



SUPPORTING
AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT
FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Enabling Environment Snapshot

Mexico

26 February 2025

Context

In the past year, federal authorities have continued to close off dialogue with civil society. This was evident in the elimination of federal funding for organisations and the dismantling of liaison offices that connected civil society organisations (CSOs) with the government. The political landscape has seen the consolidation of hegemonic power, enabling the approval of [constitutional reforms](#) with minimal opposition in Congress. This environment has affected critical areas such as security, the administration of justice, and the autonomy of constitutional bodies. Socially, there has been a significant [rise in violence](#), characterised by an increase in crime and incidents involving criminal organisations in various regions of the country. The year 2024 was historic for Mexico, marked by an electoral participation [rate exceeding 50%](#) and the election of the first woman as President, who will lead the country for the next six years.

1. Respect for and protection of fundamental freedoms

The [CIVICUS Monitor](#) rates Mexico's civic space as 'repressed' in 2024, a rating that has persisted in recent years. This indicates that there continues to be a deterioration of the freedoms of association, expression and assembly, with persecution of protesters, journalists and human rights defenders, which hinders their ability to act as a counterbalance and agents of change.

The media and journalists have been the target of constant attacks, mainly by the Mexican government at various levels and by political parties, which are responsible for more than 40% of the attacks against their freedom of expression and, worse still, their physical integrity ([Vital Signs, 2024 and Article 19](#)). In 2024, at least 7 journalists were murdered across different states in the country ([Reforma, 2025](#)). This adds to the 561 aggressions in 2023 ([Artículo 19](#)) and a more than twofold increase in new cases of judicial harassment during the current administration during the six-year term. Also, 2024 saw the largest elections in the country, with unprecedented violence against political candidates and journalists. Between March and July alone, 100 aggressions against the press were recorded, most of them perpetrated by government agents (at municipal, state or federal levels) and members of political parties ([Article 19](#)).

Freedom of expression has also manifested through social mobilisations, gatherings, blockades and rallies. However, the total number of such events did not significantly increase between 2023 and 2024, going from 8,103 to 7,473 according to the Mexico City Government. The number of participants in such mobilisations during the six-year term of government was estimated at almost 18 million people, in the capital alone. (Mexico City Government Report, [2023](#) and [2024](#)). Nevertheless, authorities have committed acts of aggression and repression against some social movements. An example is the repression against workers, judges and magistrates, who were demonstrating against the approval of the Judicial Reform that structurally changed the method of selecting judicial authorities ([Reforma 2024, ADN40, 2024](#)).

In terms of digital freedoms, organisations such as RD3 have published reports related to restrictions on freedom of expression online and documented cases of electoral censorship,

including the removal of content by the National Electoral Institute (INE). In this report, the organisation also detailed the functions of a secret division of the army that monitors and manipulates online conversations in favour of the army and the Mexican government ([R3D](#)). These examples have contributed to the country being classified as partially free, according to Freedom House in its latest report [Freedom on the Net 2024: The Struggle for Trust Online](#).

2. Supportive legal framework for the work of civil society actors

The legal framework for civil society organisations (CSOs) has been affected in recent years by a number of new government measures that hinder their development. These include the suppression of the Co-investment Programme for organisations ([Segob, 2021](#)) and the dissolution of bodies that functioned as direct links between CSOs and the government, such as the National Institute for Social Development ([Cámara de Diputados, 2022](#)).

Between 2021 and 2024, around 10 modifications or requests for information from the authorities have caused some organisations to face difficulties in receiving private resources or have resulted in sanctions for non-compliance ([Cemefi](#)). There is also a record of changes to laws that collectively tighten the legal framework for CSOs, such as the modification to Article 151 of the Income Tax Law that limits the amount that individuals can contribute to organisations ([Consejo Cívico, 2021](#), [C. de Senadores](#)), or the proposals that sought to add another supervisory authority, in addition to the tax authority, in the supervision of foreign donations to CSOs ([C. de Diputados, 2022](#)).

Examples of this include the tightening of regulations to verify the proper use of resources by CSOs benefiting from tax incentives, where non-compliance can result in the loss of authorisation to operate; and the dissolution of trusts allocated to support CSOs - such as the case of the Administration and Investment Trust to finance works, infrastructure, projects and priority actions for Social Development and Public Security in Guanajuato - which, in alliance with the government and state companies, granted around 900 million pesos a year ([POGEGto](#)), arguing lack of transparency in the management of resources.

Taken together, these developments may be discouraging CSO growth, which between 2023 and 2024 grew by approximately 0.2 per cent ([Cemefi, 2024](#)). This has raised concerns among groups or coalitions of individuals and organisations that have come together to defend civic space and to demand their right to participate in public affairs. Examples include the [Iniciativa Manifiesta](#), the [UnidOSC collective](#), the [Alianza Surge](#), the [Pulsante Ciudadanía Activa](#) project and the [Causas Ciudadanas](#) coalition which, regardless of the specific cause they work on, collaborate in defending civic space.

3. Accessible and sustainable resources

Access to resources that enable the development of civil society, specifically CSOs, has remained virtually unchanged over the last three years ([CIESC, 2022](#)). This trend responds to the fact that the main sources of CSO income are self-generated income and donations. However, actions carried out in the previous six-year term by former president Andrés Manuel

López Obrador in 2019 led to the suspension of federal public funding for CSOs and social movements, justifying the end of the "intermediation" of resources to final beneficiaries, citing discrimination, opacity and corruption ([DOF, 14/01/2019](#)). This action led to a failure of the authorities to fulfil their obligation to promote the activities carried out by civil society organisations.

According to data from the Federal Registry of Civil Society Organisations, there was a 19% decrease in economic support, from \$1,511 million in 2022, (€ 70.4 million euros), to \$1,221 million in 2023 (€ 56.9 million euros) ([RFOSC, 2021-2023](#)). However, this only adds to the downward trend that developed during the six-year term of the former president, where government financial support decreased by 80 per cent ([Cemefi, 2023](#)).

At the state level, financial support for CSOs also showed a downward trend, with 15 entities having a support programme in 2021, down to only 13 by 2023. However, state-level governmental funding amounts showed an increase, rising from \$390 million (€ 18.1 million euros) to \$447 million (€ 20.8 million euros) in the same period ([ACED, 2023](#)).

As a substitute for the cessation of federal government resources, public funds are being promoted at the municipal level, opening doors to CSOs ([GOCDM, 2023](#)) and, in addition to this, there is private-public cooperation in the creation of trusts funded by self-imposed fiscal contributions from business owners to support civil society.

This demonstrates the level of resilience of the sector in terms of funding. However, there is an urgent need for CSOs to continue demanding the enforcement of laws that foster the growth of the sector. The lack of funding is a major obstacle to the sector's growth which remains small relative to the country's total population.

4. State openness and responsiveness

The openness and responsiveness of the Mexican state presented significant challenges on key issues such as transparency, citizen participation and accountability by 2024.

Autonomous constitutional bodies, which have historically been promoted by civil society and created to provide a framework for the protection of rights, transparency, participation and accountability, have suffered, during both the previous and current governments. These bodies have experienced a loss of autonomy, budget reductions and negative targeting in political discourses ([Verificado, 2024](#)).

Some of the most emblematic cases are: 1) the loss of autonomy and decision-making power of the National Human Rights Commission ([El Universal, 2024](#)). 2) The disappearance of the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Protection of Personal Data (INAI) which guarantees access to public information and whose powers will be transferred to a government agency ([IBERO, 2024](#)) and of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (CONEVAL) resulting in the loss of the evaluation of government social programmes. 3) The significant reduction in the budget of the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), which is the governing body for economic, population and resource information ([CD, 2024](#)).

In terms of citizen participation, although tools such as participatory budgets and popular consultations exist, their impact is limited in terms of capturing citizens' needs. Furthermore, the lack of follow-up to other institutionalised participation spaces has also suffered from governmental indifference. Of the 329 mechanisms registered throughout the country, only 67% are active and, of these, only 162 reported having activity in the last two years ([González Ulloa, 2024](#)).

Accountability faces serious challenges. Although Mexico is part of the Open Government Partnership, corruption perception rates remain high: the country ranks 126th out of 180 in [Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2023](#). Oversight and sanctioning efforts against irregularities are perceived as insufficient given the level of structural corruption.

These factors show that the country is unable to guarantee transparent, participatory and accountable governance, which needs to be strengthened to better address citizens' demands.

5. Political Culture and Public Discourses on Civil Society

Political culture reflects tensions between democratic advances and structural challenges. Although voter turnout has reached significant levels, with 61% participation in the 2024 presidential elections ([INE, 2024](#)) and a 50% satisfaction with democracy ([Latinobarómetro, 2024](#)), trust in government institutions remains low. Only 29% trust political parties, and 34% trust Congress ([ENCIGH, 2023](#)). This trust deficit limits the ability of these institutions to foster active and engaged participation.

In terms of political equality and inclusion, the country has made progress with measures such as gender parity in elected positions, resulting in women occupying 54% of seats in Congress ([INEGI, 2023](#)). However, the representation of indigenous communities, Afro-descendants, people with disabilities, and people of sexual and gender diversity, among others, remains limited. This perpetuates political and social inequalities, which are reflected in the perception of discrimination and exclusion of these groups. National surveys even show that 1 in 4 people from these groups reported having been discriminated against because of their political opinions ([ENADIS, 2022](#)).

Public discourse on civil society faces increasing polarisation. According to data from Article 19, the former president attacked the press during his daily morning conferences nearly 3,000 times during his six-year term ([Vital Signs, 2024](#)). Also, in 2024 López Obrador announced that he would send a diplomatic note to the US government to protest the funding given to the organisation Mexicans Against Corruption and Impunity, arguing that it acts as an opposition organisation in Mexico ([Reuters](#)). Such actions interfere with the work of the organisations, which have been instrumental in working on issues such as human rights, transparency and social development.

Lastly, one of the most concerning aspects is the trend towards violent resolution of conflicts between 2023 and 2024, with assassinations and attacks on human rights defenders. The organisation [Letra S, Sida, Cultura y Vida Cotidiana A.C.](#), reported the death of seven human

rights defenders, including five gay men, one trans woman and one muxe person. [ACUDEDEH](#) documented 68 events against defenders and 180 arbitrary detentions. The [TDT Network](#) also registered 92 murders of defenders. [EDUCA](#) listed the names and causes of 225 activists who were killed. The [Mexican Center for Environmental Law](#) reported that 20 lethal aggressions against environmental defenders in 2023, among other alerts that have been issued and require thorough review to avoid duplication in counting.

The fragile state of human rights is a central issue for organisations and individuals seeking justice and answers to environmental conflicts, disappearances and cases of torture occurring in the country.

Challenges and Opportunities

Civil society organisations face significant challenges related to national and international economic resources essential for their operations. These challenges have arisen due to changes in U.S. and Mexican tariff policies and the suspension of international cooperation for these organisations.

A growing challenge is ensuring the safety of organisations working on the ground, as well as protecting human rights defenders and journalists who find their work compromised by violence and organised crime.

Citizen participation in public affairs also faces obstacles, particularly in monitoring changes in laws, regulations and obligations regarding the right to information. In addition, there are difficulties in monitoring the candidacies of judges elected by popular vote.

There are also agenda-setting initiatives on issues that have not been included in public affairs, such as mobility and migration. Among the opportunities is the possibility of dialogue with the new government cabinet and CSOs on issues of gender, environment, animal protection or the care system, which can foster collaborative efforts.

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