

# MEXICO

Smart Card



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## Major Ethnic Groups

Throughout the history of Mexico, the people have created one of most intriguing cultures in the world. The combination of strongly embedded Aztec and Mayan mythologies and Spanish cultural elements make the Mexican culture distinctive.

**Mestizo:** The blending of indigenous and European blood lines have produced the "Mestizo," the largest ethnic group in Mexico, which accounts for about two-thirds of the population. Their culture often blends traditions of both European and indigenous origins.

**Nahua:** The Nahua are the earliest indigenous people to settle in Mexico. The Nahua are also known as and referred to as Aztecs. Their language is known as Nahuatl. Nahua populations are located in the center of Mexico, with most living in the states of Hidalgo, Guerrero, Puebla, San Luis Potosi, and Veracruz.

**Maya:** The Maya are a group of indigenous peoples of Meso-america. The Maya civilization advanced as the foremost indigenous culture of Meso-america. They are noted for and excelled in astronomy, hieroglyph writing, mathematics and agriculture. They mostly inhabit southern Mexico.



## Overview



**OFFICIAL NAME:** Estados Unidos Mexicanos  
**GOVERNMENT:** Presidential System – Federal Republic  
**RELIGION:** Roman Catholic 82.7%  
**PRIMARY LANGUAGES:** Spanish Language 92.7%  
 Indigenous Languages: Mayan, Nahuatl and regional languages.

Since 1920, Mexican migration to the United States has strained US–Mexico bilateral relations. Even today, immigration is a controversial and divisive issue on BOTH sides of the border.

Mexico's highest source of income is oil export, and second is remittance money sent to Mexico by its immigrants working in the United States.

- The three main political parties are:
- Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) – Leftist
  - Partido Acción Nacional, (PAN) – Right
  - Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) – Centrist

**Borders:** To its North, Mexico shares the border with the United States; to its South, Mexico shares the border with Guatemala and Belize; to the West is the Pacific Ocean and to the East is the Gulf of Mexico.

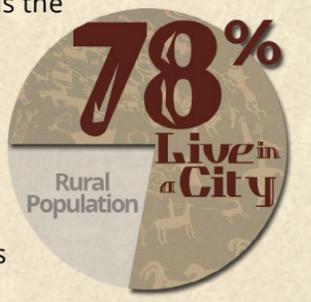
**Size:** Mexico is 1/4th the size of the United States and the 13th largest country in the world.

**Capital:** The capital is Ciudad de México, formerly known as Distrito Federal (Mexico City).

**States:** Mexico is divided into 31 states and one federal district similar to Washington D.C.\*

**Time zone:** Most of Mexico is in the Central Time Zone (UTC -06:00)

**Terrain:** High, rugged mountains; low coastal plains; high plateaus; almost two-thirds of the country's terrain consists of mountains and highlands, while deserts dominate the northern and southern borders.



- Climate Zones:**
- The Tropical/Subtropical zone-**Tierra Caliente** (Hot Land)
  - Temperate zone-**Tierra Templada** (Temperate Land)
  - The Cool zone-**Tierra Fria** (Cold Land)

- Natural Regions:**
- Baja-extending south from the US state of California; composed of two regions; geographically separated from the rest of Mexico.
  - The North – a mixture of coastlines, deserts, mountains and plains.
  - The Northeast – the most industrialized and successful region in Mexico.
  - The Gulf Coast – coastal cities along the Gulf of Mexico; vital to large scale oil production.
  - The Southeast – home of the Mayan civilization; region's only tropical rain forest.
  - The South – warm, humid climate; tropical vegetation; extends south to Guatemala and Belize.
  - The West – large agricultural areas; the breadbasket of Mexico
  - Central – the financial and industrial heart of Mexico; consists of north central and south central states.



## Historical Timeline

**Contemporary Mexico:** Mexico partners with the United States and Canada as a member of NAFTA. Political climate changes in 2000 when the PAN (right) government wins the presidential election.

**Revolution to Evolution:** 1940–1970 Mexico begins to modernize and transforms its economy into one of the most successful economies in Latin America.

**Mexican Revolution:** 1910–1920 The Mexican Revolution begins against dictator Porfirio Díaz with insurrections in several states. Great leaders like Francisco Villa and Emiliano Zapata emerge.

**Fight for Independence:** 1810–1821 "El Grito de Dolores," the call for Mexico's independence from Spain, was led by famous priest Benito Juarez.

**Spanish Conquest:** 1519–1521 The Spanish conquistadores and their leader Hernan Cortez arrive in Mexico. They assault and destroy the Aztec empire – Tenochtitlán.

**Rise of the Aztecs:** 1350–1519 The mighty Aztec civilization expands their influence to dominate the Valley of Mexico. They build an empire and construct the capitol-Tenochtitlán.



## Family

Mexicans have a strong value system. The motto for the country of Mexico is, "Nation, Liberty, Work, and Culture." Mexicans also value respect, family, religion, and hospitality.

**Extended Family**-The extended family is highly important to most Mexicans. Family members find the time to gather on many occasions each year. Mexicans maintain strong links with members of their extended families, including in-laws and "adoptive" relatives.

**Godparenting**-Supportive external kinships are developed in Mexico through a system called "**compadrazgo**" or "godparenting." These types of relationships transcend blood relations, can help provide both economic and social advantages, and extend the larger family.

Mexicans idealize the gender responsibilities of men and women on how they are symbolized within the culture. With the country deep in patriarchal tradition, an often used term is "**Machismo**," which is a common belief that, "men are strength." The word that is used to describe the character of Mexican women is "**Marianismo**," which is described as, "women are love". Together, these explain the complex family identity in Mexico.



## Religion

Religion in Mexico is a fusion of different religions practiced by the Mayan, Toltec, Zapotec and Olmec peoples of the region.

The Spaniards arrived in Mexico bringing the Catholic faith. The introduction of Catholicism ushered in the idea of believing in one God rather than multiple deities.

Mexicans practice the Catholic religion in many different ways. Those people that live in rural areas may practice a form that utilizes indigenous religious ceremonies, while more urbanized areas follow more traditional Catholic services.

After Mexican independence, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century the government was successful in beginning a reorganization to separate Church and State. This led to no government endorsed religion in the country of Mexico.

La Virgen de Guadalupe—also known as Our Lady of Guadalupe—is the patron saint of Mexico and a national religious symbol. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe is one that connects Mexico's history with its Spanish and Aztec heritage. She reflects the significant social relationships of the Mexican and Indian life, personifies all aspects of Mexican life and the struggle for freedom.



## Military

The history of the Mexican military dates back to the pre-Columbian era. During that time, the Aztec army trained and educated on war planning.

**Battle of Pueblo (Cinco de Mayo):** Although the Mexican army initially defeated the French on May 5, 1862 at the Battle of Pueblo, the French eventually overpowered the Mexican army. This holiday commemorates that win over France. This is a fairly minor holiday in Mexico; conversely, in the United States, "Cinco de Mayo" has grown into a celebration of Mexican culture.

**Recruitment:** There is compulsory military service at 18, with a twelve-month conscription obligation. Non-volunteer recruits will serve as a workforce for public social work programs.

**Education and Training:** A significant factor in the improvement of the armed forces in Mexico is the military education system. The main teaching points are the value of discipline, compliance to law, and respect for higher command. Their education system was expanded and specialized, with their officers receiving professional training from the United States and armed forces of Western Europe.

**Mexico's military has two secretariats:**

- Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA) = Army / Air Force
- Secretariat of the Marina (SEMAR) = Navy / Marines

## Vocabulary

ENGLISH	SPANISH
No	No
Yes	Sí
Please	Por favor
Thanks	Gracias
Welcome	Bienvenido
GREETINGS	
Hello	Hola
Goodbye	Adiós
Good Morning	Buenos Días
How are you?	¿Cómo está?
Pleasure to meet you	Mucho gusto
EXPRESSIONS	
How have you been?	¿Cómo ha estado?
You are welcome	De nada
Very well, thank you	Muy bien, gracias
Excuse me	Disculpe
Enjoy your meal	Buen provecho

## Language Videos

Spanish Language Videos

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j91m55N7e9I>

## Cultural Considerations

Mexican men usually greet with a handshake when they meet. Shake hands with everyone before/after the meeting; waving to the group is inappropriate. When two women meet, they tend to give a light kiss on each other's cheek.

In small groups, greet each individual; in large group settings where this may not be possible, greet as many people as you can. When greeting strangers, wait to be introduced by your Mexican counterpart.



Start conversations by exchanging pleasantries; failure to do so will imply a lack of a personal relationship.

Music, traditions, holidays, and food are appropriate conversation topics; avoid conversing about immigration, violence, or poverty.

Titles are significant in Mexico. Mexicans prefer to be addressed by their professional title. Show respect by addressing a person by using his or her title before their name ("Sargento Rodriguez" or "Señorita Robles"). First names are used only by people on familiar terms.

Although admired, don't expect huge displays of punctuality as it is given less emphasis than personal relationships, which tend to trump strict schedules. Being on time for business functions is usually expected.

## Rapport Building

Rapport is a relationship marked by cooperation, conformity, harmony and affinity. Good rapport is built through *Understanding*, *Respect*, and *Mutual trust*.

*Understanding* a culture will aid greatly in building rapport, and should be done before deployment through studies and while in-country through observation and speaking with the people.

Speaking Spanish is an in-road towards building rapport, and will be more important initially in building a relationship with Mexicans than anything else.

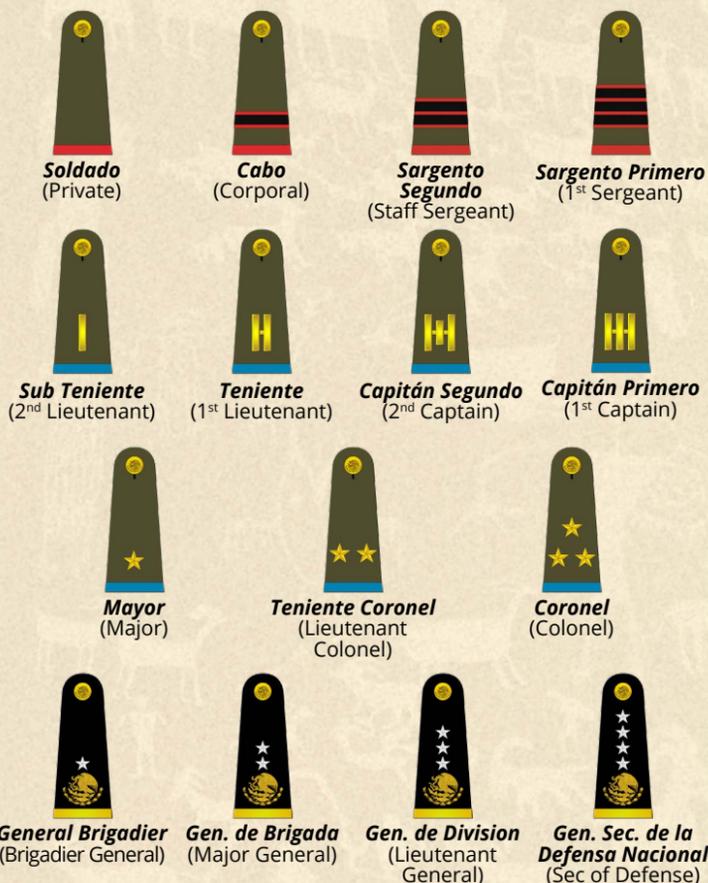
*Respect* is a reciprocal commodity. Mexicans value your honesty, generosity, and politeness.

For Mexicans, maintaining pride and honor is critical. Do not insult the honor, pride, or beliefs of a Mexican or his/her family or extended family.

*Mutual trust* is built over extended periods of time, and is necessary for lasting relationships. Building personal trust by demonstrating a willingness to commit to the task and relationship with Mexicans is necessary before any business will be conducted.



## Army Insignias



## Helpful Phrases

ENGLISH	SPANISH
Do you speak English?	¿Habla Inglés?
I am American	Yo soy Americano
What is your name?	¿Cómo se llama usted?
My name is _____	Me llamo _____
I do not speak Spanish	No hablo Español
What happened?	¿Qué pasó?
Where is _____?	¿Dónde está _____?
How long (time)?	¿Por cuánto tiempo?
How far is _____?	¿A qué distancia?
Can you help me?	¿Puede ayudarme?

## Learning Links

**DLI: Language Survival Kit Module**

[http://famdliflc.lingnet.org/products/mexican/qbm\\_bc\\_LSK/default.html](http://famdliflc.lingnet.org/products/mexican/qbm_bc_LSK/default.html)

**On-line Spanish Dictionary**

<http://www.spanishdict.com/android>

**On-line Spanish Dictionary**

<http://www.spanishdict.com/iphone>