



Global Expertise. Local Solutions.
Sustainable Democracy.

Elections in Mexico

July 1 General Elections

Frequently Asked Questions

Latin America and the Caribbean

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

1850 K Street, NW | Fifth Floor | Washington, DC 20006 | www.IFES.org

June 27, 2012

Table of Contents

When are elections in Mexico?.....	1
When does the electoral process begin?.....	1
Who will Mexicans elect in the 2012 federal elections?	1
What is Mexico’s electoral system?.....	2
Who is running for president?	2
How is election administration structured in Mexico?.....	3
Who will vote?	3
Can Mexicans who reside abroad vote in the elections?	3
When are preliminary election results released?.....	4
When are the election results final?.....	4
Is electoral observation allowed and regulated?.....	4
Can a party lose its registration if it does not obtain a minimum of votes?.....	4
What type of prerogatives do political parties receive?.....	5
Are there norms to guarantee gender equity in the nominations of candidacies?	5
Resources	6

Disclosure:

These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Mexican elections authorities as of June 26, 2012, to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When are elections in Mexico?

The federal elections are scheduled every six years, on the first Sunday of July, from 8:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Voters who are in line when the polling station closes will still be able to cast a ballot. This year elections are scheduled for July 1, 2012.

When does the electoral process begin?

Preparations for the electoral process begin the first week of October on the previous year in which elections will take place. For the 2012 elections, preparations began on October 7, 2011.

There are four stages of the electoral process during the federal elections: (1) preparation for the election; (2) Election Day; (3) results and certification of validity of the elections; and (4) the validation of the presidential election, which must conclude no later than September 6.

Who will Mexicans elect in the 2012 federal elections?

Mexicans will elect a president, 128 senators and 500 federal deputies on Election Day.

The president is the head of state of the Mexican government, elected by direct vote with a simple majority for a six-year term and no possibility for reelection. The president's term of office begins on December 1, 2012, and goes through November 30, 2018.

The Mexican Union Congress is bicameral: the (high) Chamber of Senators, elected for six-year terms, and the (lower) Chamber of Federal Deputies, elected for three-year terms. Both chambers are elected through mixed systems using first-past-the-post (FPTP) and proportional representation (PR).

The Chamber of Senators is composed of 128 members. Each state and the Federal District can select three senators, elected by FPTP. Thirty-two senators are elected by PR on a national list.

The Chamber of Deputies is composed of 500 members. Three hundred federal deputies are elected by FPTP and 200 deputies are elected by PR with a closed-party list. For the latter, the country is divided in five electoral constituencies or circumscriptions and each is assigned 40 seats. Both senators and deputies can run for reelection, but not during consecutive terms.

At the local level, state governors and the head of government in the Federal District are elected every six years. Representatives to local congresses and the legislative assembly in the Federal District are elected every three years. Local elections are organized by each local electoral institution, which is in charge of the election of municipal authorities. In total, there are 2,440 municipalities and 16 delegations within the Federal District.

On Election Day, 16 states will hold local elections concurrently: Campeche, Chiapas, Colima, Federal District, Guerrero, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Nuevo León, Querétaro, San Luis Potosí, Sonora, Tabasco and Yucatán.

What is Mexico's electoral system?

Mexico is a democratic, federal, representative republic composed of 32 autonomous federal entities (31 states and the Federal District). Mexico has a presidential system, in which the president of Mexico is both head of state and chief of government in a multiparty system.

Executive power is held by the president. The president is advised by a cabinet composed of secretaries of state. Legislative power is vested in the Congress of the Union, a bicameral legislative body composed by the Chamber of Senators and the Chamber of Federal Deputies. Judicial power is vested in the judiciary, composed of the Supreme Court, the Federal Judiciary Council and collegial unitary and district tribunals.

At the local level, each state has a governor and the Federal District has a chief of government, who is elected every six years. Also, each state has a local congress and the Federal District has a legislative assembly of only one chamber.

What are the main political parties?

Currently, there are seven registered national parties:

- PAN: National Action Party (*Partido de Acción Nacional*)
- PRD: Democratic Revolution Party (*Partido de la Revolución Democrática*)
- PRI: Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*)
- PVEM: Green Ecological Party of Mexico (*Partido Verde Ecologista de México*)
- PT: Labor Party (*Partido del Trabajo*)
- Citizen's Movement (*Movimiento Ciudadano*)
- PANAL: New Alliance Party (*Partido Nueva Alianza*)

Who is running for president?

Enrique Peña Nieto, PRI: Peña Nieto is a lawyer and has been a member of the PRI since 1984. He has held various administrative positions in state government and was former governor of the state of Mexico. He is regarded as a strong contender for the presidency. His platform focuses on tax reform; economic growth and development; economic competition; social security; and job creation.

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, PRD: López Obrador is a political scientist and public administrator. In 2006, he ran as PRD candidate for the Mexican presidency, which resulted in a controversial victory for his opponent, Felipe Calderón. He appealed the results and mobilized large protests against the elections, but the Federal Electoral Tribunal, TEPJF in Spanish, ruled the election was fair. His platform focuses on access to education and the economy.

Gabriel Quadri de la Torre, PANAL: Quadri is a civil engineer with experience in the academic and private sectors. Since 2002, he has been technical secretary of the Mexican Commission of Environmental Infrastructure. His platform focuses on modernizing the energy sector, fiscal reform, redirecting subsidies, public education, creation of technical education institutions and strengthening the agriculture and tourism sectors.

Josefina Vázquez Mota, PAN: Vázquez Mota is an economist, businesswoman and politician. She became the first female presidential candidate from any of the major political parties to win the presidential primary of the PAN, with 53 percent of votes. From 2009 to 2011 she served as parliamentary coordinator of the PAN in the Chamber of Deputies. Her platform focuses on tax reform, social welfare, public health and access to quality public education.

How is election administration structured in Mexico?

The Federal District and each of the 31 states have their own rules, institutions and electoral procedures. Although there are core standards, federal elections (for president, deputies and senators) and local elections (for governors, state legislators and municipal authorities) are regulated and organized separately.

Administrative duties and judicial duties are delegated to separate bodies at each level of government. At the national level, the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE), a public, autonomous and independent institution, has administrative responsibility (to prepare, organize and conduct elections). The Electoral Tribunal, a specialized body of the federal judicial branch, has jurisdictional responsibility (to resolve and give final ruling on election disputes and enforce electoral justice) and, in certain cases, is entitled to adopt resolutions.

At a local level, each state has its own administrative agencies, electoral courts and electoral calendar. However, in some cases, local elections are concurrent with federal elections and are held on the same date (the first Sunday in July).

Who will vote?

All registered Mexican citizens, by birth or naturalization, who are at least 18 years old on Election Day are eligible to vote with a voting credential issued by the IFE. Currently, the electoral registry has 79,452,802 registered voters, of which 10.5 million will vote for the first time in a presidential election.

Can Mexicans who reside abroad vote in the elections?

Yes. As a result of a reform measure approved in June 2005, Mexicans who are 18 years of age or over, reside abroad and have a voting credential, with a picture, may vote in a presidential election once registered in the out-of-country registry.

The time period to register to vote overseas was from October 1, 2011, through January 15, 2012. The voting process takes place by mail. Once the voter is registered and accepted in the registry, the IFE will

send the voter an electoral ballot. The voter will then mail the ballot back in a closed pre-paid envelope, which must arrive at the IFE 24 hours prior to Election Day.

Consulates and embassies will only assist with the registration process by providing information. A total of 62,294 people petitioned to register to vote overseas. The counting of out-of-country votes will be broadcast on the IFE's website on Election Day.

When are preliminary election results released?

Since 1994, the IFE has implemented and refined a preliminary electoral results program (PREP, in Spanish), which allows electronic transmission from each of the 300 district councils to the national center. Results are posted online at 8:00 p.m. on Election Day. Once these preliminary results are released, disclosure of any opinion poll results is prohibited. The IFE will also conduct a quick count with a random sample of 7,500 of the 143,000 *casillas* (polling stations) by using three different estimation methods to verify its certainty. The results will be released on the night of July 1.

When are the election results final?

On the Sunday following Election Day the executive secretary of the General Council will present a certified copy of district tally sheets of the presidential election and inform the General Council in a public session of the results by party and candidate.

Is electoral observation allowed and regulated?

Yes. Since 1993, legislation recognizes the right of Mexican citizens to participate as local observers throughout the electoral process as determined in each election by the general counsel of the IFE. Participants must request accreditation from the IFE, have no partisan affiliations and attend training workshops by the IFE or other sponsor organizations. Similarly, since 1994, international observers are allowed to participate as observers in compliance with the guidelines and accreditation requirements set by the IFE.

Currently, there are approximately 31,401 accredited domestic observers; 200 international observers from 40 countries; 86 international visitors, including 58 electoral authorities; and 14 representatives of international organizations that focus on democracy.

Can a party lose its registration if it does not obtain a minimum of votes?

Yes, in order to keep their national registration, each party must obtain at least 2 percent of the total valid votes cast. However, if a political party loses its registration, it would be allowed to re-register for the next federal election, but would not receive prerogatives (resources).

What type of prerogatives do political parties receive?

Political parties receive funding for ordinary and campaign activities; radio and TV access allocated by the IFE; and certain exemptions on postage and telegrams. Political parties fall under a special fiscal regime, so electoral law strictly prohibits the purchase of radio and TV air time for political propaganda.

Are there norms to guarantee gender equity in the nominations of candidacies?

Yes. As a result of reform measures in 2009, the law requires political parties and coalitions to include no more than 60 percent of candidates of the same sex between all candidacies presented to deputies and senators. Previously, the threshold was 70 percent.

Resources

- Federal Electoral Institute ([Spanish](#))
- Preliminary Electoral Results Program, PREP ([Spanish](#))
- Federal Electoral Tribunal, TEPJF ([Spanish](#))
- Electoral Reform from 2007-2008 ([Spanish](#))
- Election Commission (IFE) Regulations ([Spanish](#))