



Mexico

United Mexican States

Latin America

Geography

Area 1,958,201 sq km. Latin America's third largest country. Wide range of topography and rainfall ranging from arid northern plateau, central volcanic plateau and the southern mountains and rain forests. Only 10% of the country is arable.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	110,645,154	0.99%
2020	119,682,457	0.71%
2030	126,457,343	0.50%

Capital Mexico City 19,460,212. **Other major cities** Guadalajara 4.4 million; Monterrey 3.9mill; Puebla 2.3m; Tijuana 1.7m; León 1.6m; Toluca 1.6m; Juarez 1.4m; Torreón 1.2m; Tuxtla Gutiérrez 1m; San Luis Potosí 1m; Querétaro 1m; Mérida 1m. **Urbanites** 77.8%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 29%. **Life expectancy** 76 yrs.

Peoples

The spectrum from Euro-American whites to Mestizo to Amerindian is impossible to clearly demarcate.

Mestizo 65.1%. Mexican(Amerindian)/Spanish mestizo.

Euro-American 13.6%. Largely of Spanish origin; with some other European stock.

Amerindian 19.3%.

Detribalized Amerindian 9.9%.

Amerindian-speaking 9.4%. Indigenous peoples officially recognized by the government. Major groupings: Nahuatl (Aztec, 39) 2.0%; Maya(26) 1.8%; Zapoteco(101) 1.0%; Otomi(111) 0.7%; Mixteco(60) 0.6%; Mixe(12) 0.2%; others(38) 0.9%.

Other 2.0%. Arabs 0.8%; US citizens 0.4%; Russian 0.3%; other Europeans and Asians.

Literacy 91.6%. Functional literacy is much lower. **Official language** Spanish; the world's largest Spanish-speaking nation. **All languages** 297. **Languages with Scriptures** 11Bi 116NT 160por 84w.i.p.

Economy

Free market economy fuelled by oil, industry, manufactured goods, tourism and agriculture. NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and 12 other FTAs have opened foreign trade to unprecedented levels. Reforms have occurred, but more are needed to modernize the economy and free it from the grip of elite, archaic land-tenure systems and institutionalized corruption. Infrastructure needs further development. Income and wealth distribution is highly inequitable. More than 50% of the workforce labours in the informal economy. The poverty-stricken lower third of the population has yet to feel much benefit. The insidious evil of the drug trade refuses to go away and is a more urgent issue than ever; much of the northern border region is under the control of well-armed and organized cartels.

HDI Rank 53rd/182. **Public debt** 35.8% of GDP. **Income/person** \$10,200 (22% of USA).

Politics

The sophisticated Aztec Empire in central Mexico was destroyed by the Spanish and smallpox in the early 16th Century. Independent from Spain in 1821. Much of its northern territories were lost to the US in the 19th Century. The 1910-17 Revolution resulted in a one-party federal democracy with power centralized in the president and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). PRI dominance was maintained by various means (some illicit) until 2000, with the election of an opposition candidate as president. Several strong parties now contest for leadership in the federal republic. There is a history of small guerrilla movements in the south that promote land and culture rights for the native Mexican population (Amerindians).

Religion

Secular state with freedom of conscience and practice of religion. The 130-year break between the Mexican government and the Vatican ended with official relations being restored and many restrictions ended in 1992. Constitutional changes in 1992 also granted fairer treatment for religious minorities, but persecution of non-Catholics persists in some areas.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	95.03	105,143,877	1.0%
Non-religious	3.60	3,983,226	1.6%
Ethnoreligionist	1.20	1,327,742	-3.4%
Buddhist	0.10	110,645	3.1%
Jewish	0.04	44,258	1.0%
Baha'i	0.03	33,194	1.0%
Muslim	<0.01	2,213	1.0%

A large proportion of the Amerindian population, though baptized as Catholic, still adhere to their pre-Conquest religions in practice.

Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	290	7.39	8,172,000	3.9%
Independent	21	2.43	2,689,000	3.1%
Anglican	1	0.03	28,000	2.3%
Catholic	1	87.62	96,945,000	0.8%
Orthodox	3	0.03	38,000	-1.0%
Marginal	52	2.61	2,889,000	2.2%
Unaffiliated		1.22	1,348,000	2.9%
Doubly affiliated		-6.29	-6,965,000	0.0%

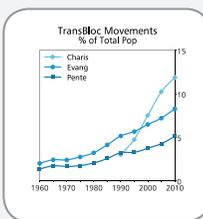
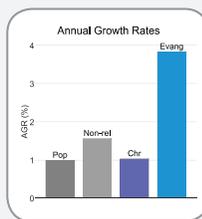
Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Catholic Church	C	5,829,512,293	783,969,945	250
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	12,900	730,000	1,735,000
National Presby Ch	P	4,800	624,000	1,450,000
Latter-day Saints (Mormon)	M	2,446	562,500	1,125,000
Assemblies of God	P	7,400	444,000	1,110,000
Union of Indep Evang Chs	I	1,500	450,000	970,000
Seventh-day Adventist	P	2,670	650,000	845,000
Methodist Church	P	400	55,000	330,000
Indep Evangelical Chs	P	1,409	155,000	310,000
Ch of God (Cleveland)	P	1,643	189,000	283,500
Apos Ch of Faith in JC	I	1,400	150,000	280,000
Ch of God in Repub of M	I	1,167	140,000	280,000
National Baptist Conv	P	1,700	136,000	272,000
Indep Pente Movement	I	3,833	115,000	209,300
Revival Churches	I	358	71,500	143,000
National Chr Ch of AoG	I	1,556	70,000	140,000
Centres of Faith, Hope & Love	I	350	65,000	130,000

Spiritual Chr Evang Ch	P	362	62,500	106,250
Other denominations[350]		35,861	2,183,061	4,096,827
Doubly affiliated				-6,965,000
Total Christians[368]		87,584	58,146,344	103,796,127

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	8.3	9,166,346	3.8%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	11.9	13,157,806	4.1%
Pentecostals	5.1	5,637,825	4.7%

Missionaries from Mexico

P,I,A 1,139 (794 long-term) in 52 agencies: in Mexico 395, North America 428, Europe 127, Middle East 59.



Answers to Prayer

- 1** There is a steady growth of evangelicals, who were only 2.1% (800,000) in 1960, but are now over 8% and numbering over nine million. If anything, such growth appears to be accelerating, not slowing.
- 2** Increasing freedom for ministry continues, a contrast from the oppressive Catholic monopoly of decades past. Even the government – municipal, state and national levels – is more open to evangelical work as a counter to the seemingly unsolvable problems of gangs, drug trafficking, kidnappings and violence.
- 3** The missions movement is beginning to blossom and play a greater role globally. The numbers of missionaries sent out from Mexico, mission agencies, training institutions and mobilizing events have mushroomed in recent years.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1** Mexico is a growing nation that is still discovering its own identity. Meso-American origins, Hispanic history and a dynamic but turbulent relationship with its neighbours all shape Mexico profoundly. This search often manifests itself through religious identity (both animist and Catholic) and the inevitable accompanying anti-Protestant sentiment. Pray that Mexicans, both indigenous and mestizo, might find their ultimate identity and destiny in the love of Christ and the purposes of God.
- 2** Many socio-economic challenges face Mexico. The state recognizes the difficulty of traditional solutions and increasingly invites Christians and churches to show initiative and partnership in meeting the many human needs. Pray for:
 - a) The poor**, both the impoverished rural poor and the exploited slum-dwellers. While the president's top-priority goal is to reduce poverty, the gap between rich and poor in Mexico is the widest of all OECD nations. Fully 60% of Mexico's population struggle with poverty.

- b) **The marginalized native Amerindians.** They officially number 9.4% of the population, but many more are partly or mostly Amerindian without such official status. They tend to face greater poverty, lack education and live in areas with the most upheaval. Radical political expression has also contributed to unrest. There is significant response to as well as opposition to evangelical ministry in those regions.
- c) **Corruption in politics and the police.** The advent of multiparty politics unseated the increasingly corrupt PRI, but the problem remains in all levels of government. Corruption in government has seen millions embezzled, and corruption in the police forces allows for greater growth in organized crime.
- d) **The massive drug trade** and gang violence that accompanies it. Drug trafficking is big business in Mexico – thanks to both the USA’s insatiable habit and Mexico’s own growing troubles. Sadly, this structure of sin brings huge amounts of money into Mexico’s economy, so the desire to halt it is less than the cost and effort to do so.
 - i) *The 500,000-plus addicts*, whose number has grown rapidly due to increasing availability of cheap drugs. Mexico is poorly positioned to cope with the number of addicts in terms of prevention, treatment and ministry to those afflicted.
 - ii) *The wealthy, powerful cartels* that control it are ruthless. Most of their violence is directed toward each other, but police, armed forces, journalists and helpless citizens also die at their hands. Pray for a way to reach out to the cartel leaders and members.
 - iii) *The government and police* face great difficulties in combating the drug trade and those who run it. Informers and corruption undermine the effort, and fear of the heavily armed gangs prevents decisive action. Pray for courage and wisdom in dealing with these great challenges.

3 The relationship with the USA shapes Mexico inexorably. Despite resentment on both sides, the reality is that the countries need each other. Pray for:

- a) **Political-economic cooperation.** The economies of both nations could benefit from truly fair trade and movement of goods and services. Pray for equitable relations and for justice to prevail in all dealings between the nations.
- b) **Collaborative law enforcement** is necessary to thwart the drug cartels as well as human trafficking. There is no love lost, but only cooperation and trust will overcome the wickedness that seeks to prosper on both sides of the border.
- c) **Immigration and labour issues.** Migrant Mexican labour in California and other US border states has long been a feature of national life. They number nearly 13 million and are overwhelmingly male and predominantly young. There are many implications to their presence:
 - i) *Those trying to enter the USA* number more than one million each year, hundreds of them dying in the attempt. They are also a huge drain on US coffers via the costs of border protection.
 - ii) *Those left behind.* Millions in Mexico depend on earnings made by relatives who successfully find work in the USA. Downturns in the US economy impact Mexico deeply. Some towns in Mexico have almost no able-bodied men, as all have left for America.
 - iii) *Those already in the USA.* Many work demanding jobs for long hours and little pay. Some US states’ economies would collapse without the informal economy driven by Mexican migrants. Many Mexicans also find Jesus while away from home, since there are many opportunities for them to hear the gospel. Pray for ministry in Spanish by **CAMI**, Avant and many denominational workers in these areas.

4 For 300 years the Catholic Church dominated Mexico. Recent times have seen it stripped of much of its privilege and power, while retaining a high degree of cultural influence. Catholicism in Mexico is very diverse in expression, from liberation theologians to charismatics to conservatives to syncretistic “popular Catholicism”. There is encouraging growth in Christ-centred renewal within the Catholic Church, but frequently the figureheads of such movements leave to start their own independent megachurches. The Alpha course is having a positive impact within Catholicism. Most Mexicans are culturally Catholic but not practicing; only 10% are regular churchgoers. Many others blend elements of Amerindian spiritism, including gods and goddesses, into folk Catholicism. Pray for renewal to spread and

deepen by the Holy Spirit's power, and for the polluting influences of ancient gods and the spirit-world to be broken among those with Christo-pagan beliefs and practices.

5 Evangelicals have grown, even amid some opposition in certain areas. Growth is in both international denominations and in vigorous newer indigenous movements. Pray that the momentum might be maintained. The highest concentrations of evangelicals are in large cities, in northern states bordering the USA and in southern states where there is a higher proportion of Amerindian peoples. Returnees from the USA are influential in bringing evangelical Christianity back with them. Many Mexicans seek a spirituality beyond what they see as empty religious traditions; both evangelicals and charismatic Catholics benefit from this searching. Pray for this growth to be sustained in both numbers and spiritual depth.

6 The specific challenges for evangelicals are substantial, but indicate a wealth of opportunity more than an overwhelming threat.

a) **Unity.** The Evangelical Fraternity of Mexico (CONEMEX) works to strengthen unity, deal with the government and sponsor important events. A Pentecostal fellowship also exists to bring together the millions of Pentecostals. There needs to be a more effective strategic partnership among mission agencies. Large-scale events such as the March for Jesus/March of Glory as well as nationwide prayer movements are drawing believers together, but much more could be done.

b) **Discipleship and biblical commitment** are great needs, since many families are split by brokenness or geography. Many are first generation believers and have only a very superficial understanding of their faith. Commitment needs to extend to giving – few pastors and missionaries are adequately supported and therefore must work bivocationally to survive. This especially affects poorer churches in rural areas and urban slums.

c) **Leadership training** is the key to the future health of the Church. There are well over 100 Protestant Bible schools and seminaries training thousands of future leaders at all levels, from indigenous primary-level language to degree-awarding schools, as well as numerous TEE programmes. Pray that spiritual depth, evangelistic vision and sound teaching may be imparted to the students. Doctrinal shallowness, error and moral and personal relationship breakdowns impair the growth of the Church. Pray also for the provision of godly pastors for poor rural and urban slum congregations; most prospective pastors seek a more “successful” placement.

d) **Development of a missions vision.** Sending of missionaries by the Mexican Church has developed rapidly, but awareness of “people group thinking” needs to grow in the churches. An increasing number of congregations send and support missionaries. COMIMEX provides a nationwide umbrella linking most agencies, national and international, and involved denominations. COMIMEX operates through 13 departments (focusing on issues such as mobilization, prayer and member care) and three networks (churches, sending structures and training institutions). Significant international agencies have been birthed in Mexico, such as PMI, with its involvement in the Muslim world. There may be as many as 1,200 Mexican evangelical missionaries with over 50 agencies. The majority of them serve abroad, with increasing numbers in the 10/40 Window.

e) **The evangelical approach to money and finance** needs wisdom, maturity and balance. Many Protestants, and Mexicans in general, have only recently begun to emerge from poverty. The traditional humble material possessions of Mexican evangelicals now combine with recent economic growth, the influence of US-style prosperity gospel and the very public salvation of a number of high profile and successful Mexican businessmen and media figures. Pray for a release of finances into Kingdom work; pray also for the right biblical perspective on how to handle issues of money.

7 Persecution of evangelicals occurs in certain parts of Mexico. In general, acceptance of Protestants is higher in recent years as their profile increases. But in the southern states, particularly Chiapas, Oaxaca and Guerrero, believers face prejudice, harassment, evictions and church and property damage. This mostly occurs due to believers' refusal to participate in community religious events that involve traditional Christo-pagan practices. Pray that the believers may demonstrate the meekness and love of their Saviour when maltreated. Pray also for full implementation of religious freedom at both national and local levels.

8 **Ministry to young people** is vital. Around one-third of Mexicans are aged 15 or younger. Due to its focus on youth ministry, the evangelical faith has made great inroads among young people in Mexico. This staggering challenge is being only partially met.

a) University students number over 2.5 million in nearly 10,000 campus locations. Outreach is yielding exciting results. Pray for the wide-ranging ministries of **CCCI** (on campuses and among churches). **IFES**-linked student movement *Compañerismo Estudiantil A C* (Compa) has 170 groups in 50 universities with 1,500 students served by seven full-time and 11 part-time staff and 16 volunteers. A number of Mexican-originated movements are also rapidly growing.

b) Young people. Although evangelical churches appeal to the younger generation, too few churches target them; most programmes use the approaches of previous generations. Pray for creative and cutting-edge ministry to today's youth.

c) Street children, especially in Mexico City. There may be up to 800,000 homeless or street children. They sleep in whatever shelter they can find and desperately need love and help.

d) Child labourers. As many as 11 million Mexicans under the age of 15 work. The income may be crucial to their poverty-stricken families, but many of these children drop out of school in order to work.

9 **Foreign missionaries' roles** have changed significantly. Their presence is still needed in facilitating Bible translations, mobilizing Mexicans for mission, children and youth work, theological education and leadership development. The majority are US citizens, so they need sensitivity and tact in their cultural adaptation in order to overcome perceptions arising from their origin and wealth. Pray that their ministries may assist the Church to be what God desires.

10 **Sections of the population and peoples** with few committed Christians:

a) The Rosary Belt, a region in central Mexico consisting of Zacatecas, Jalisco, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Colima, Michoacán and Querétaro. This region is often called the 10/40 Window of the Americas by Latino evangelicals. Spanish colonial and religious influence is very strong here. None of these states numbers over 2% evangelical, and Querétaro is only 0.25% evangelical.

b) Indian peoples are largely Catholic in name but pagan in practice. Most of the old pantheon of gods and spirits have Catholic names; others retain their original identities. According to research by COMIMEX, of 298 people groups, 15 are without a viable Christian witness, 98 have a church that still needs help from the outside to finish preaching the gospel in their group and a further five are inadequately researched. The complex syncretism, traditional isolation and linguistic diversity make these groups difficult to effectively evangelize. Vital discipleship and church planting ministries must be expanded to build on the impressive Scripture translation programme of SIL. Some of the least evangelized include peoples from the Náhuatl (3), Zapoteco (4), Mixteco (2), Popoloca, Chatino, Huichole and Mixe groups of peoples.

c) The wealthy elite. There is a strong atheist-agnostic current among them reinforced by an education system designed to dilute the influence of the Church. The large gap in income, lifestyle and even physical security between these elite and the rest of society means that generally they remain aloof from Christian growth. High-profile evangelical ministries have attracted some; pray for others to also show interest in spiritual things.

11 **Mexico City** is still a major challenge, as the cultural, financial and political powerhouse of the nation. The metropolitan area is one of the world's largest urban agglomerations, but Mexico City proper is losing residents to the suburban areas and other regions. It has one of the higher percentages of Protestants (over 7%), but church participation is generally lower in this city where secular influences are strong. Pray for:

a) The hundreds of neighbourhoods without an evangelical congregation; especially needy are the upper-class areas.

b) The slum-dwellers. About 80% of the millions in the capital are poor, living in desperate economic conditions, often amid great squalor. Christian ministry to them is fraught with difficulty and challenge. Few are prepared to commit themselves to it.

- c) **The million Indians** representing nearly every language of Mexico. Very little is being done to cater for their spiritual needs.
- d) **Marginal sects** are rapidly growing through aggressive proselytism. The Mormons add over 1,000 members a month just from Mexico City alone and are already the second-largest Mormon population in the world, after the USA.

12 Bible translation and distribution. Despite centuries of social and cultural pressure, use of indigenous languages is vigorous and varied. The many dialects illustrate translation and language needs beyond the ordinary. Pray for:

a) **Translation.** Since 1936, Bible translation work has been remarkable, with programmes among 190 languages and NTs completed in 120. Currently SIL is involved in 84 translation projects. Research shows that 11 languages still have a definite need for a full translation, and a further 20 exist where a more limited project would meet the need. Pray for the achievement of the current NT and Bible translation goals by the Mexican Bible Society, New Tribes, SIL and others. There are many requests for help with NT revisions and adaptations. Pray for UNTI (the Union of Indigenous Bible Translators) as they seek to find and support local, trained personnel to help with these needs. A great need is for strong partnerships among those who promote Scripture use and literacy. Pray for translation agencies to have continued good relations with federal and state government agencies.

b) **Printing and distribution.** The Bible Society plays an important role in producing and distributing Spanish and indigenous Scriptures in Mexico and the whole region, as does the Bible League. Pray that the dissemination and reading of the Scriptures may transform individuals, congregations and the nation.

13 Christian media is a vital and growing cluster of ministries with great potential. Pray for these:

a) **Christian literature,** a ministry growing in size and influence as the evangelical population grows. Pray for more Mexican evangelical writers and publishers. Milamex is a key ministry that publishes several evangelical periodicals such as the seminal Prisma magazine. Pray for a literate, well-taught and well-equipped Church to be the result.

b) **Christian broadcasting** was long denied to evangelicals in Mexico. As a result, hundreds of hours/week are beamed into the country from the USA, Guatemala and elsewhere. Doors are only now opening for Christian radio and TV from within the country. Much more could be done if resources – people, skills and finances – were available. Pray for a release of such and for the Holy Spirit to gift key believers for Kingdom media impact.

c) **The JESUS film** has been extensively used as a film and on TV. The film is in use in 66 Mexican languages and is being prepared in a further three. Pray for progress in the translation and production in the remaining languages of the smaller, isolated people groups with little or no access to Scripture in their mother tongue.

d) **Cassette recordings.** GRN has messages available in 390 languages and dialects. It is a vital tool in the complex linguistic situation, where dialects and sub-dialects do not require or cannot justify their own Bible translation. Pray for recordists, for new recordings and wide distribution, and for eternal fruit. Audio Scripture Ministries has recorded NTs in 37 languages, most in Oaxaca.