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Democratic Integrity: Mexico 2024

VOTING FROM ABROAD



Summary

**"The term 'voting from abroad' refers to the possibility for a country's electoral legislation to permit citizens who are outside its territory to exercise their right to vote."
Electoral Dictionary. Ibero-American Institute for Human Rights.**

Globally, Mexico has among the highest percentage of its population living outside its national territory. For this reason, guaranteeing the political rights of citizens living abroad has been a key task for the country's electoral authorities.

Since 2006, Mexicans living abroad have been allowed to vote in presidential elections. Since 2018, they have also been able to vote for the Senate. Various local constitutions have included expatriate voting in gubernatorial and state legislative elections.

In the June 2 elections, 226,661 Mexicans living abroad can vote for 140 elected positions, including the Presidency of the Republic, 128 senatorial seats, 7 governorships, and a single local congressional seat in four different states.

Mexicans abroad will be able to cast a ballot in one of three ways: by mail, electronically through the Internet, and, for the first time, physically in 23 Mexican consulates.

In the Last Glance section, we provide an overview of the schedule and content of the three presidential debates that will take place in the coming weeks.

VOTING FROM ABROAD

The Extension of Voting Rights to Mexican Emigrants

The right of Mexicans abroad to cast votes in the country's elections is a relatively new development and has continued to expand in recent years.

In 2005, the electoral law was reformed to include extraterritorial voting, but only for the president and by mail-in ballots. In 2006, 40,876 people residing in 71 different countries registered to vote. Ultimately, 81% participated, or 32,621 citizens. In the next presidential election in 2012, 59,115 people in 92 different countries registered to vote. A total of 40,714 votes were cast, representing 69.29% of those who registered.

The 2014 electoral reform allowed Mexican migrants to vote not only in presidential elections but also for senate seats and in gubernatorial elections if local constitutions so provided. Changes also included the creation of the National Electoral Institute (INE) to replace the Federal Electoral Institute (IFE). Among the INE's duties was the administration of voting abroad. Thus, the INE assumed responsibility for developing rules for extraterritorial voting in both federal and local elections. In addition, the new institute centralized several tasks, such as the consolidation and shipment of electoral packages and the construction of an online voting system.



Source: Compiled by the author based on information from the Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior. IME.

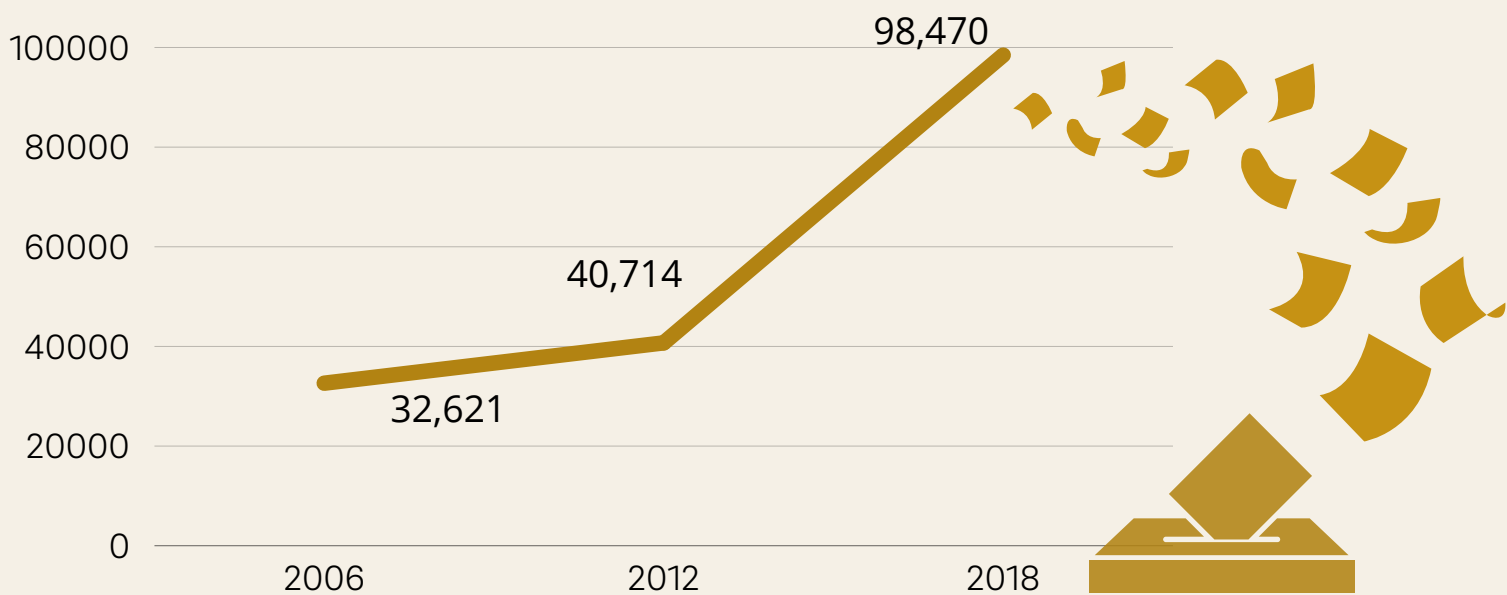
To learn more about voting rights for Mexicans living abroad, please visit: <https://votoextranjero.mx>

The reform also expanded the posts eligible for extraterritorial voting in 2018. Mexicans abroad were able to cast ballots for 137 federal and local positions, including the Presidency, 128 senate seats, 6 governorships (Chiapas, Guanajuato, Jalisco, Morelos, Puebla, and Yucatán), the head of the government of Mexico City, as well as for a single seat in the Jalisco state chamber of deputies. In this election, 181,873 Mexicans living in 120 countries registered to vote, and 54% cast ballots.

The 2021 elections did not include any federal races that were eligible for extraterritorial voting. However, 32,305 Mexicans abroad registered to vote for nine governorships and two state legislatures. For the first time this year, it was also possible to vote online. A total of 18,079 votes were cast (56% participation).

It should be noted that overseas voting was also possible during the 2022 presidential recall referendum—itself an unprecedented exercise—for which only online voting was allowed. For this, 17,809 people registered, and 8,287 votes were cast (46% turnout).

Votes Received From Abroad. Elections to the Presidency



Registering to Vote from Abroad

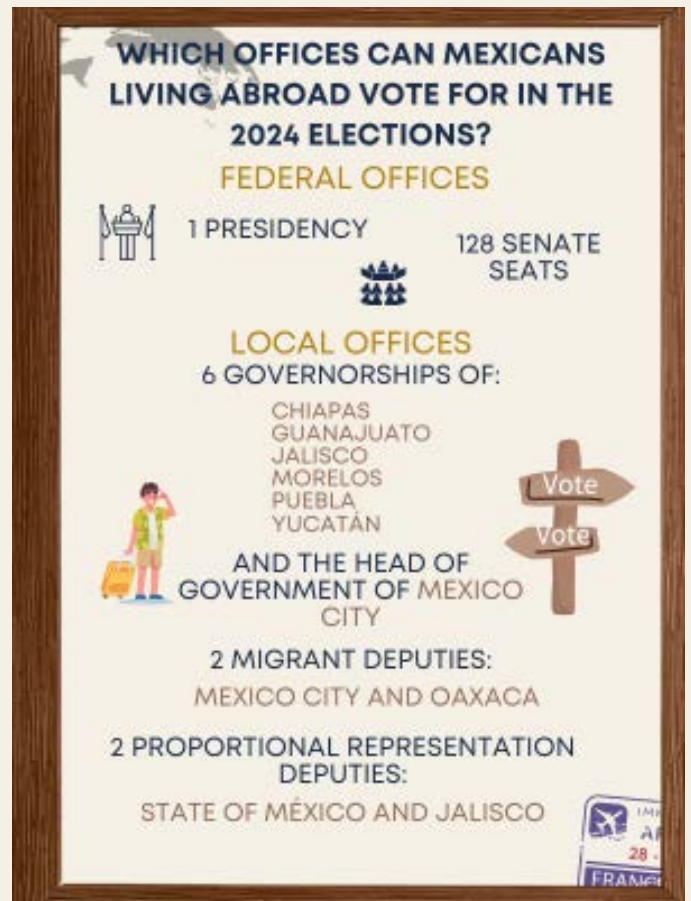
In 2014, as part of the electoral reform, the INE was tasked with issuing voting credentials to Mexican citizens living abroad.

Previously, the IFE only issued credentials to citizens living within Mexico, which meant that many Mexicans abroad were unable to vote in the 2006 and 2012 elections since they lacked valid credentials and did not have the option to obtain a non-resident credential.

Beginning in February 2016, the INE began issuing voting credentials to Mexican citizens outside of the country. Eligible voters were able to register at one of the 149 consulates. The INE is responsible for issuing and delivering the necessary credentials, which are sent free of charge by mail to the person's address abroad.

Between February 2016 and March 2024, the INE issued a total of 1,858,459 voting credentials to individuals living abroad.

As of March 14, 2024, the INE reports that the nominal list of Mexicans living abroad includes 1,479,902 individuals. Of these, 828,202 are men (56%) and 656,700 are women (46%).



Eligibility for Voting Abroad

To ensure the integrity of the extraterritorial vote, Mexican law establishes the following requirements for those intending to cast a ballot from abroad:

- a) Possess a valid voting card, whether issued by the INE in Mexico or abroad;
- b) To register via the INE's internet portal. This step makes it possible to verify the voter's identity. This process also collects the addresses to which the ballot packages will be sent (in the case of a vote-by-mail ballot). Citizens who register to vote abroad are also automatically removed from the regular national voter registry. This guarantees that a person who votes abroad cannot double vote within Mexico.

This online registration process does not apply to residents of Mexico, for whom possessing a valid voting credential guarantees their registration.

Mexican citizens voting from abroad may obtain credentials at either an INE office within Mexico or apply for them at a consulate. In the 2024 elections, of the 226,661 applications for overseas voting, 94,968 were from people with Mexican-issued voter credentials and 131,693 were from people with voter credentials that had been issued abroad.

It is important to note that all political parties monitor the creation of extraterritorial voter lists. Each party can review the lists and submit comments if necessary and the INE is obliged to resolve them. In the case of 2024, there have been observations by the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), which are currently under consideration by the INE.

Types of Voting Systems

The citizens who have registered to vote from abroad on June 2 have already chosen the modality by which they will cast their ballots:

- 22.93% opted for postal voting.
- 69.86% chose electronic voting.
- 7.21% decided to vote in person in Mexican consulates.

a) Vote by Mail

Vote-by-mail was the only option for Mexicans living abroad in the 2006, 2012, and 2018 federal elections. To ensure the timely delivery of ballots, the INE works with private mailing companies and pays for the postage.

Each person who registers to vote by mail, whether for local or federal elections, receives a package assembled and sent by mail by the INE. The package contains:

- 1) The ballots for which the citizen is entitled to vote.
- 2) The ballot envelope: the envelope in which the marked ballot is placed. It does not contain any information about the identity of the voter. The ballot envelope is inserted into the postal envelope.
- 3) Postal envelope: the envelope in which the voter returns the ballot envelope to the INE. It contains a stamped envelope with the sender's details and the address of the INE where the votes will be collected.
- 4) Instructions on how to mark the ballot and return the required envelopes.
- 5) Information on the political platforms and proposals of the candidates, political parties, or coalitions.



Source: Compiled by the author based on information from the National Electoral Institute. INE.

On election day, the envelopes are taken to the voting tables. At these tables, the votes are counted and recorded. Election officials, who are randomly selected and trained by the INE (see Democratic Integrity: Mexico 2024 number 10, "Electoral Training in Mexico"), remove the ballot envelope from the postal envelope in the presence of representatives from the political parties and coalitions. In this way, the envelopes containing the ballots will be separated from the voter's data to guarantee the secrecy of the suffrage.

Once it is no longer possible to link the ballot envelope with the voter's data, the ballot envelopes are opened, the ballots are removed, and the votes are recorded.

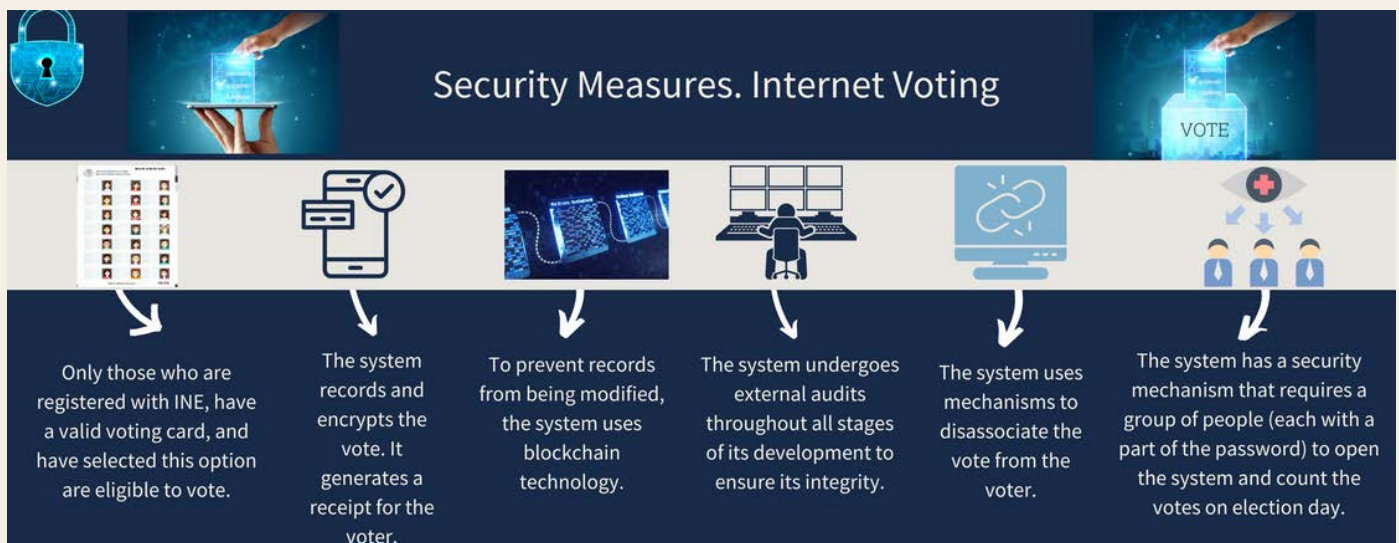
b) Internet Voting

2024 will be the first federal election in which citizens abroad will be able to vote online (they were able to do so for local elections in 2021). Voters within Mexico will not have an online option, however.

To use this method, voters must provide two forms of authentication: an email and a cell phone number. With this information, the INE will send an e-mail with a link through which the voter will access the online voting system.

The system requires voters to identify themselves through a QR code or SMS message to create a password and cast their vote, either from their smartphone or a computer with Internet access.

After submitting their ballot, the voter will receive a receipt from the system to confirm that it has been registered. The votes will be counted on election day, starting at 6:00 p.m. People abroad can follow the counting of votes through the Internet.



Source: Compiled by the author based on information from the National Electoral Institute. INE.

c) In-person Voting

The Electoral Tribunal ordered the INE to implement in-person voting in embassies and consulates. The first exercise was conducted in the 2023 local elections. In the same year, a pilot test was conducted for the gubernatorial elections in the states of Mexico and Coahuila.

June 2, 2024, will be the first federal election in which Mexicans abroad will be able to vote in person in the network of Mexican consulates around the world. The INE has selected 23 consulates (out of the 149 that exist): 21 in North America and two in Europe. The selection was based on the number of Mexicans living in those cities.



Source: Compiled by the author based on information from the National Electoral Institute. INE.

Voting at consulates will take place through electronic ballot boxes. To vote, citizens must present their valid electoral card, whether issued in Mexican territory or abroad. Once identified, they will receive an access code to a voting station. With this code, the computer equipment will indicate which elections the user is eligible to vote for. After viewing the ballot, they will be able to electronically mark and submit it.

As with voters in the national territory, each person who has voted abroad will have their INE card marked, and indelible liquid will be applied to their right thumb.

Last Glance

The INE has determined that there will be three presidential debates in 2024.

Although the law only provides for two debates, the National Electoral Institute decided to hold three, as it had done in the previous 2018 presidential election. The purpose of this is to provide a comparison of the different electoral proposals and encourage an informed vote.

The presidential debates will occur on Sunday evening, on April 7, April 28, and May 19. All of them will be held at 8:00 p.m. Central Mexico time, as the INE calculates that this schedule will allow for the highest television audience.

1 APRIL 7 TOPICS	2 APRIL 28 TOPICS	3 MAY 19 TOPICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education and Health;• Transparency and Anti-Corruption;• Non-discrimination, Vulnerable Groups and Violence Against Women.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic Growth;• Employment and Inflation;• Infrastructure, Development, Poverty and Inequality;• Climate Change and Sustainable Development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social Policy;• Insecurity and Organized Crime;• Migration and Foreign Policy;• Democracy, Pluralism, and Division of Powers.
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION	CITIZEN PARTICIPATION	CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
 Questions from social networks and digital platforms.	 Citizen-submitted videotaped questions.	 No citizen participation.

All debates can viewed online via the INE's digital platform: <https://www.ine.mx/transmisiones-en-vivo/>

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