caraveo*

condition. Secondary roadways, however, are located away from populated areas and are poorly maintained. Seldom are they paved, frequently suffering damage during the rainy season. They are also narrow, winding, and full of potholes; in the mountains, they seldom have guardrails.^{28, 29}

Transportation along rural roadways can be treacherous in many ways. Rural Mexicans seldom fence their animals so they frequently wander onto roadways, especially at night or after rains. Motorists often drive without working lights on their vehicles, so travel at night can be treacherous. Additionally, road signs are not reflective, making it hard to see them, and construction sites and obstacles are not visibly marked. Pedestrians are forced to walk on roadways because roads have very narrow shoulders or no shoulders at all. Hit-and-run accidents are common.^{30, 31}

Travelers in rural Mexico must maintain situational awareness at all times. Services become scarce farther away from populated areas. Gas and service stations become infrequent, so travelers are encouraged to carry resources with them when they travel. Travelers should keep maps, extra food and water, a cellular phone and calling cards, and a compass in their vehicles in case of emergencies. Additionally, police do not regularly patrol rural roadways, although the Mexican military operates checkpoints from time to time; violent crimes occur frequently on these remote roads, especially at night. Border violence is high, especially in rural areas along the Mexico-United States border. Bus hijackings and carjackings are frequent.^{32, 33, 34}

Health Issues

Rural Mexico continues to be underserved by the medical community, and healthcare is nonexistent in many remote villages. Consequently, people who are sick either must use local folk medicine, or must travel long distances to urban areas for healthcare.^{35, 36, 37}

Exchange 25: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Official:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	aay aalgoona kleeneeka seRka
Local:	Yes, over there.	see, aayaa



*Almada Clinic
Flickr / G*

The limited facilities in rural areas make it difficult for public health officials to combat and eradicate diseases, such as tuberculosis, typhoid, malaria, and dengue fever. These diseases are prevalent in rural areas, and outbreaks of diseases such as malaria and dengue fever occur throughout the year. Water- and food-borne illnesses frequently occur.^{38, 39} Poor sanitation and water supplies cause infections that prevent people from working. Travelers to rural Mexico should always exercise great caution and ensure that they only drink purified water, and that they sterilize and cook all foods. A common food-borne disease in rural Mexico—especially in Oaxaca—is trichinellosis. Trichinellosis comes from eating raw or undercooked meat from animals infected by the trichinella worm. Domestic pigs in Oaxaca are severely infected by this worm, and there is a high rate of pig to human transmission.^{40, 41, 42}

Rural Education

Education and school attendance varies in rural Mexico. Most rural and indigenous schools are located in the poorest rural regions in southern Mexico where conditions are bleak. Many rural and indigenous schools lack qualified teachers and often rely on volunteers to teach classes. Further, families live in subsistence-level communities and often rely on the unpaid labor of their children. This means that going to school is often less relevant for rural and indigenous children who are old enough to work, around the age of eight—even though families intrinsically value education.^{43, 44, 45}

Exchange 26: Is there a school nearby?

Official:	Is there a school nearby?	aay aalgoona eskweyla seRka
Local:	Yes.	see

In the poorest areas, schools might have dirt floors and need major repairs. Basic learning materials are often not available, and unqualified teachers fail to teach students the basic curriculum developed by the federal government.^{46, 47, 48}

*Rural village
Flickr / OliBac*



On the other hand, a few rural areas have created enough wealth for children to attend schools that are run by trained teachers. They have a robust supply of educational materials and adequate facilities.^{49, 50} Children in a few rural areas even attend classes delivered by satellite television from urban centers.^{51, 52, 53}

The Mexican government recognizes the need to address this problem, and it has developed programs to improve education across the nation. Yet, most poor rural areas remain ill prepared to improve education in their communities. High poverty rates continue to contribute to educational disruptions in the local community—mainly brought on by the families who leave in search of work. This weakens local economies and drives up demands for child labor, which increases school dropout rates. Poor infrastructure also prevents children and teachers from reaching schools. Impassable roads and great distances are obstacles that many cannot overcome.^{54, 55, 56, 57, 58}

Who is in Charge?

Mexico is a federal republic with an elected president and bicameral legislature. The nation is subdivided into 31 states, each headed by an elected governor and one federal district.^{59, 60} States are further subdivided into municipalities, with authorities elected by the local residents.⁶¹ The chief municipal official is the mayor, who is elected to a single three-year term. The one notable exception is the mayor of Mexico City, who serves a six-year term. Municipal councils (*ayuntamientos*) help the mayor govern, and members are indirectly elected to three-year terms.⁶² Municipalities have some power to manage local services (e.g. water and sewage), help provision public education, provide emergency services (fire and medical), and provide for public safety.⁶³ Mexico's municipalities remain heavily dependent on the federal government and have few opportunities or resources to act independently.^{64, 65}

Border Crossings and Checkpoints

The 3155 km (1,960 mi) U.S.-Mexico border crossing is the busiest in the world, allowing approximately 300 million people, 90 million cars, and 4.3 million trucks to legally enter the U.S. each year.^{66, 67} More Mexicans left than entered the United States between 2009 and 2014, and estimates placed around 5.6 million unauthorized Mexicans still living in the United States at the end of 2014.^{68, 69}

Exchange 27: Where is the nearest checkpoint?

Official:	Where is the nearest checkpoint?	dondey estaa el Reten maas seRkaano
Local:	Two kilometers from here.	aa dos keelomitRos



*Border crossing
Flickr / Ken Lund*

The U.S.-Mexican border also functions as a major drug smuggling route. Drug cartels have terrorized Mexican cities in recent years (including border towns), smuggling enormous amounts of drugs into the United States annually. The United States and Mexico continue to cooperate with one another to reduce the flow of drugs and money. Tightened security along the land border succeeded in stemming the flow, but this forced cartels to use maritime smuggling routes.⁷⁰ Despite operating approximately 35 points of entry, the long U.S.-Mexico border leaves large areas unguarded or under-guarded.^{71, 72, 73}

Exchange 28: Is this all the ID you have?

Guard:	Is this all the ID you have?	es toda laa eedentee feekaaseeyon key teeyeny
Driver:	Yes.	see

The Mexican government has expressed concern over illegal transmigration along its southern border. Mexico shares densely forested, mountainous borders with Guatemala and Belize. This provides cover for El Salvadorians, Hondurans, and Guatemalans traveling illegally through Mexico to reach the United States.^{74, 75} In the 1980s, the Mexican government instituted measures to decrease the number of illegal immigrants from Central America. However, the country's southern borders are a challenge. Mexico has a 276 km (172 mi) border with Belize, and an additional 958 km (595 mi) border with Guatemala. The density and ruggedness of the terrain, as well as budget constraints, limit Mexico's ability to limit illegal border crossings.^{76, 77, 78}

Exchange 29: Please get out of the car.

Guard:	Please get out of the car.	poR favoR, saalga del kaaRo
Driver:	Okay.	moowee beeyen

Landmines

Mexico has been a party to the mine ban treaty since 1999, and reports that it has no history of using, stockpiling, producing, exporting, or importing antipersonnel mines. Mexico reserves cluster munitions and antipersonnel mines exclusively for military use. It prohibits non-military personnel from possessing or using these weapons. Violation of Mexico's policies constitutes a major criminal offense.⁷⁹

Exchange 30: Is this area mined?

Visitor:	Is this area mined?	aay meenaas eksplozeemas poR aakee
Local:	Yes.	see



Munitions on display
Flickr / alvaro_qc

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Overview

Chapter 5 Assessment

1. Agriculture is the main source of household income in rural Mexico.

FALSE

Agriculture is also an economically important activity in rural Mexico, yet it accounts for just 28% of rural household incomes (including livestock). Over half of all rural household incomes are derived from just two sources: paid nonfarm work (32%) and remittances (20%).

2. Secondary roadways in rural Mexico rival those of developed countries.

FALSE

Secondary roadways, however, are located away from populated areas and are poorly maintained. Seldom are they paved, frequently suffering damage during the rainy season. They are also narrow, winding, and full of potholes; in the mountains, they seldom have guardrails.

3. About half of all agricultural landholdings are *ejidos*, or community owned plots of land.

TRUE

Approximately half of the agricultural lands are held by *ejidos*. The majority of farmers engage in small-scale subsistence farming on plots of land averaging 5 hectares (12 acres) or less.

4. Communicable diseases have been largely eradicated in rural Mexico.

FALSE

The limited facilities in rural areas make it difficult to combat and eradicate diseases such as tuberculosis, typhoid, malaria, and dengue fever.

5. The Mexican government has developed successful rural education programs.

FALSE

The Mexican government has designed to improve education, but poor rural areas are ill prepared to garner the funding they need to improve educational facilities.



CHAPTER 6

*Family with Grandma
Flickr / Katie Gardner*

Family Life

Introduction

Family is a central feature of life in Mexico. Traditionally, mothers raise their children and care for the family home, while fathers provide for the fiscal well-being of their family.¹ Yet, changes in Mexican society have put pressures on the family, creating the need to adapt traditional values to modern realities.^{2,3} Rural families tend to be relatively large, but urban families have become smaller.^{4,5} In 2015, the average nuclear family in Mexico was approximately four people.⁶ Gender roles have also changed as more women enter the workforce. Women are more likely to work outside the home than in the past. These changes have weakened traditional gender roles and there is now an emergent

emphasis on individual values, but collective family values remain strong. Men also play a greater role at home, including child rearing and helping with household chores.⁷ These changes are particularly noticeable among the growing middle-class and urban households.⁸

Families still tend to live near each other, sometimes in the same household with extended families. *Familismo* is the tendency to value familial needs over individual needs, and continues to be a core value within Mexican families. *Familismo* also means that family members are expected to be supportive of each other and to be loyal to the family above other groups.^{9, 10}

Typical Household and Family Structure

Family is one of Mexico's cultural cornerstones. Few people in Mexico live alone or with others who are not family members.^{11, 12} Today, the nuclear family is the most common family structure within Mexico.^{13, 14} Contemporary extended families tend to live in close proximity, rather than under the same roof as that did in the past—taking time to celebrate festive occasions as a group.^{15, 16}



Family gathering
Flickr / Gustavo Rojo

Exchange 31: How many people live in this house?

Official:	How many people live in this house?	kwaantas peRsonas beeven en esta kaasa
Local:	Four.	kwaatRo

Extended families spend a great deal of time together. They are close-knit and come together for social and religious festivals and celebrations, including marriages. In-laws, blood relations, and “adopted” relatives—very close family friends who are considered part of the family—frequently gather together to strengthen their ties, and to support one another.^{17, 18, 19}

Exchange 32: Are these people [children] part of your family?

Official:	Are these people [children] part of your family?	estos neenyos son paaRtey de soo faameeleeya
Local:	Yes.	see

Male/Female Interactions Within the Family

The interaction between men and women in Mexican families is often dictated by socially prescribed roles. *Machismo* determines the behavior of men, and encourages them to be strong, independent, virile, and dominant. Men are the authority within the Mexican home, so they are also expected to earn a living, provide for their family, and protect them. In some instances, *machismo* encourages men to dominate their families and to become excessively authoritarian. In these households, emotional and physical abuse can occur. In other instances, *machismo* encourages men to nurture their families; they help their wives with housework and spend a great deal of time helping them raise the children.^{20, 21, 22}



Father and child
Flickr / Avi Dolgin

Marianismo influences the behavior of women. Women are expected to be submissive, dependent, and chaste. Mexican families emphasize childbearing for married women. *Marianismo* also encourages self-sacrifice on the part of women. Women often deny themselves opportunities for education, careers, and social lives so they can devote more of their time to their families. The husband is generally the authority within the home, but women are the primary childcare providers and are responsible for running their households efficiently. For many Mexican women, it is their role as mother, not wife, that is most important.^{23, 24, 25, 26}

Status of Elders, Adolescents, and Children

Elders

Elders are revered in their extended families, and are integral members of Mexican households.²⁷ For example, the elderly often care for their grandchildren when adult children go to work, and they help maintain the household. They mentor young families, and they help maintain traditional cultural values in the face of rapid societal changes.^{28, 29} Families continue to be responsible for the well-being of their aging relatives.



Children helping sell corn
Flickr / CIMMYT

Approximately 62% of people over the age of 60 are reliant on their family members for economic support.³⁰ Part of the change in Mexican society is the work-related migration of family members. This has resulted in more elderly being left behind in Mexico without family support.^{31, 32}

Adolescents

Adolescents are also a key part of the Mexican family. In some rural communities, adolescents work outside the home to support their families. Adolescents also take care of younger siblings in two-income homes where both parents work outside the home. They perform household duties, feed younger family members, and help siblings with homework. Mexican adolescents highly value their families. On average, Mexican teens spend 2–4 hours each day with their families. Mexican adolescents respect the authority of their elders and look to their families—not peer groups—for guidance and acceptance. As a result, Mexican teens develop their personal values and self-image from interactions with their family. They also tend to have higher self-motivation than teens from cultures that place less importance on family.^{33, 34, 35}

Children

Children hold an honored place in Mexican families. Women adopt motherhood as the defining role in their lives. Men achieve successful masculinity through being a father and providing for their children. Many people, not just parents, honor children. Family members find joy in children and participate in their upbringing. From a young age, children are indoctrinated into the realities of daily life. Playtime with their mothers may be work-oriented; children will learn how to cook, clean, and take care of younger children under the guidance of the mothers. Fathers tend to dote upon their children. Mexican parents expect to take care of their children, even after they get married.^{36, 37}

Married Life, Birth, and Divorce

Married Life

Marriage and family continue to play central roles in Mexican society due to strong Catholic traditions. The Church has been and continues to be an outspoken advocate for family values in Mexico. For example, Mexican bishops issued a recent statement in which they defended marriage and family.³⁸ Yet, the number

*New baby and
proud parents
Flickr / Nearsoft*



of married couples in Mexico continues to decline. In 2010, about 41% of Mexicans age 12 and older were married. This is a decline of nearly 11% from 1990.³⁹ Only 63% of Mexican couples aged 18-49 were married in 2010.⁴⁰ Further, 26% of all couples in Mexico were living together in a consensual union outside traditional marriage.⁴¹ The age of people when they enter into their first marriage has risen relatively steadily over the recent decades. By 2010, it was approximately 23 years for females and 25.5 for males.^{42, 43} Approximately 35% of the population was single in 2010.⁴⁴

Birth

Financially able mothers are able to obtain both pre- and postnatal care, and receive care from trained hospital staff during their delivery. Yet, for the many women living in poverty, giving birth can be a life-threatening event. In southern Mexico—the poorest region with the highest populations of indigenous peoples—child and maternal mortality are almost double the national average. Many families lack access to clinics, or to clinics with adequately trained staff. Further, many impoverished rural families cannot afford the costs associated with hospital or clinic deliveries. Consequently, many poor women give birth alone or with the aid of unqualified family members. Still, a slowly improving healthcare system has been able to lower mortality rates from 152 per 100,000 in 1980 to 11 per 1,000 in 2015.^{45, 46, 47}

Divorce

There are significant clashes between the government and Church when it comes to marriage and divorce. Divorce was legalized in 1917, yet it was stigmatized by the Church from the start, even though divorces occur regularly.⁴⁸ Mexico's government also does not recognize church marriages, and the Catholic Church does not recognize civil divorces. The Mexican government only recognizes civil marriages that are registered in the state where the marriage occurred. Most Catholic marriages also include a second church ceremony, which is recognized by the Church.^{49, 50}

The stigma of divorce is still present in Mexican society, but it is diminishing.^{51, 52} Divorce rates are on the rise in contemporary Mexico, especially in Mexico City. Here, marriages last an average of 12 years, with half of all marriages ending in divorce.^{53, 54, 55} As Mexico continues to modernize and develop, women continue to enter the workforce. This change alone provides women the financial freedom they need to leave unhappy marriages. Approximately two-thirds of divorces in Mexico are initiated by women.⁵⁶ Mexico's legislature has initiated divorce law reforms to meet the needs of the rising divorce rates nationwide. No-fault divorce is one such initiative designed to speed up the process and cut the costs of divorce. Mexico City has initiated a two-year marriage plan that allows couples to marry for a two-year period, after which they may separate without the legal difficulties associated with divorce. If they wish, they can renew their marriage contract.^{57, 58}

Family Social Events

Weddings

Marriage is an important event in the lives of Mexicans. For the most part, Mexicans choose to marry for love, although socio-economic status and future financial security



Wedding day
Flickr / Javier Hidalgo

play major roles. Social acceptance also factors into decisions to marry, with many preferring not to marry outside their community's pool of available partners. Engagements are usually long and formal. The young couple needs time to save so they can set up house and pay for a large wedding.⁵⁹ The engaged couple is sponsored by their godparents, who mentor them throughout the engagement. The godparents discuss the realities of married life with the young couple, and make themselves available to them socially and financially.^{60, 61} Marriages in Mexico are usually civil and religious. The civil ceremony is legally recognized by the government, but most Mexicans also have a religious ceremony. The extended family and friends of both the bride and groom attend, followed by a large reception.⁶²

Exchange 33: Congratulations on your Marriage!

Visitor:	Congratulations on your Marriage!	feleeseedaades poR soo boda
Local:	We are honored to have you here.	es oon onoR key aaya veneedo

Mexican wedding traditions vary by region and socioeconomic status, but some practices are commonly shared. One such practice is to join the newlyweds with a *lazo* (lasso). The couple wears the *lazo* throughout the service as a symbol of their unity.⁶³ In Catholic ceremonies, the bride often makes an offering (*ofrenda*) to the Virgin of Guadalupe by kneeling at the statue, giving a prayer of thanks, and leaving flowers at the Virgin's altar.⁶⁴ In another tradition, the groom gives his bride a gift of 13 gold coins that have been blessed by a priest. This is a symbol of his commitment and promise to take care of his wife.⁶⁵ After the wedding ceremony, most couples have a reception that can include hundreds of guests. The reception provides guests with food and drink and it can go late into the night. Music and dancing are an important part of the festivities.⁶⁶

Funerals

Mexican funerals are social events and involve the decedent's family and friends. It also includes church members and sometimes people from the community. Embalming is not common in Mexico, so the pre-burial rituals take place immediately after death.

In urban areas, bodies are laid out in a funeral home. In rural areas, bodies are laid out in the family home, with family and friends attending to the body, sitting in a vigil called *velario*. Candles are lit and women serve drinks and food, while men take care of the funeral arrangements. Whole families—including children—occupy themselves with remembrances of the deceased and with prayers. This will go on until the funeral procession leaves for the church, which usually takes place within 24 hours.^{67, 68}

Exchange 34: I offer my condolences to you and your family.

Visitor:	I offer my condolences to you and your family.	mee maas sendeedo peysaamey paaRa oosted ee soo faameeleeya
Local:	Thank you for being with us.	gRaaseeyas poR aakompanyaaRnos

For a Catholic burial, the body is then taken into the church for a funeral mass. Mourners wait for the priest outside the church before carrying the body inside. After mass, pallbearers carry the body to the cemetery plot where it is customary to hold a second graveside prayers service. The deceased is lowered into the ground, and family and friends each throw a handful of dirt into the grave. It is also customary for mourners to place a personal object with the deceased in the grave before it is backfilled.^{69, 70}

Quinceañera

A girl's fifteenth birthday (*quinceañera*) is enthusiastically celebrated in Mexico. The *quinceañeras* is a traditional rite of passage that introduces a girl to her community as an adult.⁷¹ The ceremony celebrates God, family, community, and friends, and starts off with mass or a blessing. To begin, the girl enters the church accompanied by family and friends and receives objects of worship that have been blessed, such as a rosary. She then renews her commitment to follow the church's teachings.^{72, 73} Afterwards, the family holds a community fiesta to celebrate her passage into womanhood. The community fiesta a lavish affair, where the girl might even have her first alcoholic beverage. She is expected to dance at least one waltz with her father before she dances with any young men.^{74, 75}



Quinceañera
Flickr / Christian Frausto Bernal

The costs associated with the *quinceañeras* are high, so the extended family often helps by donating items. Such items include a white, pink or pastel (signifying purity) ball gown made just for this occasion, and a tiara.⁷⁶ In addition to gifts of jewelry, the young woman will receive a doll dressed in a matching gown. It is a symbolic last childhood gift, one that she might give to a younger sister to indicate that she is leaving behind her childhood.⁷⁷ Not all families can afford to pay for a *quinceañera*, so Mexico City now hosts an annual mass *quinceañera* for hundreds of girls. Daughters from wealthier families might forgo the party altogether, and opt to receive a car or an international vacation.⁷⁸ Traditionally, her next rite of passage is marriage.

Naming Conventions

Mexicans follow many conventions when naming their children. One convention is to name children after Roman Catholic saints, often for saints on whose feast days they are born. Children are also named after deceased family members, or their godparents who play an active role in the lives of their godchildren.^{79, 80} Many children in Mexico have two given names. Technically, middle names are not common in Mexico. Children may be called by their first name, their second name, or by a combination of both. A boy named José Luís may be called José, Luís, or José Luís.^{81, 82} Names are also gendered in Mexico. Male names often end with an “o” as in Mario, and female names often end with an “a” as in María.^{83, 84, 85}

Most Mexicans have two surnames. The first surname is from the father and the second is from the mother. For example, if José Luís Reyes Ortíz and Ana Paula Santos Torres have children, their children will have the surname Reyes Santos. Both surnames will be documented on birth certificates, passports, and other legal documents. As a result,



*Grandparents and Granddaughter
Flickr / Carlos Mejía Greene*

children’s last names are different from either of their parents, although all siblings will have the same last name. A common suffix for last names in Mexico is “-ez,” which can be translated as “son of,” so Martínez literally means “son of Martín.”^{86, 87}

Mexicans women commonly keep their surname when they marry. However, some add their husband’s paternal surname to their own. For example, when José Luís Reyes Ortíz marries María Elena García Ramírez, she may be known by any of several names. She may opt to keep her own name and continue to be legally known as María Elena García Ramírez. She may also adopt her husband’s name and become known as María Elena García Ramírez de Reyes or María Elena García de Reyes or María Elena García Señora de Reyes.^{88, 89, 90}

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Overview

Chapter 6 Assessment

1. The concept of *familismo* refers to the tendency to value family needs over those of the individual.

TRUE

Familismo is the tendency to value familial needs over individual needs, and continues to be a core value within Mexican families. *Familismo* also means that family members are expected to be supportive of each other and to be loyal to the family above other groups.

2. Mexican elders have little importance within the family home.

FALSE

Elders are revered in their extended families, and continue as integral members of Mexican households. For example, the elderly often care for their grandchildren when adult children go to work, and they help maintain the household and mentor young families.

3. The son of Juan Pablo Reyes Sanchez and Norma Gabriela Palomares Martínez would have the last name of Sanchez Martínez.

FALSE

Children take the paternal last names of each parent. The son would have the last name Reyes Palomares.

4. Mexican society expects men to care for and protect their families.

TRUE

Society expects men to be strong, independent, virile, and dominant. They are also expected to earn a living and provide for and protect their family.

5. Most Mexican marriages are arranged.

FALSE

For the most part, Mexicans choose to marry for love, although socio-economic status and future financial security play major roles.

Spanish-Mexico Cultural Orientation

Final Assessment

1. Mexico has one main climate zone.

FALSE

Mexico experiences a wide range of climatic conditions: tropical, subtropical, temperate, and desert.

2. Since independence, the Mexican government has been stable and unchallenged.

FALSE

Mexico struggled throughout the 19th century, changing constitutions, presidents, and governments as the people fought to gain power and to stabilize the economy and government.

3. Contemporary Mexico suffers from drug-related violence.

TRUE

Powerful drug cartels are present across the nation, leading to strings of murders, kidnappings, and government corruption.

4. The Nahua are Mexico's largest indigenous group.

TRUE

The Nahua are descendants of the ancient Aztecs and number around 1.5 million, making them one of Mexico's largest indigenous groups.

5. Mexico's economy is one of the weakest in Latin America.

FALSE

Mexico has one of the strongest economies in Latin America—second only to Brazil—and ranks high internationally.

6. Modern Mexican Catholicism combines traditional Catholic beliefs and practices with indigenous ones.

TRUE

Catholicism in Mexico has developed into a unique blend of traditional Catholic practices and indigenous beliefs. This is especially true in the south where a large indigenous population resides.

7. The Mexican government is headed by the Church.

FALSE

Mexico's government is officially secular and the constitution guarantees religious freedom for all.

8. One of the most significant holidays is the Holy Week during which much of the nation comes to a stop.

TRUE

Semana Santa is one of Mexico's most important religious celebrations; it is the celebration of the Holy Week (20-27 March 2016). This holiday lasts from Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday.

9. Mexico's constitution does not ensure freedom of religion.

FALSE

Religious freedom is constitutionally guaranteed, yet instances of religious intolerance and discrimination do occur (mostly at the local level).

10. Church doctrine reinforces a matriarchal structure within the home.

FALSE

Catholicism also reinforces the patriarchal structure within the home, whereby women are encouraged to treat their husbands as they would the clergy. In effect, this means a woman should obey her husband and never challenge his authority.

11. In Mexican society, individuality is valued more highly than family unity.

FALSE

Mexicans honor *familia*; nuclear and extended family are equally important.

12. It is polite when eating to keep hands visible at the table.

TRUE

It is polite to keep hands visible when dining. A person may rest their wrists on the edge of the table when not eating.

13. Households generally follow a patriarchal structure, that is, the man is head of the household.

TRUE

Mexican society charges men with the care and protection of their families. Men take on a role of leader in their relationships with women.

14. Any small gift is appropriate to give hosts in Mexico.

FALSE

Marigolds, red flowers, and silver are inappropriate gifts in Mexico.

15. Guest should always arrive on time to dinner parties in Mexico.

FALSE

Mexican hosts expect guests to arrive at least 30 minutes late for a meal. It is bad manners to arrive on time or early.

16. All Mexican citizens have equal access to quality healthcare.

FALSE

Mexico's cities are renowned for their modern private medical facilities, delivering high quality medical care. However, socioeconomic disparities ensure that only those with enough money have access.

17. The majority of the Mexico City labor force is employed in the informal market.

TRUE

Across Mexico, almost 60% of the population works in the informal sector, and some speculate that a full one-half of the jobs in Mexico City fall into this category.

18. Mexico's focus on education resulted in approximately 70% of students graduating from secondary school.

FALSE

Mexico's secondary school enrollment is much lower than most OECD countries and its dropout rates are significantly higher. Only about 47% of upper secondary students actually graduate, many dropping out to enter the work force.

19. Mexico has a one universal healthcare system for all of its citizens.

FALSE

Two different systems provide public healthcare for Mexicans. Mexico's Security and Social Services provides healthcare for state employees. The universal healthcare system is federally funded and services approximately 50 million of Mexico's poor.

20. Traditional city markets are a regular part of the daily lives of urban Mexicans.

TRUE

Mexicans of all socioeconomic levels purchase food products from traditional city markets, as well as leather goods, meals, and traditional remedies.

21. Mexican farmers cannot own farmland.

FALSE

The Mexican constitution reformed national land ownership and distribution laws. This served to redefine rural land ownership as either *comunidades* or *ejidos*, resulting in the return of rural land to local communities.

22. Southern Mexico is home to largest numbers of *comunidades*—indigenous communal farms.

TRUE

Southern Mexico is humid and tropical. It is home to the largest populations of indigenous communal farms, or *comunidades*. Subsistence farming is most frequent in this area, which is dense with forestland.

23. Rural communities in Mexico are severely underserved by public health authorities.

TRUE

In many remote villages, healthcare is nonexistent. People suffering from illness and disease are forced to travel very long distances to urban areas for treatment.

24. By law, rural children finish high school before entering the workforce.

FALSE

Although education is valued, it can be considered less relevant for working children, usually around eight years old.

25. Mexican immigration to the United States has increased since 2014.

FALSE

More Mexicans left than entered the United States between 2009 and 2014, and estimates placed around 5.6 million unauthorized Mexicans still living in the United States at the end of 2014.

26. Divorce has been a regular part of Mexican society since 1917.

TRUE

Divorce was legalized in 1917, yet it was stigmatized by the Church from the start, even though divorces occur regularly.

27. The average Mexican family size is about six persons.

FALSE

Rural families tend to be relatively large, but urban families have become smaller. In 2015, the average nuclear family in Mexico was approximately four people.

28. The concept of *machismo* refers to the notion that women should assume a subservient role in society.

FALSE

Marianismo influences the behavior of women. Women are expected to be submissive, dependent, and chaste. *Marianismo* also encourages self-sacrifice on the part of women who often deny themselves opportunities for education, careers, and social lives so they can devote more of their time to their families.

29. Adolescents in Mexico tend to look to their families—not peers—for guidance and acceptance.

TRUE

Mexican adolescents respect the authority of their elders and look to their families—not peer groups—for guidance and acceptance. On average, Mexican teens spend 2–4 hours each day with their families.

30. Funerals in Mexico often involve whole communities.

TRUE

Mexican funerals are social events and involve the decedent's family and friends. It also includes church members and sometimes people from the community.

Spanish-Mexico Cultural Orientation

Further Reading and Resources

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