

The cost of politics in **Mexico**

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January 2025

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Acknowledgements

This study is supported by an EU-funded project, WYDE Civic Engagement, led by EPD, the European Partnership for Democracy. The WYDE project is a component of the European Commission's Women and Youth in Democracy Initiative (WYDE). The aim of the project is to strengthen the participation of young people in democratic processes at national, regional and global levels.

Special thanks to Arturo Velasco Delgado for his valuable editorial support.

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List of acronyms

CIM	Inter-American Commission of Women
COFIPE	Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
IFE	Federal Electoral Institute
PEI Index	Perceptions of Electoral Integrity Index
INE	National Electoral Institute
JDC	Trial for the Protection of the Political and Electoral Rights of the Citizenry
MC	Citizens' Movement
Morena	National Regeneration Movement
MR	Relative Majority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAN	National Action Party
PARM	Authentic Party of the Mexican Revolution
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
PPN	National Political Parties
PPS	Popular Socialist Party
PRD	Party of the Democratic Revolution
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
PVEM	Ecologist Green Party of Mexico
RNE	National Register of Voters
TRIFE	Federal Electoral Tribunal

Introduction

Entering and contesting politics in Mexico is a great challenge. Those brave enough to participate face various costs, both visible and invisible, including financial, personal, reputational and even threats to their physical security. Although public funding for political parties in the country is adequate and meets international standards, not all political actors have equal access to these resources. Furthermore there is the presence of opaque and/or illicit contributions. Moreover, the cost of politics goes beyond campaign expenses, and involves facing a legal framework that favours partisan structures, and a context of insecurity, violence and political corruption. Citizens who are interested in participating in politics, especially in legislative elections, must also deal with entrenched clientelistic practices.

These elements make up what has been called the "cost of politics" in Mexico. This report delves into these dynamics, analysing the challenges faced by candidates who seek elective office, particularly those from vulnerable or marginalised backgrounds, such as women, youth and indigenous communities, with a particular focus on legislative positions in the 2024 elections. In this context, the report also examines emerging trends in the Mexican political arena, such as the growing polarisation and influence of the media, which amplify both misinformation and tensions around political figures.

Reducing these costs and encouraging greater and broader political participation are key objectives for revitalising democracy in Mexico. This requires an opening up of the party system and a change in the legal framework, security conditions and political culture in order to ensure a more inclusive and fairer democratic space. In the following pages obstacles to this reality will be identified and solutions proposed, for without the active and conscious participation of citizens, democracy will remain incomplete.

Methodology

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy's "cost of politics" approach goes beyond the analysis of the financial cost of campaigns. It proposes to study the effort, activities and sacrifices required to participate in politics and the impact this has, not only on the different phases of the electoral cycle, but also on the quality of democracy. In other words, according to this approach, involvement in politics goes beyond campaigning, which is public and short-lived.

This report provides an overview of all types of costs. This includes costs that are incurred from the moment of deciding to participate in politics, joining or registering in a political party, to the participation in its activities, the decision to seek a candidacy, the process of gaining the nomination, pre-campaigning and campaigning, all the way to the exercise of public office as an elected representative, if the candidate is successful. In other words, costs and their drivers were studied throughout the different phases of the electoral cycle.

Information was obtained from two main sources. Desk research, drawing on scientific and opinion articles were used, as well as reports from election observation missions and assessments by international organisations and think tanks such as the Organisation of American States and the Electoral Integrity Project (PEI Index), among others. To supplement this, 18 bilateral interviews and two focus group discussions were conducted to gain in-depth, first-hand knowledge of the experiences of individuals who have lived the cost of politics in Mexico.

Interviews were held with members of political parties, former candidates, legislators, journalists, academics, and civil society experts all with proven experience in the field. Eleven women and 11 men were interviewed; six members of political parties, eight members of academia and civil society, two civil servants and six specialists. In addition, the study engaged a wide age range, from 28 to 70 years old, including six young women. The first focus group consisted of political party members and elected representatives with experience in campaigning and public engagement. The second group consisted of academics from public and private universities with research expertise covering campaigning, political finance, violence and justice.

Historical context

Throughout the 20th century, and especially after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1921), Mexico was ruled by a hegemonic party regime that for 70 years constructed the façade of a multiparty system and the simulation of a moderately competitive system. The dynamics were complex because although different political parties existed, some of them were satellite parties and others had no serious chance to compete.

During the hegemony of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) there was no alternation in government at the federal level and there were only a few exceptions that allowed alternation at the municipal level, and later at the state level.¹ Thus, the path to participation was the PRI, identified as "the space for deliberation and institutionalisation to gain access to power".^{2,3} To participate in politics, there were two options. The first was to be a member of the dominant party; the second was to make a large investment, not only financially but also politically, to join the other options, which, besides being scarce, had little chance of success.⁴

Over time, economic crises, social demands and splits within the party elite contributed to the opening of the system. This began in 1963 with the electoral reform that would begin to open the way for the democratic transition. In response to events such as a railway workers' strike and the democratic demands of the National Action Party (PAN), the Constitution was amended to create "party deputies". This consisted of granting the party that achieved a minimum of 2.5% of the national vote cast, one legislator for each half percentage point obtained, with a limit of up to 20 representatives per party in the Chamber of Deputies. This first reform set the tone for increasing the voice of different parties such as the PAN, the Popular Socialist Party (PPS) and the Authentic

Party of the Mexican Revolution (PARM).⁵ Thus, the system began to make certain adjustments towards greater participation.

From 1977 to 2014 alone, there were 11 electoral reforms that, among other things, aimed to promote inclusion, enhance the credibility of the processes and guarantee the fairness of the contests (see Annex 1). The changes gradually led to pluralism and increased participation, not only of a greater number of players and political parties, but also of historically relegated groups such as women and in 2014, independent candidates who, from that moment on, could seek public office without belonging to a political party.

But of the 500 federal deputy seats – which are shared equally by men and women - only one was won by a 43-year-old independent candidate in 2024. However, 32 indigenous persons and four Afro-Mexicans were elected to the legislature⁶ in 2024, and for the first time in its history, Mexico has a woman as head of the federal executive branch along with 13 female governors.⁷

There is no doubt that this, coupled with gradual victories at the local and federal level, as well as the evolution from a hegemonic party system to a more pluralistic one, are positive developments that have strengthened Mexican democracy. However, there is still a long way to go. Today there are more competitors in the race, but barriers to entry remain high. In addition to physical security concerns, corruption, clientelistic practices and entrenched party structures represent obstacles for citizens to hold public office and, above all, increase the costs of contesting for public office.

In Mexico, politics is inequitable

Although with different approaches, experiences and areas of specialisation, all of the interviewees and focus groups discussants engaged for this study agreed on one thing: in Mexico, it is not easy to gain access to elected office, and not everyone can participate, let alone gain access to the position. Although the transition to democracy allowed the country's plurality to be expressed and competitive campaigns and parties multiplied, the spaces for institutional participation have been limited. In the words of one interviewee, "even the simplest institutional mechanisms designed for participation - such as independent candidacies - are quite difficult".⁸

In practical terms, it is estimated that the average cost of a campaign for a federal deputy election is MXN 487,404.60 pesos (US\$25,583⁹). This is an average cost: successful campaigns usually require almost double the investment, close to MXN 823,393.20 pesos¹⁰ (US\$41,229¹¹). This cost, of course, is limited to the three-month campaign period and does not include up-front or hidden costs, nor professional or personal sacrifices.¹² For the 2023-24 electoral process, Mexico's electoral commission (INE) established a limit of MXN 2,203,262 million for deputy campaigns and MXN 329,638 for pre-campaigns,¹³ for a total of MXN 2,532,900 (US\$132,829).¹⁴

This amount is estimated to adequately cover the minimum equipment necessary to have a chance of actually contesting which interviewees defined as:

- a tax expert to help meet the INE's tax requirements;
- a lawyer, to understand and comply with the legal requirements and obligations set by a large number of regulations;¹⁵
- a person dedicated to media communication, both traditional and social media;
- two executive staff, in charge of the planning and development of public events and conferences and the territorial operation of the campaign.

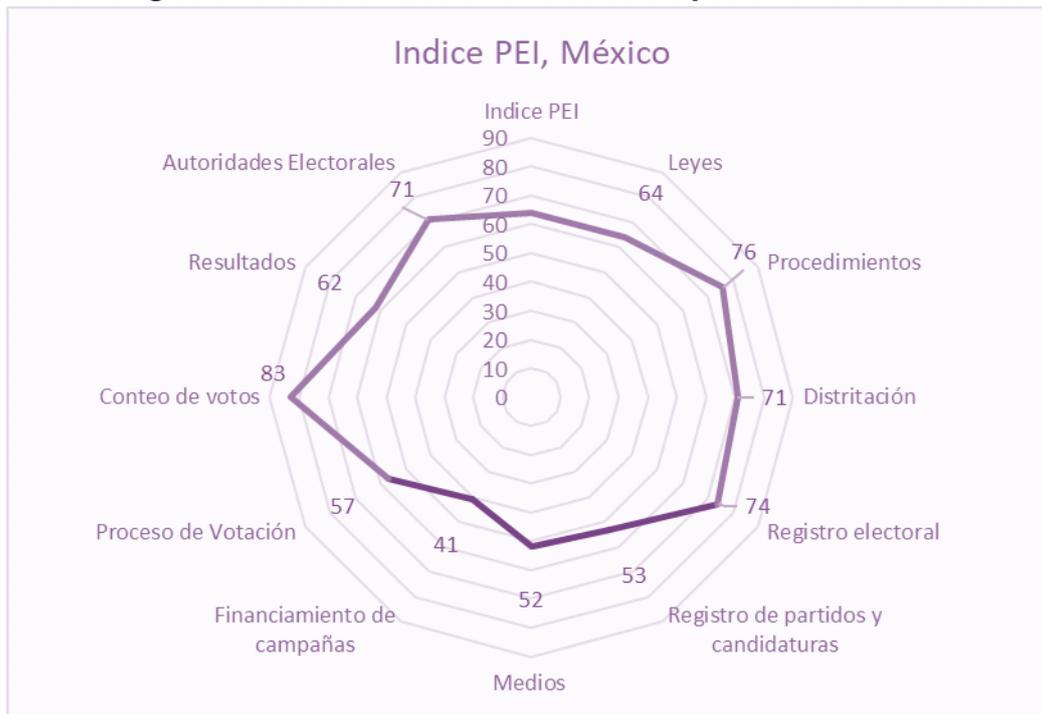
In addition to human capital, there are other expenses such as advertising on public roads and other media such as radio, television, social networks and websites, as well as events and other campaign operating expenses.

Both public and private sources of funding are available to a candidate to meet these needs. Public resources are directly linked to the party and come from the treasury, while private resources come from the party's militancy, supporters and, finally, self-financing. In a country where the average salary is MXN 6,150 per month,¹⁶ very few have MXN 823,393.20 available to them, nor the potential access to the campaign equipment described above. Added to this are other inequalities: a lack of access to public financial resources, media, party structures and support, and security, among others. Reports from the most recent electoral process show that the candidates who contributed the most of their own resources to their campaigns were local candidates, with amounts ranging from MXN 250,000-800,000 for federal campaigns. Private contributions represented 1.9% of the funding they received.¹⁷

The PEI Index¹⁸ confirms these inequities in Mexico's electoral landscape and provides valuable insights to the main challenges of the cost of doing politics. The index assesses the integrity of an election throughout the entire electoral cycle, not only focusing on what happens on election day, but also on what happens before, during and after an approach consistent with the comprehensive approach to the 'cost of politics'. The index assesses 11 core aspects including, among others, the legal framework for elections, voter registration, campaign media, political financing, the performance of electoral authorities and results.

Figure 1 shows that three components are the worst evaluated in the PEI index for Mexico: campaign finance, campaign media, and registration of political parties and candidacies pointing to significant inequality in access to politics and political campaigning for elected office.

Figure 1: PEI Index, and weakest components: Mexico



Source: Own elaboration with data from the Index of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity, v. 10.0

In particular, the following are identified:

- The low score for the component 'campaign finance' (41/100) implies, among others, the indicators: i) inequitable access to resources; ii) significant influence of third parties; iii) misuse of public resources; and iv) opacity in the receipt and expenditure of these resources.
- The low score for the 'media' component (52/100) indicates: i) inequitable media coverage; ii) unequal access to advertising and media space; and iii) the existence of misinformation on social media.
- The low score for the component 'party registration and candidacy' component (53/100) refers to: i) lack of opportunities for citizens to obtain a candidacy and campaign and ii) party leadership control over the selection of candidates. It also indicates that obstacles are particularly high for women and ethnic minorities.

It is common that joining a political party, gaining candidacy and campaigning often requires substantial resources that are normally beyond the reach of the average citizen. This impacts on the cost of politics, especially for under-represented groups and citizens without sufficient political or economic resources.

Barriers to participation in politics in Mexico

The cost of politics is not limited to the campaign period, but encompasses the entire cycle of running for office from the moment the decision to participate is made. This cycle includes political training, networking, financing pre-candidacy activities, the election campaign itself and, finally, holding office once elected. Each stage of this cycle involves a series of costs that can be prohibitive, particularly for those outside the political elite. In the case of pre-candidacy activities, candidates often incur significant expenses to secure the support of internal party delegates or structures that are key to their selection as official candidates. These expenditures may include funding for meetings, promotional events and gifts to influential members, as well as strengthening political support networks. In some cases, specifically in parties where internal competition is high, the costs of securing the nomination may exceed those of the election campaign itself, as the internal process becomes the real election, especially in regions where the party has a high probability of winning.

Financing political campaigns, obtaining resources (financial and material) to promote candidacies, and the investment needed to compete effectively are barriers that place those without the necessary financial backing at a disadvantage. Furthermore, the current model limits private funding for both political parties and independent candidacies. For parties, the Constitution establishes that public resources should prevail over private ones.¹⁹

Institutional barriers relate to electoral regulations, such as the collection of signatures and the requirements for the registration of independent candidacies.²⁰ These requirements represent not only complex administrative processes, but also challenges for those who lack financial resources and support networks. For example, independent candidates require a structure that facilitates the collection of a large number of signatures in a short period of time, which entails costs in terms of personnel, logistics and time.

In addition, for those seeking access to Congress, it is essential to have a minimum team of specialists in areas such as oversight, media, logistics and field operations. The hiring of these professionals requires considerable initial capital which, in the absence of funding, leads many candidates to promise payments that are conditional on winning office. This financial precariousness limits the capacity of candidates to develop transparent campaigns and subjects them to depend on economic commitments or political favours that must be paid later, affecting their independence and generating a cycle of debt that undermines fairness in the electoral contest.

In the realm of political barriers, access to power is often conditioned by networks of influence that are woven through family connections and alliances that have existed for generations. These links

are consolidated through party loyalties, informal agreements and favours that strengthen the position of those already within the circle of power. Consequently, the opportunities for those outside these groups are considerably limited, not only because of the lack of political backing, but also because of the absence of a network of contacts that would facilitate access to strategic resources, such as funding, media space or 'face-time' with party leaders. This situation perpetuates a closed structure in which political leadership is inherited or shared among the same elites, excluding new voices and projects that do not have familiar surnames, kinship ties or long-standing relationships of trust.

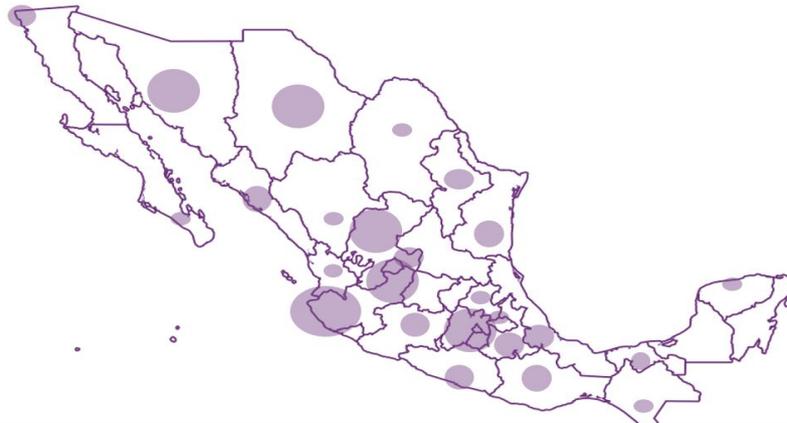
Cultural barriers that are deeply rooted in social perceptions of who "should" participate in politics particularly affect women and historically marginalised groups, who are considered secondary actors in a space traditionally dominated by male elites. This concentration of power in the hands of a few is perpetuated through practices such as the so-called "chapulineo"²¹, which consists of the frequent change of party affiliation by certain actors in order to maintain their position of power or gain access to new positions.

This phenomenon is a reflection of the hyper-eliticisation of politics in Mexico, where opportunities are distributed according to actors' ability to adapt to changes in the political environment, rather than their merits or ideological commitments. As one academic interviewed put it, "it doesn't matter what your profession is; we are all citizens, yet politics in Mexico is hyper-eliticised".²² The Desimal survey of November 2023²³ reveals a generalised rejection of this practice, with 52% of the population against "chapulineo", 60% who consider it necessary to prevent this behaviour, 62% who are disillusioned with politicians who change parties and 53% who say they would not vote again for a candidate who has changed parties. This demonstrates the distrust that this type of practice generates in the public and how it contributes to keeping control of power in the same hands, blocking the entry of new voices and projects.

There are also barriers linked to physical integrity due to the violence and insecurity faced by those who venture to compete for public office, exposing themselves to physical threats, intimidation and even, in extreme cases, loss of life. It should be noted that this level of risk, although increasing in recent electoral processes, is not uniform throughout the country, as it is aggravated in certain regions where violence and territorial control by criminal groups are more prevalent, creating a particularly hostile environment for political participation. The most dangerous areas of Mexico - where organised crime has a strong presence - include states such as Guanajuato, Sinaloa, Jalisco, Michoacán, and Guerrero. These areas have been the scene of struggles for territorial control between cartels. In addition, violence has intensified in states such as Chihuahua, Morelos and Tamaulipas in recent years.

Proof of this is the testimony of a female MP interviewed, who mentioned that her son, after she had received several threats for exposing malpractices, begged her "not to go on".²⁴ This testimony illustrates the severe pressure and emotional impact that insecurity can have on politicians' families, especially in contexts where violence is more present.

Figure 2: Map of organised crime in Mexico



Source: Authors elaboration with data from El País.²⁵

Reputational barriers are also a factor and refer to the public image cost of participating in politics, as "those who get involved in politics are often perceived as part of a corrupt or untrustworthy system"²⁶. Involvement in politics can come at a high cost in terms of public image and personal relationships. As one former federal official argued

*"Public opinion is strategically driven by narratives aimed at capturing attention, constructed with shocking narratives that are not always true. These narratives directed towards a person generate a growing reputational cost, resulting in stigmatisation with negative symbols that become attached to that politician for the rest of his or her life"*²⁷

In turn, wider societal gender barriers manifest themselves particularly in politics, limiting women's opportunities to compete on equal terms. Despite advances in legislation, women still face persistent inequality in the allocation of spaces and opportunities. In the words of two interviewees:

*"Women always be earning their space, men already have it"*²⁸

The lack of effective regulatory mechanisms to sanction gender-based violence within political parties also leaves women exposed to a hostile and discriminatory environment that limits their participation and reduces their chances of attaining positions of power. A testimony collected from a civil society representative highlighted that "gender-based violence has not been regulated within a party".²⁹

Furthermore, barriers to youth in politics are presented by stereotypes that discredit their ability to lead, as well as by the absence of specific support for them to compete on equal terms. Young people are perceived as inexperienced actors and are often excluded from decision-making as a result. This phenomenon is reinforced by the lack of funding and institutional backing, which makes it difficult for them to build an independent political career.

These barriers are compounded by intersectionality, understood as the interaction of multiple layers of vulnerability such as gender, age, ethnicity and disability.³⁰ Forms of discrimination and exclusion overlap and amplify, creating contexts in which young women, indigenous people and those with disabilities are at a compound disadvantage.

Drivers of the cost of making policy

Spending practices and nomination selection costs

In many political contexts in Mexico, there is a widespread expectation that candidates will finance works or donate resources to communities during their campaigns. These practices, ranging from vote buying to the construction of public infrastructure, represent a form of political transaction linked to clientelistic dynamics and, at times, corruption. A former federal deputy interviewed shared how "people expect you to do something tangible, to bring direct benefits. If you don't do that, they don't believe in your proposals".³¹ This phenomenon, although more frequent at the municipal and state levels, generates high financial and reputational costs for candidates. As one activist and former candidate commented: "economic resources undermine the ability to achieve the dream of having a seat".³² This testimony illustrates how structural inequalities favour those with significant resources and support networks to the exclusion of those without such advantages.

Internal party candidate selection processes are also not without high costs. Candidates often face significant expenses to secure the support of party structures, including payments to delegates, financing of events and negotiations with local leaders. A former federal deputy recounted:

*"INE gives the money to the parties and the parties decide with absolute discretion how to distribute it, so many times you are left with nothing or only with supplies such as caps and t-shirts"*³³

This dynamic not only increases entry costs, but also reinforces exclusions, particularly towards young women and aspirants without established political connections. A former federal deputy and activist noted: "not only do they [youth and women] have to work twice as hard to be taken seriously, but within the parties they are assigned to the least visible campaigns. It's a system that limits their political growth."³⁴ These experiences highlight the need to address the structural barriers that perpetuate inequality in political access and participation in Mexico.

But high legal and financial barriers limit the options for those seeking a political alternative outside the existing structures. Establishing a new political party in Mexico is a costly and restrictive process. As a result, many aspirants to public office prefer to run under established parties, even though they face complex and costly internal dynamics. Independent candidates also face high

costs related to a lack of structure and resources, which limits their ability to compete effectively in the electoral arena.

Independent candidacies

Despite the intention to encourage citizen participation, the requirements for independent candidacies are restrictive and costly. As one official noted: "for independent candidacies the law is very demanding. In 2024 there were 111 applications for an independent candidacy; only 2 fulfilled the requirements and only 1 person was elected (in Michoacán) with a federal deputation".³⁵ This illustrates the gap between the intention to participate and the real possibility of complying with the established legal requirements.

One of the main costs for independent candidates is the collection of signatures, as the legislation requires that they collect a number of signatures equivalent to a significant percentage of the nominal list of the electoral roll corresponding to the demarcation in which they compete. For federal deputies, 2% of the nominal list of the district for which they are running is required, distributed in at least half of the electoral sections, with 1% in each of them, in a period of 30 days. This timeframe for the collection of signatures and for the validation of the requirements is limited, which generates additional pressure on independent candidates. It forces candidates to deploy an intensive field operations which, if not carried out with sufficient planning and resources, significantly reduces the likelihood of success. In addition, digital formats that require access to mobile devices and internet connection must be used, which introduces an additional technological barrier, especially for candidates in rural or low-income areas.

Compliance with administrative and legal requirements also demands the hiring of specialists, advisors and lawyers to ensure that every aspect of the process is compliant with current regulations. This is because independent candidates face a legal framework that imposes a series of restrictions and regulations originally designed for established political parties, with structures and resources that can hardly be replicated by individuals or groups without prior formal organisation. As one civil society person pointed out

*"In all Mexican legislation, particularly for independent candidates, the spirit of the law is that no one can beat it."*³⁶

This perception reflects the experience of many actors who, despite citizen support, find their efforts frustrated by regulatory complications. Despite the difficulties, Mexico's legal framework has evolved to better protect citizens' political-electoral rights by providing remedies that seek to balance the balance against the challenges imposed by regulations and bureaucracy. The creation of the Trial for the Protection of the Political-Electoral Rights of Citizens (JDC) in 1996 opened the door to the effective protection of political-electoral rights, establishing an accessible remedy for anyone who considers that their rights to vote, be voted for, join a political party, or access and remain in public office are being violated. Since its implementation, 192,639 lawsuits have been

filed, of which 192,449 have been resolved,³⁷ reflecting its broadly positive role in the protection of citizens' rights.

Electoral financing: Obstacles and challenges to political equity in Mexico

Political campaign financing in Mexico is mainly supported by public funds and is subject to strict control by INE. Nationally registered political parties receive, annually, an amount calculated by multiplying the number of citizens registered in the electoral roll by 65% of the daily value of the The Measurement and Update Unit (UMA).³⁸ This amount is distributed among the parties as follows: 30% equally and the remaining 70% according to the votes obtained in the last deputy election.³⁹ For 2024, public funding for ordinary activities of national political parties amounted to MXN 6,609,787,227, of which an additional 50% is allocated to campaign expenses.^{40, 41} According to the law, national political parties receive public funding for their ordinary activities and campaign expenses in order to ensure that public resources prevail over those of private origin.

However, in practice, candidates often need to supplement these resources to cover the costs associated with their campaigns, especially in contexts where party support is limited or insufficient. These additional expenses vary significantly by candidate and party. In highly competitive districts or where the party lacks a solid structure, candidates may finance between 30-50% of their campaign with their own resources. On the other hand, larger or better-resourced parties provide considerable support, although its distribution may be uneven, depending on factors such as internal competition, the relevance of the candidate for the party or the geographical area.

In addition to public resources, private funding also plays a role in political campaigns, although it is heavily regulated to avoid undue interference. Donations from executive, legislative and judicial powers, political parties, foreign persons, international organisations, ministers of worship, religious associations, unidentified persons, among others, are prohibited.⁴² In the case of political parties, all resources must be channelled through specific bank accounts and expenditures must be rigorously verified. Although the same controls apply to independent candidacies, for political party candidates, auditing is carried out through the financial reports submitted by the parties themselves, which implies that their funding is subject to the control of these party structures. However, these controls only apply to funds that are formally reported; in practice, much of the funding is in cash or in kind, which makes it difficult to track and properly audit.

Unlike political parties, whose financial structure is largely based on public funding, independent candidates rely on their own resources and private donations.⁴³ Private funding for independent candidacies consists of contributions from the candidates themselves and their supporters, with a limit of 10% of the expenditure ceiling for the corresponding election.⁴⁴

Mexico's electoral financing system seeks to balance equitable access to public resources with the need to limit the influence of private sources. However, challenges remain to ensure truly transparent and efficient use of resources. In this context, oversight is a crucial tool to monitor and sanction illegal or unreported expenditures during campaigns. Mexico has one of the most detailed and complex oversight systems in the world, but it also faces major challenges in terms of implementation and effectiveness. A key aspect of this problem is the prevalence of illicit money in campaigns, which is mainly used to finance activities such as electoral clientelism, vote promotion or buying, and spending during election day, better known as "D-Day".⁴⁵

The promotion or buying of votes is presented as a dynamic in which both political parties and certain interest groups play a fundamental role. Although the exact figures may vary according to the region and the specific context, cases have been documented in which the price of a vote ranges from MXN 500-1,000.⁴⁶ This can be seen from both a supply and demand perspective. On the supply side, political parties and candidates allocate resources to practices that seek to mobilise and secure votes in exchange for immediate benefits, such as money or material goods. On the demand side, voters may expect or request these benefits in exchange for their electoral support, creating a cycle in which public campaign finances are used to secure a victory through methods that compromise the integrity of the electoral process. This phenomenon increases the costs of the electoral process, as it involves resources that could have been used for more substantive and transparent proposals or programmes. In the words of one federal deputy interviewed;

*"The campaign spending cap is not congruent, it is not realistic, you can't run a competitive campaign like this and therefore, you are forced to not report certain expenses"*⁴⁷

Despite INE's efforts to conduct exhaustive audits, the institution's capacity to trace the totality of resources is limited. For every peso declared by a gubernatorial candidate, it is estimated that up to 15 more are moved in the dark, escaping the electoral body's oversight.⁴⁸ As one civil society representative indicated, "a campaign costs ten times more than what is authorised by INE, and INE audits only 10%".⁴⁹ A good part of the undeclared expenses detected by INE correspond to visible elements: unreported billboards, undeclared painted banners, advertisements on social networks, renting of furniture for rallies and unregistered payments to polling station representatives.⁵⁰

Although the design of public financing seeks to prevent candidates from being limited by a lack of resources, the reality is that the centralised control of these funds by parties negatively impacts the competitiveness and autonomy of candidates. In the words of a former federal deputy, "the resources should go directly to the candidates and not to the political party".⁵¹ It is estimated that for every additional million pesos spent on a federal deputy candidate, the probability of victory increases by an average of 19.7%.⁵² However, the discretion with which funds are distributed creates additional barriers. According to one federal deputy: "INE gives the money to the parties and the parties decide with absolute discretion how to distribute it, so many times you are left with

nothing (...). It is difficult".⁵³ In many cases, candidates are encouraged to spend beyond the support they receive from their parties. This can put additional pressure on candidates, who must rely on external or personal sources of funding to compete on a level financial playing field.

While parties provide base funding, candidates, especially in federal elections, must often supplement these funds with additional resources from their own pockets. These expenditures may include advertising, voter mobilisation and the hiring of political consultants. In addition, party endorsements may vary depending on factors such as the relevance of the candidacy within the party, geographic area, internal competition and resources available at the national or local level. Candidates in competitive districts or hard-to-reach areas may face higher costs, as party support is not always sufficient.

This situation becomes even more critical for women, youth and people from indigenous peoples and communities, who face additional barriers in accessing the resources needed to compete on equal terms. The unequal distribution of resources to these groups not only reflects a lack of economic support, but also perpetuates their marginalisation within the political system. While affirmative action and quotas have been promoted in recent years to encourage the participation of these sectors, the underlying problem remains a lack of financial autonomy.⁵⁴ As one activist and former candidate interviewed put it, "there is a lack of resources for young women in general".⁵⁵ Similarly, youth and people from indigenous communities face a double disadvantage: the lack of financial resources and the absence of consolidated political networks that would allow them to access additional or informal funding. One journalist interviewed stressed that "there is a huge disadvantage for these social groups in terms of resources that do not have a close relationship with political parties".⁵⁶

Unequal access to economic resources generates a cycle of exclusion and perpetuates the under-representation of these groups in the country's political life. With less capacity for effective campaigning, their participation is reduced to a merely symbolic role, with no real chance of reaching representative positions. In the 2024 elections, the representation of women, youth and indigenous people in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate recorded some progress with gender equality across both houses notable. However in the Chamber of Deputies, only 26 seats were held by indigenous persons, or 8.7%, and just six in the Senate, 9% of the total seats.⁵⁷

Invisible costs: violence and organised crime as obstacles in Mexican politics

Violence associated with political activity in Mexico has become one of the main costs of participating in the country's public life. From the start of 2018 to 1 October 2024, 2,133 incidents of threats, assassinations, armed attacks, disappearances and kidnappings were recorded against people working in politics, government or against government facilities and political parties.⁵⁸ These

acts are mainly perpetrated by organised crime groups and occur before, during and after electoral processes, reflecting the vulnerability of the political environment in the country.

Mexico has been singled out as one of the most dangerous places in the world for the local political class. According to estimates by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), 62% of the incidents recorded in 2022 were intentional attacks against government officials, in many cases resulting in violent deaths.⁵⁹ A former federal deputy interviewed commented: "I have already seen my friends murdered, kidnapped, imprisoned... that's why I decided not to continue".⁶⁰

The 2023-2024 electoral process was alarming in this regard. According to a study by Laboratorio Electoral, 96 people linked to politics were assassinated, of which 42 were aspirants to pre-candidacy or candidacy.⁶¹ The most dangerous states for candidates were Chiapas, Guerrero and Puebla, where 49% of the attacks took place. The main political parties affected were Morena with 34 victims, the PAN-PRI-PRD coalition with 16 victims, and Citizen's Movement (MC) and the Ecologist Green Party of Mexico (PVEM) with eight victims each.⁶² In this regard, a journalist argued that "the state is being overtaken by organised crime".⁶³

Organised crime uses violence as a mechanism to intimidate, eliminate opponents and favour its allied candidates. In the words of another journalist interviewed, "organised crime is a territorial dispute. The wave of violence is with organised crime, they want to govern the country through the candidates".⁶⁴ The growing violence in the country has forced electoral authorities to implement personal protection schemes as an urgent measure to guarantee the security of participants in the electoral contest. However, as one journalist interviewed argued:

"The greatest cost of doing politics in Mexico is life".⁶⁵

Political violence in Mexico is not limited to widespread attacks on those seeking representative office; gender-based violence is also a profound problem. Although the vast majority of victims of political violence perpetrated by criminal groups are men - those who held or ran for office at the local level - the impact of violence against women politicians is notorious. Women candidates faced a type of violence that, while not always culminating in death, focuses on intimidating them, silencing them and minimising their role in the political arena. With women: "violence is not only physical, but of all kinds".⁶⁶ In fact, women are often symbolically attacked, not only because of their political status, but also because of their gender. A former federal deputy and activist for indigenous peoples and communities said: "I was attacked twice as an activist".⁶⁷

The use of violence as a strategy to exclude women from decision-making spaces is reflected in the increase in attacks during the election period. Although fewer women candidates were murdered than men, the message sent by these acts is clear: power and politics are still perceived as exclusively male domains. The phenomenon of gender-based political violence is based on dynamics of discrimination and exclusion that seek to keep women out of spaces of power and limit their participation in decision-making. According to the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM), this form of violence ranges from physical and sexual aggression to psychological, symbolic

and patrimonial violence, directed specifically at women because of their gender and their political participation.⁶⁸

In the 2023-2024 electoral process, many women candidates reported being the target of symbolic and verbal attacks that discredited them not only as politicians, but also as individuals. Through public disqualification and the dissemination of false news, their image and reputation were affected, with the aim of delegitimising their participation. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), at least 273 cases of political violence against women were documented in the first half of 2024,⁶⁹ ranging from threats and aggressions on social networks to direct attacks. Of this total, 40% of the cases involved aggressions in digital spaces, which shows the magnitude of symbolic and psychological violence in virtual environments.

A distinctive feature of gender-based political violence in Mexico is that it occurs not only in the context of election campaigns, but also once women have gained public office. This violence ranges from harassment at work and threats to force their resignation, to institutional violence, such as obstruction of resources needed to hold office.

The increase in gender-based violence is also linked to the presence of organised crime in politics. Various testimonies from women candidates and officials indicate that criminal groups not only see them as a threat to their territorial and political control, but also as vulnerable and easy targets for intimidation. This type of violence has intensified in regions of high conflict, such as Guerrero, Oaxaca and Michoacán,⁷⁰ where women who challenge the *de facto* power of these criminal groups are often the first to face reprisals.

Gender-based political violence is not an isolated consequence of electoral dynamics, but a reflection of deeply entrenched gender inequalities and stereotypes in Mexican society. For many women, participating in politics becomes a constant struggle not only to win votes, but also to ensure their physical and emotional integrity, as well as that of their families. As one former congresswoman and activist stated:

"The violence we face does not end when we win the election. Another battle begins: the battle to hold and exercise, without fear, the office for which we were elected".⁷¹

In the case of indigenous women, the situation is even more complex due to the multiple discriminations they face because of their gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. Many indigenous women candidates are denied access to political and financial resources and are sometimes pressured to give up their candidacies in favour of men from their own communities or parties. In addition, these women face physical violence and threats aimed at silencing them for their role as defenders of the rights of their peoples and indigenous communities. In the words of a former deputy, "they are not only fighting for political office, but for their right to be heard and to represent their communities on equal terms".⁷² This structural violence pushes them out of the

public space, perpetuating a cycle of exclusion that, in turn, limits the political participation of these historically marginalised groups.

Gender and youth: intersectionality as a barrier to political participation

Gender

Being a woman means facing obstacles that are not socially or culturally part of men's reality in Mexico. In addition, financial disadvantages are more likely to be faced, and there are other barriers that aggravate monetary problems.

There is "violence through culture and society, where women are minimised, infantilised and not recognised as citizens with capacities".⁷³ These difficulties start with the language and the way they are labelled. Women candidates or civil servants are not thought of as women who have reached this point because of their academic and professional careers, they are thought of as "the daughters of, the wives of, the goddaughters of..."; this is symbolic and linguistic violence.

In addition, women continue to face barriers to their role in society. "Doing politics in Mexico means uprooting thoughts that have been built up over the years",⁷⁴ and although there are advances, there are circumstances that maintain the gap. "Public office does not exonerate them from being mothers and from the responsibilities that make them work double or triple shifts. It is still women who find it most difficult to participate".⁷⁵ For Mexican women, the family factor and the assigned role continue to be a driving force that hinders their participation, "you go out into the public sphere and then guilt sets in. The barriers of the family and what a woman should be have a very strong weight. You decide to go ahead and you pay a very high price. Losing your family should not have to be the cost of wanting to participate in a legitimate way in an exercise that is a right".⁷⁶

When it comes to regulations, Mexico has undergone an important evolution reflected in the inclusion of principles such as gender parity, which establish as a requirement that candidates be composed of 50% men and 50% women in local and federal congresses. The constitution also establishes that political parties must guarantee gender parity in their candidacies for different elected positions.⁷⁷ However, this does not mean that there is no work to be done: "parity is the floor, not the ceiling"⁷⁸ as one respondent argued.

"The patriarchy is so benevolent that it reduces us to numbers, but denies us a voice, autonomy, freedom and the vote",⁷⁹ "we raise our hands to participate and they tell us: we are looking for 'so and so' and only if the party forces us to put women in... it is something forced. They consider us a requirement".⁸⁰ On occasions, false or simulated compliance with this principle has even been denounced, where men run for a given party, appealing to self-ascription as women in order to

comply with the requirement and guarantee a space. In the June 2024 election process, eight men won a municipal presidency in the state of Michoacán and were nominated on the grounds that they were transgender women.⁸¹ It is not enough to enter the group and become part of a contest, "it seems that we are already inside the party, but the truth is that it is difficult to get to the top echelons. They put their foot in it and you have to make your way in other ways".⁸²

The existence of an entrenched and institutionalised system, with rigid rules of the game and dominant leaderships that set a very clear pattern, has generated dynamics of violence:

*"If you don't follow the mandate within the party, political violence against women on the basis of gender begins, they ask you to keep silent and they don't let you get where you want to go, they put you and send you where the party decides"*⁸³

Despite the fact that the law requires it,⁸⁴ parties provide little training and support so that women really know what they are entitled to in terms of resources and processes. Furthermore, the budget that should be allocated for this purpose is not transparent. However, for female candidates who have financial independence, there are threats and violence because "the system does not like economic autonomy and it becomes a barrier. Not needing the party's money is counterproductive because you become a threat".⁸⁵

Moreover, in the case of young women, those who have entered politics do not necessarily pave the way for the rest: "women within the parties do not give space to young women and women from outside",⁸⁶ "I encountered obstacles when working with women candidates, what do you know? You are very young and you still don't understand the political game".⁸⁷ In other words, young women face a discredit associated with their age and gender, which comes not only from men, but also from women, and which leads them to be relegated from decision-making "they are not listening to me in the party and I feel alone. She said to me, this is what politics is like and you are still too young to understand it... I thought 'you tell me how to do it, help me. Don't tell me that's how it is and you're going to understand by beating me'".⁸⁸

Young people

Since 2023, the minimum age to become a legislator in the Chamber of Deputies is 18 years old and to lead a ministry is 25.⁸⁹ Adjustments such as these open the door for more people to participate; however, they are not the only answer. Although the different political parties consider in their statutes, measures to encourage the participation of young people⁹⁰, in practice another reality is experienced, "young people are being left out and what is really being thought is 'let them train and wait'".⁹¹

In Mexico, there are two ways of doing politics and being part of a political party. The first is to be a "hothouse" politician, that is, to come from a political family and be part of the party "from the cradle". The second is to be a "wild" politician and to have grown into that path through a series of

circumstances and decisions. For the latter, the cost and the road to a successful career is much higher and more complicated than for the former, as it requires many years of intra-party work, that requires one to enter very young and outlay significant opportunity costs in time and experience, "while my friends were kicking a ball I was in a party meeting"⁹² explained one respondent. But "today, for a 23-year-old who does not have relatives or acquaintances and a track record to support him or her, it is imposible [to enter politics]. The dynamics no longer allow it. If you don't have someone to help you, to be at the top and bring you down the ladder, it's very complicated".⁹³

The data reveals that during the 2024 electoral process, 813 young people between the ages of 21 and 29 participated, or 18.5% of the total number of candidates voted for in 2024.⁹⁴ Although no official data on the number of young people elected was available at the time of writing, it is noteworthy that this was one of the age groups that voted the most in the election, with 61.5% of 18-year-olds participating.⁹⁵ In the previous legislature (2021-2024), 19 members were youth, equivalent to just 3.8% of the total number of seats, a decline on the 21 present during 2018-2021 legislature and the 24 present from 2015-2018.⁹⁶

Politician and corruption: a costly association

A person running for and holding public office also faces demands from potential voters or malpractices of offering something in exchange for a vote:

"During the campaign, of course, they asked me: 'What are you going to give me in return?' They will always expect something".⁹⁷

This generates a vicious circle, giving rise to clientelistic practices that are sustained through the investment of resources and programmes, both public and private, which undermine the electoral process and the system as a whole. Four out of ten Mexicans report having seen candidates or representatives of political parties handing out gifts or favours on the campaign trail.⁹⁸

In Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Mexico ranks 126th out of 180 countries evaluated and it is at the bottom of the list of countries evaluated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. With major corruption scandals and misappropriation of resources, Mexican society considers corruption to be one of the greatest obstacles to development and the reduction of inequality.⁹⁹

This reality is well document but the data collected for this study lead us to identify an additional cost that makes it difficult to participate in politics: the reputation of individuals and the defamation and attacks to which they may fall victim.

"The reputational cost is brutal. Many of us are ashamed to say that I am an MP or a politician. The job as an MP lasts three years, but the shame lasts a lifetime"¹⁰⁰

"They don't put you down as a thief and corrupt. It is a challenge to make a difference and to make them know what each person does. The good and bad that I do, beyond the speech, is reflected on the board and how I voted, whether or not I obeyed the leadership or whether my cause was reflected".¹⁰¹

This cost element is increasingly shaped by social media. Strategies to discredit an opponent are not new, but the use of social networks to viralise them in a short period of time is: "It has been shown that fake news does not have the same impact as information that is denied; people are left with the fake news and think that what is denied is false".¹⁰² These dynamics not only affect candidates and politicians, but also add to the distrust that already exists among citizens towards them. Accessing public office is already complicated. For example a young woman who is just starting her political career and needs the support of networks to give her a boost "has to hang on to other political figures. But that makes you lose credibility and can lead to accusations of corruption."¹⁰³

Perspectives and recommendations

Political participation in Mexico faces a number of cost related challenges that limit equity and inclusion in the democratic process. Corruption, both in its public manifestation and in clientelistic practices, erodes citizens' trust in democratic institutions, while structural barriers based on gender, age and social class exclude broad sectors of the population, especially women, youth and indigenous people, from full access to the political system.

If corrupt practices and barriers to participation are not eradicated, Mexico's democratic system will continue to be weak and ineffective, perpetuating exclusion that affects the most vulnerable sectors. Democracy cannot thrive if a crucial part of the population is excluded or marginalised, either by the costs of participation or by power structures that favour the few. This contributes to a weak and fragmented democracy, where only a minority has the opportunity to participate on equal terms.

In analysing key issues such as the legal cost of candidacy and political parties, electoral financing, violence, gender and youth, and corruption, it is critical to recognise that these factors are interconnected and require a comprehensive approach to address their adverse effects. The proposed recommendations presented are based on a thorough analysis of the current barriers faced by political actors and seek to promote a fairer and more accessible environment. Through innovative policies, promoting transparency and strengthening oversight, it is possible to move towards a stronger democracy in which all citizens, regardless of gender, age or social status, can

participate fully. These recommendations aim not only to mitigate the costs of doing politics, but also to foster a culture of active and responsible participation in the Mexican political system.

Legal and administrative

- **Simplification of registration requirements.** It is recommended that the regulatory framework for the constitution of new political parties be reviewed and simplified to reduce the number of members needed and the number of assemblies required for registration. However, to prevent new parties from simply replicating existing practices, it is suggested that additional requirements be incorporated to promote transparency, accountability and political innovation, such as the obligation to present a clear plan of action to guarantee the effective participation of historically excluded groups, such as women, youth and indigenous people, as well as the implementation of internal mechanisms of democratic control and party ethics.
- **Technical and financial support for new candidacies.** The creation of technical and financial support programmes for independent candidacies is recommended. This could include training in the use of digital tools for signature collection, as well as the provision of financial resources to cover initial administrative costs. These programmes would facilitate access to politics for those with limited resources.
- **Revision of the law on independent candidature.** A comprehensive review of the requirements for independent candidacies is recommended, with the aim of making them more accessible. This could include reducing the percentage of signatures required and extending the deadlines for their collection. Additionally, the implementation of a system that allows for the collection of signatures virtually should be considered.

Funding

- **Implementing a system of direct funding for candidates.** It is suggested that the current model be modified to allow a portion of public funds to be distributed directly to candidates, rather than to political parties. This could increase the autonomy of candidates and ensure that resources effectively reach those who need them for their campaigns. In addition, it is recommended to establish mandatory mechanisms for transparency in the allocation and use of resources that parties distribute to their candidates, ensuring stricter oversight to avoid discretionary practices and to promote equitable distribution, especially for women, youth and indigenous people.
- **Strengthening oversight and transparency in the use of resources.** It is recommended to improve oversight and control mechanisms over campaign financing, ensuring that more effective measures are taken against the use of unreported or illicit resources. This could include the use of advanced technology to track expenditures and the implementation of more rigorous audits by INE. Transparency in the distribution and use of resources is crucial to avoid corruption and promote a more equitable political environment.

- **Establish financial support programmes for diverse candidacies.** Propose the creation of special funds to financially support candidacies of historically marginalised groups, such as women, youth and indigenous representatives. These funds could provide additional resources and campaign management training, helping to level the playing field and encouraging greater representation of these groups in politics. These programmes could be complemented by tax incentives for donations to candidates in these categories.

Insecurity

- **Create a national protection programme for politicians and activists.** It is recommended that a comprehensive protection programme be established that includes personal security measures, legal advice and psychological support for politicians, especially those facing threats or violence. This programme should be administered by an independent and trained body that guarantees confidentiality and effective protection of applicants. With more than 2,100 incidents of violence recorded in the political sphere between 2018 and 2024, it is critical to implement proactive measures to ensure the safety of those engaged in politics. Such protection can help reduce fear and intimidation, encouraging more equal participation in political life.
- **Foster spaces for dialogue and training for indigenous youth and women.** It is recommended that training and empowerment programmes be implemented for indigenous youth and women seeking to engage in politics. These programmes should provide training in leadership, electoral strategies and political rights, as well as create safe spaces to discuss their experiences and challenges. These programmes would not only help to develop political skills, but would also help to break down stigma and prejudice, promoting greater inclusion in the political arena and reducing the perception that politics is not a space for them.
- **Review the candidate selection process to improve security and inclusivity.** It is recommended that the candidate selection process be reviewed and reformed to address security risks and increase political diversity. This process should incorporate rigorous assessments of the risks faced by applicants, especially in contexts of high political violence, to ensure their effective protection. In addition, selection criteria should be inclusive, considering the participation of women, youth and indigenous people, especially in high-risk constituencies. This reform should be backed by the implementation of clear security protocols, access to legal counsel and psychological support, and early warning systems to protect candidates throughout the electoral process. Improving candidate selection will not only strengthen the security of candidates, but will also contribute to a more diverse and equitable representation in Mexican politics.

Women and youth

- **Electoral law reforms to ensure substantive parity.** It is recommended that electoral legislation be amended to not only require numerical parity in candidacies, but also to implement measures to ensure substantive parity in the internal processes of political parties. This includes establishing oversight mechanisms and sanctions for non-compliance with parity rules and specific measures to prevent the simulated use of the rules. The proposed reforms would seek

to ensure that women not only occupy spaces, but that they have a real voice and autonomy in political decision-making processes.

- **Establish decision-making spaces for young people.** It is recommended that formal spaces be created within political parties and local government where young people can actively participate in decision-making and policy-making. This could include youth councils that advise legislators and officials on issues relevant to youth.
- **Better mechanisms to regulate the internal life of political parties.** It is recommended that specific measures be implemented to regulate the internal life of political parties in two main areas. The first is related to measures that address the political violence that is exercised from within and from the party leadership; that actions are implemented that go beyond a fine that does not discourage bad practices. The second point has to do with training, mentoring and follow-up, regulating the destination of the resources that should be earmarked for this purpose within the parties and providing follow-up to ensure continuous, real and effective training.

Awareness raising

- **Civic education on the veracity of information:** It is recommended to implement civic education programmes in schools and communities that focus on the veracity of information, critical thinking and social media management. This would include workshops that teach citizens how to identify fake news and how to discern between legitimate information and misinformation.
- **Anti-vote buying campaigns.** It is recommended that programmes be developed to raise public awareness of the negative impact of vote buying on the integrity of the electoral process and the quality of democracy. These programmes could include public awareness campaigns, complaints mechanisms and training so that voters better understand their rights and can hold their representatives more accountable.

Anti-corruption

- **Strengthen enforcement of measures to tackle corruption.** Accountability mechanisms should be strengthened so that elected officials are properly held accountable to their constituents and not just to political elites or interest groups.

Annex 1

Electoral reforms, 1963-2014

Year of Reform	Changes
1963	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Party deputies were established, facilitating the participation of political forces that until then had little representation in parliamentary activity. Five deputies were granted to those parties that obtained at least 2.5% of the vote and one more deputy for each additional half point, with a maximum of 20 deputies per party. Party deputies were the first effort to introduce proportional representation.
1973	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The threshold for party deputies was lowered from 2.5% of the national vote to 1.5%.
1977	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New parties were legalised, allowing greater opposition participation. The composition of the lower house was changed to give a greater voice to minorities by introducing proportional representation deputies. The Technical Commission for the Monitoring of the National Register of Voters was established.
1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of proportional representation deputies was increased (from 100 to 200). It was established that no party could have more than 70% of the representatives in the lower house. The Electoral Disputes Tribunal was established under the executive branch.
1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) and the Federal Electoral Tribunal were created. The foundations were laid for the new model of professionalisation and organisation of elections.
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Federal Code of Electoral Institutions and Procedures was created. Limits were set on campaign spending and private funding was restricted.
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreements were established for impartial campaign coverage and government advertising was regulated (e.g. 20-day ban on government advertising). The vote of political party representatives within the IFE was eliminated and six citizen councillors appointed by the Chamber of Deputies were established. The Office of the Prosecutor for Electoral Offences was established.

1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IFE was given constitutional autonomy. The presidency was transferred from the Secretary of the Interior (Minister of the Interior) to a presiding councillor elected by qualified majority in the Chamber of Deputies. • A new public funding model was established, increasing resources to all parties and levelling the playing field. • A system for auditing party resources was set up.
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender quotas in legislative candidacies (70-30 formula) were established.
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The requirements for creating political parties were increased.
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The vote of Mexicans abroad for presidential elections was established.
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The communication model was changed with free airtime for parties on radio and television. • The IFE was designated as the sole administrator of media time. • Campaign and party oversight was increased to level the electoral playing field.
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national electoral authority was created, replacing IFE with a National Electoral Institute. • The General Law on Electoral Offences was adopted. • The principle of gender parity was established for the nomination of candidates for the Congress of the Union and state congresses. • Political parties were required to allocate 3% of their funding to promote women's leadership. • The nullity of an election was established if the campaign expenditure limit is exceeded by more than 5%.

Source: Own elaboration with data from Luis Carlos Ugalde and Said Hernández Quintana, coords, *Elecciones, justicia y democracia en México. Strengths and weaknesses of the electoral system, 1990-2020*.

Notes

¹ It was not until 1989 that the first alternation at the state level was registered, when the National Action Party (PAN) won the governorship of Baja California. See Vázquez Ferrari, Carlos Javier. 2017. "El caso de México: del partido hegemónico a la relevancia de la oposición", in *La influencia legislativa de la oposición en las iniciativas presidenciales: el caso de los gobiernos de minoría en México, 1997-2012*.

² Ibid.

³ Vargas Llosa, Mario. 1990. Mexico is the perfect dictatorship'. *El País*. 31 August. Disponible en

⁴ Interview with academic, August 2024.

⁵ Velázquez Ferrari, Carlos Javier. Op. cit.

⁶ Electoral Laboratory. Elections Mexico 2024. The results of affirmative action after 2 June. Available at

⁷ Female leadership at the state level, at 40%, is the highest on record. See Guillén, Beatriz. 2024. Mexico reaches the highest number of female governors in its history. 4 June. *El País*. Available at <https://elpais.com/mexico/elecciones-mexicanas/2024-06-04/mexico-alcanza-el-mayor-numero-de-gobernadoras-de-su-historia.html>

⁸ Interview with academic. 8 August 2024.

⁹ At the exchange rate of 23 August 2024.

¹⁰ Atilano Edwin, Bárcena Sergio, Téllez Julio (2024). *¿Cuánto cuesta una diputación?: gastos de campaña y elecciones en México*, in *Estudios Sociológicos de El Colegio de México* <https://estudiossociologicos.colmex.mx/index.php/es/article/view/2542/2367>

¹¹ At the exchange rate of 21 October 2024.

¹² An average gubernatorial campaign can cost up to 10 times more than the legal cap. The average legal cap for gubernatorial campaigns in the last elections in the 32 entities of the country before 2018 was 46.8 million constant pesos, with variations ranging from 4.8 million in the case of Quintana Roo to 299 million in the case of the State of Mexico. That would mean that the average actual expenditure of a successful gubernatorial campaign could be around 460 million, with variations up or down depending on the entity. Casar M. A. and Ugalde L.C. 2018. Money under the table: Illegal financing and spending in political campaigns'. *Integralia Consultores and Mexicanos Contra La Corrupción*. Available at <https://integralia.com.mx/web/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Dinero-Bajo-la-Mesa.-Financiamiento-y-Gasto-Ilegal-de-las-Campan%CC%83as-en-Me%CC%81xico.pdf>

¹³ Central Electoral. *The Prerogatives Commission defines pre-campaign and campaign spending limits for the 2023-2024 federal election*. National Electoral Institute. Available at

¹⁴ In case they want to run for the Presidency of the Republic, the cost is naturally even higher, with a legal ceiling set at \$660,978,723 (the equivalent of US\$ 34,013,932).

¹⁵ From the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States, the General Law on Electoral Institutions and Procedures and the General Law on Political Parties, to the Statutes of Political Parties and the Agreements issued by the General Council of INE and by the Local Public Electoral Bodies, as the case may be.

¹⁶ Government of Mexico. *Data Mexico, Employment and Education*. Available at <https://www.economia.gob.mx/datamexico/es/profile/geo/mexico?occupationMetrics=salaryOption>

¹⁷ García, Carina. 2024. *Donativos de particulares a candidatos apenas representan 2% de lo que reciben*" 18 June. *Expansión Política*. Available at:

<https://politica.expansion.mx/elecciones/2024/06/18/cuanto-dinero-de-particulares-recibieron-candidatos>

¹⁸ The Electoral Integrity Perceptions Index. Electoral Integrity Project. Available at:

<https://www.electoralintegrityproject.com/pei>

¹⁹ Article 41, section II of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States.

²⁰ In order to obtain the registration certificate, candidates must declare their intention to participate, present the articles of incorporation of a Civil Association, registration with the Tax Administration System and proof of opening a bank account. In addition, they must collect geographically distributed citizen support in accordance with the office for which they will compete. Finally, they must submit an application for registration with documentation demonstrating compliance with constitutional requirements.

²¹ According to the Royal Spanish Academy, it means "the abandonment of one post for another before the end of the initially estimated period".

²² Interview with academic, August 2024.

²³ Weekly poll. *The political chapulines of politics*. Available at <https://desimal.mx/encuesta-semanal-los-chapulines-de-la-politica/>

²⁴ Interview with MP, August 2024.

²⁵ El País. *The map of organised crime in Mexico: these are the red spots to fight*. Available at <https://elpais.com/mexico/2024-10-07/la-huella-del-crimen-organizado-estos-son-los-puntos-rojos-a-combatir.html>

²⁶ Interview with MP, September 2024.

²⁷ Interview with former federal official, August 2024.

²⁸ Interview with academic and civil society person, August 2024.

²⁹ Interview with civil society, August 2024.

³⁰ *Womankind. Intersectionality 101: what is it and why is it important?*. Available at

³¹ Interview with former official, August 2024.

³² Interview with activist and former candidate, August 2024.

³³ Interview with former official, August 2024.

³⁴ Interview with activist and former candidate, August 2024.

³⁵ Interview with official, August 2024.

³⁶ Interview with civil society, August 2024.

³⁷ Information from the Statistics and Jurisdictional Information Unit as of 7 October 2024. "Cases received, resolved, substantiation and jurisdiction by means of challenge and by Chambers". Electoral Tribunal of the Judiciary of the Federation (Tribunal Electoral del Poder Judicial de la Federación). Available at

³⁸ General Law on Political Parties. Article 51, numeral 1, paragraph a), section I.

³⁹ Political Constitution of the United Mexican States. Article 41, third paragraph, Base II.

⁴⁰ Agreement of the General Council of the National Electoral Institute establishing the figures for public financing of national political parties and campaign expenses for independent candidacies for the 2024 fiscal year. Available at: <https://>

⁴¹ Political parties also receive funding for specific activities, such as political education and training, socio-economic and political research, as well as for editorial work. This funding is calculated as 3% of total annual ordinary activities and is distributed according to the percentage of votes obtained.

⁴² General Law on Political Parties. Article 25.

- ⁴³ Public funding for independent candidates is calculated in proportion to what would correspond to a newly registered party and is distributed equally among presidential candidates, senatorial formulas and deputy formulas.
- ⁴⁴ General Law on Electoral Institutions and Procedures. Article 399.
- ⁴⁵ Casar M. A. and Ugalde L.C. 2018. Money under the table: Illegal financing and spending in political campaigns. Integralia Consultores and Mexicanos Contra La Corrupción. Available at <https://integralia.com.mx/web/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Dinero-Bajo-la-Mesa.-Financiamiento-y-Gasto-Ilegal-de-las-Campan%CC%83as-en-Me%CC%81xico.pdf> [accessed 3 October 2024].
- ⁴⁶ *How much does it cost to buy a vote?* Forbes. Available at <https://forbes.com.mx/cuanto-cuesta-comprar-un-voto/>
- ⁴⁷ Interview with federal deputy, September 2024.
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