Mexico: Accumulation of debits makes an uncertain future

August 2021 SIGNOS

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The Council is structured with an Executive Committee, and Advisory Committee of Specialists and a Comunication Advisory Committee, and a Executive Director coordinates the operation of these three Committees.

One of the main objectives is the collection of reliable and independent information on the key variables of our economic, political and sociocultural context in order to diagnose, with a good degree of certainty, the state where the country is located.

Vital Signs intends to serve as a light to show the direction that Mexico is taking through the dissemination of quarterly reports, with a national and international scope, to alert society and the policy makers of the wide variety of problems that require special attention.



Weak or absent pulse can have many causes and represents a medical emergency.

The more frequent causes are the heart attack and the shock condition. Heart attack occurs when the heart stops beating. The shock condition occurs when the organism suffers a considerable deterioration, which causes a weak pulse, fast heartbeat, shallow, breathing and loss of consciousness. It can be caused by different factors.

Vital signs weaken and you have to be constantly taking the pulse.

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I. THE DIFFICULT CONTEXT

In this Signos Vitales' (Vital Signals) report, we present the passives of the administration, the notorious build-up of issues, needs, and demands that have not been addressed in just a little over two years and a half of Lopez Obrador's government. Due to the particular and not very effective government style that the president has implanted, the results and achievements are seen as limited and with little impact on the diverse and complex problems that the country suffers. The report analyses the problems as well as the consequences that affect diverse sectors. The costs that imply the passive accumulation over time are especially highlighted, which have been detonated by factors such as the pandemic, visible government passivity, and errors in public policies construction and implementation.

There are three main sections in the report; the first gives a general vision of how the quandary the country faces is conceived, and at the same time defines and exemplifies the criteria used to frame the deficiencies the government has fallen into. A conceptual framework is established where the passives and debits we carry as a country are analyzed, their worsening due to the aforementioned factors, and the difficulties we will face to overcome them. A second section treats the topics about the passives' accumulation, which have to do with the thematic axes

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Signos Vitales continually works: governance, economy, and social axis. For governance, issues related to the constitutional and the rule of law erosion, the importance and fragility of democracy, insecurity, and militarization are covered. The second addresses the limited and weak economic growth as well as its main explanatory factors. Finally, issues addressed focus on generalized impoverishment and country's inequality, the costs the pandemic have left in the healthcare field, and the consequences that the unsuccessful government strategy on education have left. Energy insecurity and environmental deterioration are also addressed. As a final part of this section, science and technology are included as a forgotten sector, underestimated by the current government, and affected by budgetary issues and institutional capabilities.

The last main section, named Lag Accrual and Structural Losses, focuses on points, by way of conclusion, that notes the difficulties to reverse the accumulated lags. Decisions made in the political area, the rule of law, governance, the country's fragility to recover economic growth, problems such as the social mobility truncation, and environmental damages, among others. To conclude, a follow–up on the slight effectiveness and the implementation of questionable Mexico's foreign policy.

The topics presented are posed analytically with a body of evidence, stressing the government inaction to address the different issues arising in the whole country. This deterioration has had measurable and visible negative consequences on Mexican people's living standards and our institutional life in the short future, causing a generational delay to reverse them. The costs for not making the right decisions and postponing answers will be part of the legacy of this government that has not wanted to assess the consequences of its acts in the future of Mexicans.

Due to the particular and not very effective government style that the president has implanted, the results and achievements are seen as limited and with little impact on the diverse and complex problems that the country suffers.

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ACCUMULATION OF PASSIVES IN TIME

Lopez Obrador's arrival to the federal government meant, among other things, changes in the styles and forms of government and, with this, a rigorous transformation on how problems are addressed are prioritized. The importance and priority that the government places on the public problems often differs from the reality that millions of Mexicans live in.

This new way of government is underpinned through a communication strategy that stigmatizes, polarizes, and reproduces misinformation that hide a reality that contrasts against the governmental narrative, has been accompanied by institutional destruction, government capabilities dismantling to give effective results, and a budgetary reduction to institutions and vital programs for the provision of public goods and governmental performance.

This scenario has complicated a quick and expeditious way out of the sanitary crisis, and it has also destroyed the progress and achievements reached in years and previous decades. While many of these achievements were deficient and uncompleted in many cases, they buoyed the country up, marked, and supported direction. The landscape currently presented in Mexico questions the developing levels and growth acquired at least before the pandemic, which seem to be farther and farther to get. The current government has centered more on communicating a message of change more than on building and implementation.

The lack of federal government rescue plans and programs that are adequate and adapted to the current circumstances of the country reflect the inefficiency and passivity with which the national problems are faced. This situation generates costs that can be irreversible in different fields such as healthcare, education, security, war on poverty, environment, among others. The plans are still not considering the setback made for the most part by the pandemic, restricting and affecting the present and future of millions of Mexicans. Topics like employment generation or income transfers, health services deficiencies, educational gap reduction, or students' behavioral or emotional problems are examples where the federal government has not oriented accurate actions, including the required budget to attend this lag. The catastrophic effects the COVID-19 pandemic has left, just as the lack of palliatives and policies

that counteract the impact, have been evident in practically every family in the country. It is already appropriate to speak about Mexico before and after this unfortunate event.

PANDEMIC'S PASSIVES

The pandemic has affected every area in the country, and the effects have been exacerbated due to the slight effective actions taken to face it. This downward spiral of bad decisions has an origin in inadequate policy planning, the same that has omitted the mechanisms and basic instruments to build, implement, and assess such policies. Additionally, the current administration has not achieved (nor pretended) to structure a strategy that unifies important actors as businesses, universities, or local governments, which has been instrumental in other countries to cope with the effects and consequences of the pandemic.

The fact that the institutional capabilities of the current government are surpassed, especially during the pandemic time, provokes that answers and possible solutions to the multitude of problems arrive late or never arrive. The lack of a structured plan to attend to the sanitary crisis made an overloaded and worn out healthcare system redirect its already scarce resources to attend COVID-19 patients with inadequate training and resources, which augmented the mortality rate by the virus and the deterioration of the physical structure.

The passives in medical attention and the families' economic situation from the pandemic have been significant. The government decisions in the face of the crisis, taken or omitted, should also be an object of profound analysis since it has an impact on the welfare and performance of the society and the country.

DEBITS FOR GOVERNMENTAL PASSIVITY

The government has also been a factor that has aggravated the problems by not taking concrete actions and a timely resolution. One of these omissions is related to the affectations in development and economic growth of the country. The clearest example is the systematic rejection by the executive over adopting policies to mitigate the effects of the crisis and promote a progression not just in the economic field, but that impact society's welfare and the rule of law. Many of these actions were implemented and are still driven today in different countries, with better economic management and results than Mexico's.

The passivity with which the government has faced the country's dilemmas has had adverse results. Another example is how the generated violence during the past election was allowed to grow. It was decided not to take concrete actions arguing that it was ordinary during the election season, or blaming conservatism and political polarization. A piece of information that is worth highlighting about it is that, according to Etellekt, the electoral process 2020-2021 registered 1,066 crimes committed against politically related people; consequently, this process can be considered the most aggressive in the democratic era of the country. There is an increase of 38% in the aggression against politicians regarding the previous federal electoral process. 75% of the political violence affected politicians and rivals, candidates to local governments.

An additional example is related to the absence of programs and policies to support the formal and informal workers' income as well as small companies. This situation has caused an unusual poverty increase and a medium-class reduction. Similarly, the women working conditions are still unattended. The sanitary crisis has significantly negatively impacted the employment and women's working conditions, generating a more than a decade setback in progress made in women's labor participation. In 2020 an overwhelming number of women participating in the workforce, as a result of attending house-related demanded care, did not continue with their employment search. According to the National Survey on Occupation and Employment (2019 and 2020) (ENOE for its acronym in Spanish) with the third quarter information, it is calculated, additionally, that the women unemployment rate reached 12% in 2020, a percentage that increases to 22.2% if the same labor participation of women of 2019 is assumed. As a reply, the government continues ignoring these and other additional problems, trying to deliver a truth that does not exist.

LAGS FOR POLITICAL ERRORS

A deficient diagnostic that works as an input to generate effective public policies has as a natural consequence. It produces an incomplete and inefficient solution to the problems that initially were to be solved. In educational matters, as an example, the learning loss that happened with the SARs–CoV–2's arrival because of the school closing and the forced migration to a distance learning online educational format is worsening preexisting differences in the access to education, reducing children and youngsters' opportunities that live in rural or poor communities, or students with disabilities.

The error in the implementation of this educational policy has resulted in a deficient coordination of efforts to temper at the maximum the adverse effects of the pandemic on millions of students. It mainly shows that the National Educational System has been little prepared and willing to face this challenge in a context of deficiency and negligence that have been tolerated from the beginning of the pandemic. Such as lack of teachers, limited budget to attend problems related to education, the shutdown of schools without alternative plans for hybrid systems, the precarious digital adaptation of the educational contents, lack of a policy to moderate the unequal access to the internet with educational purposes, among others.

Another policy that specialists have criticized is the excessive amount of resources, the allotment of new functions, and the management of the Armed Forces projects. There is concern about the direction and the speed that the Army and Navy are acquiring control of strategic areas. The current government carried out institutional, legal, and even constitutional reforms for the Secretariat of National Defense (SED-ENA for its acronym in Spanish) and the Navy Secretary (SEMAR for its acronym in Spanish) to have a regulatory umbrella that allows them to achieve the security tasks they were doing years ago. Some of these have challenged as unconstitutional.

Thus, the proper problems of the pandemic have been added to a series of omission errors or failed policies to mitigate the sanitary crisis, which has not only worsened the current situation but also represents obstacles for the future. The failure at solving problems has been one characteristic that has framed the current government. The governmental achievements three years into the administration are practically null, and where they are, they exist because the political or electoral posture that the president promotes is attended.

INSTITUTIONAL DESTRUCTION DEBITS

The establishment of the still weak Mexican democracy was possible thanks to a lengthy transition process anchored in constructing democratic institutions capable of resolving the political problems pacifically, legally, and equally while governmental bureaucracies were professionalized. These institutions were produced by people's struggles, which led to broad debates between diverse political actors who agreed to disconcert the presidential power. Albeit some of the critical institutions of Mexican democracy already were there, they were subordinated, formally or informally, to the federal executive wishes, while others were formed to achieve specific specialized tasks relevant for the Mexican State.

Vital Signals has identified at least three tactics to weaken a particular executive's counterbalance: the first is to subtract budget to the most inconvenient institutions, the second is to colonize the autonomous branches' governmental organs, and the third and most radical to disappear or subordinate the federal executive institutions structurally. The inertia created by destroying institutions that have worked as a counterbalance and whose objective has been building a better democracy; it is a setback, and it has repercussions in the long term in the country's power. Unfortunately, this path seems to be followed in the local field.

The destruction of institutional capabilities for public goods such as healthcare services, education, security, and the rule of law is added to the destruction of the counterbalance. The budget reduction to the bodies in charge of providing these services in quality and adequacy have affected the actual performance. Unfortunately, they have provoked in certain circumstances setbacks that will take many years to recover. The most notorious case is the dramatic increase in maternal death and the comeback of diseases eradicated due to lack of vaccination.

THE IMMEDIATE DAMAGE

Undoubtedly, the biggest affectation is focused on Mexicans' life quality, the efficiency, and stability of the national institution, the quality of democracy, and the loss of human efforts and financial resources that led to progress in the country. The pandemic and these non-taken or inappropriate-taken actions' immediate damage can be more significant than one may think. Large-scale problems like the environmental impact, the energy management inefficiency, or the questionable foreign policy have been in the neverending list of issues the government has placed in the last position of its priorities.

Thereby, issues such as poverty augmentation and inequality represent a severe many years setback. Should the forecasts of Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval for its acronym in Spanish) and the Institute of Research for Equitable Development (EQUIDE for its acronym in Spanish), of the Ibero–American University in CDMX (UIA for its acronym in Spanish) are materialized, there will be several additional millions of Mexicans in poverty this year.

It is estimated that the National Educational System (SEN for its acronym in Spanish) will continue operating inertially, without planning, with educational lags, without a mitigation policy, and with no extra resources. If these are not solved, it can lead to a generational catastrophe (UNESCO, 2020) and lost learning decades in our students and future professionals (Signos Vitales, 2021b). It does not seem to be far-fetched to talk about a lost generation in 2020 in Mexico. The educational gap has severely widened, and if the pandemic gets longer and the children cannot come back to classes in normal conditions, the damages will be irreversible. The other school dropouts recorded since the beginning of the pandemic forecasts this. The digital gap that already existed has taken many new implications that transform it into an inequality motor-driven.

The economy will take some years to recover the levels it registered in 2019, and the trend of potential output, meaning the capacity of the economy to produce goods and services, has been reduced for the long term. The regional polarization, already present in the last administration, intensifies more and more with growing difficulties to alleviate the differences.

This is the reality that will be addressed through this report. The COVID–19 pandemic is not over yet, but we have at sight lags and difficulties that worsen by the institutional destruction and the effective policies absent to temper the sanitary crisis impact, have already severe repercussions in the present and future of Mexicans' welfare.

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PASSIVES ACCUMULATION

Image: razon.com.mx at https://tinyurl.com/mr4e3t9f



1. THE CONSTITUTIONAL EROSION «

The constitutional and legal erosion that Mexico has experienced in recent years is symptomatic of the little legal appreciation for democracy that many representatives have, and they constitute debits that we will drag in the future. The federal government has conducted transformations to the constitutional and legal framework through mechanisms that have blurred the power separation and have taken the legality of the procedure to the extreme for performing reform on the regulatory framework. The systematic violation of the law and the National Supreme Court of Justice's inaction (SCJN for its acronym in Spanish) concerning abuses done by the significant force in the parliament has allowed the president to carry part of his government program forward (Signos, Vitales, 2021b). This information is relevant for the future because there are still highlighted appointments to make in the judiciary and other constitutionally autonomous bodies during the three remaining years in this administration.

THE SYSTEMATIC VIOLATION OF THE LAW

Mexican governments have not stood out for fully enforcing the law. There are multiple cases of law violation or even constitutional violation that can be listed in the different administrations (Signos Vitales, 2021b). However, the federal executive performed a reformist process that the predominant regulatory actors and the president himself were not interested in fulfilling, not even with the procedural forms to perform constitutional modifications, nor the content of the modification that in many occasions reduce previously recognized rights invade other powers' competence areas and restrict the transparency in the use of public resources. All this despite the cero corruption and illegality acceptance narrative, summed up in the phrase " al margen de la ley nada, por encima de la ley nadie" [outside of the law nothing, and no one above it], whereby Lopez Obrador became president at the beginning of the administration in 2018.

Among the notable cases are the appointments of autonomous bodies members, such as Rosario Piedra Ibarra, current president of the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH for its acronym in Spanish), four commissioners of the Energy Regulation Commission (CRE for its acronym in Spanish) and the Agency for Safety, Energy and Environment incumbent (ASEA for its acronym in Spanish). None of them met the requirements stipulated in the law and Constitution to hold a public office (Vital Signals, 2021b). Similarly, the magistrate Jorge Camero Ocampo's suspension for corruption accusations was particularly relevant, who granted an appeal for legal protection against the building of the Felipe Angeles airport and the acceptance of the resignation in the senate of the minister Eduardo Medina Mora. This last case made

up unavoidable unconstitutionality since the constitutional article 98 establishes that the National Supreme Court Justice minister's resignations will only proceed for severe causes; they will be submitted to the executive. If this is accepted, they will be sent for approval to the senate. This process was not followed thoroughly since the now–former minister did not provide arguments to validate the severe causes of his dismissal.

Concerning human rights, the president and Congress have approved at least nine laws whose provisions violate more than 25 fundamental rights (Signos Vitales, 2021b). It is essential to mention that among the laws that have been appealed, just the National Law of Forfeiture Proceedings has suffered a partial annulment by SCJN. Expressly, article 11 of the law was annulled by establishing the imprescriptibility of the forfeiture proceeding action. In addition, the medication out of the stock situation as a product of the administrative deficiencies inside of the federal government constitutes a violation of the constitutional article 4th, in which is established the State must guarantee the gradual, quantitative and qualitative expansion of the healthcare services for a comprehensive and free of charge care for people that do not have social security.

In addition to this, the current government has violated regulations included in the new Canada–United States-Mexico Agreement (T-MEC for its acronym in Spanish), mainly in the energy field (Forbes, $2021^{\underline{a}}$), by endowing to the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE for its acronym in Spanish) unfounded preferences that give it advantages over its competitors. Currently, the priority order in the energy office in Mexico is defined concerning the production cost. Thus, the companies with less marginal cost will be the first to be attended in the short term. Thus, it commonly happens that the renewable energy plants get cleared first, then combined cycle power plants, and finally fuel oil and diesel plant (these last two represent the most significant CFE share in the market). Energy Industry Law is intended to modify the priority criteria to attend energy plants, giving an advantage to CFE plants despite these polluting the most and representing high costs for the Mexican State.

It is essential to mention that Congress approved the Electricity Industry Law on March 3, 2021, and later, it was suspended definitely by judge Juan Pablo Gomez Fierro, who was subject to accusations made by the president during the morning conference. As a result, the president informed that among the three constitutional reforms he would send to the Congress during his next three years of administration, there is a reform in the electricity field intending to make legal what is not yet legal. Accordingly, by modifying the rules of the game in the electricity matter, chapter 14 of USMCA would be violated, and its appendices that establish the energy sector will have regulatory protection provided by that instrument. If the government loses the investors' lawsuit against the Mexican Estate (in case these arrive at national panels), Mexico will have to compensate the affected companies for sums calculated by some institutions up to 61 million dollars (Gante, 2021).

TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS MADE BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

ACTION/DECISION, LAW/TREATY WHICH VIOLATES, REACTIONS (ANNEX TABLE 1)

LIST OF VIOLATIONS:

- 1. Hydrocarbon Law
- 2. Electricity Reform Law
- 3. Decree on Electricity System Reliability Policy
- 4. April 15, 2021, Judicial Reofrm ("Zaldívar Law")
- 5. Internal Security Law (the SCJN established the unconstitutionality of the contested law)
- 6. Minister Medina Mora's resignation
- 7. Magistrate Jorge Arturo Camero's suspension
- 8. CNDH incumbent appointment
- 9. CRE commissioners appointment
- 10. Agency for Safety, Energy, and Environment (ASEA) Incumbent appointment
- 11. Metrobus cancellation in La Laguna
- 12. Brewing Constellation Brands cancellation
- 13. Medicine scarcity
- 14. Ask passenger transport companies for IDs to all who will travel across the country in public transportation.
- 15. Remuneration Law
- 16. National Guard Law

- 17. Public Force Use National Law
- 18. General National Public Security System Act
- 19. Detention Record National Law
- 20. National Code of Legal Procedures and Fiscal Code Reform
- 21. Forfeiture Proceeding National Law
- 22. Republican austerity Federal Law
- 23. Ovidio Guzmán Loera's liberation
- 24. Teachers Professional Carreer Law
- 25. Federal Law on Budget and Treasury Responsibility Reform
- 26. To make excessive or not justify the use of awarding a contract without bidding
- 27. The disappearance of the Educational Physical Infrastructure National Institute (Inifed for its acronym in Spanish) provoked transferring its tasks and budgets to students, parents, and teachers from the schools.
- 28. President's intervention in the intermediate election of 2021 through propaganda acts during the morning conferences, he gives..

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29. Popular referendum to "send to trial" former presidents

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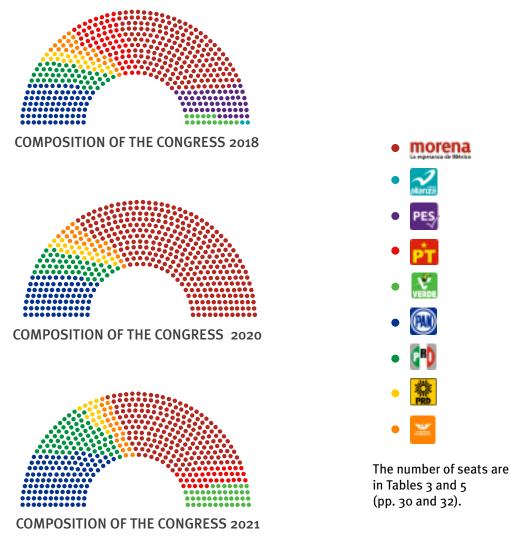
- 30. Decree with reforms that removed diverse protection of civilian persons, advocates of human rights' trusts and journalists, technology and science development and the former migration workers support fund.
- 31. The Federal Expenditure Budget 2021 does not include resources for developing the local policies and stipulates the removal of the Strengthening of Public Safety Performance Program (Fortaseg for its acronym in Spanish).
- 32. Reforms aimed to take all the port administrative positions in the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (SCT for its acronym in Spanish) to the Marine Secretary (SEMAR for its acronym in Spanish).
- 33. The personal protection supplies sourcing to the sanitary personnel that combat the COVID-19 omission.
- 34. A decree that commands to create the Mobile Telephone Users National Roll (Panuat).

- 35. A decree to issue the New Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office.
- 36. "Nahle" Decree
- 37. The National Fund for Tourism Development (FONATUR) general director announced that the army would receive the obtained resources from Tren Maya's operation. In addition, all the railways will be Sedena's property.
- 38. The president used religious imagery and phrases in a spot to justify his government's labor.
- 39. The Financial Intelligence Unit froze the Delicias local council in Chihuahua due to protests caused by the water in the dam La Boquilla conflict.
- 40. Use of "servants of the nation" as electoral propaganda in the vaccination process,

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Aristegui Noticias (2019b), Artículo 19 (2020), Alcalá (2019), Casar (2020), Caso (2020), Causa en Común (2021b), CNDH (2018), DOF (2020a), DOF (2020b), DOF (2020c), Damián (2021), Dosal and Castellanosz (2021), El Siglo de Torreón (2021), Espino (2021), Expansión Política (2019a), Forbes (2019), Forbes (2021a), Galván (2021), García (2020), La Jornada (2021), Marin (2021), Nava y Vela (2020), Padilla (2021), Pantín y Quesada (2021), Ponce (2020), Reyes (2020), Tourliere (2021), Vanguardia (2020), Vela (2021), Vivanco (2019).

THE MAJORITY IN CONGRESS AND INACTIVITY IN THE COURT: THE COUPLE

All the legal modifications supposedly unconstitutional that have been done during this administration have been possible thanks to two factors: 1) the gualified majority the president built up in the Congress after the 2018 elections, and 2) the SCIN inaction on the objections against the decision, reforms, and relevant laws for the federal government. According to the information provided by the Parliamentary Bureau (2019), despite Morena got 181 seats in the Deputies' Chamber in the election by the legislature in September 2018 beginning, due to de deputies transfer coming from PT and PES, the majority party already had 248 seats, and by the end of the first legislative year (April 1, 2019) it already had 259 seats (come of them coming from PVEM and PRD). By 2020 the coalition led by MORENA in the Deputies Chamber (that included PT, PES, PVEM parties – the latter voted with MORENA in the 90% of the voting-) already had 332 deputies, of which 334 were necessary to modify the Constitution in case during the voting process would exist 100% of attendance.



Although the construction of the legislative majorities is a natural part of the parliament functioning and not illegal, in the jurisdictional field, there are some early signs of thinking that there is a block that acts in favor of president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador in SCJN. In the beginning, the president himself intervened in the Court's decision to impede the return of 35 thousand million pesos to the company Modelo (Expansion, 2019^a).In addition to the 11 ministers, three have been appointed during the current administration. This means they have been proposed by Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO for his acronym in Spanish), and it is felt the Court's president, Arturo Saldivar, has not been blunt opposing to comments and federal executive actions to intervene in competencies of the Judiciary Power. The paradigmatic case was the consultation to clarify the political decision from the past approval, which AMLO communicates as a consultation to send former presidents of Mexico to trial.

Many legal and constitutional framework modifications made by the political force have been refuted and taken to the SCJN. However, the highest Court has not resolved a series of issues that could be considered the heart of the project called the fourth transformation. The Court has not given any decision since 2019 on critical national topics due to the enormous number of human rights that are considered violated. The actions and constitutional controversies against the Use of Force National Law, the Public Safety National System General Law, the National Guard Law, and Detention Record National Law are excelled. In addition, the inaction of the Court has left in force these dispositions.

Consequently, they are applicable while there are no rulings from the highest constitutional court in the country. In this respect, the decision–making delay made by the Court has been interpreted as validation de facto of the legal and constitutional framework that the current government has built and beyond they can be reverted in future, it is expected that the majority of the administration or the complete administration concur with dispositions that different empowered to do it actors have refuted. This situation constitutes, for many specialists, the country's constitutional framework erosion.

REGULATORY ADJUSTMENTS TO MAKE THE UNCONSTITUTIONAL, EFFECTIVE

The Mexican institutional design of the transition considered that no political force could have the majority in the Senators Chamber, so the political parties must negotiate the upper Chamber. In addition, making modifications to the Magna Carta requires the training of qualified majorities in the Deputies Chamber and the Upper Chamber, the approval of half of the local legislation, and that the federal executive does not veto it. Naturally, modifying the Constitution requires that many wills are aligned. Despite not having the majority ensured, the president has dared to reform the Constitution by openly unconstitutional routes. The flagship cases are on one side, the Judiciary Power Reform that included one of its transitory articles, the extension of the SCJN president for two more years. This means that he will be in the position for six years. The federal judiciary counselors, whose period will pass from five to seven, and on the other side the Electricity Industry Reform that through a transitory article tried to reform constitutional aspects.

As established in the Constitution in its article 94, the Minister-President of the SCIN must serve four years without immediate reelection possibility. Similarly, constitutional article 100 establishes that the counselors of the federal judiciary will serve for five years. Suppose the Court endorses the Zaldivar and the federal judiciary counselors serving extension, the submission of the judicial power dome before the president could be assumed. This tricky mechanism to modify the constitutional sections together with the SCIN inaction constitutes an effective strategy to govern above the constitutional and legal framework. That is to say, if the majority political power includes transitory articles that infringe the Constitution and the Court does not solve unconstitutionality actions and unconstitutional controversies, then the government can act using the less regulatory rank modifications violating the constitutional supremacy severely. Again, constitutional framework erosion is discussed.

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LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AND PENDING APPOINTMENTS

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In the next three years of government, the federal representatives will have to solve a series of issues of significant political and social relevance. Among these excel everything related to legalizing abortion and marihuana, and the appointment of diverse constitutionally autonomous bodies' members and the SCJN that, because of their attributions and counteract-role to the presidential power, they will be very relevant for the public opinion and the political dynamic for the rest of the administration.

It stands out that on the opposite to the demands of a significant part of the electorate that supported AMLO and MORENA in the 2018 elections, various issues related traditionally to left–wing parties such as legalizing abortion, marihuana, and euthanasia have had little public support from the president. High– level public servants such a the Ministry of Interior have indeed defended abortion and marihuana legalization openly. Some initiatives have been presented to legalize and increase abortion penalization, but the topic has remained frozen in Congress, and the president has not made it a legislative priority. Meanwhile, one thousand 732 women have been reported for the abortion crime from December 1, 2018, to May 31, 2021 (SESNSP, 2021). The criminalization of women for exercising their rights on their bodies is still a reality in this country. The president has not been clear about drug legalization, specifically marihuana, but recently the Court decided to declare unconstitutional the prohibition of using marihuana recreationally. As a result, Congress will have to eliminate included dispositions in the General Health Law.



Image: The Senate approves cannabis legislation in El Confidencial at https://tinyurl.com/3eb3yaum

Similarly, during these three years of federal administration, the appointments of news executive or upper management positions in five constitutionally autonomous bodies, excelling the Governor of the Bank of Mexico, president and councilor of National Electoral Institute (INE for its acronym in Spanish), president of INEGI and one seat in the National Supreme Court of Justice. There will be required appointments also in the Federal Institute for Access to Public Information and Data Protection (INAI for its acronym in Spanish) and in the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI for its acronym in Spanish). The renewal in these institutions will need the gualified majority approval from one or two Mexican Congress' Chambers and due to the celebrated elections in lune 2021 did not result in a majority by any political force, the president will have to build majorities with diverse parliamentary forces to take his favorite appointments forward.



TABLE 2. AUTONOMOUS BODIES PENDING APPOINTMENTS

AUTONOMOUS BODY	CHARGE	
Bank of Mexico (Banxico)	One Governing Board member is missing	
Instituto Nacional de Transparencia, Acceso a la Información y Protección de Datos Personales (INAI)	One Governing Board member is missing.	
Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE)	Two commissioners are missing.	
Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI)	Four counselors are missing	
Consejo Ciudadano de la FGR	One Governing Board is missing and the presidency will be renewed.	
Source: In-house elaboration with data from Co	lín (2020).	Complete c

The renewal in these institutions will need the qualified majority approval from one or two Mexican Congress' Chambers.

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2. DEMOCRACY IN TENTERHOOKS

ELECTION'S X-RAY

On the 6 of June, because of the political post number, the most important election process in the Mexican democratic era was celebrated. In addition, the total renovation of the Deputies Chamber. Fifteen gubernatorial, 30 local legislatures, and a thousand 926 local councils (Infobae, 2020). The results of these elections were fascinating because they aligned many of the federal government capabilities that it will have to continue with its governmental program, characterized by a constitutional and legal framework accelerated modification. Over only three years (2018–2021), 55 constitutional reforms have been performed, and 2019 became the third year

with more reforms of this type since 1917 (Deputies Chamber, 2021).

In the federal field, MORENA was repeated as the most voted party. Concerning the whole voting process for each party, the party in power showed a big muscle again, obtaining 6 million 571 thousand 127 votes, and this means 2 million 742 thousand 899 more than PAN, 3 million 856 thousand 4 more than PRI, and 6 million 3322 thousand more than PRD. MORENA by itself won 64 electoral districts, while the whole coalition of Va por Mexico together obtained 63 districts (Enfoque Noticias, 2021).

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The parties that augmented their presence in the Lower Chamber are MORENA, PAN, PRI, PVEM. While in 2018, MORENA individually as a party obtained 191 seats (INE, 2018), in 2021, should the Electoral Court not modify INE's rulings, the party in the government will obtain 198 seats. Therefore, as a brand, MORE-NA did not suffer any setback in spite of the fact that this is an intermediate election, which usually does not favor the party in the government. For example, in the intermediate elections in 2003, PAN had 153 seats, 71 seats less than in the 2000 elections. In 2009 the party in the government, PAN, again obtained 143 councils, 63 less than in 2006. In 2015, the PRI party in power obtained 203 seats in the Lower Chamber, 38 less than in 2012 (INE, 2021). That is to say, from the presidential transition in 2000, the only party occupying the federal government that increased its seats in the intermediate elections has been MORENA.

The Chamber's composition will continue benefiting the governing coalition, but to perform constitutional reforms and approve its appointments to constitutionally autonomous bodies, just as in 2018, will need a post-electoral qualified majority.

TABLE 3. VARIATION IN THE ELECTORAL COMPOSITION

IN THE DEPUTIES CHAMBER BY PARTY BETWEEN THE 2018 AND 2021 ELECTIONS

PARTY		OBTAINED SEATS IN THE 2018 ELECTIONS	OBTAINED SEATS IN THE 2021 ELECTIONS	
	orena	191	198	
PVEM		16	43	
РТ	ΡŤ	61	37	
PAN		81	114	
PRI	(P)	45	70	
PRD	禁 PRD	21	15	
MC	*	27	23	
Encuentro Solidario Party*	PES	56	0	
Redes Sociales Progresistas	(N/A	0	
Fuerza por México	FUERZA MEDQICO	N/A	0	

Note: *Encuentro Solidario Party lost its registry after the 2018 elections, and its leaders formed the Encuentro Solidario Party that took part in the 2021 elections.

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Instituto Nacional Electoral (2018) y (2021).

TABLE 4. CONSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS THAT REQUIRE QUALIFIED VOTING IN THE CONGRESS

DEPUTIES **SENATORS** BOTH » Choose minister and presi-» Remove the IFT and Cofece counselors » Approve laws and decrees dent Coneval. previously rejected partia-» Name IFT's president lly or totally by the Federal » Choose immediate internal Executive. » Name Cofece's president control bodies in the IFT and Cofece incumbent » Admit new States in the fede-» Name Federal Court of Fiscal and Administrative Justice's superior court magistrate. ral union. » Choose ministers and the INE » Name the federal executive from any state so when all the entity's constitutional powers have president's minister of the » Form new states inside the disappeared, the elections are called. **General Council** limits of the already existing ones. » Appointment of SCJN's ministers » Choose an incumbent of the » To change the residency of internal body of Ine's control. » To Appoint the Bank of Mexico's governor and lieutenant governor. the supreme powers of the » Appoint the incumbents of federation. » Authorize the amicable agreement celebrated by federative entities on their limits. the ASF » Public debt matter: to appro-» Appoint the Attorney General's Office incumbent ve the indebtedness amounts » Appoint the jurisdictional electoral authorities, among which superior court and regional annually. courts. » Declare war depending on the data the current presi-» Object the appointment or removal of a specialized prosecutor in corruption combat and elecdent shows. toral crimes. » To concede amnesty for cri-» Appoint CNDH's advisory council's counselors and CNDH's president. mes whose knowledge is the » Make an impeachment and, where appropriate, establish and execute penalties. The impeafederation tribunals. chment can be done (constitutional article 110) against: » To appoint a new president in » Congress of The Union Senators and Deputies case of absolute absence. » The Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation ministers, » To accept the resignation of » Federal Judiciary counselors the president. » Office clerks

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As a coalition, Juntos Haremos Historia reduced its legislative presence since it obtained 278 seats, that although they represent the absolute majority (more than 50% of seats) (INE, 2021), it is far from the 308 seats that the coalition led by MORENA achieved in 2018 (INE, 2018). In this sense, to reform the Constitution and appoint members to the Supreme Court and to various constitutionally autonomous bodies, the president will have to conform to new majorities unless he is willing to violate a legal and constitution-al procedure to perform those actions.

Geographically, MORENA's victory is more evident. From the 15 gubernatorial posts at play, it is estimated that if the electoral jurisdictional authority does not modify the results, the president's party will have 11 local governments and 12 if the San Luis Potosi government won by a PVEM candidate is included. PVEM is linked politically to the dominant force. Concerning the local congresses, MORENA became the majoritarian force in 19 of these, enough to get the regional approval that constitutional reforms require. In sum, even though the governing coalition lost a confident presence in the lower Chamber, it kept an absolute majority, and it improved its presence in local governments. Despite all this, the no hegemony of MORENA and its coalition allows con-

TABLE 5. VARIATION IN THE ELECTORAL COMPOSITION IN THE DEPUTIES CHAMBER BY COALITION BETWEEN THE 2018 AND 2021 ELECTIONS

COALITION	OBTAINED SEATS IN 2018 ELECTIONS		COALITION	OBTAINED SEATS IN 2021 ELECTIONS*	
MORENA	191		MORENA	198	
РТ	61	308	PVEM	43	278
PES	56		PT	37	
PAN	81		PAN	114	
PRD	21	129	PRI	70	199
MC	27		PRD	15	
PRI	45				
PVEM	16	63	MC	23	23
PANAL	2				

Note: The final account is subject to the Electoral Court's ratification (TEPJF).

Source: In-house elaboration with data from the National Electoral Institute (2018 and 2021).

sidering that the current state of the political system stays competitive and with confident parliamentary pluralism where different projects can be represented. However, the majority force counts with unusual power instruments in the Mexican democracy of the XXI century.

On the other hand, despite the comparatively good performance for MORENA, the results in some of the country's biggest cities seem to show that the electorate does not agree with the arrangements or political platform from MORENA. The most relevant case is in Mexico City, traditionally on the left–wing, where the president's party only obtained seven from the 14 municipalities of the capital. MORENA also lost the elections for the Monterrey Guadalajara, Querétaro, Puebla, Morelia, Guanajuato and Cuernavaca municipalities.

It should be noted that, as shown by Lantia Intelligence (2021), it is presumed that organized crime made it through different parties. At least 15 winning candidates are linked to criminal groups which seem to have operated in favor of candidates that represented less risk of changing. Integralia Consultores (2021) reported that the criminal groups have seemed to slip through in Mexican electoral politics



Image: June 6th elections in El Sol de México at https://tinyurl.com/3jm2sat6

because by influencing the political power, they have access to privileged information, mainly related to public safety. They can have shelter and protection from local or State police officers and access to numerous resources.

Concerning political violence, the numbers are alarming. In this electoral process, the consultancy firm Etellekt (2021b) registered 1,066 crimes committed against political persons so that this process can be considered the most aggressive in the democratic era

STATE	MUNICIPALITY	CAI	PARTY	
SAN LUIS POTOSÍ		RICARDO GALLARDO	Imagen: https://tinyurl. com/63r57ra3	PVEM
SINALOA		RUBÉN ROCHA MOYA	Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/ mzbt67pf	MORENA
ESTADO DE MÉXICO	IXTAPALUCA	FELIPE ARVIZU	Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/ fzj4x4xp	MORENA
ESTADO DE MÉXICO	TLALMANALCO	LUIS ENRIQUE SÁNCHEZ	Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/ 2f9e9efn	MC

TABLE 6. WINNING CANDIDATES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME 1/4

TABLE 6. WINNING CANDIDATES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME 2/4

STATE	MUNICIPALITY	C	PARTY	
GUANAJUATO	VALLE DE SANTIAGO	EMMANUEL REYES	Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/ uk8vyhyb	MORENA
GUERRERO	COCULA	ULISES RAMÍREZ	Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/ d7zfuadv	MC
MICHOACÁN	AQUILA	JOSÉ MARÍA VALENCIA	<i>Imagen:</i> https://tinyurl. com/4ua9vknb	PVEM
MICHOACÁN	COAHUAYANA	GILDARDO RUIZ	Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/ d9s7wya5	FPM

STATE	MUNICIPALITY	C <i>i</i>	PARTY	
NUEVO LEÓN	SALINAS VICTORIA	RAÚL CANTÚ DE LA GARZA	Imagen: https://tinyurl. com/2w8c59zx	MC
PUEBLA	ZAPOTITLÁN SALINAS	EDUARDO VÁZQUEZ	<i>Imagen</i> : https://tinyurl. com/8s767pmm	PRI
PUEBLA	VENUSTIANO CARRANZA	ERNESTO GARCÍA	Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/ y62z2n2v	MORENA
PUEBLA	TECAMACHALCO	INÉS SATURNINO	Imagen: https://tinyurl. com/8mbs2s8a	PSI

TABLE 6. WINNING CANDIDATES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME 3/4

QUINTANA ROOTULUMMARCIAN DZUL CAAMALImagen: https://tinyurl. com/8rkwzhzvMORENAVERACRUZACULTZINGOLUIS ALFREDO CRUZImagen: https://tinyurl. com/8rkwzhzvPRSPYUCATÁNCHUMAYELJULIÁN CANO CHANImagen: https://tinyurl. com/ac6dzwyoMORENA	STATE	MUNICIPALITY	C.	ANDIDATE	PARTY
YUCATÁN CHUMAYEL JULIÁN CANO CHAN MORENA Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/ m8nkcwkz MORENA	QUINTANA ROO	TULUM	MARCIAN DZUL CAAMAL		MORENA
Imagen: https://tinyurl.	VERACRUZ	ACULTZINGO	LUIS ALFREDO CRUZ	Imagen: https://tinyurl.com/	PRSP
	YUCATÁN	CHUMAYEL	JULIÁN CANO CHAN	Imagen: https://tinyurl. com/436d7wv9	MORENA

TABLE 6. WINNING CANDIDATES LINKED TO ORGANIZED CRIME 4/4

in the country. The aggression against politicians regarding the federal electoral process increased 38%. Six hundred ninety–six aggressions against popular post candidates and aspirants were registered. Thirty–six were mortal victims, from which 80% were political opponents to the state governments. In this sense, the electoral process 2021.2021 is the second, with more homicides against politicians reaching the 102 figure. Only the electoral process 2017–2018 is worse, when 152 homicides were registered against politicians.

Etellekt (2021a) also reported that Veracruz, Chiapas, and Oaxaca were the states with more assassinated politicians during the 2020–2021 electoral process, with 18, 12, and 11 assassinations, respectively. Similarly, the states with a more considerable percentage increase of assassinations against politicians regarding the previous federal electoral process (2017– 2018) were Chiapas and Baja California, with a growth of 500%.

As mentioned on different occasions, the electoral competition at the municipal level is the most dangerous for the aspirants and candidates to popular election posts since 77% of the aspirants and elected candidates that were attacked competed for a municipality post. Regarding the victim's militancy, it can be said that all the parties forces faced the violence wave. Albeit MORENA militancy was the most attacked since 1 of every four aggression were directed toward them, there were more assassinations from the opposition alliance to the federal government (PAN–PRI–PRD), with 47 assassinations that represent 46% of the total, than the coalition in the power that represents 26, that is to say, 25% of the total (Etellekt, 2021b).

In this electoral process, there were registered 1,066 crimes committed against political persons so that this process can be considered the most aggressive in the democratic era in the country:

77% of the aspirants and elected candidates that were attacked. Etellekt

As observed, it seems that the criminal aggressions against the candidates have become an efficient strategy to prevent uncomfortable representatives for crime groups from winning. As reported by Integralia Consultores (2021), the victory margins in 64% of the municipalities were aspirants or candidates to municipalities posts assassinations were registered were more than the national average. In addition, only in ten of these municipalities did the victim's party won the election. From 28 municipalities where assassinations of aspirants or candidates to municipalities posts were reported, MORENA won in eight; PAN will govern in seven, MC in five, PRI in four; PVEM in three; and Unidad Ciudadana in one. It also stands out that MORENA won in six of the ten states with the highest rates of intentional homicide, and it also won in 22 of the 50 municipalities with the highest incidence of offenses rates in the countries.

Finally, as expected, some of the players were unsatisfied with the results. The most famous cases were those in the gubernatorial elections of San Luis Potosi, Michoacan, Campeche, Sinaloa, Guerrero. In all of these, the opposition parties demanded to cancel the election mainly for reasons related to one side on the campaign expenditure overtaking and, on the other side, the organized crime intervention in the election. MORENA militancy was the most attacked: 1 of every 4.

There were more assassinations of the opposition alliance to the federal government (PAN-PRI-PRD), with 47 assassinations that represent 46% of the total.

The most mediatic case was Michoacan's case where the still governor Silvano Aureoles accused the winning candidate, Alfredo Ramirez Bedolla, of having colluded with organized crime to operate the election in his favor. As a reply, the president of Mexico demanded proof and Aureoles went to the jurisdictional authorities and to the National Palace to talk to the Federal Executive incumbent, arguing that much of the proof and information he possesses may affect national safety. Lopez Obrador did not receive him. It is essential to mention that the local electoral tribunals dismissed the canceling demands in Michoacan, Guerrero, Campeche, and Sinaloa.

REFORM TO INE

The National Electoral Institute has been constitutionally one of the autonomous bodies that have received more hardships from the majority force and concretely from the president in the current administration. As reported previously, the public displeasure the president has shown to the administrative electoral authority is not new; it comes at least from 2006. What stands out is that now as president, Lopez Obrador did not stop attacking INE publicly; it has been one of his favorite targets during his morning conferences. According to SPIN, up to March 31, 2021, AMLO mentioned INE 167 times, insisting that it is a costly body that is inefficient and corrupt. He even accused the institute of violating his freedom of speech after being requested to stop propaganda in morning conferences during election silence.

The four routes that the majority force has followed to attack INE have been the budgetary route, the warning to disappear the INE's General Council or the INE itself, the threats of impeachment, and the indirect threats to the INE council's integrity.

(PEF) OF INE 2019-2021 2019 2020 2021 30 15,363.0 16,660.8 26,819.8 25 20 15 10 5 0 Source: In-house elaboration with información from PEF (2019, 2020, 2021).

TABLE 7. COMPARISON OF THE FEDERAL BUDGET

Although INE has experienced a significant budgetary increase year by year, the institute has mentioned the resources it has been limited for the number of tasks it has to achieve. Apart from this, accurate or not, it is true that INE has had to organize an election in three years of this administration which represents important budgetary cuts, and it has had to organize the popular consultation on the 1 of August.

In the same way, the public proposals to structurally reform INE by disappearing its General Council or disappearing the institute have been taken as possible elements of an electoral–politic reform. The legislator from MORENA Pablo Gomez proposed to replace INE' General Council (CG) with a General Executive Board as an authority exclusively technical and professional since he considers the CG is a body integrated by politicians disguised as technicians. Parallelly, the president himself, on the same path as Gomez, suggested the INE's disappearance so the judiciary power could absorb its function.

The threats of impeachment against counselors took greater relevance after INE took back some contestants' applications of diverse political forces. The most conspicuous, MORENA's candidates to the Guerrero and Michoacan's governments, Felix Salgado Macedonio and Raul Moron, respectively. The MORENA's president himself, Mario Delgado, and the party's general secretary Citlali Hernández warned that they encourage the deputies of their parties to impeach some counselors like Lorenzo Cordoba and Ciro Murayama for considering them disguised MORENA's opposition militants.



Image: Raúl Morón in El Sol de Zamora at https://tinyurl.com/9cs3swt4

Image: Félix Salgado Macedonio. Photo: José Luis de la Cruz in Proceso.com.mx at https:// tinyurl.com/489kkfpm

Lastly, the threat that by its nature is the most serious was done by Feliz Salgado Macedonio, who in a canvassing event done outside of INE's offices (hours before the electoral authority gave its verdict on the admissibility or inadmissibility of his candidacy) starred the vigil of Lorenzo Cordova and Ciro Murayama. In the event, a black coffin could be seen with the name of the president and councilor with the legend "count the days, rat, demon." Parallelly, Guerrero's governor aspirant encouraged his followers, saying explicitly "¿No le gustaría al pueblo de México saber dónde vive Lorenzo Córdova? ¿Les gustaría saber cómo es su casita de lámina negra? Cabroncito. No sabe por lo que estamos luchando en Guerrero" (Barragán, 2021). [Would not the Mexican people like to know where Lorenzo Cordova lives? Would the people like to know how his poor house looks? Little jerk. He does not know what we are fighting for in Guerrero] The threats to INE, if they become real, would represent a significant setback in our democracy.



Image: Salgado Macedonio says he will go against INE counsellors. Photo: Carlos Alberto Carbajal/Cuartoscuro in politica.expansion at https://tinyurl.com/464f39dj.



Image: Félix Salgado y Mario Delgado in demonstration ein forbes.com.mx. Photo: Mario Delgado at https:// tinyurl.com/yevep744.

THE MILITARIZATION PULSE

As reported previously, contrary to what was expected from the current government, the use of the armed forces in public safety functions continued and went deeper. Parallelly, this administration has looked for an extension of the capabilities and responsibilities of the army and navy. To the already mentioned National Guard Law, Use of Force National Law, National Safety System General Law, and General National Public Security System, the Amrny Law, an initiative sent by the Federal Executive to the Congress Permanent Commission last July 13th, can be added. This law is proposed to enable the navy to perform coast guard tasks, which means to be an able authority to maintain the rule of law in Mexican marine zones, coasts, and port precincts besides the protection and marine safety.

It is not new in the public safety field that new organizations of civil society have reported, since 2019, that in fact, the creation of the National Guard (GN for its acronym in Spanish) has had a predominant military character. Even though article 2 of the National Guard Law establishes the Public Safety and citizenship At-

tention Secretary is the superior command level in the GN, it has been demonstrated that in reality is the National Defense Secretariat (SEDENA for its acronym in Spanish) the government department that controls recruiting, training and internal discipline in GN. In addition, to be responsible for the barracks' construction of this institution. It also was responsible for appointing the incumbents of the posts organically more relevant such as the Internal Affairs Unit incumbent (UAI for its acronym in Spanish), which is the primary internal control body of the institution. Despite article 22 of the National Guard Law commands, the UAI incumbent will be assigned directly by the president of the Republic to provide this civil servant with political and institutional protection that allows him to attend complaints and accusations inside the institution. The appointed incumbent was a Brigadier–General retired from the Judiciary Military Police considered by the PRODH center as an especially shady body and prone to infringe human rights.

Additionally to this evident militarization of the GN, president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador's statement



Image: National Guard announcement that offers vacancy for women with a monthly salary of 16 thousand pesos in El Universalpuebla at https://tinyurl. com/8xs6nef5

where he communicated that he would look for the GN pass to be an organic part of SEDENA is added. In this respect, the GN's military subordination will be explicit and formal, the opposite of what was posed since this institution's creation. Beyond this modification, the political intention of the president seems

to prove that the GN was thought, designed, and created under a rigorous military logic and not civil logic. The opposition in the legislative power's resistance made the majority force establish in the law that the GN would be a specialized body with civil characteristics, which was violated almost immediately.

INSECURITY, THE NEW FEATURES

In the insecurity field, it can be observed that the crime incidence has improved marginally. Although the high impact crimes, specifically homicides, showed a decrease of 0.7% comparing the January–May 2021 period with the same period in 2020, the homicide rates are still high. The crimes of kidnapping and force disappearing and extortion shown by the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System (SESNSP for its acronym in Spanish) have also decreased significantly.

The states with the most significant homicide rates for each one hundred thousand inhabitants between January and May 2021 were Baja California (31.1), Colima (28.7), Zacatecas (28.4), Chihuahua (23.2), and Sonora (22.7). On the contrary, the states with lower homicide rates in the same period were Yucatán (0.7), Aguascalientes (1.8), Coahuila (1.8), Baja California Sur (3), and Hidalgo (3.2). Comparing the homicide rate by the entity, it can be observed that 16 states have experienced an increase and the resting 16 a decrease.

TABLE 8. ENTITIES WITH A MAJOR VARIATION IN THE HOMICIDES RATES JANUARY-MAY 2021 WITH JANUARY-MAY 2020

UPW.	ARDS	DOWNWARDS		
STATE	PERCENTUAL VARIATION	STATE	PERCENTUAL VARIATION	
Zacatecas	73.6	Tamaulipas	26.2	
SLP	34.2	CDMX	21.4	
Sonora	29.5	Puebla	20.3	
Nayarit	25.7	Hidalgo	18.5	
Baja California Sur	18.2	Oaxaca	18.3	

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Causa en Común (2021a).

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Regarding the kidnapping and force disappearing, it is reported a relevant decrease. Between 2019–2020, this crime incidence reported by SESNSP was reduced by 36%, and it is expected that in case the trend continues in 2021, 587 are registered, 43.7% less than 2020 figures. The states with higher rates of kidnapping and forced disappearing for each one hundred thousand inhabitants between January and May 2021 were Chihuahua (2), Baja California Sur (0.8), Quintana Roo (0.4), Tabasco (0.4), and Nayarit (0.), while the entities with the lower rate of this crime were Durango (0.0), Coahuila (0.02), Yucatan (0.04), Colima (0.04) and Aguascalientes (0.07)

A relevant decrease in kidnapping is reported. Between 2019 and 2020, the incidence of this crime was reduced by 36% and it is expected that this trend continues and that by 2021, there will be 43.7% less than 2020. SESNSP

TABLE 9. NUMBER, RATE, AND DAILY KIDNAP REGISTERED IN MÉXICO 2015–2021

PERIOD	NUMBER OF KIDNAPPED REGISTERED	KIDNAPPING REGISTERED FOR EACH 100 THOUSAND INHABITANTS	AVERAGE OF KIDNAP- PING REGISTERED BY DAY
JAN–DEC 2015	1312	1.1	4
JAN-DEC 2016	1381	1.1	4
JAN-DEC 2017	1390	1.1	4
JAN-DEC 2018	1560	1.2	4
JAN-DEC 2019	1630	1.3	4
JAN-DEC 2020	1041	0.8	3
JAN-DEC 2021*	256	0.2	1.6

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Source: Causa en Común with information from SESNSP (2021a)

The register for extortion presented a lower decrease of 7% between 2019 and 2020. Between January and May 2021 has been registered 3 thousand 380 extortion cases. If the trend continues, it is expected that the year closes with 8 thousand 202 registers. The states with a major incidence rate for each hundred thousand inhabitants for extorsion between January and May 2021 were: Zacatecas (9.93), Mexico State (7.72), Baja California Sur (4.26), Queretaro (4.05) and Veracruz (3.93). The entities that showed a lower rate of the same crime in the same period were Yucatan (0.04), Tlaxcala (0.07), Coahuila (0.29) and Colima (0.39).

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TABLE 10. NUMBER, RATE DAILY AVERAGE OF EXTORSIONS REGISTERED IN MEXICO

2015-2021

PERIOD	NUMBER OF REGISTERED EXTORSIONS	EXTORSIONS REGISTERED BY 100 THOUSAND INHABITANTS	AVERAGE OF REGISTERED EXTORSIONS BY DÍA
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2015	6,223	5.1	17
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2016	5,854	4.8	16
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2017	6,272	5.1	17
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2018	6,895	5.5	19
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2019	9,003	7.1	25
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2020	8,380	6.6	23
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2021*	3,380	2.69	22.3
Source: Causa en Común with information fro	om SESNSP (2021a).		

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

TERRITORIAL CONTROL OF ORGANIZED CRIME

Regarding organized crime, it can be said that the Mexican State's effective territorial control is still incomplete. The violence created by organized crime groups has not presented a reduction, and its capacity to influence politically and criminally in diverse territories in the country keeps steady. It is presumed that this is the result of the federal government's inaction. At the same time, it is thought that the government of Lopez Obrador has attacked the Sinaloa's Cartel much less than the Jalisco's New Generation Cartel (CJNG for its acronym in Spanish). The electoral field has also registered the existence of effective criminal cronyism.

According to the Lantia Intelligence (2021) information, the CJNG and Sinaloa's Cartel are the organizations that organize crime presence in more federative entities, 29 and 28 respectively, followed by Northwest's Cartel and Carteles United. Although Sinaloa's Cartel is one of the best distributed and armed in the country, it has not been the one with the most detained members, summing 163 detainees, but the CJNG has suffered the detention of at least 683 members during the current administration.



Image: Failed arrest of Ovidio Guzmán in bbc mundo at https://tinyurl.com/yk93842m

It is presumed that the little effective control over the territory that the Mexican State has, is due partially to the federal government inaction whose mantra in the organized crime topic has been the already popular president's phrase abrazos no balazos (hugs, not bullets). In these senses, the criminal organization has been capable of operating without traditional restraint by authorities. The emblematic case was the capture and almost immediate release of Ovidio Guzman on October 17, 2019, in Culiacan, Sinaloa, when the government decided to release Capo after the violent mobilization of the criminal group he leads to prevent Guzman's city extraction and extradited to the United States. Maybe a positive aspect of the low participation of the Mexican authorities in the frontal combat to the organized crime is that the massacres have been reduced with the public safety authorities with potential violation of human rights. Up to June this year, only four have been recorded.

TABLE 11. PRESENCE OF CRIMINAL GROUPS BY STATES

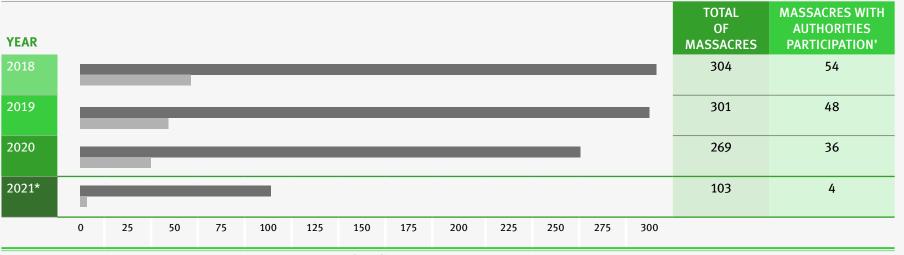
IT DOES NOT CONSIDER ALLIES/SUBORDINATES ORGANIZATIONS

CRIMINAL GROUP	FEDERAL STATES
SINALOA'S CARTEL	Aguascalientes, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campe- che, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Coahuila, Colima, Du- rango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Mexico State, Nayarit, Nuevo Leon, Oaxaca, Puebla, Queretaro, Quintana Roo, Sinaloa, Sonora, Tabasco, Yucaten, Zacatecas
JALISCO NEW GENERA- TION'S CARTEL	Aguascalientes, Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campe- che, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Coahuila, Colima, Du- rango, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Hidalgo, Jalisco, Michoacán, Morelos, Mexico State, Nayarit, Nuevo Leon, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Quintana Roo, San Luis Potosi, Sonora, Tamauli- pas, Veracruz, Yucatán, Zacatecas
NORTHEAST CARTEL	Campeche, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, Quintana Roo, San Luis Po- tosi, Tamaulipas, Zacatecas
UNITED CARTELS	Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Guerrero, Jalisco, Michoacan, Morelos, Oaxaca
THE TEPITO UNION CARTEL	Mexico City, Hidalgo, Mexico State
UNITED WARRIORS CARTEL	Guerrero, Morelos, Mexico State, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo
Source: Lantia Intelligenc	e (2021).

TABLE 12. CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION MEMBERS ARRESTS BY TRIMESTER DURING PRESIDENT ANDRES MANUEL LOPEZ OBRADOR' GOVERNMENT IT DOES NOT CONSIDER ALLIES/SUBORDINATES

ORGANIZATION	T3	T4	T1	T2	T3	T4	T1	T2	TOTAL	
	2019	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2021	2021	Ř	
CJNG	40	30	103	81	100	110	126	93	683	
SINALOA'S CARTEL	24	5	24	19	12	20	31	28	163	
Source: Lantia Intelligence (2021).										

TABLE 13. MASSACRES WITH PUBLIC SAFETY INSTITUTIONS' INVOLVEMENT INCIDENTS WITH FOUR OR MORE FATALLY WOUNDED VICTIMS



Note: *Data from January to June. Source: Lantia Intelligence (2021).

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Concerning criminal patronage, Lantia Intelligence (2021) also reported the distribution of grocery packages, household appliances, candies, and toys in electoral times by criminal groups, mainly in the municipalities Michoacan and San Luis Potosi. Thereby, organized crime still has a presence in most of the country, and it seems to control large territories. Its growing role in the elections has become a worrying topic or even threatens the democracy and stability of the Mexican State.

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Image: "The CJNG cartel pretends to win people's trust" in debate.com.mx at https://tinyurl.com/5xatbhpy

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TABLE 14. CRIMINAL PATRONAGE DURING THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

2020-2021

	CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION	ΑCTIVITY	STATE	MUNICIPALITY
5/10/2020	Gulf Cartel	Groceries packages distribution	Tamaulipas	Matamoros
5/10/2020	Gulf Cartel	Groceries packages distribution	Tamaulipas	Cd. Victoria
5/11/2020	The Viagras	Groceries packages distribution	Michoacán	Apatzingan
5/14/2020	CJNG	Groceries packages distribution	San Luis Potosi	Salinas de Hidalgo
5/14/2020	CJNG	Groceries packages distribution	San Luis Potosi	Villa de Arriaga
5/14/2020	CJNG	Groceries packages distribution	San Luis Potosí	Villa de Reyes
5/14/2020	CJNG	Groceries packages distribution	San Luis Potosi	Santa Maria del Rio
5/14/2020	CJNG	Groceries packages distribution	San Luis Potosi	Tierra Nueva
5/14/2020	CJNG	Groceries packages distribution	San Luis Potosi	Rioverde
5/14/2020	CJNG	Groceries packages distribution	San Luis Potosi	Soledad de Graciano
5/17/2020	The Zetas	Groceries packages distribution	Veracruz	Coatzacoalcos
5/30/2020	Shadow Group	Groceries packages distribution	Veracruz	Tuxpan
27/12/2020	CJNG	Toys and candy distribution	Jalisco	Cuautitlan de Garcia Barragan
1/6/2021	CJNG	Toys and money distribution	Michoacan	Aguililla
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Guanajuato	Penjamo
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Michoacan	Chavinda
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Michoacan	Ecuandireo
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Michoacan	Numaran
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Michoacan	Zacapu
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Michoacan	Purépero
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Michoacan	Tanhuato
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Michoacan	Tinaja de Vargas
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Michoacan	La Piedad
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Jalisco	Poncitlán
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Jalisco	Degollado
5/10/2021	CJNG	Household appliances distribution	Jalisco	Jamay
5/23/2021	Sinaloa's Cartel	Groceries packages distribution	Sinaloa	Culiacan
5/23/2021	Sinaloa's Cartel	Groceries packages distribution	Sinaloa	Mazatlan

Source: Lantia Intelligence (2021).

ATTACK ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

The state of freedom of speech has been sensitive for more than 15 years. The beginning of the named war against organized crime multiplies the homicides and aggressions against the journalists and human rights advocates. This situation has not been modified in the last three years. In addition, the official advertising distribution still has no clear rules of operation, and the president's attacks on the media and journalists during his morning conferences have not ceased.

From December 2018 until June 2021, the organization Articulo 19 has registered the homicide of 200 journalists because of their profession. In the same period, The newspaper *Reforma* counted at least 56 activists who have been homicide victims. As a reply, the Secretary of the Interior accepted that there were 68 activists, as well as 43 journalists murdered. In 2020, Mexico was ranked in position 28 of the world most dangerous countries to work in journalism, together with countries such as Venezuela, Cuba and Honduras.

TABLE 15. MOST MENTIONED NATIONAL MEDIA BY THE PRESIDENT DURING THE MORNING CONFERENCES

UP TO FEBRUARY 15TH, 2021

MEDIA	NUMBER OF MENTIONS				
REFORMA	390				
EL UNIVERSAL	145				
EL FINANCIERO	55				
MILENIO	24				
LA JORNADA	24				
EXCELSIOR	23				
<i>Source:</i> Causa en Común with information froml SESNSP (2021a).					

Articulo 19 reported that during 2020, there was an aggression against the press every 13 hours. In addition, the number of attacks against the media increased by 13.6% in 2019. In total, in 2020, the organization counted 692 aggressions against the press. The stigmatization against journalists and the media has been promoted from the National Palace. President Lopez Obrador has been consistent in accussing various media and journalists to belonging to conservative and antidemocratic groups. SPIN organization reported that, by February 2021, *Reforma* and *El Universal* newspapers were the most attacked by Lopez Obrador, with 390 and 145 respectively. In addition, by May 2021 intellectuals and journalists most insulted by the president were Enrique Krauze, Héctor Aguilar Camín, Carlos Loret de Mola and Ciro Gómez Leyva.

Regarding the official advertising, the general expenses of the government continue decreasing, but the distribution of contracts still are discretional and unfair. The media Televisa, TV Azteca, and *La Jornada* concentrate since the administration started 66% of the federal government's official advertising expenditure total.



Images: Enrique Krauze at https://tinyurl.com/ya4kks6p; Héctor Aguilar Camín at https://tinyurl.com/yumh7yw4; Carlos Loret de Mola at https://tinyurl.com/a9wk7k9t; Ciro Gómez Leyva at https://tinyurl.com/3c9w8bf5; Joaquín López Dóriga at https://tinyurl.com/ na9cfb9y; Raymundo Riva Palacio at https://tinyurl.com/3d83c54t

Source: In-house elaboration with information from SPIN (2021).

ATTACKS TO OTHER PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY

Besides the onslaught against the press, the Mexican Executive's chief has sustained his battering against other pillars of democracy. The president's rejection of the constitutionally autonomous bodies as **INE, INAI Federal Economic Competition Commission** (Cofece), and the Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT) is not new. He even proposed disappearing these bodies and transferring their responsibilities to Public Federal Administration and the Federation's Judiciary Power. As it was already mentioned in this report, many of these institutions will renovate members of their governing bodies and the president will play an important role in the appointment process. It will be interesting to observe the profiles he will nominate. It stands out that despite the presidential threats, INE, INAI, and Cofece were not the most punished bodies in budgetary terms, but INEGI and CNDH. The INE's budget reduction explains itself partially since the general population and housing census was done in 2020.

Finally, part of the Civil Society and the Mexican Businessman has been under public attack constantly. The president has repeated on many occasions that he is not a mere manager to the service of economic power, nor a decoration, but the president of Mexico referring to the former presidents saying they were at the great Mexican businessman commands. The people that the president has pointed to the most in the morning conferences are Gustavo de Hoyos, Mexican Confederation of Business Owners's president, and Claudio X Gonzalez, former president and founder of Mexicans Against Corruptions and Impunity (MCCI for its acronym in Spanish). The latter also promoted the opposition coalition to the government formed by PRI, PAN, and PRD called Va por Mexico.

Images:

Gustavo de Hoyos in expansion.mx at https://tinyurl. com/csdjrbc7

Claudio X Gonzalez in lideresmexicanos.com at https://tinyurl.com/4a7bzefv



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TABLE 17. PPEF AND PEF CONSTITUTIONAL AUTONOMOUS BODIES COMPARISON 2020

MILLION PESOS. REAL VALUE, BASE: 2019

INSTITUTION	BUDGET 2019	BUDGET 2020	VARIATION %	BUDGET 2021	VARIATION %
INEGI	12.129	15.381	26.8%	6.943	-54.8%
INE	15.363	15.463	0.6%	24.041	55.4%
INAI	900	814	-9.5%	811	-0.3%
CNDH	1.809	1.739	-3.8%	1.505	-13.4%
Cofece	582	539	-7.4%	536	-0.5%
IFT	1.5	1.43	-4.6%	1.353	-5.3%
FGR	15.351	15.501	0.9%	15.485	-0.1%

Note: *Deflated by the INPC of January. Source: Causa en Común with information from SESNSP (2021a).

Both have been accused of trying to unstabilize the federal government. In fact, in the May 8, 2021 morning conference, the president announced he sent a diplomatic letter to the USA government asking to clarify the amount and purpose of the resources that, through the American embassy, it sends to civil organizations as MCCI, IMCO, and Mexico Evalua. It is essential to point out that the president attacks on civil society have intensified during 2021, and the MCCI organization has been accused of corruption (the president calls it Mexicans on Favor of Corruption), and he assured that he demanded the USA to stop supporting them, to what Biden replied he would continue to finance organizations and journalists that fight corruption.





3. THE INCREASING ECONOMIC TIGHTNESS

«

The COVID-19 pandemic was brutal at the beginning by destroying supply chains and closing non-essential activities. The Mexican government fell into the trap of closing the economy without supporting the families nor enterprises, which translated into the loss of employment and the closing of productive establishments. Its repercussions have been massive and, in some cases, also deep, this will slow down the recovery of the per capita income to a similar level to the one in 2018. The Mexican government fell into the trap of closing the economy without supporting the families nor enterprises, which translated into the loss of employment and the closing of productive establishments.

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MACROECONOMIC BALANCE

The economic policy has been steered to macroeconomic balances based on the apparent fiscal discipline of the federal government. Actions on the incomes and outflows have been taken to make it. Adjustments in expenses mean to stop doing what is up to the government (opportunity cost) especially, in areas of great importance such as education, health, security and the environment.

One part of the macroeconomic balance has been accomplished. On the income side, due to the extinction of trusts (The natural disasters fund being one of them), collection of tax credits of major contributors (such as foreign companies), the usage of budgeting funds for emergencies, and the improvement of world economic activity, which is boosting the international oil prices. On the outflow side, the austerity in budgets and the concentration of public investment in emblematic government projects have kept them relatively controlled.

During the first semester of 2021, oil related income increased by 62.9% in real terms (177.3 billion pesos), and tax revenue increased 19.4% (49.4 billion

pesos) in comparison to the same semester in 2020 (43.3 billion pesos). On the other hand, the income review shows a low increase of 1.1% encouraged by the reopening of the economy and the increased consumerism; however, the income revenues did not increase (-0.9%). In 2021, the government almost exhausted the Budgetary Income Stability Fund (FEIP), an exclusive fund to offset the harmful effects of any unexpected event (Such as the sanitary crisis) and compensate for the shortage of income. The withdrawals surpassed the operation rules, which means that its use was so excessive that it became illegal.



Image: Increase of oil income of 62.9%. Reuters at 24horas. mx en https://tinyurl.com/89rdaytr The expenditure pressures had increased for the energy policy and the financial support of the productive state enterprises. In the case of the CFE, the modification to the electric industry law inhibits competitiveness and may generate a relevant investment reliance crisis.

The modifications to this law focused on the generation of electricity, the area where the state enterprise shows the most inefficiency. This may imply a more significant tax burden for public finances and the rest of the CFE subsidiaries.

The idea of PEMEX increasing petrol production could be a risk for the economy, the environment and public finances since the refinery is the line of business where the company's losses are, increasing its production would increase the PEMEX deficit. The persistence and stiffness of such policy have led the government to start modifications on the hydrocarbon law. The limited oil production has shown a downward trend for a few years now, and it only takes to import oil or petrol itself. That will enlarge the deficit on the oil products scale.

The federal executive decided that the age to access the elderly adults' pension should reduce from 68 to 65 years old, and the amount to be received should increase from 2,700 to 6,000 bi–monthly by the end of his six–year term, increasing 122.2%. According to specialists in this manner (Urzúa, 2021), this decision means to outlay the equivalent to 1.5% of the current gross domestic product, which, in addition to the contributive pension (IMSS, ISSSTE, among others.), may increase the cost of pensions to 5.5% of the GDP. Meaning that the remaining resources for other government functions such as health, security, investments, and public education would have to adjust downward if the general revenues continue with the current trend.

It is essential to note that some of the actions taken to increase income can only be performed once. There are no more trusts to extinguish. The resources of FEIP (budgetary income stability fund) and the list of significant contributors to collect debts from are also going to an end. For its part, the oil income relies on the international economic situation, and they have been sensitive to the health conditions around the globe. In other words, the government's room for maneuver in public finances is getting tight.

THE ABSENCE OF COMPENSATORY POLICIES

The absence of the federal government to implement policies needed to allow Mexicans, their families, and their business to come out well from this sanitary crisis and its consequences is well known and evident. As seen, during this pandemic process (that is still going on), at least three more broke out: economic, social, and care.¹

The economic crisis has increased in some sectors, such as tourism and construction, among others, especially the labor one. The impact on this market has fallen upon women and young people.

In what the tourist sector concerns, the federal government has approved a budget of 38,613 million pesos (mdp) for 2021. However, from this budget, 98% will be assigned to the Mayan train construction, executed by The National Fund for Tourism Development (FONATUR). Only 2% is given to the operation of the tourism secretariat, the equivalent to 0.04% of the tourist aggregate supply. The construction sector has been marked by the continuity of the emblematic building projects of the federal executive (Mayan train, Dos Bocas refinery and, the Felipe Ángeles international airport). However, focusing on such projects had led to stop investing in the main areas of social development such as health and education. The fall of the construction value of the first trimester of 2021 is 85,702 mdp in its annual comparison (–7.3%), 3.7 times over the economy's shrinkage in general. Therefore, the trajectory of the gross fixed investment has been severely affected by the construction shutdown, and it opens more doubt to the future to come.

On its part, the companies, primary employers for the young population (15 to 29 years old), find themselves in a delicate situation. During February, only three out of a hundred companies received any kind of government support (considering the three levels of government) according to the economic impact on companies caused by the COVID–19 survey (ECOVID– IE). On its part, the companies, primary employers for the young population (15 to 29 years old), find themselves in a delicate situation. During February,

¹ Dissociating the care crisis from the social one since the first one has intensified, especially for women, but acknowledging their close relationship.

only three out of a hundred companies received any kind of government support (considering the three levels of government) according to the economic impact on companies caused by the COVID-19 survey (ECOVID-IE).

In sum, the federal government designated an amount to confront the crisis and compensate for the damages caused by any of the crises in question had been minimal. With information from the Fiscal Monitor Database of Country Fiscal Measures in Response to the COVID–19 Pandemic of the International Monetary Fund, we know that the Mexican government has assigned 1.85% of the Gross Domestic Product, GDP (GDP for its acronym in Spanish) in response to the sanitary crisis and figures as the emerging and average income country that has set the less discretionary support in April 2021 (0.65% from GDP).

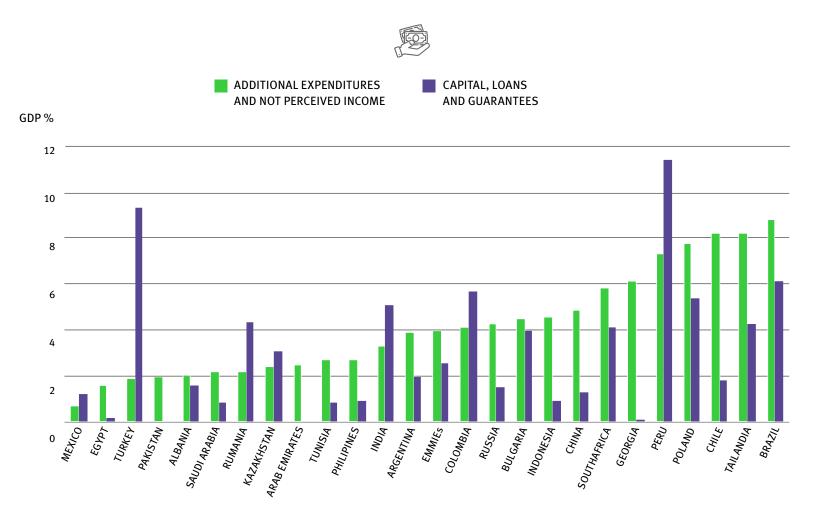
The federal government did not provide additional resources to families, companies, or workers under the allegation of low fiscal margin and the high cost of hiring more debt. In one of the last interviews as secretary of finance, Arturo Herrera mentioned that if the debt service had been indebted, It would have increased 5.2 billion pesos (22.5% of GDP in 2020) (Negrete, 2021), a number that is out of proportion.

On the other hand, the federal government was unwilling to re-assign resources of its emblematic construction projects or reduce subsidies like the ones provided to the Federal Commission of Electricity (CFE) or the transactions provided to Mexican Petroleums (PEMEX).

The lack of governmental assistance to families and companies contributed to the severity of the crisis. If its effects are permanent and not only transitory, even once the pandemic is eradicated, the deterioration of the Mexicans life conditions would continue for an extended period.

The Mexican government has only assigned 1.85% of the Gross Domestic Product in response to the COVID–19 pandemic, and figures as the emerging and average income country that has set the less discretionary support by April 2021 (0.65% del GDP). International Monetary Fund

GRAPH 1. FISCAL RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS IN AVERAGE INCOME AND EMERGENT ECONOMIES (GDP PERCENTAGE) APRIL 2021



Note: MEEIM* references Emergent Markets and middle–income economies *Source*: In–house elaboration with data from the fiscal measurements monitoring from countries as a response to COVID–19 (2021).

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ASYMMETRIC SECTORAL PATH

The gross domestic product (GDP) had its record high ever in the third trimester of 2018 (18.58 billion pesos). By the first trimester of 2021, the GDP is at 5.1% under such a record. On the annual comparison (same trimester of 2020), it still is 2.8% below that, and it will not be until the second quarter of 2021 that it will show a positive growth rate in comparison to the same 2020 trimester. Adding the most recent data, it is a total of 10 quarters where GDP is below the record high, and up to date, this will be the most profound and most extended crisis ever recorded².

The performance of each activity differs significantly. While there are activities in higher levels compared to the same trimester of last year, such as health service and social assistance (8%) and wholesale trade (6.1%), there are many others whose losses in production are evident. Such are the cases of cultural and sports recreation and other leisure services (-45.5%) and temporary accommodation services and food and beverages production (-35.5%).

Other activities of great importance –due to their contribution to the total production value–, may push GDP downwards in the long term, such as the real estate and the rent of intangible properties services, transport, mail and storage, and retail trade. In the first trimester of 2021, these three activities alone provide 26.7% of the total production value.

> Image: real state supply in centro urbano.com at https://tinyurl.com/wyar78w



² Eight trimesters were needed to return to the maximum level of the product after the 1994–1995 crisis.

CONSUMPTION RECOVERY

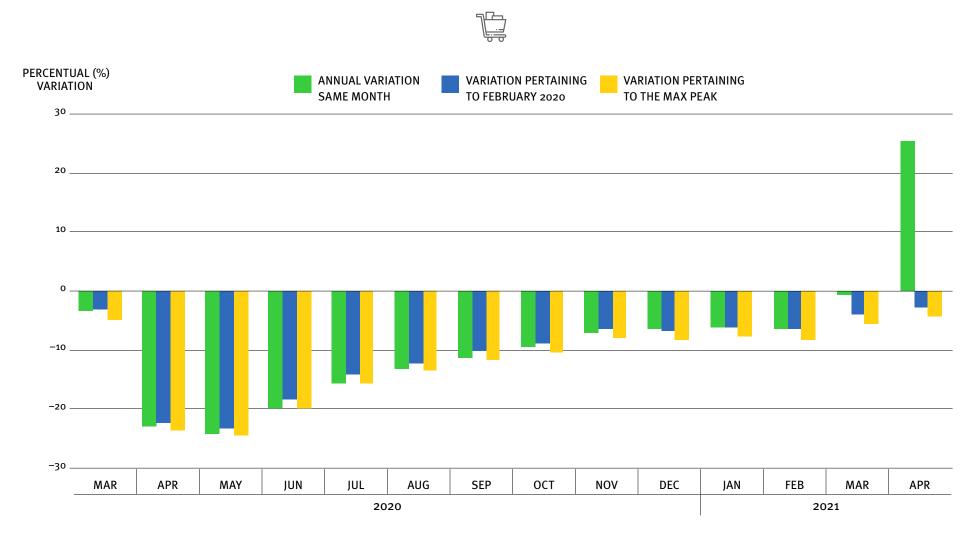
The recent behavior on consumption through credit and debit cards show that this will continue with a growing tendency. In a way, private consumption continues to push the aggregate demand upwards. An event that seems positive for the economy in the short term.

Different factors may explain the remarkable improvement in private consumption behavior. Let us identify at least three variables: remittances, social programs and, mobility increment as social distancing actions have softened. Transfers received in different households (remittances and social programs) somehow have cushioned the sanitary crisis impact over consumption. According to the Bank of Mexico (Banxico, 2021), if it were not because the remittances increased in 2020, consumption would have fallen nationally, but it could have had more significant negative implications in the center–north and south of the country. Transfers received in different households (remittances and social programs) somehow have cushioned the sanitary crisis impact over consumption.

According to the origins of acquired goods (national or imported), those imported show a considerable improvement. In March 2021, it exceeded the previous historical peak (October 2019). Meaning, households and companies had increased their consumption of imported goods, which also happens in national goods. Its level is higher than before the sanitary crisis, 1.8% under its historical peak (March 2018).

However, the consumption of services is the one with less recovery. Although it shows a positive variation on its annual comparison on April 2021 (17.8%), it still finds itself 10% under its previous level before the sanitary crisis, which matches its record high in the consumption of services (February 2020). Therefore, the low consumption of services pushes the

GRAPH 2. PRIVATE CONSUMPTION TRAJECTORY. VARIATION (%) RESPECT TO DIFFERENT BASE LINE UNSEASONALLY ADJUSTED SERIES 2013=100



Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2021).

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consumption of goods and services of national origin downwards, affecting the aggregate of private consumption since it represents approximately 90% of the total private consumption.

In addition, the future improvement of private consumption will rely on restoring the sanitary and economic conditions that allow the proper functioning of the service sector of the economy, especially those activities that are still at a disadvantage, such as culture, tourism, and sport.

The consumption of services is the one with less recovery. Although it shows a positive variation of 17.8%, it still finds itself 10% under its previous level before the sanitary crisis.

LABOR MARKET X-RAY

To dimension the loss of employment in Mexico, it was necessary to consider different indicators since the complexity of the phenomena has gone beyond the traditional measurement method. One of the phenomena that have caught the attention the most was the excessive number of people who had to leave the labor market due to the sanitary crisis, which conditions did not allow them to go out and seek employment. These people were not considered unemployed officially.

Thus the population non–economically active (PNEA) reaches 50.1 million people in May 2020. A year later, the PNEA is 40.2 million people, meaning that there has been a reduction of 9.9 million people in such conditions. Implying that a significant number of people are going back to their place of work, have been able to go job hunting, or have enrolled in a different one. Therefore they are back to the economically active people (PEA) (employed and unemployed), explaining to a large extent the increase to 11.6 million people of PEA (annual variation of 26.4%).

The population going back to the labor market is men in the majority, from the nearly 11.6 million people that have joined the labor market after over a year since the sanitary crisis started, 41.3% are women, and 58.7% are men. From the PNEA perspective, the reduction is more to men than women, 63.4% and 36.6%, respectively, which means that after the pandemic, a limited number of women are going back to the labor market compared to men.

Even after incorporating people into the labor market, the depth of the crisis has been so severe that by May 2021, there is still 26.4% of the potential labor force in the country find itself in a job insecurity situation, unemployment, or cannot leave home to seek for a job (labor gap, the most extensive conception of unemployment). A historical peak of unemployment ever recorded was spotted in May 2020 (53 out of 100 Mexicans were in this condition). The current unemployment levels that we are facing are similar to the one during the recession of 2009. Meaning that the situation has improved, but it is still precarious.

RISKS THAT ENDANGER ECONOMIC GROWTH

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Four risks subjugating the Mexican economy can be perceived. Some of them are structural, and the external market pressures generate others as well as the sanitary conditions outputting those that can affect the growth path of the economy in the short and medium-term. The risks observed are:

1. INFLATION. Different factors are increasing the prices in the economy. A significant part of the increment and many other variables are due to the basis of comparison. However, an extremely worrisome element is the underlying inflation³ in which the central bank founds its monetary policy, which is above the target level.

The underlying inflation has the character of having much more pronounced cycles than the non– underlying inflation. However, external factors also force the national prices to increase, as in the case of the food products demand for the United

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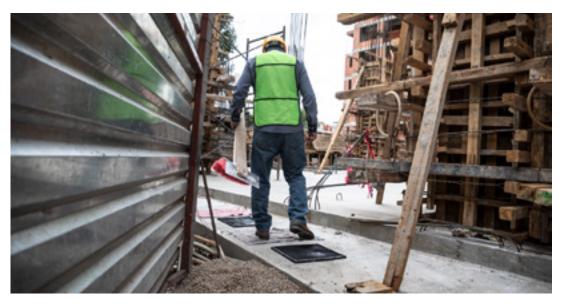
³ The underlying inflation refers to a rise in the prices of a subset of goods and services on which costs do not present high volatility or stableness, such as the prices of tomatoes and avocados.

States and other aspects like the lack of water in the North of the country, which have increased prices in other sectors like food.

Such a condition implies an increase in the interest base rate intended to slow down inflation, and that may also cause a break of interest rates that affects the international financial market.

2. THE LOW LEVEL OF GROSS FIXED INVESTMENT (IFB) has been a recurrent problem to the Mexican economy. April's level in 2021 is only comparable with the one in March 2011, which is ten years of stagnation. The monthly variation with respect to March 2021 is -0.09%, but in comparison with the historic peak (July 2018) is -16.4%. We could say that the sanitary emergency created the crisis; however, other indicators do not confirm that.

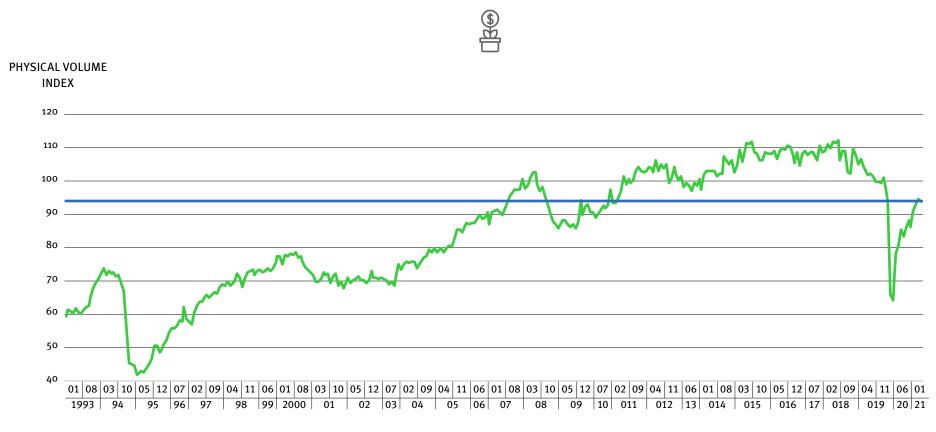
In principle, other economic aggregates such as international trade and domestic consumption show a remarkable improvement regarding the strong confinement, and even find themselves closer to levels observed before the crisis. However, it is a fact of significant importance that the construction (that along with the acquisition of machinery and equipment which are part of the IFB –Gross Fixed Investment–) is still downwards. We can even say it is agonizing.



With the National Survey of Construction Companies (ENEC), we know that by February 2020 (before the sanitary crisis), the construction production value was 12.7% lower than the level in December 2018. In January 2008, the maximum value ever recorded showed up (37,841.3 mdp). By May 2021, the production value is 39.8% below that record. At this moment, the machinery and equipment purchase contribution is the only thing that has kept the IFB afloat, and that is more concerning than encouraging. *Image*: Construction agonizes in Mexico in forbes. com.mx at https://tinyurl. com/6b579m8b.

GRAPH 3. FIXED GROSS INVESTMENT BEHAVIOR

UNSEASONALLY ADJUSTED SERIES 2013=100



Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2021).

It is troubling because it makes the Mexican economy more dependent on the United States' economic performance and because a possible downturn of the development of that country can lead to an even more evident downfall in Mexico's IFB. This situation is similar to being on life support.

- 3. THE AFFECTATIONS IN DIFFERENT SUPPLY CHAINS, mainly in those related to semiconductors, is also a risk. Manufacturers, especially their exportation, have benefitted from the economic reactivation in the United States. Automobile exportations are part of this reactivation. However, the demand (demand growth in the United States and national consumption) and supply are necessary to keep such a growth. This last one may be compromised by the affectations suffered by the primary producers of semiconductors (essential components of automobiles) worldwide due to the production paralysis caused by the sanitary crisis and environmental events.
- 4. ANOTHER RISK IS THE POTENTIAL LOSS OF AUTO-NOMY OF THE MEXICAN CENTRAL BANK (BANXICO). In December, the Banxico governor will be replaced, probably by Arturo Hererra, former treasury secre-

tary of the present government. The central bank administration board would be dominated by the current federal executive's designations, putting the bank's autonomy at risk.



Image: Semiconductors in automotive industry in mexicoindustry.com at https://tinyurl.com/dem74f64.





4. IMPOVERISHMENT AND INEQUALITY INCREASE «

Mexico is trapped in underdevelopment with a population overwhelmed by its deprivations and limited resources to face hardship (Sánchez 2018). If poverty in Mexico is a historical structural issue that persists in spite of all efforts, the current picture shows a significant shrinking of the progress against it. Poverty is a condition that damages millions of Mexicans, and its level expose the priorities of a government that is not helping the poorest, putting a social politics speech that is not materializing.

Income loss for most of the population since 2016 has been consistent and even more since 2018, according to INEGI (National Institute of Statistics and Geography). The income distribution, measured by the Gini coefficient, has improved but for the wrong reasons. Average income of nine out of ten income deciles have decreased, but the top income deciles from the structure have dropped even more. An increase in the income of the poor higher than the income from the population located on the top income deciles would have been much better.

Poverty is a condition that damages millions of Mexicans, and its level expose the priorities of a government that is not favouring the poorest.

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POVERTY, EXTREME POVERTY, AND WORKING POVERTY

The evidence shows that in ten years of multidimensional measurement of poverty, the improvements made to reduce the impoverished population were limited, with a decrease of 2.5 percentage points from 2008 to 2018. Extreme poverty had also diminished 3.6 percentage points during the same period (Coneval, 2019). However, the impact of the sanitary crisis and the lack of actions to mitigate and avoid mass impoverishment of society shows on the 2020 numbers.

Poverty went up from 41.9% of the population in 2018 to 43.9% in 2020 (graph 4), returning to the levels reported before 2016. It implies an increment of 3.8 million people between 2018 and 2020 (Coneval, 2021).

This crisis is also found in people living in extreme poverty, going from 7% in 2018 to 8.5% by 2020. This phenomenon means an increment of 2.1 million people living in extreme poverty, which means that in two years, we lost all the improvement made in five years in terms of poverty and public welfare. Additionally, the Institute of Research for Equitable Development (EQUIDE) estimated the evolution of poverty through the ENCOVID-19 survey, where they reported significant increments in poverty as well as in extreme poverty for 2020, 52% and 15% respectively, and these levels will remain during 2021 (EQUIDE, 2021).

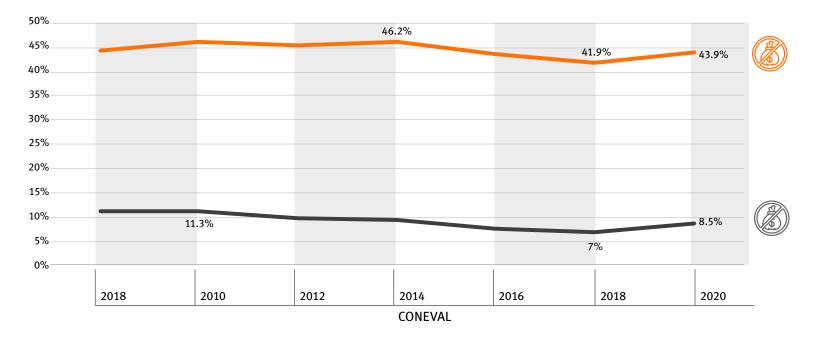
Economical wellness is also affected, considering that income poverty increases considerably, going from 49% in 2018 to 52.8% in 2020. In this sense, extreme income poverty is growing the most due to the pandemic effects on the population, going from 14% in 2018 to 17.2% without monetary income enough to acquire at least the basic basket of goods and services. Equally, working poverty⁴ is one of the markets that shows the most significant impact of the sanitary crisis.

According to the Evaluation of social development report, the percentage of the population in labor pov-

⁴ It refers to the amount of people that cannot afford the basic basket with their job income.

GRAPH 4. EVOLUTION OF POVERTY AND EXTREME POVERTY UNTIL MARCH 2021





Source: In-house elaboration with data from Coneval (2018) and EQUIDE (2021).

erty increased 10.7 points between the first trimester of 2020 and the first trimester of 2021, with a more significant impact in urban areas (14.8 percentage variation during the same period) than rural areas (1.9 variation percentage points) (Table 18)

Portraying that the urban population tends to be more vulnerable than the rural one in similar conditions to the loss of labor income associated with the economic shocks, this happens because it has a greater integration to formal employments, greater dependence on labor income, and less coverage of the leading direct transfer public programs (Coneval 2018).

The intensification and differentiation of poverty is evident among the various regions and levels of Mexican society. The National Household Income and Expenditure Survey (ENIGH) 2020 shows the impact and depth of the sequels. Concerning household incomes, the ENIGH 2020 shows that this income decreased significantly between 2018 and 2020. The average current income dropped 5.8 percentual points in comparison to the one recorded in 2018.⁵ According to its composition, labor income occupies

5 Going from \$53,418 pesos in 2018 to \$50,309 in 2020. Current

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

TABLE 18. PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION IN WORKING POVERTY APRIL AND SEPTEMBER 2020

FIELD	1T / 2020	1T / 2021	PERCENTUAL VARIATION
NATIONAL	35,6	39,4	10,7
URBAN	31,7	36,4	14,8
RURAL	48	48,9	1,9

Source: In-house elaboration with estimates from Coneval (2020c).

The intensification and differentiation of poverty is evident among the various regions and levels of Mexican society.

value prices of 2020.

the first place with a total average of 2,978.8 pesos monthly per member, followed by the monthly average transfers income of 821.4 pesos per household member⁶ (Table 19).

Part of the income components illustrated in Table 21, the income related to a property rental, shows a fall of -13.6 percentage points comparing to 2018, and labor income shows -10.7, proving that even after the primary source of income is labor, this one suffered a significant drop in 2020 somehow going more profound due to the COVID-19 effects.

TABLE 19. AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME PER HOUSEHOLD MEMBER

ENIGH 2016	ENIGH 2018	ENIGH 2020	VARIATION 2016–2020	VARIATION 2018–2020
\$ 4.985,6	\$ 4.946,2	\$ 4.658,2	-6,57	-5,82
\$ 3.170,7	\$ 3.328,8	\$ 2.972,8	-6,24	-10,70
\$ 788,3	\$ 758,4	\$ 821,4	4,19	8,30
\$ 573,0	\$ 563,1	\$ 608,1	6,14	8,01
\$ 449,3	\$ 291,6	\$ 251,9	-43,94	-13,62
\$ 4,4	\$ 4,4	\$ 4,1	-6,81	-6,38
	\$ 4.985,6 \$ 3.170,7 \$ 788,3 \$ 573,0 \$ 449,3	\$ 4.985,6 \$ 4.946,2 \$ 3.170,7 \$ 3.328,8 \$ 788,3 \$ 758,4 \$ 573,0 \$ 563,1 \$ 449,3 \$ 291,6	\$ 4.985,6 \$ 4.946,2 \$ 4.658,2 \$ 3.170,7 \$ 3.328,8 \$ 2.972,8 \$ 788,3 \$ 758,4 \$ 821,4 \$ 573,0 \$ 563,1 \$ 608,1 \$ 449,3 \$ 291,6 \$ 251,9	2016-2020 \$ 4.985,6 \$ 4.946,2 \$ 4.658,2 -6,57 \$ 3.170,7 \$ 3.328,8 \$ 2.972,8 -6,24 \$ 788,3 \$ 758,4 \$ 821,4 4,19 \$ 573,0 \$ 563,1 \$ 608,1 6,14 \$ 449,3 \$ 291,6 \$ 251,9 -43,94

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

⁶ According to ENIGH 2020, the average household membership this year is 3.55.

The role of social politics as a primary tool for the governments to reduce inequality in the countries to move forward on behalf of better living conditions of the people is essential. However, the standard of the current administration has been the struggle of vulnerable groups in the discursive rhetoric and the slogan "first the poor." However, in reality, there is no meaningful modification in the social politics of the new administration that can improve the Mexican's life conditions. More readily, a lack of targeting of the beneficiaries, due to mistakes in the development and design of the welfare census to shape the registration of beneficiaries created by the current government (Signos Vitales 2020 c), has cost an increment on governmental support for the population with higher income than for those in poverty.

While according to ENIGH 2020 the Mexican household income has relied on two primary sources: one is labor income, and the other one is transfers (Table 20), a positive element of the current policy is the increase in the amount of transfers the present government has granted, 50.5% with respect to 2018. However, the data shows a considerable drawback when analyzing the amount received by the lower–income household (Decile I), because such governmental transactions dropped 32%. In other words, there was

"First the poor"

There was a 50.5% increase in transfers compared to 2018. However, data shows that these transactions for lower–income dropped 32% (decile I), while for the 30% of the wealthier people in the country (decile VIII, IX, X), the governmental support and scholarships increased by 129%. INEGI

TABLE 20. COMPOSITION OF THE PRIMARY SOURCES OF INCOME

PRIMARY SOURCES OF	2016	2018	2020	PERCENTUAL VARIATION 2016–2020	PERCENTUAL VARIATION 2018–2020
LABOR INCOME	\$35.814	\$35.951	\$32.106	-10,4	-10,7
REMUNERATION FOR SUBORDINATE WORK	\$30.434	\$30.425	\$27.128	-10,9	-10,8
FREE-LANCE WORK INCOME	\$4.016	\$42.016	\$3.775	-6,0	-91,0
OTHER JOBS INCOME	\$1.363	\$1.320	\$1.203	-11,7	-8,9
PROPERTY RENTAL	\$4.933	\$3.149	\$2.720	-44,9	-13,6
INCOME FROM COOPERATIVES, PARTNERSHIPS AND COMPANIES THAT OPERATE AS CORPORA- TIONS	\$4.282	\$2.511	\$2.173	-49,3	-13,5
LEASES OF TANGIBLE AND FINANCIAL ASSETS	\$651	\$638	\$547	-16,0	-14,3
TRANSFERS	\$8.656	\$8.191	\$8.871	2,5	8,3
RETIREMENTS AND PENSIONS	\$3.716	\$3.722	\$4.284	15,3	15,1
GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONS SCHOLARSHIPS	\$170	\$125	\$122	-28,2	-2,4
DONATIONS OF MONEY FROM INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER HOUSEHOLDS	\$1.171	\$1.164	\$1.086	-7,3	-6,7
INCOMES FROM OTHER COUNTRIES	\$410	\$422	\$416	1,5	-1,4
BENEFITS FROM SOCIAL PROGRAMS	\$982	\$775	\$1.166	18,7	50,5
IN-KIND TRANSFERS FROM OTHER HOUSEHOLDS	\$1.490	\$1.357	\$1.311	-12,0	-3,4
IN-KIND TRANSFERS FROM INSTITUTIONS	\$718	\$626	\$485	-32,5	-22,5
ESTIMATED HOUSING RENT	\$6.291	\$6.081	\$6.568	4,4	8,0
OTHER CURRENT INCOME	\$48	\$47	\$44	-8,3	-6,4

Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENIGH (2018 and 2020).

an increase in social programs compared to 2018. However, they were minimized for the most impoverished population, while for the 30% of the wealthiest people in the country (decile VIII, IX, X), the governmental support and scholarships increased 129% (INEGI 2021c).

Therefore, the current social policy not only does not contribute to strike poverty, but rather aggravates the situation of those who have less. This element indicates that people are having a hard time incorporating themselves into the dynamic sectors of the economy to improve their income. In addition, the benefits from the government programs, including transfers, only make up for 10% of the labor income loss that reports a significant drop considering the labor poverty increment in Mexico.

In addition to this, based on the ENCOVID-19 information, only four out of 10 country's households (38%) are benefiting from a government social program. This number does not overcome the numbers from previous administrations. Meaning that only three out of ten people received any social welfare, almost five out of ten (43.9%)Mexicans live in a poverty situation, and nearly one out of ten (8.5%) is in extreme poverty (Coneval 2021)



Image: Ecatepec, urban poverty. Photo: Cuartosocuro in el Sol de México at https://tinyurl. com/2s752frb

The current social policy not only does not contribute to strike poverty, but rather aggravates the situation of those who have less. The benefits from the government programs, including transfers, only make up for 10% of the labor income loss. Furthermore, the income inequality in most Mexican populations reflects the differentiated effects per income decile, where every decile suffered a considerable reduction compared to 2018 (Table 21). Per income decile, those located in 10% of the most impoverished of the population (decile I) marginally managed to improve their income these years (1.3%) (Graph 5). Its monthly average income in 2020 was

	ENIGH 2016	ENIGH 2018	ENIGH 2020	PERCENTUAL VARIATION 2016–2020	PERCENTUAL VARIATION 2018–2020
NATIONAL	\$ 5.076,7	\$ 4.865,0	\$ 4.581,9	-9,75	-5,82
I	\$ 889,8	\$ 893,2	\$ 905,1	1,72	1,34
II	\$ 1.548,0	\$ 1.577,8	\$ 1.535,7	-0,79	-2,67
III	\$ 2.061,4	\$ 2.099,5	\$ 2.028,6	-1,59	-3,38
IV	\$ 2.566,8	\$ 2.615,1	\$ 2.509,8	-2,22	-4,03
V	\$ 3.139,6	\$ 3.165,9	\$ 3.038,9	-3,21	-4,01
VI	\$ 3.796,6	\$ 3.815,8	\$ 3.652,8	-3,79	-4,27
VII	\$ 4.624,6	\$ 4.630,6	\$ 4.432,6	-4,15	-4,28
VIII	\$ 5.819,7	\$ 5.769,4	\$ 5.518,9	-5,17	-4,34
IX	\$ 7.853,5	\$ 7.702,6	\$ 7.325,8	-6,72	-4,89
Х	\$ 18.467,0	\$ 16.381,0	\$ 14.870,9	-19,47	-9,22

TABLE 21. THE AVERAGE MONTHLY CURRENT INCOME PER INCOME LEVEL

HOUSEHOLD DECILES

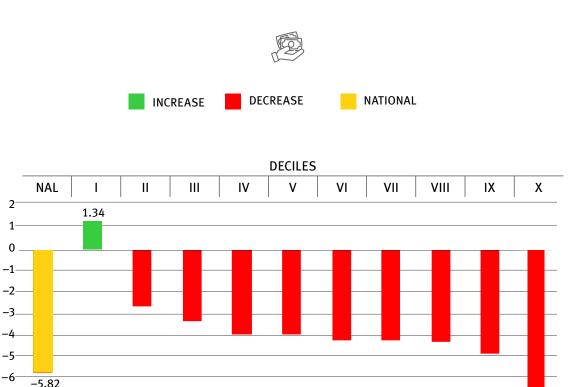
Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENIGH (2018 and 2020).

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905.1 pesos, which means 30.2 pesos a day per household integrant when in 2018, their income was barely 893.2 pesos. Out of that, the rest of the society lost income over the last four years, according to ENIGH 2020. In the households of the 10th decile, the average monthly income was 14,870.4 pesos; this means 495.7 pesos daily per member. Being so, the strike on the income has affected every decile with differentiated impacts.

The grievance of inequality in Mexico has intensified due to the effects of the COVID–19 pandemic above society's wellness. As long as the reduction of inequality is associated with lower levels of poverty could be inferred that lower levels of inequality induced higher levels of well–being and vice–versa. (Camacho and Cortez 2012). However, the slight inequality reduction observed from 2018 to 2020 is significantly due to the wealthiest income reduction and the rest of the population's than the income increment in the more impoverished people. Under this scheme, the Gini index⁷ shows income inequality, indicating a value reduction in 2020, going from

GRAPH 5. PERCENTAGE OF AVERAGE INCOME VARIATION PER HOUSEHOLD MEMBER FROM 2018 TO 2020



Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENIGH (2016, 2018 and 2020).

-7-

-8--9-

-10-

-9.22

⁷ The Gini Coefficient is a measure of income concentration: uses values ranging from zero to one. When the value is close to one, indicates that there is a higher concentration of income, on the other hand, when the Gini value is close to zero the income concentration is low. ENIGH 2020.

o.475 in 2018 (without transfers) to 0.468 in 2020. By considering the transfers, the value shows 0.426 in 2018, decreasing to 0.415 in 2020. A few hypotheses try to explain this decreasing trend in inequality in Mexico, according to Camacho and Cortez (2012). Among them are the relative changes in the supply and demand of qualified workforce, the increment in government transfers to those at a disadvantage, and sectoral and regional shifts caused by economic liberation.

The inequality social effects are not limited to purchasing power. On many occasions, it impacts the life expectancy or the access to essential services such as health, education, water service supply, sanitation, and others that may harm human rights related to social integrity (ONU, s.f), encouraging discrimination impeding access to justice.

One of the most notorious effects of inequality impacts the life expectancy of people directly because of the disparity in access and quality of health services. The development of a person's capabilities relies on a significant scale on a health status that allows realizing each person's human potential. However, according to Coneval (2020b), up until 2018, 16.2% of the population lacked access to this social right, increasing to 35.7% in 2020. Meaning, there is a percentage increment of 12 points from 2018 to 2020, with an additional 15.6 million people without health service access, placing them in a more vulnerable situation to face the sanitary crisis.⁸

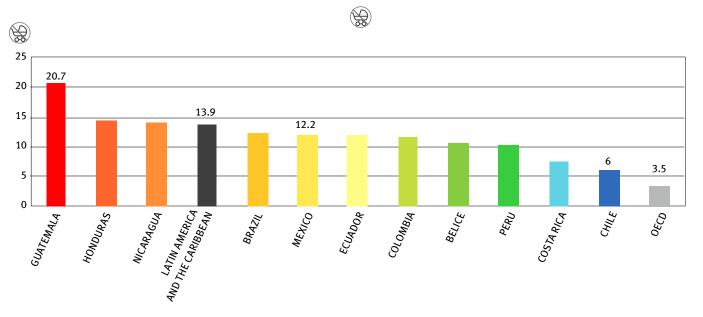
Worldwide, Mexico and other Latin American countries were above the average child mortality rate of OCDE (The Organisation for Economic Co–operation and Development) countries in 2019. The number represents almost thirteen deaths every thousand births, a number that is nearly four times the OCDE average (OCDE 2020) (Graph 6). Government actions are essential to avoid inequality in access to health services, prevent the deterioration in the most disadvantaged sectors, and ensure the provision of quality health services stopping the intensification of inequality (Bayon, 2008) before the strikes on the income previously described.

Wilkinson and Pickett (2006) propose a series of consequences of economic inequalities in population health within this framework. Some of their findings describe that better material wealth does not mean

⁸ Currently, the number of people insured at IMSS dropped over 780 thousand from March to September 2020. There is another record of reduction of 709 thousand from September to December that same year (Coneval, 2021).

health or life quality improvements for developed countries. However, they recommend diminished inequality and recover the sense of community and social integration to benefit all the countries. In this matter, it is supposed that high levels of inequality lead to a social deterioration since a higher economic difference leads to worse sanitary conditions (Wilkinson and Pickett 2006), which currently increase the vulnerability to a death caused by the pandemic significantly.

GRAPH 6. COMPARATIVE OF BABIES MORTALITY RATE BY EACH 1,000 BORN ALIVED



Source: In-house elaboration with data from the World Bank (2019a) and IndexMundi (2018).

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On the other hand, the complement of the social impact can be visible by analyzing the household expenses, which indicates their priorities and behavior during the pandemic. It is only natural that the guarterly current monetary expenditure continues similar to 2018 but with some crucial differences recorded. The fields that increased the most were food and beverages, health expenses and other housing and services, while the proportion of the expenses designated to communication and transportation, education, clothing and footwear decreased. Thus, the field of food and beverages went from 35.2% in 2018 to 38% in 2020 the housing field and all the services increased from 9.5% to 11%, the expenses in personal care from 7.4% to 8%, health expenses from 2.6% in 2018 to 4.2% in 2020, cleaning and housekeeping from 5.9% in 2018 to 6.5% in 2020. On the contrary, the communication and transportation expenses dropped down from 20% in 2018 to 18.6% in 2020, education and leisure went from 12.1% to 7.7% in 2020, and the clothing and footwear area went down from 4.5% in 2018 to the current expenditure's 3% in 2020.

Also, the income's impact fall can be perceived on the expense reduction from each of the deciles in Mexico. Only the first decile increased 9.8% from 2018 to 2020 (table 22), reporting an average month-

Household expenditure:

	2018		2020	
Food and beverages	35.2%		38%	
Housing and services	9.5 %		11%	-
Personal care	7.4%	Т	8%	
Health	2.6%		4.2%	
Cleaning and housekeeping	5.9 %		6.5%	
Transport	20%		18.6%	
Education and leisure	12.1%	-	7.7%	Л
Clothing and footware	4.5%		3.0%	$\mathbf{\vee}$

ly expenditure of 1082.06 pesos, which means 90.8 pesos daily per household member, for ENIGH (National Household Income and Expenditure Survey) 2018, such decile registered 985.34 pesos. In contrast, the households of the tenth decile got an average monthly expenditure per household member of 6,703.19 pesos, meaning 233.4 pesos per member a day, showing a reduction of 21.7%. There were also minor rearrangements in Federal entities. By 2018, the states with the higher average current income were Mexico City, Nuevo Leon, Baja California Sur, Queretaro and, Sonora; in 2020, almost all of them remained except for Sonora, Baja California took its place, and Mexico City went down to the third place (Graph 7 and 8).

	ENIGH 2016	ENIGH 2018	ENIGH 2020	PERCENTUAL VARIATION 2016–2020	PERCENTUAL VARIATION 2018–2020
NATIONAL	\$ 3,068.03	\$ 3,126.50	\$ 2,724.04	-11.21	-12.87
I	\$ 992.44	\$ 985.34	\$ 1,082.06	09.03	9.82
II	\$ 1,374.13	\$ 1,400.36	\$ 1,350.73	-1.70	-3.54
Ш	\$ 1,657.74	\$ 1,697.72	\$ 1,617.94	-2.40	-4.70
IV	\$ 1,970.13	\$ 1,998.45	\$ 1,868.58	-5.15	-6.50
V	\$ 2,291.26	\$ 2,361.66	\$ 2,125.96	-7.21	-9.98
VI	\$ 2,599.82	\$ 2,682.88	\$ 2,417.03	-7.03	-9.91
VII	\$ 3,087.61	\$ 3,134.97	\$ 2,788.25	-9.70	-11.06
VIII	\$ 3,602.64	\$ 3,723.41	\$ 3,230.60	-10.33	-13.24
IX	\$ 4,670.40	\$ 4,720.86	\$ 4,056.47	-13.15	-14.07
X	\$ 8,434.34	\$ 8,559.20	\$ 6,703.19	-20.53	-21.68

TABLE 22. AVERAGE MONETARY EXPENDITURE PER HOUSEHOLD MEMBER

Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENIGH (2016, 2018 and 2020).

While the states with the higher average current age current expenditure were those in the states of monetary expenditure quarterly were Mexico City, Queretaro, Nuevo Leon, Jalisco and, Quintana Roo, meanwhile, the households with the lowest aver-

CHIAPAS

GUERRERO

VERACRUZ

OAXACA

TLAXCALA

SONORA

BCS

CDMX

0

10,000

OUERETARO

NUEVO LEON

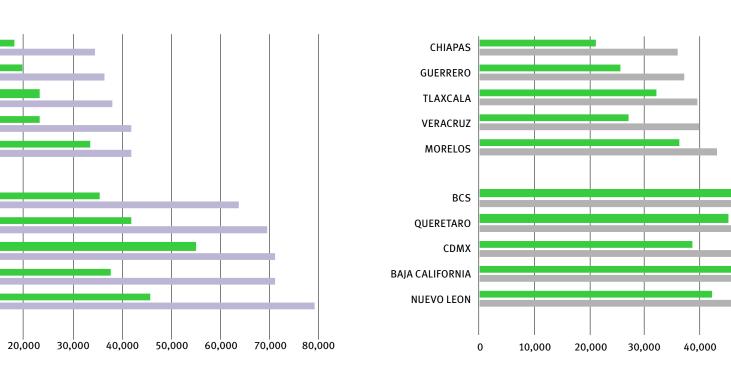
Tlaxcala, Oaxaca, Veracruz, Guerrero, and, Chiapas (Graph 9). By 2020, it is obtained that the households with the highest expenditure are those lo-

GRAPH 7. STATES WITH LOWER AND HIGHER AVERAGE CURRENT INCOME QUARTERLY AVERAGE 2018



🔠 URBAN

🚸 RURAL



URBAN 상 RURAL

Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENIGH (2018).

Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENIGH (2020).

50,000

60,000

70,000

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cated in the States of Nuevo León, Baja California, Ciudad de México, Querétaro, and Sinaloa. On the other hand, the lowest average current expenditure reported were Oaxaca, Veracruz, Tlaxcala, Guerrero, and Chiapas (Graph 10).



🔶 RURAL

CHIAPAS

OAXACA

GUERRERO

VERACRUZ

TLAXCALA

Q ROO

JALISCO

NUEVO LEÓN

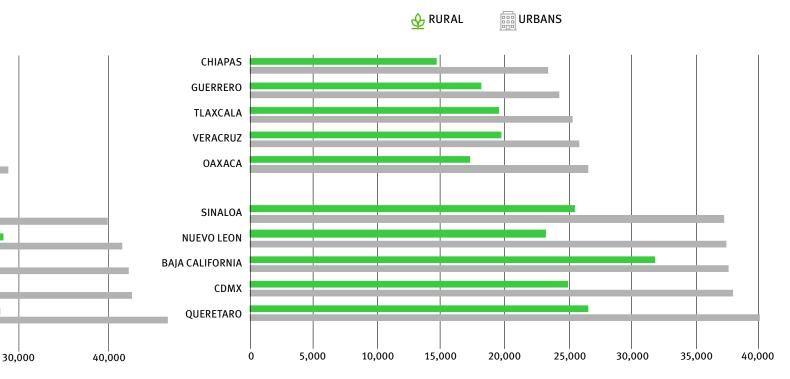
QUERETARO

CDMX

0

📰 URBAN

GRAPH 10. STATES WITH LOWER AND HIGHER AVERAGE MONETARY CURRENT EXPENDITURE QUARTERLY AVERAGE 2020



Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENIGH (2018).

20,000

10,000

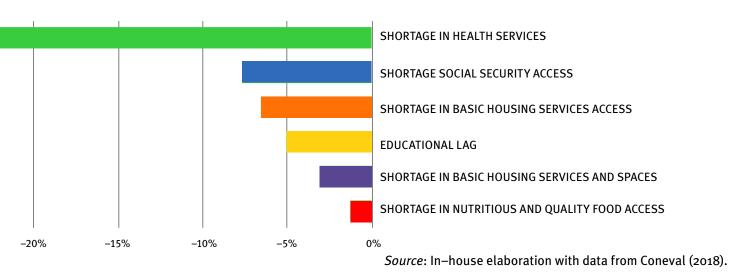
Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENIGH (2020).

SOCIAL DEPRIVATION

Mexico is a highly unequal country, with almost half of its population living in poverty, but there have also been improvements accomplished between 2008 and 2018, according to Coneval (2019), in the decreasing percentage of people living in social deprivation between those years. These improvements have been at risk of getting lost because of the sanitary crisis and the passivity of the governmental authorities and the reduction of corresponding budgets. The progress implies reductions in six indicators of social deprivation, accomplishing significant improvement from food access deprivation in -1.3% from 2008 to 2018 to a considerable reduction of the lack of access to health services in -22.2% on the same period (Graph 11)

Unfortunately, the risk of the COVID-19 pandemic affectations reversing the progress made in diminishing social deprivations was present, leaving long-term

GRAPH 11. PERCENTAGE DECREASE IN SOCIAL DEPRIVATIONS



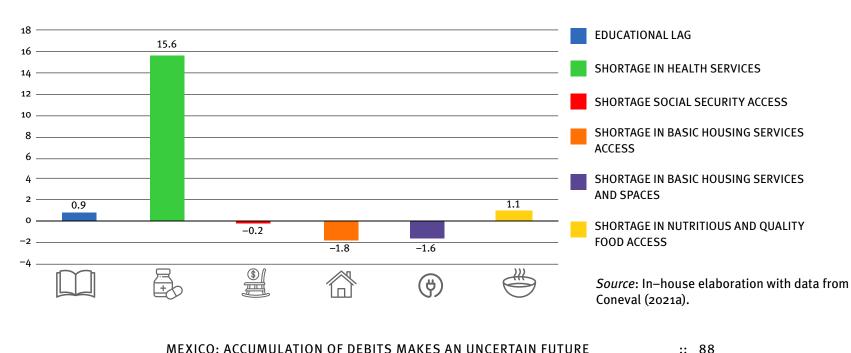
BETWEEN 2008 AND 2018

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sequels hard to overcome. Coneval (2021) reported an increment in three out of the six indicators of social deprivations where the most affected one was deprivation for the lack of access to health services, increasing 12 percentual points from 2018 (16.2%) to 2020 (28.2%), contributing to the increment of 15.6 million of people with health deprivation, 0.9 million of people with educational lag and an additional 1.1 million people with access to quality and nutritional food deprivation (Graph 12).

However, the social security access deprivation still shows a higher incidence in 2020, 52% of the population under such conditions, equivalent to 66.0 million, even after presenting a reduction in 2018.

For this reason, according to Coneval (2020), it is urgent to strengthen the attention to vulnerable groups due to income or social deprivation and grant the population access to goods and services that make the exercise of their rights possible.



GRAPH 12. INCREASE OR DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH SOCIAL DEPRIVATION FROM 2018 TO 2020

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Besides, the challenge of reducing social deprivation includes the young population since the population between 3 to 21 years old does not attend school and does not count with compulsory education increased from 15.6% in 2018 to 16.7% in 2020, this context added to the loss of income due to the confinement measures aggravated the situation of poverty in young people, recording an increment in teenagers and young people (12 to 29 years old) from 42.3% in 2018 to 46.1% in 2020. This group is one of the most affected during the pandemic due to schools and companies closing, facing adjustments to stop the virus and fight the economic crisis at the same time.

Under this structure, the General Law of Social Development (LGDS) has the assignment of granting plenty exercise of the social rights enshrined in the Political Constitution of the Mexican United States established as objectives of the National Social Development policy the promotion of conditions that ensure the enjoyment of social rights, and the encouragement of economic development with a social sense that rises the population's income and contributes reducing inequality (DOF–Official Journal of the Federation– s.f), this still has not been accomplished instead, they have turned out to be unattainable. It is necessary to reckon that even when structural problems that limit economic growth and development exist, policies and strategies should also exist to fight them with massive State participation (Campos y Monroy–Gómez, 2016). However, the current social politics course moves on a discourse of a government that, instead of benefiting the most vulnerable under the rhetoric of "The poor first," stays still before the adversities that the crisis represents.

Proof of that is the lack of response of the social protection politics in Mexico aimed to mitigate the potential impact upon inequality and poverty. While the rest of the biggest countries in Latin America implemented fiscal stimulus packages and large–scale social spending initiatives, the Mexican government's budgetary and social protection response to the pandemic was extremely limited (Table 23).

COUNTRY	PROGRAM	TARGET POPULATION	NUMBER OF TRANSFERS	AMOUNT OF TRANSFERS	TRANSFERS AS % OF THE POVERTY LINE	ALL BENEFICIA- RIES (ADMINIS- TRATIVE DATA)	FISCAL COST IN % GDP
ARGENTINA	EMERGENCY FAMILY INCOME	VULNERABLES, INFORMAL WOR- KERS	3	ARG\$ 10.000	111,9	9 MILLION PEOPLE	1,14%
BRAZIL	EMERGENCY AID		5	R\$ 600	12,2	65.9 MILLION PEOPLE	1,95%
	FAMILIES IN ACTION		3	COL\$ 145.000	58,7	2.6 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS	0,10%
	YOUTH IN ACTION		3	COL\$ 356.000	144,1	204, 000 PEOPLE	0,02%
COLOMBIA	ELDERLY COLOMBIA		3	COL\$ 160.000	64,8	1.7 MILLION PEOPLE	0,07%
	SOLIDARITY INCOME	VULNERABLES, INFORMAL WOR- KERS	3	COL\$ 160.000	64,8	3 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS	0,13%
MEXICO	NO ADDITIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	NO ADDITIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	NO ADDITIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	NO ADDITIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	NO ADDITIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	NO ADDITIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE	NO ADDITIONAL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

TABLE 23. THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR REDUCING THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Blofield, Lustig and Trasverg (2020).

Mexico had initiatives lacking in additional programs on the Mexican Government's behalf, without a budget, and without an active role in the battle against poverty and inequality. The government has been passive in face of the magnitude of the strikes to poverty, income, work and, above all, the welfare loss of millions of Mexicans. It has accumulated more lags than the ones that existed before.

The government has been passive in face of the magnitude of the strikes to poverty, income, work and, above all, the welfare loss of millions of Mexicans.

SOCIAL LAGS AND GAPS AMONG SOCIAL GROUPS

On top of that, the lag in Mexico is another face of the inequality that the people are facing. In an attempt to illustrate it, Coneval presents the Social Lag Index (IRS for its acronym in Spanish) 2020 as a pondered way that summarizes education indicators, essential housing services, and home assets.

About the rate and the level of social lag in the federal entities by 2020, five of the entities with the highest IRS were: Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Veracruz, and Puebla. The first four have a very high level of social lag, and Puebla has a high level (Table 24).

On the contrary, the five entities with the lowest IRS were: Nuevo León, Coahuila, Mexico City, Aguascalientes, and Colima. Only Colima has a low level of social lag: the four remaining entities have a deficient level of IRS (Table 25).

Moreover, Coneval (2020) reports that Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca appear as the states with the highest incidents in a few IRS indicators, mainly in those related to illiteracy and incomplete education, dwellings with dirt floors, houses without piped wa-

TABLE 24. FIVE STATES WITH THE HIGHEST RATE OF SOCIAL LAG INDEX (IRS)

2020

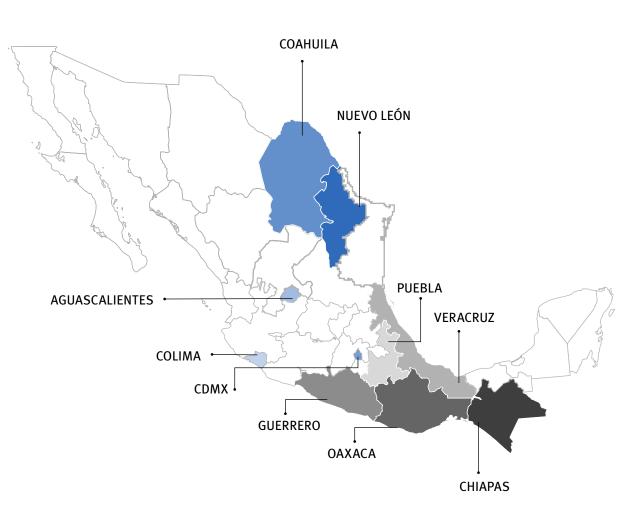
	2020	
STATE	IRS	DEGREE OF SOCIAL LAG
CHIAPAS	2,644	VERY HIGH
OAXACA	2,591	VERY HIGH
GUERRERO	2,45	VERY HIGH
VERACRUZ	1,143	VERY HIGH
PUEBLA	0,744	HIGH

Source: Estimates by Coneval based on Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020.

TABLE 25. FIVE STATES WITH THE LOWEST RATE OF SOCIAL LAG INDEX (IRS)

	2020	
STATE	IRS	DEGREE OF SOCIAL LAG
NUEVO LEON	-1,255	VERY LOW
COAHUILA	-1,148	VERY LOW
CDMX	-1,115	VERY LOW
AGUASCALIENTES	-1,102	VERY LOW
COLIMA	-0,691	LOW

Source: Estimates by Coneval based on Censo de Población y Vivienda 2020.



ter from the public water mains, and homes that do not have a washing machine. In this scenario, Chiapas shows the highest levels in five of the eleven indicators of the IRS; in contrast, Mexico City shows the lowest levels in six out of the eleven indicators.

The lag in Mexico is another face of the inequality that people are facing.

Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca, are the states with higher index of social lag: illiteracy, housing, water, among others.







Images:

House with soil floor in Mitontic, Chiapas in chiapasparalelo.com at https://tinyurl. com/yy9ss4na.

"Without drinkable water and sanitation" in Chiapas in frayba.org.mx at https:// tinyurl.com/hnkvr4.

"Gabriela Mistral, school is a mirror of shortages of the educational system in Chiapas. Photo: Elizabeth Ruiz in chiapasparalelo.com at https://tinyurl.com/34b-88fut.

DISADVANTAGES ACCUMULATION

The accumulation of disadvantages is linked to discrimination, and Mexico has a higher incidence among people under the condition of poverty, an element that repeats for most vulnerable groups (Ordoñez, 2018).

Disadvantages in the matter of labor, education, or linked to poverty, either at income or infrastructure conditions, services, and urban segregation (synchronic accumulation) are evident when the progress in social deprivation from past years are pushed back with the pandemic arrival, and by the lack of reaction from the government to react to soften the impacts.

Additionally, in what respects to the accumulative process through life, there are other less explored disadvantages, associated, for instance, with health, crime, indebtedness, or forced migration, to mention some (Saravi 2020). Mexico has suffered a progressive weakening of spaces that could hinder a faster way out of the crisis.

By replicating inequality schemes where the wealthy attend wealthy schools, the middle class attends mid-

Without a clear strategy of economic recovery that leads to equality, there could be significant instabilities and social differences. That is not the way to reduce economic and social inequality in generational and cross–generational terms.

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dle-class schools, and the poor attend poor schools, the contributions to the education system to promote social integration and avoid marginality are scarce, even after Mexico's efforts to expand the access to education of the poorest sectors of the population. The residential segregation and the segmentation of services reduce the areas of socially heterogeneous encounters, and it weakens the structural base that holds the empathy capacity and moral obligation and the level of tolerance to inequality. (Kaztman, 2002). In this sense, the functioning of social, economic, and political institutions facilitates or limits the opportunities of a shared social experience, key in every citizenship practice (Barry, 1998). The lack of an effective government reaction has been decisive, and it will even be more so with the current conditions of the COVID–19 crisis. All that deepens the negative impacts that poverty takes within and drags on its way. By continuing without a clear strategy of economic recovery that leads to equality, there could be significant instabilities and social differences. That is not the way to reduce economic and social inequality in generational and cross–generational terms. It is well known that access to the same opportunities for everybody paves the way to facilitate and accomplish a better and faster welfare condition.





5. The Pandemic's Dead «

When the pandemic started, Mexico had to face a number of challenges to guarantee the right of health services to every Mexican no matter social–economic condition. Within that goal health conditions should also be guaranteed to healthcare workers, avoiding the spreading of the SARS–CoV–2 virus.

As the number of Coronavirus cases increased in Mexico and the world, the health system in every Latin American country adopted methods learned over the last ten years, when the region was the center of contagions of the AH1N1 flu virus (El Hospital, 2020). At that time, Mexico had the highest number of deaths and contagions (Signos Vitales 2020, p. 30). However, it seems like nothing was learned about the importance of having a robust health system. The health system's collapse is reflected in the opportunity cost of what has not been done and what is not being done, as well as in the fall in the health coverage of the population.

Through the pandemic, the health system's importance for the development of society has been demonstrated again. Health and well-being are crucial worldwide in the making of public decisions. In Mexico, a total of 241,279 deaths (officially) and a total of 2,861,498 estimated COVID-19 cases by August 3rd, 2021 is the number that places us in the

4th position of total deaths due to COVID-19 worldwide, right after The United States, Brazil, and India (world-o-meter 2021) out of a total of 222 registered countries.

The health system's collapse is reflected in the opportunity cost of what has not been done and what is not being done. Only so far this year, the medicine shortage in the public health sector has been undeniable, in addition to the reduction of outpatient consultations, specialties, and dental due to the great demand for services that require COVID–19 attention. In addition to the setbacks in health as the target population without the corresponding vaccines, the impact on Mexicans' pockets has been notorious, and the passivity of a government that does not seem to see the damages.

Three years into this administration, there is still a significant lack of drugs supply and the precariousness of the health services is notorious. The budget for this sector has not increased, and its use in 2021 is way below the approved amount. That impacts the expense in pocket money that families have to assign to medicines and health services, which has been seen and has strongly increased over the last two years. ENIGH (2020) estimates that the out-ofpocket expense in health increased 41% over the last two years. It is clear that authorities have failed to provide an effective alternative to robust the health system and stop spreading the virus.

Over the last two years, 15.6 million people are not covered anymore by the public health system; 35.7 million people DO NOT have access to health services.

THE INCAPACITY OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

The health needs of the population due to the arrival of COVID-19 have made evident the sector's incapacities. What was not done before and during the pandemic to strengthen an already worn-out health system is embodied in its weakness, limiting its actions, determining millions of Mexicans' wellbeing.

According to the National Health and Nutrition Survey (ENSANUT for its acronym in Spanish) (2020), only 36% of beneficiaries of the Institute of Social Security and Services for State Workers (ISSSTE for its acronym in Spanish) are cared for at these institutions. This percentage is 49% for the beneficiaries of the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS its acronym in Spanish), and 51% in other public services such as the Secretariat of National Defense (SEDENA for its acronym in Spanish), the Secretariat of the Navy (SEMAR its acronym in Spanish) and Petróleos Mexicanos (PEMEX its acronym in Spanish). The primary health needs reported in recent months were acute diseases (38%), followed by chronic (25%), non-infectious acute events (14%), and preventive services (13%).

Regarding the use of public sector services, a good percentage of the population, despite being a beneficiary of public health services, resort to private services, including clinics near pharmacies. Thus, 45% of IMSS beneficiaries, 57% of those from ISSSTE, and 29% from other public services turn to private–sector care. Additionally, the clinics adjacent to pharmacies served 13% of IMSS beneficiaries, 10% of ISSSTE, and 7% of other public services (Shamah–Levy *et al.*, 2021).

The attention demanded by the population in the face of COVID-19 symptoms demanded coverage and quality of health services. According to ENSANUT, the cascade of care shows that 18.6% of the population reported having a health need three months before the survey. Of these, 82% sought care, 81% received it, and only 34% received public health services.

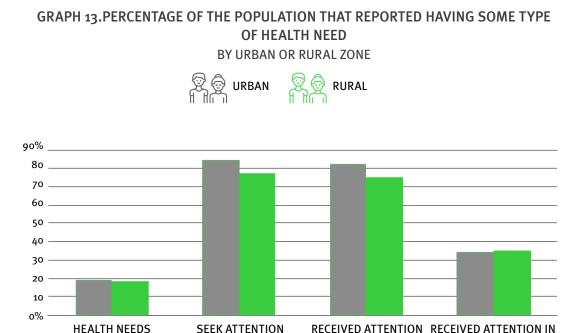
If we break down by sex and location (urban and rural), 21% of the women reported having a health need, 84% sought care, 82% received it, and 36% received public services. In men, the percentage reported having a health need is lower than in women (16%); 81% sought care, 79% received it, and 32% received care in public services.

Regarding the population living in rural locations, 18% reported having a health need, 77% sought care, 75% received it, and 35% received public services, while in urban locations, 19% reported having health needs, a higher percentage than in rural localities sought care (84%) and received it (82%), and the same percentage was attended in public services (34%) (Graph 13).

Although the Federal Executive's speech ensures universal coverage for the entire population, Mexicans are spending more on health items compared to 2018. In 2020, for example, households spent 126 pesos on medication per member compared to \$ 102.6 in 2018. The same occurs with medical consultations, where a larger amount is observed, allocating \$ 30 in 2018 to \$ 47 in 2020 per member (Graph 14).

One of the government's responses to the emergency was the subrogation of specific ailments to private hospitals. Given the lack of care capacity in the health system hospitals, patients with illnesses that could not wait, such as childbirth and appendicitis, could be referred to private hospitals, and the State covered the cost at a price that barely reached to cover operating costs. The State no longer covered care in private hospitals for costlier conditions, and patients

BY SEX RURAL AND URBAN	HEALTH NEEDS	SEEK ATTENTION	RECEIVED ATTENTION	RECEIVED ATTENTION IN PUBLIC SERVICES
	21%	84%	82%	36%
	16%	81%	79%	32%



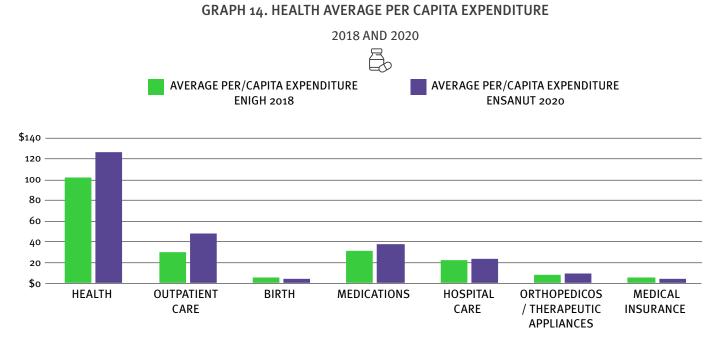
Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENSANUT COVID-19 (2020).

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PUBLIC SERVICES

had nowhere to go unless they paid the cost. Over the 153 days of the agreement in 2020 (from April 13 to September 24), 17,413 services were derived to private institutions, and the total outlay by the government was 91.1 million pesos.

Most of the patients referred to private hospitals were by Social Security (86%) and ISSSTE (11%). Unfortunately, the Institute of Health for Welfare (INSA-BI for its acronym in Spanish) did not take advantage of the agreement's benefits, and many patients could not receive care. In addition, the resources to pay for the subrogated services came from the same IMSS and ISSSTE. In other words, there was no particular budget to cover the medical expenses of patients who previously went to public hospitals, so other types of ailments could not be treated either (Sánchez, 2021). The question remains: With additional public budget due to the pandemic to pay expenses of patients referred to private hospitals, and with the active involvement of INSABI in the agreement, how many patients could have been saved?



Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENSANUT COVID-19 (2020).

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Given the reduction in hospital discharges in public institutions in 2020 (Signos Vitales, 2021b), and the shortage of medicines that the Nosotrxs (Us) organization has also reported, there has been a greater need for health services during the pandemic. Additionally, some households attended by public services must have opted for private services for certain types of ailments, as shown by the increase in private spending on health.

Another indication that points in the same direction refer to measles vaccination as a critical factor in meeting Millennium Development Goal 4, which reduces infant mortality (WHO, 2015).⁹ The International Initiative aims to reduce measles—related mortality by 95% by 2015 and eliminate measles and rubella by 2020 in at least five of the six WHO regions. His ultimate task was to ensure that no child died of measles or was born with congenital rubella syndrome.

In Mexico, the health authorities emphasized immunization actions. 73.8% of 1-year-old children had measles vaccination coverage in 1990, and by 2012 MMR vaccination coverage increased to 86.8%

(UNDP, 2014). However, at present, we are in a state of high vulnerability due to the insufficient number of vaccines and low vaccination rates registered in our country in recent years; where at least the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), in the last 14 years, has had a deficit in the application of measles vaccine of 49% (Herrera et al., 2020). Likewise, according to the Mexican Vaccination Observatory, the percentage of the population without a vaccine increased dramatically to 68% in 2019, and by 2020 only 21.8%¹⁰ of the target population have a dose of the measles vaccine (Graph 15). In other words, in just two years, we went back a decade in vaccination against measles. Therefore, a more significant outbreak of measles cases in Mexico is expected, coupled with the presence of COVID-19.

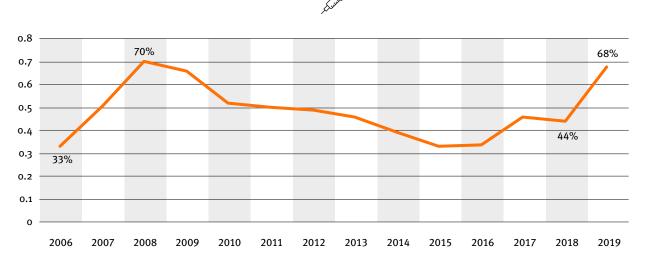
10 As of February 29th, 2020

⁹ The Measles and Rubella Initiative, launched in 2001, is a global alliance led by the Red Cross of the United States of America, the United Nations Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), UNICEF and WHO.



Image: Children without access to measles vaccine in Mexico in codigosanluis.com at https://tinyurl.com/ zj6tv7n3

GRAPH 15. PERCENTAGE OF THE GOAL POPULATION WITHOUT MEASLES VACCINATION IN MEXICO



Source: In-house elaboration with information from the Mexican Vaccination Association (2020).

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THE TOLL OF THE PANDEMIC

The pandemic has left deaths and shortages in Mexico and the world. It is necessary to remember that the health crisis is not over yet and that the consequences in its wake will leave a long-term mark. The challenge continues with a fragmented health system, with structural weaknesses that affect the poorest, few vaccination levels, and a government that has shown its passivity in the multiple crises and a lack of effective strategy.

As already mentioned, we are in the 4th position of 222 countries registered with more deaths from COVID–19 (236,331 deaths) and more than 2.6 million infections (Worldometer, 2021)¹¹. At the national level, the entities with the highest number of confirmed cases correspond to Mexico City (730,359), the State of Mexico (271,572), Guanajuato (134,918), Nuevo León (132,678), Jalisco (94,365), and Puebla (87,961) (Graph 16).

Unfortunately, the virus in Mexico has caused deaths from contagion and indirect deaths derived from what was left unattended inside and outside the health system. In this sense, in the last year the more Unfortunately, the virus in Mexico has caused deaths from contagion and indirect deaths derived from what was left unattended inside and outside the health system.

In the last year more than one hundred centers of the health sector system, clinics, and hospitals, reduced between 42% and 49% of beneficiary consultation for diseases such as cancer, hypertension, obesity and other chronic–degenerative diseases. Celis, 2021

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than one hundred centers of the health sector system, clinics, and hospitals, either due to the pandemic or deliberately, reduced between 42% and 49% of beneficiary consultation for diseases such as cancer, hypertension, obesity and other chronic–degenerative diseases (Celis, 2021). Only the number of outpatient consultations, which had already decreased since 2015, had a significant drop in 2020 (Graph 17), a phenomenon that also occurs with specialized or dental consultations (Graph 18).

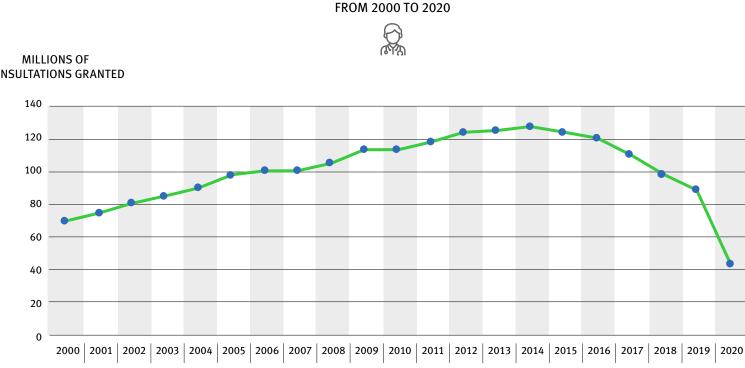
GRAPH 16. CONFIRMED COVID-19 CASES PER STATE

ş.

STATE	CASES
CDMX	730,359
EDO MEX	271,572
GUANAJUATO	134,918
NUEVO LEON	132,678
JALISCO	94,365
PUEBLA	87,961
SONORA	83,618
TABASCO	81,842
VERACRUZ	71,567
QUERETARO	71,353
COAHUILA	70,724
TAMAULIPAS	69,600
SLP	66,992
CHIHUAHUA	58,825
BAJA CALIFORNIA	51,593
YUCATAN	51,249
OAXACA	51,183
MICHOACÁN	50,523
SINALOA	49,664
BCS	45,419
GUERRERO	45,197
HIDALGO	41,118
QUINTANA ROO	38,281
MORELOS	35,695
DURANGO	35,489
ZACATECAS	31,643
AGUASCALIENTES	27,095
TLAXCALA	20,424
NAYARIT	14,327
CAMPECHE	13,284
COLIMA	13,120
CHIAPAS	13,021

Source: In-house elaboration with data from COVID-19 Conacyt (2021).

GRAPH 17. NUMBER OF OUTPATIENT CONSULTATIONS GIVEN



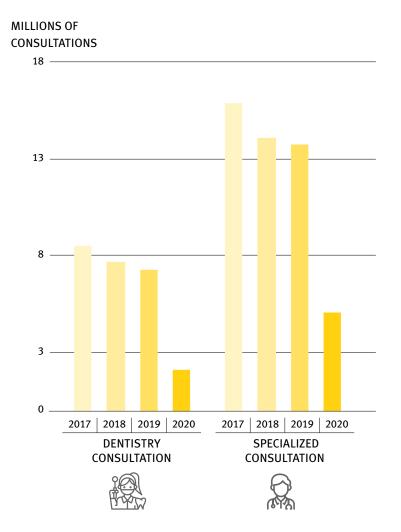
CONSULTATIONS GRANTED

Source: In-house elaboration with data from Information System of the Ministry of Health (2020).

As if that were not enough, the neglect and lack of protection that health personnel has suffered due to the insecurity of their working conditions has generated problems for the health sector. The Amnesty International report entitled "Exposed, silenced and attacked" (2020) exposed, since the beginning of the

pandemic, the deficiencies in the protection of health personnel and revealed that practically all of the 63 countries analyzed lacked personal protective equipment (PPE) enough. Some groups have been particularly affected by this abandonment. In countries such as Malaysia, Mexico, and the United States, cleaning

GRAPH 18. NUMBER OF CONSULTATIONS GRANTED BY THE HEALTH SECTOR FROM 2017 TO 2020



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Information System of the Ministry of Health (2020).

staff, auxiliary services, and social services have suffered reprisals, including dismissals and detention, for demanding PPE and safe work conditions.

There is currently no systematic global monitoring of the number of health workers who have died after contracting COVID–19. However, some organizations such as Amnesty International have compiled and analyzed a whole series of available data showing that more than 17 thousand health workers have died in the world after contracting the SARS–CoV–2 virus. According to the Director of Economic and Social Justice of Amnesty International, every 30 minutes, a health worker dies from COVID–19 in the world.

In Mexico, according to the information provided by the Ministry of Health as of July 17, 2021, 4 thousand 084 deaths of Health Personnel have been confirmed, where Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Puebla, Veracruz, Jalisco, Guanajuato, Chihuahua, Nuevo León, Tabasco, and Tamaulipas are the ten states with the highest number of deaths, accounting for 65% of all deaths.

The distribution of deaths of health personnel by profession indicates that doctors account for the highest number of deaths with 46%, followed by the category "other health workers" with 30%, nurses with 19%, dentists with 3%, and laboratory technicians 2% (Graph 19).

It is important to note that although vaccination has covered the first line of health personnel facing the battle against the virus, there is ambiguity in the information of health personnel, both on the conditions with which they work and on the number of reported deaths. However, it should not be forgotten that while full coverage is achieved, health workers continue to put their lives at risk by being anonymous heroes.

GRAPH 19. PERCENTAGE OF DEATHS BY MEDICAL PROFESSION

Source: In-house elaboration with information from the Ministry of Health as of July 19, 2021.

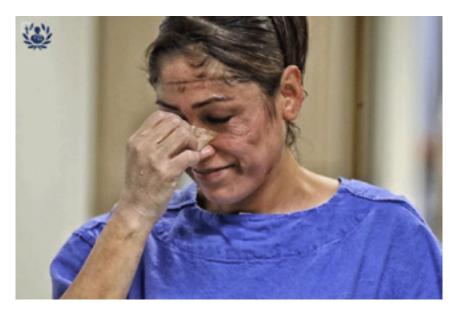


Image: "Mexico ranks first place worldwide in physicians deaths by COVID" in topdoctors.mx at https://tinyurl.com/8dhf6pjk

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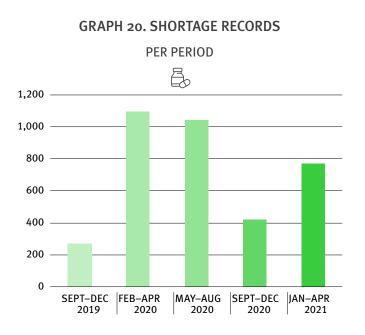
SHORTAGES AND DETERIORATION OF THE HEALTH SYSTEM

The medication shortage has been a problem that reflects the deterioration of the health system in Mexico. According to an article published in *The Lancet*, the shortage of medicines and the deterioration of the health system go beyond the fault of corruption, as President Lopez Obrador has asserted. Mexico has suffered from a shortage of drugs to treat cancer for the last two years. President Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador decreed the modernization of the procurement process for pharmaceutical products which has been ineffective. The problem actually started before the pandemic (Agren, 2021).

Only the Cero Desabasto (Zero Shortage) NGO documented that the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS), which provides medical care to 51% of Mexicans, could not fill around 2% of prescriptions in 2019. This shortage increased to 8% of prescriptions. In 2020, however, the most important cause of medicines shortage was inefficiency in management, planning, and purchasing operations, according to Dr. Andrés Castañeda Prado, a physician and collaborator of the Cero Desabasto organization. Vaccination to prevent other diseases also decreased. For example, in the case of tuberculosis, the number of vaccines administered decreased 92% compared to 2019 (Agren, 2021), before the arrival of the pandemic, which highlights the ineffectiveness of government management in the the Health sector.

Likewise, Cero Desabasto has documented the record of 4,504 reports that detail the unavailability of medicines or medical supplies in public institutions of the health sector throughout the country. In its last four-month cut (Jan-Apr 21), the initiative surveyed 30 states that cover 94% of the national territory. They compiled 773 reports from patients and health professionals, a third more than in the previous fourmonth period (Sep-Dec 20) (Graph 20).

This unfortunate situation has a more significant impact on the lives of the most disadvantaged groups, nullifying their possibilities for the right to access health services. The latest Health Transparency Report 2019–2020 (2021) reported that at least in the



Source: In-house elaboration with information from Cero Desabasto (2021).

IMSS, from 2019 to 2020, the percentage of prescriptions filled fell, from 98% to 92%, which implied that 16 million prescriptions could not be fully provided to provide adequate treatment to a large number of beneficiaries (Nosotrxs, 2021). In Mexico, the weakened health system, the number of deaths from COVID-19, and the almost null government response detail the tragedy that the pandemic has become for a very aggrieved Mexico under an austerity approach that has taken and will continue to claim lives.



Image: "Demonstrators block Terminal 1 of Mexico City's airport; they asked for medical attention to children with cancer" in El Sol de México at https://tinyurl.com/r43526ae

THE VACCINE THAT COMES IN DRIBS AND DRABS

According to the plan presented by the Ministry of Health, the prioritization established in order of priority and target population is:

- 1. Health personnel facing COVID-19 (estimated at 1.1 million people)
- 2. Population aged 50 and over (27,181,091):
 - » Over 80 years of age (2,035,415)
 - » People from 70 to 79 years old (4,225,668)
 - » People from 60 to 69 years old (8,199,671)
 - » People from 50 to 59 years old (12,720,337)
- 3. Pregnant women aged 18 years and over from the third month of pregnancy (2,133,951)
- 4. Teaching staff of the Federal Entities in green epidemiological traffic light
- 5. People living with comorbidities:
 - » Morbid obesity
 - » Mellitus diabetes
 - » Systemic hypertension
 - » Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
 - » Asthma
 - » Cerebrovascular diseases

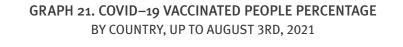
- » HIV
- » Chronic kidney disease
- » Diseases that require immunosuppression
- » Cancer in active treatment
- 6. People aged 40 to 49.
- 7. Remainder of the population aged 16 and over.

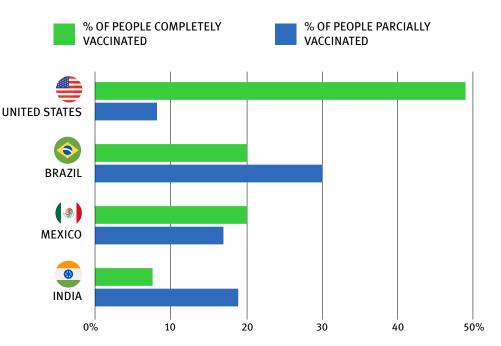
However, the vaccination process follows an unclear dynamic where the vaccination for the rest of the population (Stage 5 established by the Ministry of Health) would begin in July 2021. By then, the groups of people aged 40 to 49 years should have been vaccinated, from 50 to 59, and pregnant women over 18 years of age, health personnel, and older adults, thus covering a total of 96.1 million fully vaccinated Mexicans. However, as of August 3, 2021, only 20% of the population is fully vaccinated, and a further 17% is only partially vaccinated (Graph 21). Mexico is below countries like the United States and Brazil, and above India, which lead the highest number of deaths from COVID–19 (Our World in Data, 2021).

THE FAILED GOVERNMENT STRATEGY AND AUSTERITY THAT HAS CLAIMED LIVES

The Mexican health system has been chronically underfunded. The highest point of total health spending (public and private) occurred in 2009 with 6.1% of GDP on average. It reached just 5.4% of GDP in 2018 (Sánchez–Talanquer *et al.*, 2021). For 2021 (amid the health crisis), the budget for the health sector represented only an increase of 1.9% compared to the one approved in 2020. Expenditure on health (Health function) for 2021 represents 2.7% of GDP and 10.6 % of the total budget (Graph 22). Health expenditures have been insufficient to respond to the needs of an aging population with a high prevalence of chronic diseases and greater expectations of access to quality care, not counting the recent cascade of health demands due to COVID –19.

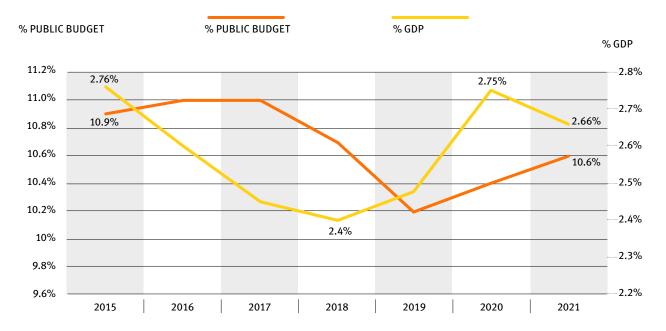
In other words, although the reasons given for the 2021 budget included a discourse on expanding and strengthening capacities of the health system, with an emphasis on services aimed at the care of vulnerable groups, the participation of the health function for 2021 fell as a share of GDP. The budget proposal for health and medicines considers increases, but these are lower than the previous year: 4.8% and 4.4% compared to 6.2% and 5.0%, respectively (Canifarma, 2020).





Source: In-house elaboration with data of Our World in Data (2021).

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GRAPH 22. HEALTH OPERATION PARTICIPATION IN GDP AND BUDGET

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Canifarma (2020).

Under this structure, current budget cuts and austerity measures leave us even more constrained, making Mexico the country with the lowest share of public funding in total health spending among OECD countries.

Unfortunately, the federal government's refusal to demand more resources for the health sector has been constant. The adopted measures were limited to recommendations of a healthy distance, face masks, constant hand washing, and antibacterial gel. There were no resources for mass testing or protection of health personnel, which is a problem in this third wave of infections currently being experienced. The vaccination strategy has followed a scheme without transparency or clarity so that 63% of the population continues without immunization.

As if that were not enough, the prediction model used by Undersecretary Hugo Lopez-Gatell, who served as a benchmark to guide health management, expected a maximum of 5,000 daily infections and predicted the end of the pandemic by July 2020. Reality surpassed the Lopez-Gatell model. The excess of deaths above that observed in previous years during the pandemic involves 498 thousand people who, under normal circumstances, would not have died. The excess mortality indicates that only 353 thousand deaths are associated with COVID-19; there is no explanation for the rest of the deaths that amount to 145 thousand. It should be remembered that experts warned that no country expected the pandemic to end so soon, especially without vaccines to immunize its population (Rojas, 2021).

Despite those mentioned above, as of June 1, 2020, the Government of Mexico began reopening economic activities to avoid economic collapse. Most people who stayed at home had no way to survive without working, so the "stay at home" strategy was ineffective. The balance between the health of the population (controlling SARS–CoV–2 transmission) and the economic well–being of society was not achieved. As the "new normality" was established, a state epidemiological risk traffic light system to restart economic and social activities was implemented. This traffic light determines the level of health alert and defines the type of activities authorized to be carried out in the economic, labor, school, and social spheres according to the color of the traffic light in turn. However, after a few months, the implementation of the traffic light was left to state authorities, and there was no longer clarity in the criteria for determining the color of the traffic light.

It is necessary to recount what happened over a year after the COVID–19 pandemic, which is still in force in its Delta variant. The virus' arrival unmasked social, economic, and health gaps in Mexico and the world, which have been reflected in millions of direct and indirect deaths because of the virus. In Mexico, the weakened health system, the number of deaths from COVID–19, and the almost null government response detail the tragedy that the pandemic has become for a very aggrieved Mexico under an austerity approach that has taken and will continue to claim lives. Mexico found itself at a crucial moment where the government's responses and society, in general, have shaped the present and will determine the country's future.





6. IMPACT ON EDUCATION

Given the arrival of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in our country, the suspension of classes was imminent to prevent the spread and death of students, teachers, and staff working in schools. However, it is not the first time that there has been an experience that prevents the continuation of classes in person, so there is experience to prevent the loss of learning. For example, in some regions of Mexico, schools have been affected on at least two occasions by the earthquakes of 1985 and 2017, which required the suspension of classes affecting 1,568 and 3,678 schools, respectively (ISSUE, 2020, p.20). However, in both cases, the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP for its acronym in Spanish) established an emergency program of television classes only for these students, responding rapidly to such contingency.

Under this scheme, tele–secundaria (schooling through satellite television in isolated communities) has been the oldest experience that the country has in terms of television technology (National Institute for the Evaluation of Education, INEE for its acronym in Spanish, 2005)¹² which has been transformed into education based on Information and Communication Technologies (TIC by its acronym in Spanish).

Given the health contingency of 2020, in an effort to limit the transmission of the virus, measures were taken to suspend classes, which have lasted for more than a year and continue until July 2021. It is import-

¹² They are generally located in towns with less than 2,500 inhabitants, in marginalized or difficult-to-access areas, where the low number of primary school graduates makes the installation of a general or technical secondary school unfeasible.

ant to note that these actions were adopted as a first resort, not as a last measure. Evidence indicates that both the discontinuity of classes and the complete disruption of the school year cause a lag in learning in formal education (Woessmann, 2003) (Goodman, 2014). Despite the recent experience of dozens of countries that have at least partially reopened schools, this highlights the fact that educational authorities have not reacted efficiently to prevent loss of learning and other benefits of on–site teaching¹³. Given the risk of losing the continuity of learning and the possibility of acquiring the knowledge programmed in the period, it is incomprehensible that schools were closed while cinemas, bars, and restaurants remained open.

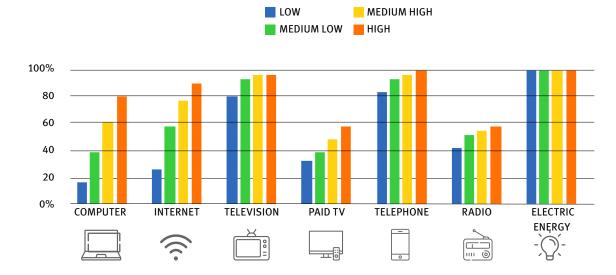
In response, the educational authorities changed the distance learning modality and released the programs "Learn at Home I, II and III," which are classes on free television. Regardless of other problems intrinsic to the model and other pedagogical difficulties, the "Learn at home" program is an educational policy's action. However, it is neither inclusive nor equitable (Reimers and Scheleider, 2020) since this



modality leaves students with no digital resources to continue their studies. In this sense, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI for its acronym in Spanish) in 2020 yielded the following data that indicate greater exclusion for the most disadvantaged: a) Only 15.7% households located in the lowest socioeconomic stratum have a computer, compared to 6 out of every ten households (60.6%), belonging to the upper-middle stratum, b) 25.1% of the population from the lowest stratum do not have internet access, and c) 20.4% do not have television at home (Graph 23). *Image*: girl taking classes from TV. Getty images/ Wradio at https://tinyurl. com/4e4f9vxw

¹³ Mexico is one of the few countries that have not reopened schools, even partially, since the pandemic began (UNICEF, 2021).

GRAPH 23. PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH SOME TYPE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SOCIOECONOMIC LEVELS 2020



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Use and Availability of Information Technologies in the Household National Survey (ENDUTIH for its acronym in Spanish) (2020).

As we announced in Vital Signals (2020b), some international organizations (UN, UNDP) insisted on the importance of opening schools as soon as the local transmission of COVID–19 was controlled; otherwise, its prolonged closure could generate a "generational catastrophe" for which public policy recommendations were issued in favor of opening schools (p.212). At the beginning of the health crisis, most countries decided to completely close their doors (Canada, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Spain, England, and so on), and some others, such as Germany and Russia, chose to keep their doors partially open. However, in September 2020, some countries such as France, England, Germany, Russia, and even South Africa chose to open schools completely to continue learning (Signos Vitales, 2020b, p.10). This action required more significant efforts and resources in the countries to take care of health and at the same time safeguard learning.

Graph 24 shows that, compared to other regions, from April 1 to December 31, 2020, Latin America and the Caribbean present a very high number of days in which schools were closed to develop on-site classes. In that period (275 days in a row), an average of 124 days without on-site classes was accumulated, which increases to 184 if the school recess period is included.

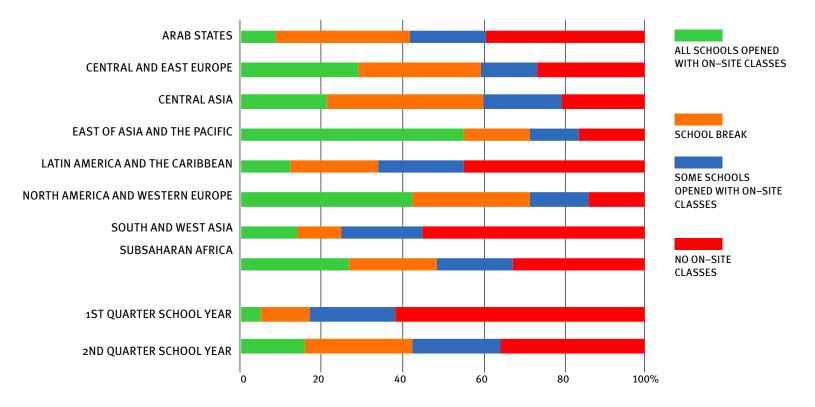
The relationship between the academic year beginning and the suspension of on-site classes are highlighted in the analyzed period. On average, those countries in the region that regularly start classes in the first quarter of the year suspended on-site classes for 170 days. On the other hand, in countries where the academic year begins in the third quarter, this number drops to 99 (UNESCO, 2021).

Unfortunately, there has never been a safe back-toschool plan in Mexico, despite the president's insistence that there will be a return in the next school year under any circumstances. Although vaccination has advanced covering the teaching profession, there are still no vaccines for students who are precisely those under 18 years of age. In addition, hundreds of educational establishments are in terrible conditions regarding infrastructure and equipment, aggravated by abandonment during the pandemic, and do not have the resources to compensate for these deficiencies. Finally, there is still no differentiated care program for students since the pandemic impacts have not been homogeneous. This situation exacerbates inequality in the entire population, but mainly among the most vulnerable.

In this sense, the points still present in the educational authorities are the lack of innovations in educational matters to respond to the emergency, budgetary rigidity, and no efforts to combat the loss of learning and school drop-outs.

GRAPH 24. AVERAGE OF ACCUMULATED DAYS ACCORDING TO SCHOOL OPENING SITUATION

BY REGION, FROM APRIL 1ST TO DECEMBER 2020



Source: In-house elaboration with information from UNESCO (2021).

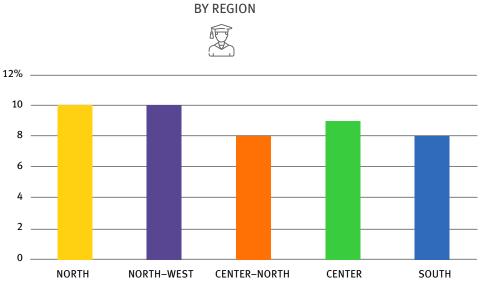
EDUCATIONAL AND LEARNING INEQUALITIES

Inequality is the main problem of education in Mexico since it prevents the distribution of the quality and access to learning required to live a dignified life and that the right to quality education is fulfilled (Schmelkes, 2005).

In this sense, the different educational indicators: access, drop-out, failure, terminal efficiency, learning, are closely related to other living conditions, such as the people's place of origin, if they belong to a family that speaks an indigenous language, if it is born in an area of high or low marginalization, the education of its parents and the income level of the family to which it belongs, among others (Bolaños, 2021). Under this scheme, education must be the equalizing mechanism par excellence. However, in Mexico, inequality is still a latent issue that, with the pandemic, has deepened even more.

Only at the regional level, the percentage of people who studied a professional career and whose parents have primary school or less is different in each of them. At the national level, it is 9%, in the southern and north center regions of the country is 8%, while it is 10% in the northern and north western regions. (Graph 25). This factor predisposes the opportunities that an individual will have from childhood to youth and the future-income potential of people.

GRAPH 25. PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE THAT STUDIED A PROFESSIONAL CAREER WHOSE PARENTS ONLY HAVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OR LESS



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Espinosa Yglesias Study Center (CEEY for its acronym in Spanish) (2021).

SCHOOL DROP-OUT AND LOSS OF EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY

The deepening of inequalities before the arrival of COVID–19 is reflected in the loss of learning for all ages. According to UNESCO, in childhood, these range from the loss of learning, mental anguish, exposure to violence and abuse, to the lack of meals and vaccines at school, or the lower development of social skills. The consequences for children will be felt in their academic performance, social commitment, and physical and mental health (UNESCO, 2021).

Those most affected are often children from low-resource settings, who do not have access to distance learning tools, and the youngest in vital developmental stages. However, boys and girls between the ages of o and 5 in Mexico also experience significant lagging; for example, 12% of children under five years of age still suffer from chronic malnutrition, and 65% do not have access to children's books, which can be a factor in the insufficient levels of reading and writing in primary school.

Additionally, the Survey to Measure the Impact of COVID–19 on Education (ECOVID–ED for its acronym in Spanish) (2020) refers to the disadvantages of on-

line classes where 58.3% of students believe that they do not learn or learn less than in person. This is followed by the lack of follow–up to the learning of the students (27.1%) and the lack of technical capacity or the pedagogical ability of parents or guardians to transmit knowledge (23.9%), triggers that can lead to loss of learning and thus put educational mobility at risk.

According to the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), the primary education graduation profile characteristics are illustrated in table 26. The challenge begins from the first grades of primary education, since the process of literacy begins, of learning to read and write. Literacy goes beyond the mere knowledge of letters and their sounds, implying that the student understands the functioning of the alphabetic code, endows it with meaning and sense to integrate and interact efficiently in a discursive community as a social practice of language, which happens daily in the various contexts of his life (SEP, 2017).

Likewise, the development of a more favorable attitude toward mathematics and the understanding of the natural, social and intrapersonal world, which are at risk from the interruption of learning and school drop-outs, will determine the future level of life of the child.

TABLE 26. RISKS OF THE ELEMENTARY EDUCATION GRADUATION PROFILE IN THE FACE OF INTERRUPTED LEARNING

<u>D</u>	DESCRIPTION
LANGUAGE AND COMUNICATION	Basic communication: oral and written events and ideas in the mother tongue; If an indigenous language is used, they will also communicate in Spanish, orally and in writing. The use of English in aspects of their past and environment, as well as immediate needs.
MATHEMATICAL THINK-ING	Understanding of concepts and procedures to solve various mathe-matical problems and to apply them in other contexts
EXPLORATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE MATERIAL AND SOCIAL WORLD	Recognition of some natural and social phenomena that generate curiosity and the need to answer questions explored through inquiry, analysis, and experimentation
CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING	It is the problem–solving strategy with different applied strategies: or–dered observation, analysis, reflec- tion, and planning.
SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS AND LIFE PROJECT	Identify and practice personal strengths to self-regulate emotions and be calm to play, learn, develop empa- thy and live with others.
COLLABORATION AND TEAMWORK	Work collaboratively. Identify abilities and recognition and appreciation of those of others.
ARTISTIC APPRECIATION AND EXPRESSION	It is the exploration and experimentation of different artistic manifesta-tions. Express himself creatively through elements of music, dance, theater, and the visual arts.
ATTENTION TO THE BODY AND HEALTH	Recognition of anatomy. Solve challenges and challenges through the creative use of physical skills. Make informed decisions about their hygiene and food.
ENVIRONMENTAL CARE	It is the Recognition of the importance of caring for the environment. Identify local and global problems and solutions that can be imple-mented (for example, turning off lights and not wasting water).

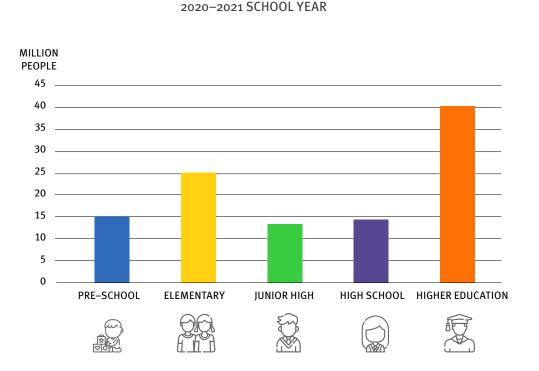
urce: In–nouse elaboration with information from the Ministry of Public Education (2017).

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In young people, the learning interruption impacts both the continuity of education and the success of insertion in the labor market. In Mexico, on average, only 27.2% of young people return to the school system after leaving it (Agüero and Beleche, 2013). Said probability decreases, for all strata, as the age at which individuals interrupt their studies increases. This relationship is strengthened since the probability of interrupting education in the first place is higher for the lower strata. Under this scheme, it is found that the educational achievement of those who return does not suffer consequences due to a selection effect: those who have material conditions and high probabilities of completing the educational level are those who return, while those who would not have a drop in the level of education. Academic performance does not return first.

As if that were not enough, the population not enrolled by educational level in the 2020–2021 school year indicates that the number of boys and girls who should be in primary education and are not amount to just over 25 million, while in middle school, there are 13 million, in high–school, there are more than 14 million. In higher education, 40 million people are not enrolled in the corresponding level (Graph 26).

GRAPH 26. NUMBER OF UNENROLLED PEOPLE IN THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM PER EDUCATIONAL LEVEL



Source: In-house elaboration with data from SEP (2021) and INEGI Census (2020).

Unfortunately, with all the disruption of learning with the arrival of COVID–19, school drop–out has been imminent. Only the figures reveal that in Mexico City, there were 27 thousand fewer registrations (Camarillo, 2021)¹⁴ for admission to upper secondary education (EMS) for the next school year, that is, a decrease of 9.9% in comparison to 2020. On the other hand, the leading figures of the National Educational System 2019–2020 indicate that school drop–out in primary education has been increasing, going from 0.5% for the 2017–2018 cycle to 0.7% in the 2018– 2019 cycle, a percentage that is maintained for the 2019–2020 cycle (General Directorate of Educational Planning, Programming, and Statistics, DGPPyEE for its acronym in Spanish, 2020).

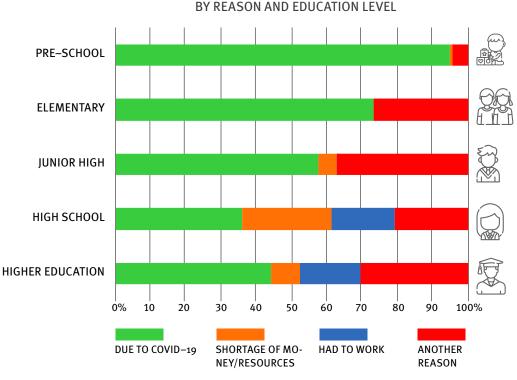
Currently, the INEGI reports that the percentage of the population that did not complete the school year due to the COVID–19 pandemic is decreasing as the level of education increases (INEGI, 2021a). According to the ECOVID–ED (2021), it is identified that for those who were in preschool, it was practically the only reason for not completing the school year (94.7%); the percentage drops to 73.2% for the elementary level and reaches 35.9% for high school education, the lowest percentage. In higher education, the percentage of mentions of COVID-19 as the reason for noncompletion was 44.6%.On the other hand, the percentage that did not complete the 2019-2020 school year due to lack of resources or because they had to work was 5.6% for the middle school level, 43.7% for the high school level, and 25.1% for the higher education level. (Graph 27).



Image: School dropout in municipalqro.com at https://tinyurl. com/k5x54rfk

In Mexico City there were 27,000 fewer registrations in High School in 2021.

¹⁴ The spokesman for the Metropolitan Commission of Public Institutions of Higher Secondary Education (COMIPEMS for its acronym in Spanish), Javier Olmedo Badía, announced that for 2020 there were 302,709 applicants, while for 2021 there were 275,347.



GRAPH 27. PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 3 AND 29 WHO DID NOT COMPLETE THE 2019–2020 SCHOOL YEAR

The consequences of this situation could be enormous. There is not only the possible reversal of the educational achievements of the last decade but the increase in the already existing "learning poverty" (De la Torre, 2021). This poverty (learning poverty) is the proportion of children who cannot read and understand a simple text at the end of primary school and who have been deprived of schooling, either because they do not attend a school or because they have a significant lag in education schooling by age (De la Torre, 2021). The learning losses associated with these situations in Latin America and the Carib-

Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENCOVID-ED (2020).

bean could translate into a total economic cost, measured in terms of loss of future income to be received, of up to USD 1.7 billion, equivalent to approximately 10% of total income. (World Bank, 2021).

Another serious consequence of the interruption of learning is the loss of educational mobility, which may mean that the educational progress of the new generations compared to their parents is reduced between 25 and 33% (CEEY, 2021). Evidence indicates that the loss of educational mobility in the country's different regions is due to the adversities that arose from distance education and its disruption in the face of the threat of COVID-19 (De la Torre, 2021). This educational vulnerability has been identified in Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Veracruz, and Puebla with the most adverse conditions for distance education, which coincide with the states with the highest level of poverty according to the Council for the Evaluation of Social Development Policy (Coneval for its acronym in Spanish) (2018). In contrast, Mexico City, Nuevo León, Sonora, Aguascalientes, and Baja California found relatively better conditions for distance education.

However, the central result of the analysis is that the highest educational risk due to the pandemic occurs where the intergenerational transmission of educational achievement or adversity is highest. In general, the states with the most vulnerable educational systems were not those that suffered the most infections. San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas, Querétaro, Hidalgo, Jalisco, and Chihuahua are the entities that could most reduce their educational mobility given the combination of risks derived from the pandemic and the inequality of opportunities arising from the educational conditions of origin (De la Torre, 2021). According to experts, if what is intended is to reduce inequality, the normalization of on-site classes and attention to lagging should prioritize the most affected states. Although the return to classes matters, it is argued, greater importance should be given to the attention of the states with more significant educational lagging due to the pandemic, thus preventing the loss of educational mobility.

The learning poverty is the proportion of children who cannot read and understand a simple text at the end of elementary school and who have been deprived of schooling (De la Torre, 2021).

THE CHALLENGES OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM (SEN)

One of the main challenges of the SEN requires the efforts of society, in general, to prioritize attention to the loss of learning, taking into account regional inequalities and heterogeneities of students. Not attending classes has compromised the educational process of girls, boys, and young people, especially those living in poverty, and the possibility of successfully participating in the labor market and receiving higher incomes in the future (De Hoyos, 2020). Given the above, returning to school is becoming increasingly necessary. However, for a safe return to class, at least certain aspects must be addressed, such as those indicated by the Inter–American Development Bank (IDB), which considers that four key points should be taken into account for a safe return to the classrooms for students and teachers (Berlanga *et al.*, 2020):

TABLE 27. CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SAFE RETURN



Source: In-house elaboration with información from Berlanga et al. (2020).

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The opportunities presented by the pandemic explicitly imply recognizing the educational system's weaknesses and burdens, specifically the need to know the profile of students who do not return to the educational system, the knowledge of those who did not log in to classes, and those who already had previous lagging (De Hoyos, 2021).

In this sense, facing a prevailing need for coming back to classes, experts argue that the SEN must pay special attention to the prioritization of the National curriculum. They consider that one of the challenges schools must have faced in the online classes caused by COVID–19 is to address the academic curriculums and make the students develop their learnings in a defiant context (Educación 2020, 2020). AS a result, the need to implement a compensatory policy is essential. Expert mention an effort for invest in the necessary technology, tutoring classes attending the academic heterogeneity directing to the learning crisis root, and transforming the structures that lead to it (approach "Teaching at the right level") (TaRL, s.f).¹⁵ These requirements demand a budget and resources that, if not invested, would be compromising the future of young people in Mexico, especially the poorest.



¹⁵ The approach works by dividing children (usually grades 3–5) into groups based on learning needs rather than age or grade; spending time on basic skills rather than focusing solely on the curriculum; and periodically assess student performance, rather than relying solely on end-of-year exams. Teaching at the right level.



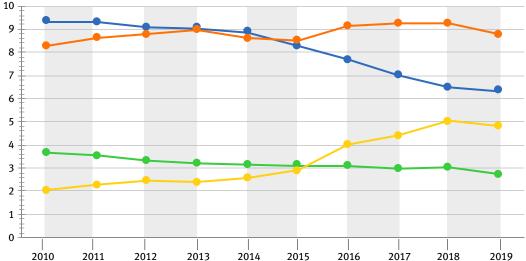
7. ENERGY INSECURITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION «

Mexico has been considered a country with relative "energy security" due to the accessibility and supply THOUSANDS of energy that the United States provides. However, 10 when considering the productive capacity to satisfy 9 the country's energy demand, security becomes relative, since the levels of energy consumption as of 7 2015 are higher by 44.43% (2018) and 39.13% (2019) 6 than those of production. This situation reflects the 1 inability of the country to supply domestic demand. 4 This condition contributes to the trade deficit in the 1 energy sector present since 2016 (Graph 28). 2

Insufficient energy production shows an inefficient and insecure energy sector at least to the end of 2019, despite the Energy Reform of 2013 and the creation

GRAPH 28. PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION, EXPORTS, AND IMPORTS OF ENERGY IN MEXICO PETAJOULES 2010–2019





Source: In-house elaboration with data from from the Ministry of Energy (SENER for its acronym in Spanish) (2019).

of the Electricity and Hydrocarbons Industry Laws of 2014. Its objectives were to increase productivity and ensure energy self-sufficiency by strengthening PE-MEX and CFE, promoting the transition to renewable energies, and reducing CO2 emissions (Government of the Republic, nd). The trend began to reverse, albeit slowly. The production of energy from non-renewable sources decreased its share from 87.9% in 2014 to 83.9% of national production in 2019 (Graph 29); however, based on data from SENER (2019), energy consumption by the same sector increased by 10.75%, so that CO2 emissions registered an increase in volume of 5.3% in the 2014–2018 period (Graph 31). On the other hand, the total energy produced by renewable sources increased its share from 7.5% in 2014 to 10.5% in 2019.

The constitutional reforms of 2013 and 2014 would contribute to a diversification of energy production through renewable sources. However, the progress made in terms of renewable energy, still modest, is currently in decline due to the decisions of the current administration, focused on the rescue and consolidation of PEMEX and CFE as the leading companies in the sector, decisions strongly criticized by specialists at a national and international level. PEMEX "presents the worst financial debt of oil companies in the world with multimillion–dollar losses per quarter." CFE "faces reductions in its profits in the way of 50% per year" (Solís, 2020), also marginalizing investment in renewable energies that could reduce costs to users (Energy under debate, 2021). That could contribute to meeting the excess demand for internal energy and create energy security on a sustainable basis.

In this context, additionally, the current government of Mexico "is taking a step backward in the climate and the energy sector by favoring fossil fuels over renewable energy generation. This includes the construction of a new oil refinery and a new budget allocation for the 'modernization of coal, diesel, gas and oil power plants, some of which the previous administration had already scheduled for retirement" (Climate Action Tracker, 2020).

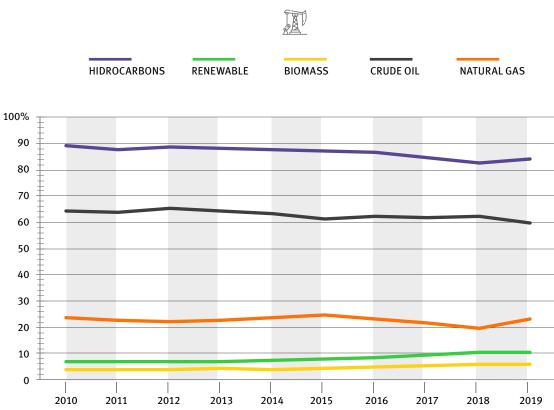
INSUFFICIENT SUPPLY IN QUANTITY AND QUALITY

The energy production from hydrocarbons (crude oil, natural gas, coal.) is the primary source of CO₂ emissions. Energy from these sources represents 83.9% of total production in 2019, to which crude oil contributes more than 60% of the energy produced in the period 2010–2019. This volume is six times greater than the contribution of renewable sources representing 10.4% in 2019 (Graph 29).

From the environmental perspective, because of its source, the energy supply is not enough and is low quality, given the high CO_2 levels emitted and the lack of sustainability in the energy sector. These results contradict the goals of the current administration that underpinned their energy policy, among them "having a bigger supply and better prices" (energy security), "boost development, with social and environmental responsibility," as well as "low cost, clean, reliable supply of energy for the proper national development" (Government of the Republic, 2018, 3–23).

The energy sector presented productivity deficiencies by not ensuring enough supply of energy to satisfy the internal national demand (imports included), and in environmental terms by not promoting cleaner energy transitions and powerfully boosting the use of nonrenewable sources. In sustainability terms, data from the Climate Action Tracker, the Climate Analytics, and New Climate Institute organizations place Mexico with a grade of "<3° (inadequate)." Because "the National Determined Contributions (NDCs)" of the country are found "with this grade in the less strict area of 'fair participation' of a nation, and it is not consistent with keeping global warming below 2°C and much less the higher limit of 1,5°C of the Paris Accords." Besides, it is exposed that, "if all governmental NDC's were in that range, global warming would reach more than 2°C up until 3°C." (Climate Action Tracker, 2020).

It is also established that "the choice to favor fossil fuel energy generation above renewable energy now places Mexico in a more inconsistent path with the needed steps to reach the 1.5°C limits of the Paris Accords. Mexico's lack of ambition on new and upcoming NDC targets, its supporting renewable energy lag", derived from the reforms to the Electricity Industry Law, "and its response to the pandemic has



GRAPH 29. PRIMARY ENERGY PRODUCTION BY SOURCE OF ORIGIN PERCENTAGE 2010–2019

Source: In-house elaboration with data from SENER (2019).*

^{*} The sum of the partials may not coincide with the totals, due to rounding of the figures.

put the country's emissions on a worrying upward trajectory, "where," under the policies currently implemented, and even despite the expected drop in emissions in 2020 as a consequence of the pandemic, Mexico will not achieve its 2020 commitment and must implement additional policies to comply with its NDC targets for 2030" (Climate Action Tracker, 2020).

"The choice to favor fossil fuel energy generation above renewable energy now places Mexico in a more inconsistent path with the needed steps to reach the 1.5°C limits of the Paris Accords. Climate Action Tracker

LITIGATION AND LOSS OF COMPETITIVENESS

The current political stance to continue strengthening the energy sector by privileging hydrocarbons and the CFE led the Ministry of Energy (SENER for its acronym in Spanish) to publish a policy limiting renewable energy projects, imposing limitations on new renewable energy generation plants, and restricting the issuance of permits for new wind or solar plants. This prohibits the construction of projects in places considered congested or with little transmission capacity (Cruz, 2020).

This position led the Government of Mexico to decide through the National Energy Control Center (CENACE for its acronym in Spanish) to stop the operation of the renewable energy generation projects in execution throughout the country (González, 2020). This has led to numerous lawsuits, appeals, and administrative litigation by the private sector directly involved in this branch or sought to participate in the country (Cruz, 2020). The presidential decision has led companies and individuals to have filed 678 injunction requests by the end of June 2021 for various regulations related to the electricity sector, of which 600 have obtained provisional suspensions from specialized federal judges. Of these, 559 lawsuits have already obtained definitive suspensions. As of that date, 517 of the cases are on trial. There are already 60 favorable rulings in the first instance and four final favorable rulings.¹⁶ Because of this, the president has announced a constitutional reform initiative on energy so that his energy policy becomes legal.

In this context, the Reform of the Hydrocarbons Law (LH for its acronym in Spanish), published on May 5, 2021, is a counter-reform of the sector carried out in 2013. On the one hand, it puts an end to the powers of the Regulatory Commission of Energy (CRE for its acronym in Spanish) to enforce the asymmetric regulation in hydrocarbon, oil, and petrochemical markets that was in force and that allowed greater competition. It also facilitates the suspension of permits from private companies in the name of what the president calls "energy sovereignty." The previous is clearly expressed in articles 57 and 59 Bis of the LH reform: "Concerning the permits referred to in this Law, the authority that issued them may carry out the temporary occupation, the intervention or the suspension, in order to guarantee the interests of the Nation", and "The Ministry of Energy and the Energy Regulatory Commission may, within the scope of their respective powers, suspend the permits issued in the terms established in this Law, when provided an imminent danger to national security, energy security or to the national economy" (DOF, 2021) (Cota and Manetto, 2021).

As expected, the enactment of the LH has led to multiple legal protections and obstacles since it contravenes regional trade agreements such as the Trans–Pacific, the USMCA with the United States and Canada, and the agreement with the European Union. By the end of June, it was estimated that around three thousand lawsuits for protection had been filed in "retail" (gas station permits and final commerce), around 750 in "midstream" (various processes and refining), and five in "upstream" (exploration and extraction).¹⁷ The scenario is highly complex and, if it continues on this path, litigation costs will be in the multimillion–dollar range for the country.

This political panorama in the energy sector (LIE and LH) generates legal and financial uncertainty that will result in economic losses also derived from their impact on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). The greater

¹⁶ Reliable source that has requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.

¹⁷ Reliable source that has requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the matter.



Image: "Solar and eolic energy projects pushed in the first auction of Mexico", 2016 in evwind.com at https://tinyurl.com/2n2ce226

the uncertainty, there is less investment. This hinders economic growth, energy security, combating climate change, sustainability, and Mexicans' current and future social well-being. It also moves the country away from the transition path towards a greater clean energy generation by promoting non-compliance with the Paris Agreement and the Energy Transition (IMCO Staff, 2021) (Law Public Policy Research Center for its acronym in Spanish, 2021), predisposing a panorama of energy insecurity with high economic and social costs, as well as setbacks in terms of sustainability and energy that will last for generations.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERIORATION

The protection of the environment is an urgent need in Mexico and the rest of the world. If the current economic–productive scheme continues, a negative future with high environmental, economic and social costs will be established (UNEP, 2019). As noted in the previous section, the current energy policy does not contribute to the fight against climate change.

WATER

The water panorama becomes critical when analyzing the availability and quality of water. The analysis of the water quality of the surface network (constituted by 3,493 water quality monitoring sites) of the National Water Commission (CONAGUA for its acronym in Spanish) in 2020 showed that only 36.3% of the analyzed sites met all acceptable quality limits, 32.5% did not comply with 4 of the eight parameters, and 31.2% did not comply with toxicity, Enterococci. The analysis of the underground network made up of 1,068 sites showed that only 40.6% of these met the acceptable limits in the 14 parameters, 23.1% did not comply with 7 of the 14, and 36.2% did not comply with 8, such as nitrogen nitrate, arsenic, mercury, lead. (CONAGUA, 2021) (Table 28). The scarcity, supply problems, and poor water quality, where almost two-thirds of the sites monitored by CONAGUA throughout the country, do not meet acceptable quality limits, reflect the current and future problem in a timelier manner. Around this vital

TABLE 28. WATER QUALITY ANALYSIS RESULTS IN MEXICO 2020

SUPERFICIAL SITES	PERCENTAGE		
The sites met all the acceptable limits for the eight parameters analyzed.	36,30%		
The sites did not comply with Escherichia coli, fecal coliforms, total sus-pended solids, and percent oxygen saturation.	32,50%		
Non-compliance in Biochemical oxygen demand at five days, Chemi- cal oxygen demand, Toxicity, and Enterococci	31,20%		
SUBTERRANEOUS SITES	PERCENTAGE		
Met the acceptable water quality limits for the 14 parameters analyzed	40,60%		
Non–compliance in Alkalinity, Conductivity, Hardness, Total Dissolved Sol–ids, Total Manganese, and Iron.	23,10%		
Non–compliance in Fluorides, Fecal Coliforms, Nitrogen Nitrate, Total Ar–senic, Cadmium, Chromium, Mercury, and Lead.	36,20%		
<i>Source:</i> In-house elaboration with data from CONAGUA (2021).			

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resource, which is increasingly affecting society, with clear examples being the cases of contamination of the Atoyac River in the State of Puebla and the Santiago River in Jalisco (CONAGUA, 2021), which are associated diseases, such as typhoid fever, ascariasis, amoebiasis, lead poisoning, arsenic, kidney diseases, and cancer, associating a morbidity rate attributable to water-borne diseases increasing 4.30% in 2016 and 4.84% for 2018 (SEMARNAT, 2018), leading causes of infant death in the world (SEMARNAT, nd).

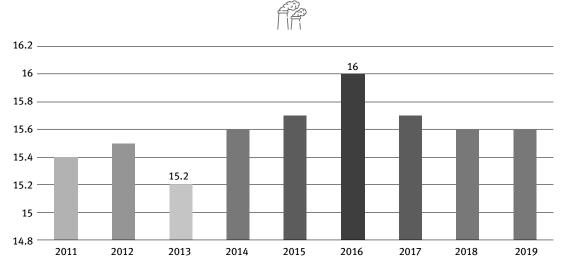
AIR

Air quality is low (bad) because, based on the latest data reported by the WHO, as of 2017, more than 90% of the population is exposed to levels that exceed the indicative value of air pollution by PM2.5 particles, causing cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and different types of cancer; attributed to these 49,095 deaths in 2017, of which 64.6% were due to cardiovascular and diabetic / kidney diseases (Ortega, 2019). The mortality rate from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases related to air pollution and the environment (PAHO, 2014), as of 2019 represented 15.6%, increasing 0.2% from 2011 to 2019 (Graph 30), a percentage that is estimated to have increased exponentially due to COVID-19, where the figures registered as of July 19, 2021, amount to "236,331 deaths" (Worldometer, 2021), deaths that are expected to continue increasing exponentially.

Air pollution attributable to high levels of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions keeps us from meeting the goal of reducing GHG by 25% - 40%, based on the Paris agreement and as a consequence of the trend to rise in the 2014–2018 period (Graph 31), which was

GRAPH 30. MORTALITY RATE DUE TO AIR POLLUTION AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN MEXICO





Source: In-house elaboration with data from the World Bank (2019).

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

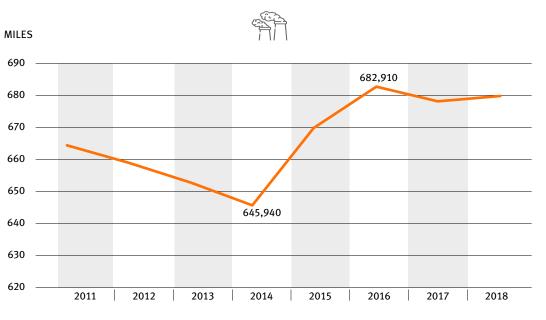
expected to decrease due to the confinement derived from the pandemic in 2021. This condition did not occur as reported by the UN through the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), registering for June 2020, CO2 emissions worldwide close to 2019 levels (Cerrillo, 2020).

In 2018, the National Air Quality Report in Mexico established that of the 118 monitoring stations capable of measuring PM2.5, only four stations (3.4%) met the NOM. 45 (58.5%) did not comply with the NOM (32 exceeded the two limits established as a reference and 13 only exceeded the 24-hour limit in one year); and in 69 stations (38.1%), it was not possible to evaluate compliance (47 due to insufficient data, 18 due to being out of operation and four did not present information). Of the 60 cities and metropolitan areas with the capacity to measure PM2.5, only 4 (6.7%) met the NOM; in 25 (51.7%), the NOM was not fulfilled; and in 31 (41.7%), it was not possible to evaluate compliance with the NOM (13 due to insufficient data, 14 due to being out of operation and in 4 due to unavailable information) (Table 29).

Air pollution in Mexico is a problem present in large metropolitan areas, such as the Metropolitan Area of the Valley of Toluca (ZMVT for its acronym in Span-

GRAPH 31. TOTAL GREEN HOUSE GAS (GHG) EMISSIONS IN MEXICO

KT OF CO, EQUIVALENT 2011–2018



Source: In-house elaboration with data from the World Bank (2018a).

ish), the Metropolitan Area of the Valley of Mexico (ZMVM), the Metropolitan Area of Monterrey (AMM for its acronym in Spanish); and in cities such as Puebla, Tula de Allende, Tijuana, Cuernavaca, among others, by not complying with NOM PM2.5. This shows that more than 50% of evaluated territory does not comply with the NOM without considering the areas that could not be evaluated due to a lack of information (Table 29).

At the national level, this condition is worrying, as it relates air quality (pollution) with the effects of the pandemic. As reported by Vital Signals (2020a), the probability of getting COVID–19 increased by 8% in the presence of high levels of PM_{2.5} particles. According to Ortega (2019), entities like the State of Mexico, Mexico City, and Veracruz are states with the highest number of deaths associated with this factor in 2017, which in turn have the highest number of deaths due to COVID–19 during January–August 2020: 84,185 in the State of Mexico, 82,449 in Mexico City and 50,000 in Veracruz (Ferrer and Téllez, 2021). Mexico and Brazil are the only Latin American countries in the ranking of the 15 countries that emit the most carbon dioxide (CO2) in the world, according to data

TABLE 29. EVALUATION OF AIR QUALITY BY SUSPENDED PARTICLES WITH AERODYNAMIC DIAMETERS LESS THAN 2.5 μ m (PM_{2.5}) IN MEXICO, 2018

CITIES AND ZONES THAT DID COMPLY WITH NOM PM _{2.5}	CITIES WHERE IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO ASSESS COMPLIANCE WITH NOM PM _{2.5}	CITIES AND METROPOLITAN AREAS THAT DO NOT COMPLY WITH NOM PM _{2.5}
San Miguel de Allende, Corregidora, San Luis de la Paz and Guanajuato.	Chihuahua, Piedras Negras, Monclova, San Juan del Rio, Saltillo, Ensenada, Torreon, Lerdo, Lolotla, Tu- lancingo, Cuautla, Ocuituco, Zacatepec, Coronango, Apizaco, Cuapiaxtla, Hermosillo, Cajeme, Agua Prie- ta, Villagran, Cortazar, Juventino Rosas, San Francis- co del Rincón, Tepeji del Rio, Tepeapulco, Huichapan, Morelia, Oaxaca, El Marques, Tlaxcala and Merida.	ZMVT, Mexicali, AMM, ZMVM, Atotonilco de Tula, ZMG, Aguascalientes, Tijuana, Salamanca, Puebla, Celaya, Irapuato, Abasolo, Pachuca, Cuernavaca. Durango, Minatitlán, Leon, Tepic, Tula de Allende, Atitalaquia, Tizayuca, Santiago de Queretaro, Xala- pa and Poza Rica.
Source: National Water Quality Report 2018 (INE	CC,2019).	

from the Global Carbon Atlas (BBC News, 2019), and for which there have not been, and there are no effective environmental policies that contribute to improving the quality of this resource in an environment as necessary as the current one.

SOIL

Economic activities and changes in land use have shown an evolution in the increase of cultivable industrial and agricultural lands at the expense of forests (Graph 32), rain forests and Protected Natural Areas (ANP for its acronym in Spanish), a condition that has contributed to the water erosion and soil degradation.

The situation mentioned above is reflected in 14 of the 17 ANPs included in the Mexico Resilience Project, designed to strengthen management effectiveness and the ANPs resilience. This is to protect biodiversity threatened by climate change, facing deforestation problems, contamination by solid waste, wastewater discharges, poor livestock practices, according to the National Commission of Protected Natural Areas (CONANP for its acronym in Spanish) (CONANP & UNDP, 2019).

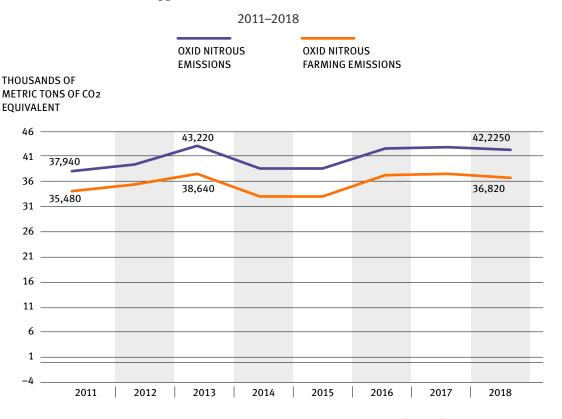
GRAPH 32. ARABLE LAND AREA AND JUNGLE AREA IN MEXICO 2011-2018 MILLION KM² 2.75 2.25 1.75 1.25 0.75 0.25 -0.25 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2011 2012 **ARABLE LAND IN KM²** JUNGLE AREA IN KM²

Source: In-house elaboration with data from the World Bank (2018b) and World Bank (2018c).

According to the National Center for Disaster Prevention (CENAPRED for its acronym in Spanish, 2020), water erosion requires urgent prevention, recovery, and remediation measures. It contributes to the contamination of soil, air, and aquifers, due to the presence of nitrogen nitrate in water; and by agricultural emissions of nitrous oxide, derived mainly from the use of fertilizers in the agricultural production process, which represent more than 80% of total emissions at the national level from 2011 to 2018 (Graph 33), a trend equal to that of the fertilizer consumption in the same period (Graph 34).

The loss of forest areas and soil contamination are not priority issues in current government policy. A series of projects have been implemented, such as those focused on promoting the Mexican countryside, among them mainly "Production for Well–being," "Sowing Life," and "Fertilizers" contribute to the increase of cultivable areas, at the expense of forest areas, and not to the productivity that these programs claim to achieve. In addition to this, the perception of citizens who receive these grants is not ideal, considering them as an extra income for cultivating without any objective in the field of productivity, as indicated by

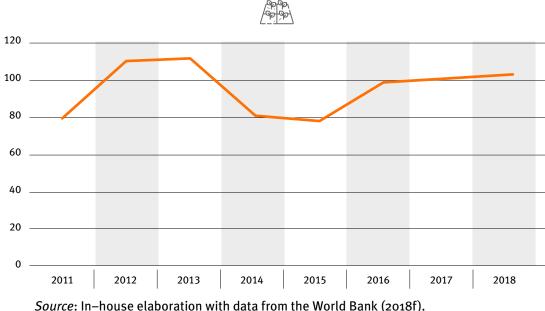
GRAPH 33. NITROUS OXIDE EMISSIONS IN MEXICO



Source: In-house elaboration with data from the World Bank (2018d) and World Bank (2018e).

GRAPH 34. FERTILIZER CONSUMPTION

KG PER HECTARE OF ARABLE LAND 2011–2018



Production for Well-being, Sowing Life, and Fertilizers contribute to the increase of cultivable areas, at the expense of forests, and not to the productivity that these programs claim to achieve. Besides, the perception of citizens who receive these grants is not ideal, who consider them as an extra income without any objective in the field of productivity.

the design evaluations with fieldwork that Coneval carried out of these particular programs (Coneval, 2020).

Water, air, and soil pollution are progressively contributing to a more significant environmental deterioration in practically the entire national territory, which will lead to higher levels of poverty and food insecurity from the perspective of land use and its long-term productivity. This leads to increased health effects that become critical with the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of air quality. Finally, about water, pollution keeps affecting Mexican surface and underground water reserves, leading to health risks, where children are the most vulnerable.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Project implementation that protects the environment is essential to minimize environmental damage. In Mexico, with the PNUMA (United Nations Environment Programme, for its acronym in Spanish) database, ten projects have been implemented, 9 of them created in the 2011–2018 timeframe, and one in 2019. From them, only four are still current ("Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short–Lived Climate Pollutants ('The Coalition')," "Strengthening Consumer Information for Sustainable Consumption and Production," "Valuing the Essentials," and "No and Low Emissions Mobility," prone to disappear by the end of 2023 (Table30 and Graph 35).

The average annual budget destined for these projects only represents 0.000019% and 0.000022% of GDP in 2019 and 2020, a figure that reflects the "government disposition to foster sustainability." There is a decreasing trend in expenditure from 2012 to 2019; it went from 0.8% (\$126,176 mdp, Million pesos for its acronym in Spanish) in 2012 to 0.5% (\$104,433 mdp) of GDP in 2019. In the same timeframe, the costs of depletion and degradation decreased from

GRAPH 35. AVERAGE ANNUAL BUDGET (USD) FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS AND NUMBER OF PROJECTS IN EXECUTION ANNUALLY IN MEXICO



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Source: In-house elaboration with data from PNUMA (s.f).

TABLE 30. BUDGET AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECTS IN MEXICO, 2011–2023

PROJECT ID	PROJECT TITLE	STATUS	BUDGET (USD)	START DATE	DUE DATE
PIMS-01554	Clean Air and Climate Coalition to re-duce short dura- tions climate pollutants ("The Coalition")	IN EXECUTION	145,000,000	2012-09-18	2022–12–31
PIMS-02011	MS-02011 Consumer's Information Strengthening for Renewa- bles Consumption and Production.		1,850,733	2018-03-21	2021–12–31
PIMS-02026	Value the essential.	IN EXECUTION	21,067,974	2018-10-16	2022-06-30
PIMS-02077	No emission mobility and low emission mobility	IN EXECUTION	13,431,076	2019–10–24	2023-06-3
GEF-4883	Protection and Production Manage-ment Protection and Production Areas Integration for the Biodiversity Conser-vation of the Tarahumara Mountain Range of Chihuahua	6º PIR	4,900,000	2014-06-13	2019-06-1
GEF-5880	Knowledge to act: to promote innova-tion among the environmental funds	4° PIR	913,24	2015-12-09	2018–12–0
GEF-9678	To generate more political will to or-ganize and pre- serve natural re-sources.	3° PIR	1,995,000	2017-01-24	2019–01–2
GEF-4881	World Vigilance Plan of the COP, in the Stockholm Convention framework Continuity and support in the Caribbe-an and Latin American regions.	5° PIR	3,636,000	2015-09-02	2020-03-3
GEF-4909	GEI (National Inventory of Green-house Effect Gas- ses, for its acronym in Spanish) emission stabilization in road transportation through doubling vehicle fuel world economy: Regional implementation of the Glo- bal economy of fuel initiative. (GFEI)	6º PIR	2,261,819	2014-06-18	2019–06–3
GEF-2860	Regional framework for the sustaina-ble use of the Bravo River	8° PIR	4,000,000	2011-01-01	2019–12–3

Source: PNUMA (s.f).

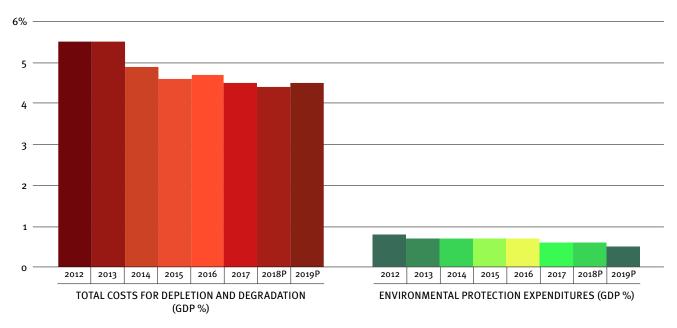
5.5% of GDP in 2012 to 4.4% (\$1,033,431 mdp) in 2018, to later increase 4.5% (\$1,096,970, mdp) in 2019 (Graph 35).

The government policy that intends to "secure the well-being of the poor" minimizes the consequences of environmental damage. This is shown by the environmental protection expenditure (Graph 36), which decreased \$18,743 mdp from 2018 to 2019,

while expenditure in farming production programs, which lack the bearings to promote sustainability, increased to \$7,127.04 mdp (Table31).

The assigned budget to productive social programs in the primary sector that have the objective to increase development and productivity of farming from a sustainable framework was \$24,265.00 mdp in 2019 and \$31,392.05 mdp in 2020, among them, protruding the

GRAPH 36. TOTAL COST OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEPLETION AND DEGRADATION (GDP %) AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION EXPENDITURE (GDP %



2010-2019

Note: P=preliminary figures. *Source*: In-house elaboration with data from INEGI.(2019).

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE :

TABLE 31. EXECUTED BUDGET BY PRIMARY PRODUCTION SOCIAL PROGRAM (MDP) 2019–2020

PROGRAM	BUDGET BY PROGRAM 2019	BUDGET BY PROGRAM 2020
Agriculture, Livestock, Fishing and, Aquaculture Encourage- ment Program – Support for the Wellbeing of Fishermen and Aqua–farmers	\$ -	\$ 1,385
Fertilizers	\$ 1,057	\$ 1,726
Livestock Credit by Word	\$ 852	\$ -
Wellbeing Production: Coffee	\$ 736	\$ 759
Wellbeing Production: Sugar Cane	\$ 807	\$ 952
Wellbeing Production: Native Producers	\$ 679	\$ 544
Wellbeing Production: Small Producers (EX PIMAF)	\$ 130	\$ -
Wellbeing Production: Small and Median Producers	\$ 8,444	\$ 6,453
Sowing Life	\$ 11,556	\$ 19,570
TOTAL	\$ 24,265	\$ 31,392

Source: In-house elaboration with data from the Mexican Government (2021).

Sembrando Vida ("Sowing Life"), Producción para el Bienestar ("Production for the Wellbeing") and Fertilizantes ("Fertilizers") programs, with an executed budget higher than one billion pesos (Table31).

The design assessment of these programs by Coneval exposed significant challenges, among them operational and institutional.¹⁸ Likewise, the Global Resource Institute report of the assessment of the *Sembrando Vida* program highlights that this "does not have as a priority objective forest restoration or reforestation" and that the program "could have promoted a loss of forestry coverage of 72,830 hectares during the first year of operations (2019)" (Brooks 2021). The conditions above can be replicated in the "Producción para el Bienestar" and "Fertilizantes" programs that aim at "the increase of agricultural productivity" at a high environmental cost.

¹⁸ Look: Evaluación de diseño con trabajo de campo del programa Producción para el Bienestar 2019–2020 [Design Evaluation with Field–Work of the "Production for the Wellbeing" program]; Evaluación de Diseño con Trabajo de Campo del Programa Sembrando Vida 2019–2020 [Design Evaluation with Field–Work of the "Sowing Life" program] y Evaluación de Diseño con Trabajo de Campo del Programa Fertilizantes 2019–2020 [Design Evaluation with Field–Work of the "Fertilizers" program], 2020 in Coneval (2020) <u>https://</u> <u>tinyurl.com/2xnxb29e</u>

The government's priority limits the current environmental, institutional performance from the governmental policies to structural projects that lack defined lines in terms of sustainability, like agricultural production social programs, the "Tren Maya" ("Mayan Train") projects, and the "Refinería Dos Bocas" ("Dos Bocas Refinery"), just like the unprecedented attacks to environmental institutions. The budgetary cuts to environmental institutions were up to 37% in 2021 compared to 2021, SEMARNAT (28.07%) [Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources, for its acronym in Spanish], INECOL (30.8%) [Institute of Ecology, for its acronym in Spanish] and, CONAFOR (38.7%) [National Forestry Commission, for its acronym in Spanish] being affected (De la Rosa, 2021). Besides, the existence of financial conditions to institutions of international renown like the National Commission for Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (CONABIO), to which, "SEMARNAT agreed to provide only 35 million pesos, under conditions to be transformed into a disconnected organ, extinguish its trust fund and the reduction of personnel" (Malo, 2019).

Besides, in 2019, during the first year of the new federal administration, "74% of the Environmental Policy and Planning Undersecretariat budget was cut". By 2020, "little more than 92% of the budget of the air quality program was reduced". To finish, "in 2021, the budgets for the environmental trusts and the air quality program are planned to disappear. Also, a 95% reduction to the Undersecretariat of Environmental Protection Management is expected, and almost 75% of resources destined to the Transition Strategy to promote the use of clean technologies and fuels" (Rios, 2020).

The result of the analysis of the government management in matters of energy and environment positions Mexico in a highly vulnerable place with large human and economic costs. The defined path of the current administration not only conditions the future for the country's population but gambles with many challenges marked in our international commitments and agreements, of which Mexico is a signatory. The costs for society will increase and intensify by following the current government path; consequently, it is expected that the lag will be accumulated to a higher degree. The environmental passives are being gathered, and they will be accelerated by the pandemic, which the Mexican government has failed to face by not developing effective policies that minimize COVID-19 havoc.





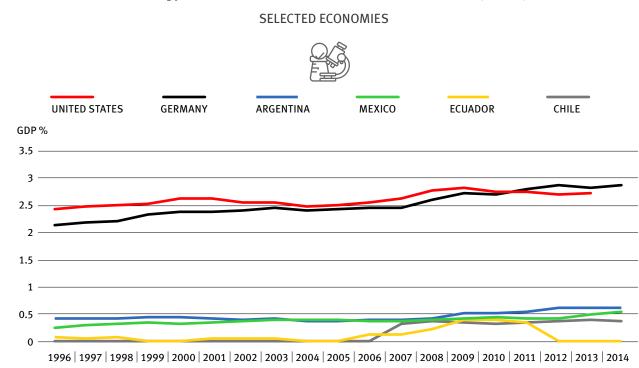
8. Science and Technology: a Limited Sector

A long-standing issue has existed in Mexico about the insufficient promotion of science and technology. The expenditure in research and development as a GDP percentage reflects Mexico is one of the economies with the lowest investment, below other Latin American countries like Argentina or Ecuador. This low level of investment limits knowledge development as an aggregated value in the country (Graph 37). Private funding for research and development has been 30% less in Mexico compared to international measures, which may be higher than 50% of expenditure (Conacyt, 2017) [National Council for Science and Technology, for its acronym in Spanish] (OEI, 2018). That hinders the country's development towards a knowledge economy, capable of linking the public sector with public universities, research centers, and mainly the private sector.

In the 2010–2019 period, financing expenditure in research and development (GIDE¹⁹) from the government and corporate sector was reduced in real terms by 14.3% and 60.7%, respectively (CONACYT, 2019). Consequently, the total IDE financing decreased by 28.5%. On the other hand, from 2018 to 2019, the total GIDE, the government GIDE, and the corporate GIDE decreased in real terms by 7.1%, 8.8%, and 3.3%, respectively, which affected the overall indicator (Graph 38).

¹⁹ The GIDE is the gross internal expenditure destined to Scientific Research and Experimental Development (IDE), within the national territory and during a specific timeframe.

GRAPH 37. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE (GDP %)



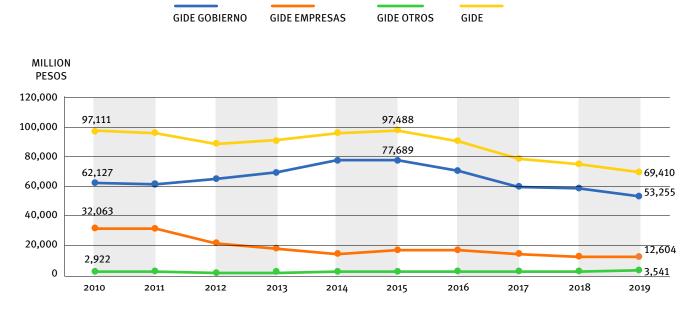


The importance of fostering science and technology support lies in the social inclusion and democratizing element of knowledge (Vargas and Zúñiga, 2021) since, under the model based on the knowledge economy, it becomes an asset for economic exchange and social progress.

UNESCO (2015) says that the indicators within the knowledge economy can illustrate the growth engine in science and technology, supporting researchers on one hand and, on the other hand, providing paths that the governments can follow measuring social change. This indicator is the actor with the most significant capacity to solve social and economic issues

GRAPH 38. GIDE FINANCING EVOLUTION IN MEXICO

2010–2019 MILLION ESOS AT 2019 PRICES



Source: In-house elaboration with information from CONACYT (2019).

of the population. These indicators act as support for the design and implementation of public policies on science and technology that drive economic development (Parsons, 2007). edge investment (Vargas and Zúñiga, 2021) and that are related to scientific developments driven by the needs of the moment (Table 32).

It is necessary to consider that although governments have a decisive role in science and technology policies, geopolitical factors exist that influence knowl-

TABLE 32. GEOPOLITICAL FACTORS THE INFLUENCE THE I+D

ТҮРЕ	EXAMPLES	
ECONÓMICOS	 The creation of ASEAN, an economic community with the goal to accelerate eco-nomic grow th, foster peace and stability in the Asian region; 	
	2. China's economic re-cession, comprises a decrease in industrial production, energetic and manufacturing that affected other economies;	
	3. The creation of Brexit as a return to their currency in the United Kingdom, which implies leaving the European Union;	
	4. The signing of the USMCA: free trade treaty signed by Mexico, United States of America, and Canada, which changes the rules of commerce among those countries.	
MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES	An example could be the yellow vests in France; they manifest social discomfort to–wards the ruling class, it was replicated in different countries like Argentina and Mexico.	
DE SALUD	The Covid–19 pandemic has paralyzed nations, to the point in some cases, to paralyze their sanitary systems and affect their economies.	
Source: In-house elaboration with information from Vargas and Zúñiga (2021).		

These geopolitical factors are marking the future of national and international policies that will impact knowledge development, and by being independent and uncontrollable like the arrival of the COVID–19, they should be considered part of the government's agenda.

The importance of fostering science and technology support lies in the social inclusion and democratizing element of knowledge. Vargas and Zuñiga

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS AND PUBLIC POLICY

Regarding science, innovation, and technology policies in Mexico, the National Development Plan 2019–2024 establishes the public policy framework in education, science, and technology, especially in the national public agenda. In the Plan, it is stated that the National Council for Science and Technology (Conacyt) will coordinate a socially beneficial plan for society and national development with the participation of universities, towns, scientists, and companies (DOF, 2019)[Official Journal of the Federation, for its acronym in Spanish]. Nevertheless, in almost three years of government, there is no determining information on how this will occur and come into play in Mexico's science, Innovation, and technology expenditure. It also does not mention if a knowledge economy will continue to develop nor the mechanisms to execute it.

On December 14th, 2020, the General Council for Science and Technology met and approved its proposal for a the draft for a new General Humanities, Science, Technologies, and Innovation Law (ALGHCTI).²⁰ The draft, elaborated by Conacyt, was delivered to the republic presidency to be submitted to one of the two Chambers of the Union Congress for its discussion and legislative procedure. The full text (comprising seven chapters, 128 articles, and 20 transitory articles) was made known to the scientific community until that date. It is worth mentioning that the document is not available on any website of the council, and, since then, many voices have raised critical questions about several concepts proposed in the draft. Likewise, they have noted the risks and negative impact that, if approved, this will have on the future development of the National System of Science, Technology, and Innovation (SNCTI, for its acronym in Spanish).²¹

It has been mentioned, in particular, that it lacks the judiciary rigor and handles vague concepts in the definition of the limits of its field of application; besides being ambiguous, it leads to inaccuracies and

²⁰ Look: Anteproyecto de Iniciativa de Ley General De Humanidades, Ciencias, Tecnologías e Innovación 2020. [New General Humanities, Science, Technologies, and Innovation New

Law Draft 2020] Available at: https://tinyurl.com/sk3npthr

²¹ Look: Anteproyecto de Ley General de Humanidades, Ciencias, Tecnologías e Innovación: algunos motivos de preocupación [New General Humanities, Science, Technologies, and Innovation New Law Draft: some motives for concer]. Available at: <u>https://tinyurl.com/hmv8x6mh</u>

lacks clarity to avoid confusion over the meaning of different concepts. Secondly, despite that ideally the General Law should optimally articulate all instances involved in the development of the system, the draft is not judicially harmonized with the Planning Law, with the General Law of Education, with the General Law of Higher Education, with the General Law of Ecological Balance and Environmental Protection, or the Federal Law of Parastatal Bodies. Finally, it includes the so-called republican austerity, which translates as a budgetary trimming of bodies that depend on the federal government, where a 50% reduction in operational costs has been requested. As a specific case, Conacyt, the primary public organism that advises the government to articulate public policies and promote scientific research, has suffered a budgetary cut translated into resource oversight.

The previously described landscape shows a disconnection pertaining to the scientific bodies that credit, legitimize, recognize, and validate those who produce science in this country, limiting the access to economic and recognition stimuli for their scientific production (Ponce, 2017), for example, the National System of Investigators (SNI, for its acronym in Spanish) and the Professional Teachers Development Program²² (PRODEP, for its acronym in Spanish). These elements illustrate a political reality that is far from helping define paths to foster science and technology for the sake of the development of the country; they hinder the field of action and hamper the knowledge attached to the austerity of bodies and programs that serve as drivers for the country's development.

Problems with the draft of the new General Law of Humanities, Sciences, Technologies and Innovation have been identified. Those refer to its lack of technical rigor and vague concepts, inconsistencies with various laws of education, and budget cuts to various state agencies in the range of 50% in general services and operational expenditure.



²² Where it has been identified that the processes can be different or contradictory among them, hence the researcher must have two different methods, favoring and holding the science bureaucratization (Vargas and Zuñiga, 2021).

LAG ACCRUAL AND STRUCTURAL LOSSES

Imagen: cimacnoticias.com.mx en https://tinyurl.com/ryyaaz9com/ryyaaz9

III. LAG ACCRUAL AND STRUCTURAL LOSSES

Part of the gravity of the substantial transformations done in the first three years of the current administration resides in the difficulty of being reverted. Lopez Obrador has said he is looking for significant changes in his government not to be put backward. Although democracy indeed contemplates institutional mechanisms to make more or less rigid the changes that are done, it is also true that formal modifications have been done ravishing the judiciary framework and the division of powers or adjusting regulations presum-

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ably unconstitutional, to which negative consequences have resulted in many ways. This harm is reflected in areas like governing and democracy, security, human rights, the environment, and international relations. In this sense, lag accrual will not only affect the country in the short term, but it is already inevitable that many of these transformations will affect Mexican society for generations to come.

1. DIFFICULTIES FOR REVERTING GOVERNANCE DECISIONS

As mentioned before, the accrual of passives in all areas are important, especially those related to the country's governance. The advances in the militarization process, in the weakening of the division of power, and the stabilization of public insecurity at a high level stand out, and they are becoming entrenched. Politically, it will not be very easy to turn back.

As it has been reported several times, contrary to what Lopez Obrador promised for a long time, the armed forces not only were not removed from the public safety tasks but legalized their acting in the matter, their budget was notably increased, as well as their responsibilities in different areas of public policy. In case the court validates the Law of the National Guard, the National Law on the Use of Force, and the General Law of the National Public Security System, or alternatively the Court simply decides not to act and solve pending constitutional challenges to these laws for the coming years, it will be particularly complicated to force the Army and the Navy to return to their barracks, and modify their behavior which, in many cases, infringe different human rights.

Likewise, the budgetary increase that has been reported seems to have a troubling trend to revert, partly because institutions get accustomed to a level of spending they are unwilling to renounce. Moreover, in part, because it would be the armed forces that will develop better intelligence and performance, without It will be particularly complicated to force the Army and the Navy to return to their barracks, and modify their behavior which, in many cases, infringe different human rights. this being beneficial for the country because of their evident lack of transparency and accountability. The amplification of their attributions to the civil area, as well as the provision of assets and operation of activities like the management of airports and railways, heighten the economic interests of the armed forces' leadership, which are not inclined to be submitted to public scrutiny (Vital Signals, 2020b). This modification, to what can be considered an achievement for the country's armed forces, will be a dead weight that the Mexican institutions will carry for years to come since it will be difficult to revert those allotments.

On the division of powers, it must be recognized that Mexico has never been characterized to have had clear borders for each power, especially between the executive and the judiciary. Despite that, the current administration has shown great pressure capability on the Judiciary power leadership, which so far has not pronounced about the unconstitutional actions or the constitutional disputes that will profoundly affect the key projects of the current administration. As long as the Supreme Court does not issue its sentences, the legal changes remain valid and strengthen the alleged unconstitutional practices, which hinders the return to previous methods once the rule of the court is produced (Vital Signals, 2021b). The president has made clear and public requests to the Supreme Court, especially its president, which allegedly infringe the power separation principle. Maybe one of the choices that better exemplifies the capability of the president to force certain decisions in the SCJN (National Supreme Court of Justice, for its acronym in Spanish) was the approval of the popular query to clarify past political decisions, which was sold by the predominant political force as the prosecution of Mexican ex-presidents, from Salinas de Gortari to Peña Nieto.

Likewise, regarding the rule of law, the current administration has constantly infringed the law in almost every area and, when this fails, fends off the risk to national security, as it was the case of the airport cancellation when the siege against it was closing (MCCI. 2019). On the regulatory framework, it does not seem willing to attack the high levels of impunity. Like what was reported by the think tank México Evalúa (Mexico Evaluates) in 2020, 92.4% of impunity prevails in the Mexican justice system. Comparatively, Mexico is still among the most corrupt countries in the world, as is shown in the Corruption Perception Index, which reports International Transparency. Mexico, in spite of "advancing" from level 130 to 124 out of 180 countries examined, is still among the The current administration has shown great pressure capability on the Judiciary power leadership [...] As long as the Supreme Court does not issue its sentences, the legal changes remain valid and strengthen the alleged unconstitutional practices most corrupt group of countries on the planet. The lags we already had in lack of transparency, impunity, and fight against corruption are not only aggravated, but there is no clear path ahead. The obstruction of the Anti–Corruption National System by most of the political class since its approval, regardless of the adjustments it requires, represents years of inaction in a fundamental task of the Mexican state.

For the last two decades, public insecurity, which is one of the scourges suffered by Mexican society, has accumulated. The strengthening of the subnational police barely had its first boost, which was clearly inadequate and partial, since many of the state governments simply hoped the federation would solve their problems. In fact, it is recognized that, in general, the opportunity and the need to work in the formation of civil corporations to face different challenges of public safety and the coordination towards the fight against organized crime has been overlooked. Counterclockwise to the strengthening of these institutions, the current administration has cut the budget destined for it. The most relevant reduction was from the disappearance of FORTASEG (the Strengthening Security Program, for its acronym in Spanish), which allotted around 4 billion pesos intended to 286 municipalities that, by the way, focus 70% of the violence in the country. These actions revert several developments that were accomplished in previous decades.

Like that, several lags carried by previous administrations have hardened in the current government and, worst, now there are more obstacles to get over the governing challenges. Significantly, the erosion of constitutional and state of law hurts the very structure of the Mexican state and makes its future recovery more complex.

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2. STRUCTURAL LOSSES TO RECOVER GROWTH «

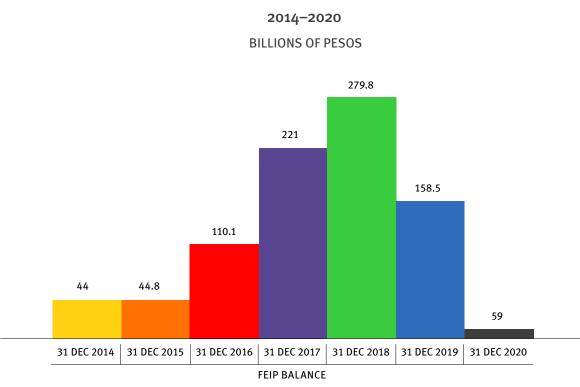
VOLATILE SUSTAINABILITY OF PUBLIC FINANCES

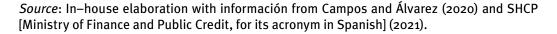
Among the significant amount of problems that the economy is facing, public finance stability is highlighted. The economic ravage could be worse if the public and private finances were contaminated. Nevertheless, data jumps to sight in the first case, producing more doubts instead of generating certainty.

As a starting point, it must be noted that during 2020, budgetary incomes were less than estimated. The Budgetary Income Stability Fund (FEIP, for its acronym in Spanish) was used to compensate for the income reduction. This fund was precisely designed to be used in emergency cases to act in a countercyclical way (against the economic cycle).

FEIP has clear rules for its operation. The rules of operation establish that it is not possible to use more than 50% of its resources in just one fiscal year. Nevertheless, the legal requirement was surpassed in the last year. The law was breached since the balance by the start of the exercise was 158.5 billion pesos, and by December 31st, the fund only had 9.5 billion

GRAPH 39. BALANCE OF THE BUDGETARY INCOME STABILITY FUND





pesos. Likewise, the same rules establish that if the FEIP is left fundless, cuts must be done in areas like social communication.

Despite using the FEIP, the federal government had to resort to public debt, following the trend started by Enrique Peña Nieto, but at a slower rate. The Historic Balance of the Public Sector Financial Requirements (SHRFSP, for its acronym in Spanish) is the broadest measure of the debt's balance; it went from 5,891 billion pesos (mmp, for its acronym in Spanish) in December 2012 to 10,552 in December 2018. This indebtedness of 4,661 mmp at Peña Nieto's current prices equates to a 40% increase in real terms (eliminating inflation) on the public debt balance during his six years of rule. Under Lopez Obrador, the indebtedness (SHRFSP) by June 2021 reached 12,083 mmp, a nominal increase of 1,851 mmp in two years and a half, which in real terms represents a 7.1% increment. If the debt is considered as a GDP percentage, this figure rose substantially due to the GDP fall in 2020 (44.5% to 52.4% of GDP in just a year), and it will shift downwards in 2021 because of the economic recovery (SHCP, 2021a).

On the other hand, in the months from January to June 2021, the total income increase is partially explained by the oilfield income boost, which grew 62.9% (177.3 billion pesos) against the same period of 2020. Conversely, non–oilfield incomes only increased by 1.4%. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the oilfield incomes obtained (427.1 billion pesos), explained in extensive measure by the increment in oil prices, 63.1 billion pesos refer to monetary contributions done by the federal government to Mexican Petroleums (PEMEX, for its acronym in Spanish). Meaning, other types of federal government incomes are being counted as oil related incomes. If those resources were not classified as oil revenues (given it is not their nature), the annual income variation would have been 114 billion pesos. Despite this resource injection to PEMEX, Moody's qualifier reduced its credit grade from Ba2 to Ba3 (both in speculative emission so-called "junk debt") on July 28th, 2021, because of its low liquidity prospects due to the 17 billion dollars loses in the refinement field (Moody's, 2021).

Finally, the increment in pension obligations and the likely increase in interest rates according to world inflation drive up the amounts to pay in unavoidable expenditures, such as pensions and the external debt service, which will have to come out of the Federations' expenditure budget. Just in the payment of the universal pensions (IMSS and ISSSTE, etcetera., non included) by decreasing the age from 68 to 65, and the increment in the pension amount, in 2024 a triple of the amount spent in 2020 will be disbursed, which is estimated will be in the ballpark of 1.5% of the current GDP (Urzúa, 2021). These additional expenses, plus the rest of the pensions and the debt service, will trouble the public finance stability in no time.

It must be noted that the oilfield incomes obtained (427.1 billion pesos), explained in extensive measure by the increment in oil prices, 63.1 billion pesos refer to monetary contributions done by the federal government to Mexican Petroleums (PEMEX). Meaning, other types of federal *qovernment incomes* are being counted as oil related incomes.

THE LESSER INVESTMENS TODAY, THE LESSER FUTURE GROWTH

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Mexico is a country that has suffered considerable contractions to the Gross Fixed Investment (IFB, for its acronym in Spanish) in at least four out of the last five administrations. Hence, the current president's government adds to a regrettable history of investment contractions starting since the electoral period. Only Felipe Calderon (2000–2006) has been the only government that traveled without issue on the matter. Moreover, in that last case, it was not until the arrival of the great financial crisis of 2008–2009 that an IFB fall was observed.

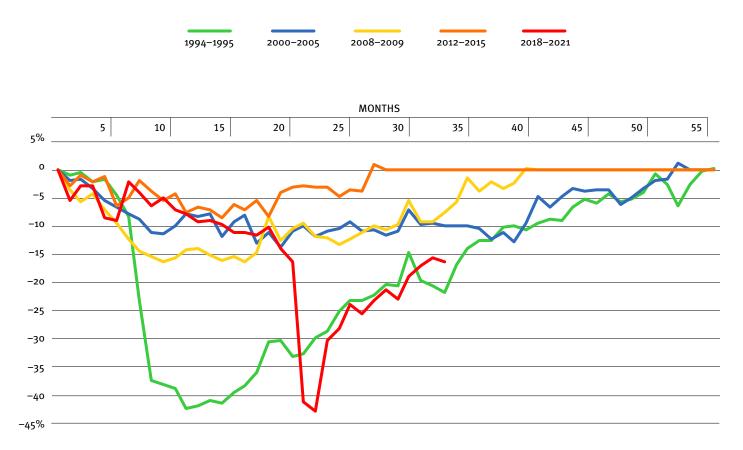
In Enrique Peña Nieto's government (2012–2018), the IFB contracted –8.5% compared to the maximum peak previous to the fall (July 2012), and it was until the 27th month that it recovered that level. The great financial crisis led to a severe fall (–16.4%) compared to the historic maximum before that crisis and implied that it would take 40 months to get back to the same level of investment.

Regarding the magnitude of the most severe crises, the 1994–1995 and the great 2020 confinement are the worst. Nevertheless, before the great confinement of last year, the IFB recurring drops and a downward trend, so that from the 2018 electoral period to April's 2021, 32 months of contraction have accrued pertaining to the maximum historic. It would not be a surprise that the Mexican economy will have to traverse a long recovery process to come back to the previous top-level, as it happened in the 1994–1995 crisis, which lasted 56 months (almost five years).

By April 2021, in the annual comparison with the same month last year, the IFB showed a considerable surge (12.1%) due to the base comparison found on the historical minimums. In fact, the investment components (construction, machinery, and equipment) point that April 2021 shows a notable deceleration compared to the previous month. It is probable that, following the current trend, the earlier peak of investment will be reached after 40 months.

GRAPH 40. LAPSED MONTHS FOR THE GROSS FIXED INVESTMENT TO RECOVER TOP-LEVEL, BEFORE EACH CONTRACTION PERIOD*

DESEASONALIZED SERIES. 2013=100



Source: In-house elaboration with information from INEGI (2021a).*

* There were no crises in 2000–2005 and 2012–2015; nonetheless, the gross fixed investment suffered considerable contractions.

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE :: 162

ENERGY MARKET AND COMPETITIVENESS

Probably the energy market is the one suffering the most due to the new energy policy, a shift that started with the appointments of the commissioners of the Energy Regulating Commission at the beginning of the sexennium to the legal changes and the regulation of different instances that directly affect it. The advances from the federal executive towards private investment have been constant. The main pretensions have been on two fronts: hydrocarbons and electric energy generation.²³ In order to achieve that, several institutional and administrative measures have been implemented that modify or pretend to modify both markets' operations.

The current government policy is, essentially, energetic self-sufficiency provided by the production companies of the state to achieve an alleged energy safety guaranteed by the state, no matter the economic cost, the state of law, or the environment. Thus, the main goal is to increase the refining process to satisfy the gasoline market with those produced by PEMEX and the electricity generation from CFE to be the only supplier in Mexico.

In the case of the hydrocarbons, under the conditions the Mexican refinement system is found, fuel oil production has accelerated at a higher rate than gasoline (as the federal executive pretends). Currently, fuel oil has a minimal market since it is highly pollutant. Again, it is intended that CFE absorb energy production in their already obsolete refineries. Through modifications to the Electric Industry Law (LIE, for its acronym in Spanish), the federal executive proposed alterations to the dispatch regulations, favoring more pollutant and expensive energies generated by the national electric system. The cheapest sources come from clean energies, generated mainly by the private sector. Notwithstanding, if such change is to be implemented, it will have noxious effects on the economy, public finances, environment, and mainly the Mexican public health due to the pollution now aggravated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Although the alterations to the LIE found a dam in the judicial power, the CRE (Energy Regulation Commission) has induced the decrease of growth in the elec-

²³ The focus has been on generation in electric energy matters since the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE, for its acronym in Spanish) keeps the monopoly in the distribution and transmission of electricity as required by law.

tric sector participants by only granting 20 electric energy generation permits during 2020, when in 2019 granted 86 permits of the kind (76.7% less). In 2019, 75% of granted permits were given to clean energy projects (solar, wind, hydro, and biomass), while only 25% of projects in 2020 were solar and wind. Meaning, despite the judicial suspension, the CRE is acting as if the law was ongoing.

The competitiveness impact on the country may be severe since the companies that participated in international markets are subject to rigorous standards on environmental impact matters. Therefore, clean energy consumption is a priority for export companies to decrease their carbon footprint. The proposed alterations to the law represent a discouragement to invest in Mexico, given its decrease in clean energy generation capacity.

The means to make it possible that CFE hides the higher cost in energy generation is through the subsidies increase.²⁴ According to the 2019 public account, the total cost of CFE basic supply (The CFE subsidiary in charge of supplying electric energy to Mexican households) was 493.9 billion pesos, 20%

24 Look at: Energy Commerce. Available at: <u>https://tinyurl.</u> <u>com/2rdjkpsa</u>



higher than the income obtained by the sale of energy (411.5 billion pesos). To cover the above difference (82.4 billion pesos), the Department of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP, for its acronym in Spanish) had to assign 75.2 billion pesos coming from the general government income (or from "savings" in different public entities), it was also needed that the following subsidiaries Transmission, Distribution, and Energy CFE had 17.9 billion transfer. Hence the Basic Supply subsidiary ended up with a 10.7 billion pesos surplus. Image: Fossile fuels pollution cause death in periodismohoy.com at https:// tinyurl.com/kpc6pxc2 To end, in hydrocarbon matters, the acquisition of the other 50% of the Deer Park refinery in Texas from PE-MEX seems to be nothing more than the (unspoken) acceptance of the facts, the incapability of PEMEX to produce the gasoline volume required by the Mexican market. On the other hand, even if the production of the Texas refinery belongs to PEMEX, on the national accounting system, the product generated by that refinery is considered a finished American product; hence, if transported to Mexico, it would be accounted as an import. For practical effects, we will keep importing gasoline.

In this way, the problematic financial situation dragged by PEMEX and CFE for years, which the 2013 energetic reform from the Pact for Mexico seemed the only way to hold productively, still with many risks, has aggravated because of several decisions already reported by Vital Signs. These passives, literally present decades ago, are accruing others that disturb the public finance liquidity and the state fiscal stability for the following years.

Even more, the energy actual cost increment in Mexico reduces the competitiveness of companies and the economy's productiveness. If the environmental impact is added, the debits will accrue for generations. *Image*: "Deer Park refinery (built in 1929) that Pemex bought" in reporteindigo.com at https://tinyurl.com/5akf8bfm



DESTRUCTION OF PRIVATE COMPANIES

According to the Business Demographics Study (EDN, for its acronym in Spanish) 2020, there were 4.86 million micros, small and medium establishments in Mexico in 2019. By September 2020, the number of establishments is 4.47 million, a net variation (births minus deaths) of minus 391,414 businesses, which is -8.1%. During this time, 1.01 million establishments died, but 619.4 thousand were born.

By company size, the most affected were small and medium–sized companies (PyMEs), whose net variation was –18.4%. Micro companies had a –7.7% net variation. Nevertheless, the weight of micro–companies in the Mexican economy explains most of the net loss (92.2%)(360,852 micro–companies). The most affected federative entities, considering the net variation, are: Quintana Roo (–24.2%), Baja California Sur (–18.1%), Sinaloa (–18.1%), and Tamaulipas (–18.1%). The loss in the prior entities is higher two or three times the national averages, as Quintana Roo does.

By sector, non-financial private services are the most affected (-12.1%). Only that sector explains 59.2% net loss of businesses in Mexico. In turn, manufacturing and commerce-related companies were



less affected. In sum, the service sector companies loss and the most affected entities being Quintana Roo and Baja California Sur are found principally related to tourism. The damage will be profound, and it will take several years to reach the levels we had at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, as will happen in other countries. Image: "The other tragedy: One million small businesses (Mypymes) in Mexico closed because of the pandemic" in Elfinanciero. com.mx at https://tinyurl. com/5akf8bfm

HUMAN CAPITAL AND INSTITUTIONS WEAKENING

For almost three years of Morena's government, because of the COVID–19 pandemic and partly due to the government decisions, the country has faced constant and accelerated economic, institutional and human capital destruction, as well as the private sector as the public. Companies closure has had severe implications on the employment level. During the first quarter of 2020, 19 million people were employed in small, medium–sized, and big companies. By the first quarter of 2021, almost 18 million were employed, hence, a –6% annual reduction.

Likewise, a human capital loss can be foreseen in the economy, which is reflected by younger people (15–19 years old) in companies of different sizes in Mexico, a 13.3% reduction between the first quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. This scenario closes a contact point between the young population and the labor market. In tandem, the job creation capability of the economy is not at the required rate. By the first quarter of 2020, the annual variation of employed workers was -4.3%, besides there are 8% fewer people coming in, by age, to the workforce. In addition to decapitalization, a bottleneck is created in the inte-

gration process of the new labor force into the economy. Therefore, it can lead to an idle human capital increment in the economy (non–working, studying, or looking for work people), which would need relevant measures in employment generation matters and measures to stem the loss of human capital such as investment education and training increase.

Besides the impacts on the corporate sector, the current administration has been in charge of debilitating bureaucratic and public institutions. These actions revert some previous developments which took years to achieve, and that after the current reforms will be challenging to overcome. Besides budgetary reductions faced by some autonomous bodies (Vital Signals, 2020b), transformations have been done that reduce the rights of the state bureaucracy, shorten the action margins of the staff members and make the public sector less attractive for the highly qualified and experienced professionals it needs.

Some examples are the Federal Law of Republican Austerity (LFAR, for its acronym in Spanish), published on November 19th, 2019, and the reforms to the Federal Law of Public Servant Compensations. The first prohibits public servants that belong to superior hierarchical groups that separate from their charge for any reason to occupy positions in any companies they had supervised, regulated, or to which they had privy information during their public charge, unless ten years have passed²⁵. Although the phenomenon known as a revolving door needs to be controlled, the elapsed period for staff members to perform in the private initiative seems excessive compared to other countries, like Europe, which is three years.

The second example was the reforms to the Federal Law of Public Servant Compensations (LFRSP), in which it was regulated that no one can have a higher salary than the Mexican president, who makes 108 thousand pesos a month. This reform gave rise to 5 thousand 168 appeals for legal protection interposed by judges, magistrates, electoral counselors, staff members of the Bank of Mexico, members of the Government Secretariat, among others. Signos Vitales (Vital Signals, 2020b) reported that several professional public servants from different institutions decided to quit before the LFRSP was approved, so they would not lose the possibility of continuing their



Image: "From assistants... to officials". Infography from Reforma.com at https://tinyurl. com/7wvzu64w



Image: The Republican Austerity Law approved in Congress. Photo: Laura Lovera ein Elsoldemexico.com.mx. at https://tinyurl.com/4nmsdc8w

professional careers in the private sector. Had they been fired once the law was approved, they would have been left without many working options in their area of expertise. Two of the clearest examples were the central bank (Banxico) and the National Banking

²⁵ Article 24 Paragraph two of the Federal Law of Republican Austerity. Available at: <u>https://tinyurl.com/kyvxn2jx</u>

and Securities Commission (CNVB, for its acronym in Spanish). In 2019, the Bank of Mexico (Banxico for its acronym in Spanish) suffered at least 200 resignations or anticipated retirements. In the same year, the CNVB was forced to cover 359 job vacancies, 222 promoting senior personnel, and 137 with new hires; this is due to the mass resignations of personnel, among which 50 high ranking members are found. Finally, it is expected that the salary reduction for the federal public administration staff members and the disappearance of seats discourage highly competent staff members from remaining in the public sector. All these decisions together will leave adrift the accumulated experience and talent vital for the efficiency of public management.

GENERALIZED IMPOVERISHMENT

As previously recorded, the sanitary crisis paralyzed the economy, and the lack of support for corporations facilitated the definitive closing of more than one million companies. Loss of employment impacted immediately, and the wage mass (the salaries of all workers in the economy) contracted 10.6%. The wage reduction implied the loss of wellbeing in Mexican households, given the income reduction. By May 2021, the wage mass remains 5.7% under the levels before the sanitary crisis (February 2020). According to ENIGH (National Household Income and Expenditure Survey, for its acronym in Spanish) 2020, the employment income of the population contracted 10.8% between 2018 and 2020.

Likewise, in light of the uncertainty caused by political, economic, and sanitary factors, by April 2021, the investment from corporations and households remains 16.4% under the historic maximum (July 2018), that is to say, an eleven–year lag. These add to an already deteriorated job market since the required jobs will not be generated to push through the economic collapse without investments. People with the lowest educational level, women and youngsters, have been the most affected. ENIGH (2020) points that with higher education comes higher incomes, where those who had elementary school just produced 10,551 pesos quarterly average, different from those with a professional degree (completed or truncated) with a 40,433 pesos quarterly average income and where the income gap between men and women is more significative at all school levels.

Before the scarce social protection mechanisms to contain macroeconomic clashes, a significant number of people have performed unemployment retirements from their retirement accounts. Between March 2020 and June 2021, 28,123 million pesos have been withdrawn as temporary compensation for lost income. Although these withdrawals will not have macroeconomic implications, they will create decapitalization to the people doing them, which will affect their future income. On top of that, the recently rise in prices considerably affects people's income (representing a poverty tax).

Therefore, evidence exists that due to the pandemic, there will be a social rearrange. The income drop has practically affected the whole population, and government transfers, especially scholarships, have not improved income distribution. The pandemic clash



implied that those just above the limit of poverty end up entering into a poverty situation. So far, the recovery has not been enough to allow them some progress. Impoverishment has led families to adjust and spend less, use previous savings and borrowing. These lead irretrievably to extensions in the loss of well-being among families. Image: empoverishment of middle class in eleconomista.com.mx at https://tinyurl. com/yn5s9ahw

3. SOCIAL MOBILITY TRUNCATION

In Mexico, the virus arrival impacts are distinct and depend on the level of exposure and population vulnerability (CEEY, Espinosa Yglesias Study Center for its acronym in Spanish, s.f). Worldwide, said exposure and susceptibility are related to living conditions, the strength of the health systems, and the actions and decisions of governments to contain the damages. Said in another way, even though worldwide the risk of contracting or dying of COVID–19 is shared, not every person and region are equally exposed nor share the same capabilities to face and recover from the damages. Depending on the policy planning and implementation efficacy, each country applies on its agenda to face this pandemic. Poverty is a condition that exposes people and, in particular, in the case of Mexico, "The social mobility situation is summarized in those born poor stay poor and those born rich stay rich. In a high inequality context accompanied by a poor economic growth dynamic." (Delajara et al. 2018, p.15). Hence, this pandemic is expected to delay the aspiration for better social mobility and better living conditions.

According to CEEY (2018), low social mobility is due to social security fragmentation, educational lag, informality, lousy quality of employment, among other elements (Table 33) that, albeit already affect access opportunities to better living conditions stratus, is quite likely that the COVID–19 impacts block these.

TABLE 33. CAUSES OF LOW SOCIAL MOBILITY

CAUSE	DESCRIPTION
1. SOCIAL SECURITY FRAGMENTATION	In 2017 only 21.8% of the population, 15–year–olds and older, had contributions to a social security institution, 21.6% contributed some time, and 56.1% had never contributed. Besides, 83.4% contributed to IMSS, 11.5% to ISSSTE, and 5.1% to other institutions. By sex, more men contributed 28.3%, different from the case of women 16.0%.
2. DIFFERENT ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES	According to Coneval, 2018 still had 16.2% of the population lacking health services.
3. EDUCATIONAL LAG, ABANDONMENT, AND LOW EDUCATIONAL MOBILITY	Up until 2018, 16.9% of the population showed educational lag in the country. The pandemic–gen- erated interruption of learning was present in pre–school (94.7%), elementary school (73.2%), High School (35.9%) and 44.6% in higher education. (ENCOVID–ED, 2021) (COVID–19 Survey for its acro– nym in Spanish)
4. INFORMALITY AND LOUSY QUALITY OF EMPLOYMENT	In Mexico, inefficiencies, low productivity, and inequality in the job market have been diagnosed from the structural and incentive programs that create high in-formality and low coverage, and inefficacy of the social security system. The or-ganization that keeps these unfavorable characteristics from the job market with the observed low social mobility has not been given enough attention.
5. FINANCIAL EXCLUSION AND LOW CREDIT LEVEL	Formal financial system services exclusion is associated with greater costs, risks, and insecurities in savings and credit access and affects the socioeconomic wellbeing when a disaster happens. Access to quality financial resources allows families to strengthen their educational and health capabilities. It also helps in the emergence of businesses, their growth, and development. Having retirement savings through an Afore helps face with independence and dignity the expenses of old age. (Delajara <i>et al.</i> , 2018).

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Delajara et al. (2018), ENIGH (2018), ECOVID-ED (2021) and ENESS [Social Security and Employment National Survey, for its acronym in Spanish] (2017).

According to UNESCO (2021), without inclusive, equal, and quality education for everyone and learning opportunities throughout life, countries will not reach gender equality or break the poverty cycle that leaves behind millions of children, youngsters, and adults. Hence, in light of the risk learning interruption represents, school abandonment, and the inequalities in Mexico, the aspirations of millions of students in the country could be blocked.

Evidence shows an association between the original social strata and the probability of school disqualification in Mexico (Solis, 2011) due to the existence of original social strata–associated mechanisms that interfere with educational trajectories. In other words, the original socio–economic strata of a person determine their academic success, where the current socio–economic disposition in Mexico points out that one out of two Mexicans is poor (54%) and almost two out of 10 lives under extreme poverty conditions (15%), elements that condition Mexican educational trajectory.

By highlighting the educational role in the boost towards development, social context with the severity of impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic needs to be associated, and the government responses to offer alternatives to at least three different types of dimensions: 1) loss of learning, 2) School abandonment, and 3) the growing educational inequality, avoiding with these a more profound social inequality.

Under this landscape, it has been proven that distance education does not substitute onsite integration between teachers and students, an element that risks foundational learning and deepens the exclusion of the least favored. As mentioned before, only two out of ten households (15.7%) on the lowest socio-economic strata have a computer available compared to six out of ten households (60.6%) that belong to the medium-high strata. Besides, one out of 4 households (25.1%) in the lowest strata do not have internet access, and one out of five (20.4%) do not have a television at home (ENDUTIH, 2020) (Use and Availability of Information Technologies in the Household National Survey for its acronym in Spanish); consequently, that solution did not work for all students alike.

SCHOOL ABANDONMENT

Even though there was a risk of abandoning education in pre-existing situations in people under unfavorable socio-economic contexts, minority groups, indigenous people, or special abilities (among others), the current sanitary condition has practically impacted the whole population. The pandemic and the absence of effective policies to contain its effects led to the school closing the sudden interruption of learning.

Currently, the education abandonment possibilities as an effect of the COVID–19 pandemic affected 740 thousand people who could not finish the 2019–2020 school cycle (2.2% of the total enrolled in that school cycle). For the 2020–2021 school cycle, the enrolled population is 32.9 million (60.6% of 3 to 29 years–old total). Of these, 30.4 million (92%) are people that were enrolled in the previous cycle (2019–200), and 2.5 million (8%) are enrolled that did not participate in the educational system in the 2019–2020 school cycle.

Likewise, the probability of not concluding studies is also related to the school life expectancy, which shows a setback in the 2019–2020 to 2020–2021 school cycles. The school life expectancy of a person between 5 and 19 years old enrolled in some educational level declined slightly from the 2019–2020 school cycle (14 years) to 2020–2021 (13.9 years) at a national level, but this can be deeper in those living under the least favorable contexts.



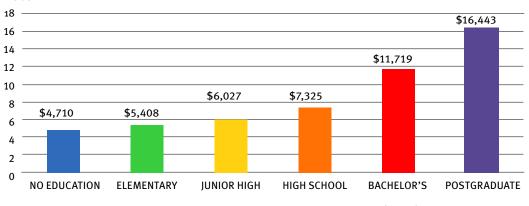
Image: "3 of each 5 children who lost a school year in the world during pandemic, live in Latin America and the Caribbean" Unicef/Volpe at https://tinyurl.com/n6fccnc3

LABORAL TRAJECTORY TRUNCATION

The career trajectory analysis implies the study of formality and informality (Lara and Rojas, 2020). Mexico has been characterized as having a higher informal employment level than other OCDE (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development for its acronym in Spanish), being a fundamental structural problem of the country. By the fourth quarter of 2018, the informal employment workers represented nearly 60% of the country's workforce (OCDE, 2020a), and 31.3 million people in the country have null or limited access to the social protection mechanism. The labor legislation does not cover them (OIT, 2020) (International Labour Organization, for its acronym in Spanish). Additionally, evidence points out that the THOUSANDS OF PESOS Mexican labor market is characterized by a high level of informal employment transfers to formal employment and vice versa. However, there are no significant increments in income or wellbeing just for being in the formal sector. That is evidence that the choice to remain in informality is rational and voluntary, particularly among the self-employed (Maloney, 1999).

In this sense, the relationship between income and educational level in Mexico determines by a great measure the wage level at which someone can aspire (Aban *et al.*, 2020). The wages of employed Mexicans present a direct relationship with their school level (Graph 41), and currently, the income aspiration could be affected by any educational interruption caused by the pandemic or the loss of family income.

GRAPH 41. MONTHLY EMPLOYED MEXICAN INCOME ACCORDING TO SCHOOL LEVEI



Fuente: In-house elaboration with información from CEEY (2020).

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Additionally, the educational transitions and trajectories of youngsters were already interposed by their working experiences. Due to an increment in academic degrees and the generalized deterioration of the admission conditions to the job market, a schism between schooling and labor opportunities is experienced (Blanco et al., 2014). The repercussions of the pandemic in the labor and education sectors could generate more considerable inequalities and aspirational blockades as professional as working–wise.

In these conditions, inequality is intensified simultaneously; the Mexican occupational mobility system becomes more rigid, in the sense that the father's occupation or the household head already determined the occupational destiny of the son or daughter (Cortés and Escobar, 2007). The situation above points out the role of social institutions like the government that provides equality within the competition for occupational positions (consumption subsidies for lower classes, education, health, and urban social services) is becoming weaker as a tool to drive social mobility in Mexico.

DAMAGES IN THE HEALTH CONDITION

A complication that ends up affecting social mobility includes health. In general terms, health and mortality indicators were getting better, even if, in some cases, they were under the prospects found in other places of the world (CEEY, 2020). Nevertheless, the current sanitary crisis reveals the limitations of a health system driven backward in some health progresses the country had. Just in the pandemic influence matters related to physical and mental health, nutrition, and access to health services (among others) (CEPAL, 2020) (United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, for its acronym in Spanish), Mexico had significant progress.

As mentioned before, Mexican health authorities focused on immunization actions, which reflected that in 1990 73.8% of one-year-old children were covered with the measles vaccine, and by 2012, the MMR vaccine coverage increased to 86.8% (SRP) (PNUD, 2014) (United Nations Development Programme, for its acronym in Spanish). Nevertheless, the number of available doses has decreased among different vaccines, and the lack of political will to continue and reach vaccination actions at a national level exposes children, adolescents, and adults to preventable diseases (Garrod, 2021).

Another health–affecting setback in Mexico is the maternal mortality rate increment. The improvements reached in 2016 were lost in 2020. Mexico recorded a mortality rate of 37.5 per 100 thousand born alive in 2016, under the Latin American average (58.2), while it decreased to 31.8 by 2018. As of 2019, it increased again (32.6) to reach the same level it had in 2016 (37.5) by 2020. The situation worsened by 2021; during the epidemiologic week 29th of 2021, maternal mortality was calculated to be 45.3 deaths per 100 thousand born alive (Secretariat of Health, 2021), representing an increment of 20.8% about the same epidemiologic week the year before.

Improvements in the state of health through life are also reduced. 56 out of 100 people born in most disadvantaged households in health matter remain there their whole life, and even if the rest manage to step up, only two of them reach the highest health index strata (1.8%) (CEEY, 2020). This reality seems to be worsened by the COVID–19 impacts; if the health sector does not prioritize this, the invoice will be charged deaths and health pretensions directly and indirectly caused by the virus in the short, medium, and long term.



Image: "From witches to healers, midwives attended thousands of women during pandemic" in chiapasparalelo.com at https://tinyurl.com/4t75a2ak

MALNUTRITION

Poor socio-economic conditions, to which 54% of the population under poverty and 15% under extreme poverty are exposed by 2021, multiply the risk of suffering malnutrition, and the consequences are widely variant: from elevated mortality rates by infectious diseases (Cuevas-Nasu et al. 2019), the decrease in learning capabilities in the infancy, to the increment in non-transmissible diseases in adulthood (Dewey and Begum, 2011).

Unfortunately, the sanitary crisis has driven the health conditions to the limit, from preschool age to adulthood. In that sense, ENSANUT (2021) about COVID-19 reports the national prevalence of underweight children found at 4.4%. The national pervasiveness of short size and emaciation was 13.9% and 1.5% in less than 5-year-old boys and girls. Regarding overweight and obesity, the national prevalence is 8.4% in less than 5-year-old children with that condition (p.154).

Additionally, the highest prevalence of low weight was found in the peninsular region with 9.4%, followed by the Pacific–Center and Center regions, both with 6%. The lowest prevalence was in CDMX (Mexico City, for its acronym in Spanish) region, with less than one percentage point of children with low weight for their age. Short–size prevalence is present in 20.9% of the South–Pacific region, followed by the peninsular region with 19.2%, and the border region with 16.7%, while again CDMX region is the one with the least prevalence of short–size with 7.8%, very similar to the 8% of the Center–North region. According to ENSANUT 2018, overweight and obesity increased around two percentage points; a possible cause can be food habits acquired during the COVID–19 pandemic confinement.

The highest prevalence in the malnutrition indicators are distributed around all country regions: the most elevated on low weight in the Peninsula region, the highest in short–size in the South–Pacific, and the highest in emaciation in the Center–Pacific area. On the other hand, the highest prevalence of overweight and obesity are shared by the Pacific–North, Center, and CDMX regions. Likewise, the type of locality in Mexico keeps referring to the malnutrition issues: more malnutrition in rural localities. Nonetheless, the overweight and obesity combo is alike in urban and rural localities. The efforts to keep the malnutrition

MALNUTRITION INDICATORS:

Low weight	Peninsula region
Short size	Pacific–South
Emaciation (weight loss)	Center–Pacific
Overweight and obesity	Pacific-North, Center and Mexico City
More malnutrition	Rural localities

indicators downward without reaching the extreme overweight and obesity still lack an integral policy.

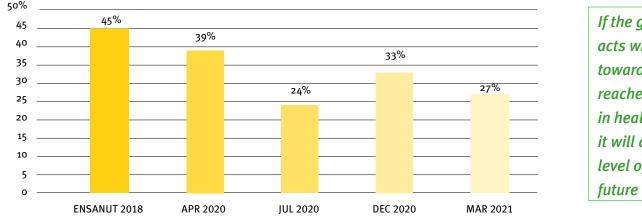
Similarly, the soft drink consumer percentage in adults is almost the same as water. This case is alarming since soft drink intake is associated with the energy increase intake, displacing water consumption, and contributes to the risk of suffering overweight and obesity, which are risk factors for non-transmissible diseases.

Genetic predisposition and poverty in Mexico explain the vulnerabilities that people are exposed to during malnutrition symptoms, elements that can leave sequels in the long term. In this sense, the ENCOVID-19 recovers information reporting that the food security evolution went from 45% in 2018 (ENSANUT 2018) to 39% by April 2020, reaching its lowest point in July 2020 with 24% and in March 2021 with 27% (Graph 42).

ENSANUT (COVID-2019) found that 59.1% of households have some level of food insecurity, 20.6% of homes are moderate and severe, meaning that in the last three months, the food amount habitually consumed was reduced. The most considerable proportions in households in food security, severe and moderate, were found in rural localities (28.8%) and the Peninsular region (33.6%).

GRAPH 42. FOOD SECURITY EVOLUTION





If the government acts with indecision towards losing reached achievements in health and nutrition, it will compromise the level of life and the future of Mexicans.

Source: In-house elaboration with data from ENCOVID-19 and ENSANUT (2020).

The current COVID-19 pandemic represents a significant challenge that could have severe and lasting effects on the health and nutrition of Mexican people. Acting with indecision towards losing reached achievements in health and nutrition compromises the level of life and the future of Mexicans. Again, the accrual of passives we already had, the pandemic, and the government response have aggravated them.

4. Environmental Damage «

Today, environmental deterioration in Mexico is overwhelming; if we continue through the same social– governmental–political path, the ecological damage will be irretrievable, causing catastrophic damage to Mexican society and its future generations. The Mexican population has witnessed the natural resources and environmental deterioration and destruction process that sustained the people for generations. Effective measures are not being taken to revert the damage and foster growth and economic development through sustainable means.

Quantifying the environmental damage that keeps accumulating and to which precautionary conservation or compensating measures are not being taken is the Total Cost for Environmental Degradation and Depletion (CTADA, for its acronym in Spanish). These increased to 1.09 billion pesos (BDP)(4.5% of GDP) in 2019, having a 65,539 million pesos increase compared to 2018. To buffer it Environmental Protection Expenditure (GPA, for its acronym in Spanish) is done, which was only 104,433 mdp (0.5% of GDP) in 2019, 32,743 mdp fewer than previously recorded in 2018. Therefore, the CTADA is nine times higher than the GPA. In this sense, in terms of degradation and protection of the environment, Mexico has a differential margin of \$9992,5387 mdp, proving that depletion and degradation of the environment surpass the environmental protection, according to INEGI Statistics (2019c).

Previous figures show that the environmental damage that has been occurring in our country keeps accumulating without looking to remedy it. Due to the changes in soil usage and loss of forestry coverage, the Arable Land Surface (STC, for its acronym in Spanish) increased based on data from the world bank (2018b; 2018c) 173,800 km2 in the 2016–018 period. The Wilderness Area (AS, for its acronym in Spanish) decreased 2,555.4 km2 in the same period. In this context, the decrease of the wilderness area contributed to the STC and changes in the use of soil that impinge against the environment; a similar condition is shown by Forests and Protected Natural Areas (APN).

Forests and ANP's are a source of goods and products, natural resources, environmental services, air and water purification, and soil conservation for society. Nevertheless, these have degradation, contamination, and deforestation issues. Such is the case of the ANP's included in the Resiliencia de México ("Mexican Resilience") project, from which 82.35% present these problematics according to CONANP (National Commission of Protected Natural Areas, for its acronym in Spanish) (CONANP & PNUD, 2019), and the Mexican forests, which show a decrease in the total area due to deforestation of 255,530 hectares (ha) from 2018 to 2020 (FAO, 2020).

Loss of forestry coverage plus the general degradation of the environment increases Mexican society's pretensions, especially in the health area. Bad air quality, incidental to high greenhouse effect emissions primarily coming from fossil fuel consumption and production, which have increased 5.25% from 2014 to 2018, relates to cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases as well as cancer, among many more in adults and medical conditions like "asthma, neurological development, and minors cognitive abilities" (Martins, 2021).

In Mexico, the air pollution situation is exceptionally delicate. The problem has been neglected until it reached alarming levels that impinge daily against the life of millions of Mexicans. According to the Mexican Air Quality National Report from 2018, only 4 (6.7%) of 60 cities and metropolitan areas are monitored to comply with the NOM for PM₂, particles. Mexico City records 15,000 premature deaths and is one of the five cities with the greatest numbers of deaths caused by air pollution in the world. This situation represents an estimated economic cost of 8 billion dollars (Greenpeace, 2020), the mortality from COVID-19 has been aggravated and accelerated by this condition in the country, positioning it among the top countries with the highest death toll by July 2021 (Worldometer, 2021).

Mexico City records 15,000 premature deaths and is one of the five cities with the greatest numbers of deaths caused by air pollution in the world. Water pollution has the same level of neglect that air pollution. In Mexico, out of 2,446 municipalities, 2,429 have a drinking water service, 1,939 municipalities have drainage and sewage systems, and only 797 (32.4%) have residual water treatment services. Of 2,203 sites of final disposal reported by 2016, only 173 (7.85%) had adequate recollected urban solid residual disposal infrastructure, and 2,030 (92.14%) lacked the proper contention and air, soil, and water emissions control infrastructure that result in the disposal of said residues (INEGI, 2020a).

The absence of a correct solid and water residue treatment, the leading causes of water pollution, leads to alarming levels of pollution in natural resources, hipping into the growth of hydrological origin diseases²⁶, "important causes of child mortality in the world"(SEMARNAT, s.f). The attributable mortality rate to hydrological diseases²⁷ increased

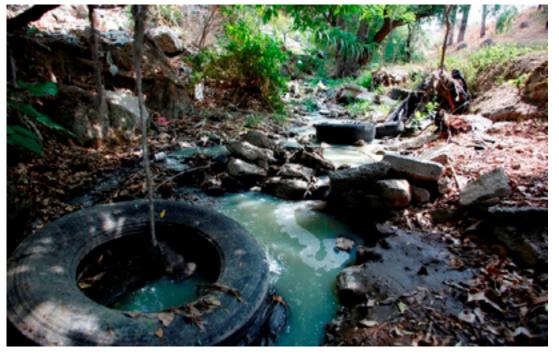


Image: Pollution of Atoyac river, Puebla in Milenio.com at https://tinyurl.com/3cmeerwd

²⁶ The following water transmissible diseases are included: intestinal amoebic, ascariasis, cholera, dengue fever (nonsevere) and hemorrhagic (severe), mild malnutrition, moderate malnutrition, severe malnutrition, scabies, yellow fever, paratyphoid A and typhoid, viral hepatitis A, intestinal infections by other organisms and undefined, leptospirosis, river blindness, other diseases caused by protozoa, another salmonellosis, malaria by Plasmodium vivax.

²⁷ Thousands of cases per 100.000 inhabitants.

0.54% in the 2016–2018 period (SEMARNAT, 2018), reflecting the progressive and, each time, higher degradation of the vital resource, which in time affects a more significant number of people. Good water quality and availability become critical factors in hygiene actions to minimize risks in terms of COVID–19 and the pandemic.

The progressive environmental decline leads to an increasing number of premature Mexican deaths each year, which translates into a higher economic cost that society will have to pay. These costs are generated due to policy errors and deficient implementation of the already inadequate public policies; they are not enough and much less sustainable since the previous administration. These expenses are currently being exacerbated because government policies promote social wellbeing at any cost, even at the expense of the environment, with consequences already at the irreversible damage level.

The iconic wellbeing programs ("Sembrando Vida," "Fertilizantes" u "Producción para el Bienestar") guarantee food security but do not have a methodological-operational framework that fosters productivity, envisioning them as additional income to their beneficiaries (Coneval, 2020). In addition, much less sustainable, contributing directly and indirectly to the erosion of the environment through the use of fertilizers (DOF, 2020d),²⁸ as well as the loss of forestry coverage (changes in the use of soil and deforestation) (Brooks, 2021)²⁹.

Structural projects such as *Aeropuerto Internacional Felipe Ángeles* ("Felipe Ángeles International Airport"), *Tren Maya* ("Mayan Train"), and *Refinería Dos Bocas* ("Dos Bocas Refinery"), introduce severe environmental impacts. In the case of the airport, the president of the Mexican Academy of Environmental Impact (AMIA, for its acronym in Spanish), Basurto Gónzalez, explained that "starting operations will bring with it different ecological and health pretensions" (Basurto, 2019). *The Tren Maya* "could cause around twenty ecocides due to its construction according to the National Fund to Foster Tourism (Fonatur)" (Infobae, 2021). Moreover, the Refinería Dos Bocas, according to an Environmental Impact Manifestation (MIA) (IMP, 2019), brings negative environ-

²⁸ The fertilizer program delivers a fertilizer package for its use up to 600 Kg per producer, contributing to the increment of nitrous oxide emissions and soil and water pollution.

²⁹ The "Sembrando Vida" ("Sowing Lie") "could have incentivized a loss of forestry coverage of 72,830 hectares during the first year of operation" (2019), according to data from the World Resources Institute report.

mental impacts in terms of water, air, soil, geomorphology, vegetation, fauna, among others.

The search to consolidate the country's energy security at any cost, missing since 2015, is yet another condition that adds to the environmental damage, and it is out of the discussion of the presidential agenda. The amendments to the Hydrocarbon Law (2021) and the Electric Industry Law (2021), despite their alleged unconstitutionality, prioritize fossil fuel energy generation above renewable sources, no matter the high levels of pollution added to the already existing ones and leaves us further to reach sustainable development goals and comply with international accords on environmental issues, such as the Paris Accords.

This environmental dilemma has reached the Senate of the Republic. In there, The climate Change, Natural Resources and Environment Commission of the LXIV Senate Legislature presented Víctor M. Toledo Manzur, Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, with queries "related to different matters, among them the Mayan Train, the Vaquita Marina, solid residues, Ultra–Low Sulfur Diesel, the Paris Accord compliance, protected natural areas, greenhouse effect emissions, environmental impact authorizations, federal offshore terrestrial zones grants, *Image: The Tren Maya* will cross through this jungle in El País.com at https://tinyurl.com/dsew2pu2





Image: "The hope to save the vaquita porpoise from extinction is decreasing" Photo Picture alliance in dw.com at https://tinyurl. com/3jzcvpnz

free access to beaches, Dos Bocas, mining, aquaculture, renewable energies, sustainable water usage, real-estate project permits, and the situation with the National Commission for the Knowledge and use of the Biodiversity (CONABIO)" (SEMARNAT, 2020). Notwithstanding, a straight government response on this problem is absent. Actually, the federal government shows a double discourse, little transparency, and coherence by promoting its emblematic projects as development sources that degrade the environment and lack ecological validity. Continuing this policy, the disdain for the environment will affect the Mexican economy and the poorest by displacing the long-term social cost to the background. The damage is severe, and it will be worse if the problem is left fully unattended without altering the facts of the current environmental policy.

The federal government shows a double discourse, little transparency, and coherence by promoting its emblematic projects as development sources that degrade the environment and lack ecological validity.

5. THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION BURDEN

DEFICIENCIES AND LIMITATIONS IN MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY

According to Latin American Foreign Affairs (2019), with Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador's arrival to power, a new and peculiar foreign policy was drafted. The most significant change is focused on greater cooperation towards Central American development and orthodoxy on the foreign policy principle execution. This style breaks with the traditional tailoring of the foreign policy of the last 30 years that positioned Mexico in a particular place of the international concert.

Regrettably, Mexican foreign policy went from the international model level, with goals, objectives, and well-defined principles, to a convenience policy that broadcasts and multiplies the ideological interests of the current administration and not the interests that act to insert a country to a world level cooperation spiral. The limited reach to create new alliances and strengthen the current ones has been the common denominator in the administration strategy. Hence results in the short and medium–term are expected to be equally limited.

Mexican isolation from international meetings and forums has been notorious, so the hoped results and proposed goals will hardly be reached. The head figure of the Foreign Relations Secretariat (SRE) has not been enough to achieve significant caliber agreements, but at a time, and permanently, an aversion and contempt message is sent to international institutions. The unnecessary isolation of the president seems to be due to ideological interests and, in consequence, an expensive Mexican confinement.

International forums and encounters should strategically work for Mexico as an invaluable diplomatic tool. Those are spaces to negotiate a wide variety of subjects formally and informally. Nevertheless, facts reiterate that for Lopez Obrador's government, Mexico's insertion into the international agenda is not a primary objective. Notwithstanding, it would be important to consider that disdain has a great significance in diplomacy.

One of the most notable examples was the unconditionality with which follow up to "instructions" and requests by Trump's administration were performed. On many occasions, these clashed and ravished our relationship with other nations. Similar incidents happened in the cases of Bolivia or Nicaragua in Latin America, where convenience surpassed, by much, the nation's interests, even though the results or the stigmatization in which Mexico could have been left.

TABLE 34. FOREIGN VISITS OF PRESIDENT LÓPEZ OBRADOR AND OTHER MEXICAN EX-PRESIDENTS

PRESIDENT AND PERIOD	NUMBER OF FOREIGN VISITS
Vicente Fox Quesada (2000–2006)	109
Felipe Calderón Hinojosa (2006–2012)	90
Enrique Peña Nieto (2012–2018)	29
Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018–2021)	1

Fuente: In-house elaboration with data from the Chamber of Deputies (2004, 2012, 2017) and BBC News World (2020).

Although Mexican foreign policy has fallen into limited action, bound by the president's interests and his dismissal to anything implying international cooperation, the consequences will be reflected when the various crises that plague the country get worse and international cooperation must be used by necessity, not by protocol. The implications of this self–isolation will be seen in the months to come when blocks of armed countries propose joint alternatives, and Mexico will probably have to accept unconditionally. Thus, subjects like climate change, economic development growth, or pandemic management, along with vaccination diplomacy, will push Mexico to align to the majority voice.

TABLE 35. EXAMPLES OF INDIFFERENCE AND ISOLATION BY LÓPEZ OBRADOR IN FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

EVENT	FACTS AND CONSEQUENCES DESCRIPTION
The World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland 2020 and G20 summit 2019 participation.	The indifference and scarce presence of the Mexican Government. Representa-tion relied upon the Secretary of Economy, Graciela Márquez, who could not con-vene the reason for the null growth, unemployment, energetic policy, or cancella-tion of the Texcoco airport. Likewise, for the G20 summit, the international pres-ence was delegated to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Marcelo Ebrard Ca-saubón.
Budgetary cut to the Foreign Affairs Secretariat.	The Implications for the amount and quality of diplomatic personnel and institu- tional consequences like the end of the investment and commerce promotion agency ProMéxico.
Scarce agenda and international presence on the president's part.	López Obrador opted to delegate his international presence to what has been interpreted by international media and other foreign governments as an evident indifference on international affairs by the president.
Latin American regional integration and cooperation.	There are no integration strategies or proposals more than political discourse.
Mexican policies and initiatives towards Central America (Puebla–Panama plan, Mesoamerican Project, or the Mérida Initiative).	These initiatives do not answer the region's core problems, like social inequality, lack of infrastructure, weakening of public institutions, violence growth, or Central American citizen's flow crossing Mexico towards the United States of America.
North American Subsecretariat disappearance that had as a primary role the coordination of the Canadian and American consulates	Nowadays, without that sub secretariat and an ambassador that is barely meeting Washington, the consuls are orphans

Source: In-house elaboration with information from *El Universal, Diálogo Político* and *Los Angeles Times* (2020).

On the other hand, Mexico has not complied and ignored practically the bulk of goals and international commitments, clearly showing the indifference on decisive subjects like climate change, post-pandemic economic recovery, the fight against corruption, or strengthening social organizations focused on critical issues. A clear example is the Paris accords, in which it is expected that members increase their goals every five years, but Mexico, counterintuitively, kept its goal to reduce emission by 22% by 2030. The decision reflects Lopez Obrador's focus, who is betting political capital to return PEMEX to its 1970 role as an essential engine of the Mexican economy. PE-MEX and the CFE are at the core of his plan for a selfsufficient Mexico in energy matters, with no concern for the economic or environmental cost.

Two of the most important rating agencies in the United States of America: Moody's, Fitch, and Standard & Poor's (S & P), decreased Mexico's credit rating a while ago, highlighting the financial issues of the government. Recently, the PEMEX rating was reduced again, which reflects its infeasibility in the medium term. This rating opens a series of inquiries related to energy management and the PEMEX and CFE command, organizations already subjected to international criticism that causes deterioration in the national and international private sector trust level.

The amendment to the Electric Energy Industry Law and the Hydrocarbons law cooked on the entrail of the National palace infringe international treaties pertaining to investor protections. Besides the CUS-MA, there will also be problems with concluded agreements with Europe, Japan, and the Trans–Pacific Economic Cooperation that 11 countries are part of. Accords, subjects, and regions in which the United States of America have a particular interest and where Mexican cooperation as an ally is expected in issues and topics that affect the present and future of millions of people.

Mexico has not complied and *ignored practically* the bulk of goals and international commitments. clearly showing the indifference on decisive subjects like climate change, postpandemic economic *recovery, the fight* against corruption, or strengthening social organizations focused on critical issues.

SIDE EFFECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Despite the change in management and positioning of Mexican foreign affairs, proximity to the United States of America and the economic structure build for years makes it a robust economy that determines the present and the future. Nevertheless, the relationship with the United States of America still lacks a clear and precise agenda that brings stability to both countries. The Mexican government keeps visualizing its northern neighbor, especially the current president, as an interventionist; this places Mexico at a disadvantage due to Joe Biden's interests. The government transition in the United States of America forces Mexico to reassess its treatment with the neighbor and approach the infinity of priority matters for both countries.



Image: "López Obrador' speech thanking Trump" in bbc.com at https://tinyurl.com/u9wnr648 Since the beginning of AMLO's administration, the bilateral relationship between the United States of America and Mexico has been characterized by the lack of diplomatic paths that foster effective communication channels. The relationship between the two nations is visualized as cold and distant. According to DW Spanish (2021), none of the embassies, especially the Mexican, has specialized and experimented with staff members, and this hampers informal dialogue exchanges. Likewise, through Trump's administration, several informal communication channels were used, which will cost Biden's government some time to re–establish and find reciprocity from the equally dismantled SRE. The fact that Mexico does not count on a clear and strategic foreign policy to cater to the demands and friction points with the North American government has highlighted deficiencies in the management of different priority issues (Table 36).

ΤΟΡΙϹ	UNITED STATES	MEXICO
ENVIRONMENT	Biden has an ambitious agenda to decrease CO2 levels by using clean energies.	Mexico has an opposite project with a new refinery and does not support clean energies.
ENERGY LAW	Environmentalists deemed the new Mexican energy law noxious for the climate and "hostile to corporations" by the American commerce chambers.	The new Mexican energy law approved in March prefers fossil energies and Pemex's petroleum industry instead of private investments and renewable energies.
SEGURITY	Tense collaboration with Mexico in the war against drugs since the Mexican ex–Minister of Defense, Salvador Cienfuegos, was arrested in the United States of America and deported to Mexico.	Mexico has poor management and policies in security and inadequate intergovernmental coordination, nationally and transnationally in security and social development foster- ing. The gun trafficking and money laundering issues have strengthened due to organized crime escalation on the Mexi- can and the United States of America borders.
MIGRATION	Search for collaboration with Mexico to face the migratory crisis, to define a common strategy.	Lack of attention in the design and implementation of a realis migration agenda that protects, at the same time, migrants within the country.

TABLE 36. CORE FRICTION POINTS BETWEEN MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Image: Mexico is being affected by "dirty" energy production in eldiariodelaenergia.com at https://tinyurl.com/wb9ywmpk



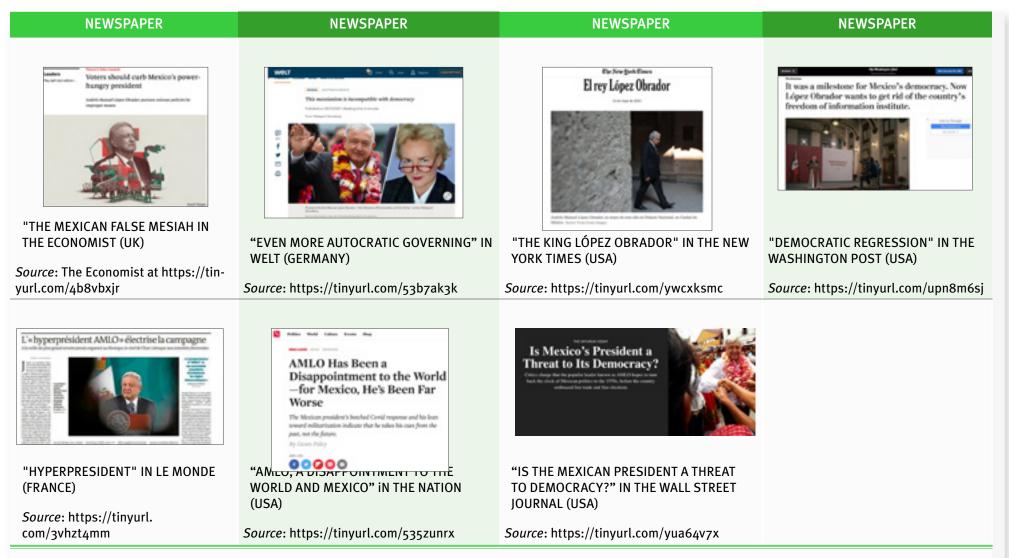
Image: Salvador Cienfuegos, the secretary of Defense during Enrique Peña Nieto' presidency (2012–2018). Photo: EFE ein forbes.co at https:// tinyurl.com/ezk6fa5u



Image: Migrants arriving USA in france24.com. Reuters/ Photo: José Luis González at https://tinyurl. com/2abvk38r

As shown, it is partially evident that the bilateral relationship is, if not fractured, at least moving towards different paths and goals. We will have to wait for Washington's reaction due to intense congressman, senator, and businessmen's requests to unlock matters that affect the United States of America interests. While the relationship with the United States of America is confronted and confused, Mexico still neglects goals and objectives from the CUSMA. This landscape has been reflected in international media. Albeit, Lopez Obrador has not had a good relationship with the national press through his administration, now he is on the world level magnifying glass, showing his vision over the country (Table 37). Even though it is true that the clash with these media is not an isolated case, the president interprets the coverage as an internationally orchestrated campaign from his adversaries, conservative, neoliberal, and factual powers, that want to discredit his government. Besides this degrading, there are the few interviews the mandatary has done with international media, focusing only on the discourse and national matters, noting that he considers doing internal policy surpasses international cooperation

TABLE 37. PRESIDENT LÓPEZ OBRADOR NEGATIVE ARTICLES ON INTERNATIONAL MEDIA DURING THE JUNE 2021 ELECTION



Source: In-house elaboration with data from Frías (2021), El Universal (2021a), El Heraldo (2021), El Financiero (2021b), El Universal (2021b), 24 horas (2021) and Fonseca (2021).

FINAL COMMENTS

Plunged into multiple crises, Mexico is moving towards an unknown economic terrain, health, education, renewable energy management, freedom of expression, public safety, and much more. In most cases, the path took resulting from the accumulation of unfulfilled federal government commitments. The lack of adequate tools of public policy by the government is getting more evident and reflects constant ignorance on public issues management, accompanied by processing passivity and inefficiency.

This Signos Vitales report enlightens the government footprint left through the almost three years of management, especially about the level of institutional destruction, the heartbreaking dismantling of acquired progress of government capacities, and the unjustified budgetary rationalization on priority subjects. The notorious lack of results in practically every area in which the government has meddled is proof that the path taken to face the country's problems has failed. The cost for the country and Mexicans will be reflected in many years of progress lost in developed and built areas. However, above all, to these years of delay, we will have to add the years it will take to at least reach the levels we had as a country in 2018.

This report attempts in many ways to find evidence to justify the decisions being taken through these years of the current administration. Nevertheless, on this search, it is hard to find achievements or reaching goals. This scenario leaves Mexico in a challenging position to find a seam to follow to rebuild a constant growth and a breath of prosperity for society. Unfortunately, Lopez Obrador's headed government is an international sample of decadence and regression in practically every area it has tried to implement a solution to a specific public issue (or to fulfill some presidential quip). At almost half of the management, the government still has not resolved not even mitigated problems like the countries poverty surge, or the violence and insecurity, or the poor and unstable educational policy that has breached millions of children and adolescents, or the caused deprivation of medication and treatment for patients with all types of illnesses. The demands of millions of women in the country have not been attended to, the evident prevalent ignorance in energy management and the indifference to the care and protection of the environment that affect climate change. Instead, the constitutional erosion and the state of the law have been sharpened.

This report counts at least three components that are now a hallmark of the particular government of Lopez Obrador, where the central point is passive accrual, a) passives due to the pandemic, b) debits due to government passivity, and c) delay due to political errors. The first component is undoubted in many matters as the sanitary, in the first place, the economic, poverty, education, and Mexican health. Talking about the second component, government passivity in attend-

ing to problems has sharpened the already existing passives. For instance, pandemic management in the country has been deficient in viral contention, contagion prevention, and budgetary and strategic management since March 2020. The well-founded and consensual decision-making delay unleashed the government into a vortex of issues that shows the uselessness and ineffectiveness they face. Subjects like opportune attention to unemployment and the supports that should have been coupled with economic contention policies comprise a list of examples where the government preferred to be an audience, while the consequences of not taking opportune decisions are suffered. In this sense, matters like insecurity and organized crime, or the environmental problem of the country, where it has been practically ignored the reality we live in, may cause the loss of control and the development route. In some cases, this report shows the loss of progress that seems irreversible.

Finally, the third component is assumed as a primary characteristic of the 4T government. The mistakes on matters of policy implementation, frequently without an adequate diagnosis, have been decisive for problems that at some point could have been solved or contained successfully, but are now at tragic levels and situations. For example, the implementation error of the educational policy resulted in Mexico's effort coordination being absent to temper to the max the adverse effects of the pandemic on millions of students. The result is the lack of teacher recruitment, limited budget to attend to education–related issues, total closing of schools without alternate plans for hybrid systems, the feeble digital adaptation of educational content, lack of a policy to moderate the unequal access to the internet with educational purposes, among others.

Albeit at some point, a promise of change and growth from the current government existed, the fulfillment of that promise is getting further. The inadequate job with which diagnosis to detect and locate the problems affecting the country and the manner and style with which they are built, implemented, and evaluate public policies, result in unsolved issues and waste of Mexican tax money. Adding to that scenario, the COVID–19 pandemic came to aggravate almost all issues. This situation proves that with the enemy at home, achieving the previous development and growth expectations from three to five years ago, it is clear today that very different routes must be taken.

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ANNEX

TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 1/8

LAW	VIOLATED TREATY	REACTIONS	
1. Hydrocarbon Law	USMCA, chapter 24, points 24.3, 24.4 y 24.11 (reduction of air pol- lution), USMCA, chapter 14, punto 14.4 (competitive spirit in a level playing field for the country partners).	Three American companies filed an arbitration claim against the Mexican government, international controversy ARB/21/25	
2. Electricity Reform Law	USMCA, chapter 24, puntos 24.3, 24.4 y 24.11 (reduction of air pol- lution)	Controversy 44/2021 filed on 22 of April by the Federal Eco- nomic Competition Commission (Cofece)	
3. Decree on Electricity System Reliability Policy	USMCA, chapter 14, point 14.4 (competitive spirit in a level playing field for the country partners)	72 injunction for protection by organizations and private companies.	
4. April 15, 2021, Judicial Reform ("Zaldivar Law")	Magna Carta, article 97, chapter four, (SCJN's president will remain in office four years and cannot be reelected for the immediate term). Magna Carta, article 100 (five years judiciary council members' post length) Guarantee of judicial independence.	One injunction's request. In the house of representatives, 167 signatures were gathered that were the minimum amount to support this action against the called "Zadivar Law." In the senators' Chamber, a fil of appeal is being elab- orated. Other actors that could also file these actions are The Human Rights National Commission and the Attorney General's Office. These institutions have not announced any intention of doing it, however.	
5. Internal Security Law (the SCJN established the unconstitutionality of the contested law)	The Internal Security Law (LSI for its acronym in Spanish) violates the human right to judiciary security and the principle of legality because it affects people's judiciary sphere without judicial sup- port to do so; it regulates deficiently the normative assumptions re- lated to internal security, the risks and threatens to it, and the prin- ciples that govern the legitimate use of force. Thus, people have no certainty on the judicial consequences of the acts they perform nor the authorities' approach. The absence of limits and boundaries al- lows the army to perform pubic safety activities entirely without the intervention of support request of civil authorities, holding the latter to the military authorities' command. This situation also vio- lates the principles in the public safety field. Similarly, it allows the army forces to violate the duty of giving custody of the detainees immediately to the Public Prosecutor Office. It allows all the mobi- lizations different from the social ones or political–electoral can be considered threats to the internal security, allowing the army forces to dissolve them and use force if it considers they are not done as is permitted in the Constitution.	Action of uncostitutionality promote by CNDH, 11 consitu- tional controversies appropriatee to the norm in question by the state of Chihuhua and the municipalities of Cocoti- tlán, Ocuilan y Nezahualcóyotl (Mexico State), Cholula and Soltepec (Puebla), Hidalgo del Parral (Chihuahua), Oxkutz- cab, Tepakan (Yucatan), Morelia y Cherán (Michoacan); 8 actions of unconstitutionality were filed by the Human Right Commission, 2,029 indirect injunctions in the whole country were issued, being Mexico State the place with the most with 416 files followed by Jalisco with 341 files and Mexico City with 311.	

MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

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TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 2/8

LAW	VIOLATED TREATY	REACTIONS
	All the information generated while applying the Internal Security Law is considered part of national security and, as a result, is classified as reserved, including the information derived from severe violations of human rights. It violates the personal data protection right since the federal authorities and autonomous bodies must provide the information the authority requires. It violates the law on the Right of Indigenous Peoples to Consultation recognized in the 6 and 7 articles of agreement number 169 of the International Labour Organization (OIT for its acronym in Spanish) on the indigenous and tribal people since it can be observed that from the legal process of the law mentioned above, the prior consultation for creating it was not performed, and that affects the mentioned communities directly.	
6. Minister Medina Mora's resignation	There were no serious causes for accepting his resignation by the senate. Article 98 demands the expression of a severe cause for abdication.	
7. Magistrate Jorge Arturo Camero's suspension	"Camero disagrees with Lopez Obrador's stance concerning Santa Lucia air- port neighboring communities that fought for the respect of their ancestral lands with a writ of Amparo. The real reason why he was suspended" Julio Gabriel Iglesias Gómez	
8. CNDH incumbent ap- pointment	According to the Human Rights National Commission, in the article ninth, IV fraction is established as a requirement to be the president of the CNDH the following information: "Do not perform or have performed as national or state director in any political party the previous year to the appointment." The appointment without two-thirds of the senators' votes violates the B section disposition in the constitutional article 102.	Carlos Pérez Vázquez, a contender to CNDH, filed a lawsuit maintaining the process was full of irregular- ities that openly violated the rights of the people par- ticipating in the call.
9. CRE commissioners appointment	The law says the president must provide a shortlist of three candidates for each vacancy in the regulatory council to get the senate chamber's votes to be two-thirds of the members on the successor.	

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TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 3/8

LAW	VIOLATED TREATY	REACTIONS
10.Agency for Safety, Energy, and Environ- ment (ASEA) Incumbent appointment)	According to article 30 of the ASEA law, the titleholder must: Have worked in leadership positions, at least for five years in professional activities in the public and private sector substantially related to the topics treated in the agency".	
11.Metrobus cancellation in La Laguna	The decision was made by a show of hands voting in one of the presi- dent's events. The budgetary reallocation can be done this way.	
12.Brewing Constellation Brands cancellation	It violates the investment protection rights of the State.	Specialists agree that the corporation can take the case to the international commerce panel at any moment, where the firms have an advantage over the governments since they cannot appeal to their laws, especially when there are signed treaties.
13. Medicine scarcity	Constitutional article 4	Hundreds of testimonials that since 2019 children affected by the medicine scarcity relatives have offered, doctors and civil organizations that handle this problem.
14.Ask passenger trans- port companies for IDs to all who will travel across the country in public transportation.	There is a violation of the traffic law, constitutional article 11 " all peo- ple have the right to enter the Republic, go out of it, travel across it and move without a safety card, passport or travel document or any other similar requirement.	
15.Remuneration Law	Severe violations of the regulatory procedure make the law unconsti- tutional. The Chamber of Deputies took a minute from 2011 and ap- proved it, violating the constitutional article 72 that states the initia- tives must be discussed between one Chamber and another.	
16.National Guard Law	This law is unconstitutional since it does not guarantee independence regarding the institution of origin. It does not comply with the com- mand of assuring the National Guard will be a civil institution.	An injunction submitted by United Mexico Against Delin- quency (MUCD for its acronym in Spanish) against articles 25, 88, 89, 90, 91 y 92 of the National Guard establishes the corporation's tasks concerning public safety and the limita- tion for active army members join it.
17. Public Force Use Na- tional Law	It jeopardizes the free exercise of various human rights, including the freedom of speech and the right to protest. It does not comply with the Pact and Committee's General Observation N°. 36 on article 6 of the Pact related to the right to life.	

TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 4/8

LAW	VIOLATED TREATY	REACTIONS
17.Public Force Use Nation- al Law	It jeopardizes the free exercise of various human rights, including the freedom of speech and the right to protest. It does not comply with the Pact and Committee's General Observation N°. 36 on article 6 of the Pact related to the right to life.	for the Defence and Promotion of Human Rights (CMDPDH
18.General National Public Security System Act	The composition of article 110 is opposite to the principle of maxi- mum advertising, the right to public information, and the internation- al standards of human rights in the field.	There is a petition of action of unconstitutionality against the articles 94, fraction i, clause a) and 97, section b, fraction v, both from the General National Public Security System Act by the Human Rights National Commission (CNDH).
19.Detention Record Na- tional Law	It does not comply with the requirement of limiting and bounding the action of the authority properly, and it generates judicial uncertainty for the citizens. It is vague and imprecise when regulating the permanent action of the army forces since it does not describe expressly and concisely how the detention made by the military will be recorded.	The action of unconstitutionality submitted by CNDH.
20.National Code of Legal Procedures and Fiscal Code Reform	It disobeys the principles of the effective motion, presumption of innocence, legality, judiciary safety, and proper process recognized in the articles 1st, 14th, 16th, and 20th of the Federal Constitution, and the article 8.2 of the Human Right American Convention, and 14.5 from the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.	
21.Forfeiture Proceeding National Law	The Supreme Court of Justice (SCJ for its acronym in Spanish) deleted fragments among which highlight: The power given to the local or federal public's prosecutor office to apply the forfeiture proceeding over ill-gotten assets, the anticipated sale without reason, the seizure of property in forfeiture proceeding process without judicial authorization " in urgent cases," the impre- scriptibility of the process for the forfeiture proceeding, and the limits senators and deputies had imposed so this figure can also apply to federal crimes.	The action of the unconstitutionality submitted by the CNDH and the criticism did not wait on the side of business people, lawyers, and politicians that accuse it violates human rights. The Mexican Confederation of Business Owners (COPARMEX for its acronym in Spanish) spoke out against it since Con- gress approved the reform. In an interview with the media, Claudio X. Gonzalez, former president of the Mexican Busi- nessmen Council (CMN for its acronym in Spanish), stated that this law could be used against people who do legitimate transactions and included among the laws and actions that inhibit the investment. The former federal attorney–general, Ignacio Morales, concurred that the law is a massive risk for the property right.

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TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 5/8

LAW	VIOLATED TREATY	REACTIONS
22.Republican austerity Federal Law	It violates the right of people to have a profession, industry or com- merce, or work they may like, and the repeated violation of the mi- grant's rights.	"The firm, Trusan & Roma Abogados was in charge of pre- senting 5,700 injunctions from public servants and retirees from the National Center for Energy Control (CENACE), Na- tional Banking and Securities Commission (CNVB for its acro- nym in Spanish), the Management Service and Property Dis- posal Department (SAE for its acronym in Spanish), Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), National Commission of Human Rights (CNDH), Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT for its acronym in Spanish) in 2019. Similarly, it was planned to have injunctions submitted by National Hydrocarbons Commission's (CNH) officials, Ener- gy Regulatory Commission (CRE), secretariats of government (Segob), public education (SEP), tourism (Sectur), and Gen- eral Prosecutor's Office.
23.Ovidio Guzmán Loera's liberation	Article 150 from the Criminal Code is violated.	
24.Teachers Professional Carreer Law	It was said the vacancies available in the entities would be granted automatically to the graduates from Teacher schools, which breaks the equality of conditions constitutional principle in the admission process and the academic staff in-service promotion.	
25.Federal Law on Budget and Treasury Responsi- bility Reform	It violates the 41 constitutional article that establishes the separation of powers and competencies, establishing that the PEF approval will correspond to the Chamber of Deputies.	
26.To make excessive or not justify the use of awarding a contract without bidding.	It violates constitutional article 134, which establishes that contract awarding without bidding can be made only by exception.	Mexicans Against Corruption and Impunity reported that: "This practice not only violates the Constitution and laws that establish the contracts for open bidding should be the rule and not the exception. They are in an open contradiction with the promises themselves, discourses, and legal objec- tives defined by the president."

TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 6/8

LAW	VIOLATED TREATY	REACTIONS
27.The disappearance of the Edu- cational Physical Infrastructure National Institute (Inifed for its acronym in Spanish) provoked transferring its tasks and budgets to students, parents, and teachers from the schools.	By handing out the resources directly, the student, academic staff, administrative staff, and manual staff's lives are compromised, plus, there are no formal regulations nor rules concerning this issue of na- tional urgency.	Concerns: How many parents will be ready and willing to budget, look for a consultant, supervise construction with- out payment? How many parents know how to interpret a construction drawing? How are we going to determine the needs in infrastructure? Who will conduct the feasibility and land studies? Who will advise on the construction or rehabil- itation of infrastructure?
28.President intervention in the inter- mediate election of 2021 through propaganda acts during the morn- ing conferences, he gives.	Manifestations of electoral nature from any public servant imply a transgression to the impartiality principles and neutrality content in the constitutional article 134.	PAN and MC parties file a complaint to the Organization of the American States (OEA for its acronym in Spanish) for in- trusion by the president in the elections. Alianza Va por Mex- ico seeks to cancel the Deputies election in various districts with a massive contest accusing the president Andres Manu- el Lopez Obrador's intervention in the electoral contest.
29. Popular referendum to "send to trial" former presidents.	There were violations of the articles 1st, 14, 16, 17, 20, 35, and 133 of the Constitution.	The INE presented unconstitutional controversy, but it was rejected by the National Supreme Court of Justice (SCJN for its acronym in Spanish).
30. Decree with reforms that removed diverse protection of civilian per- sons, advocates of human rights' trusts and journalists, technology and science development and the former migration workers support fund.	Constitutional article 1 foresees all the authorities in the extent of their competencies must promote, respect, protect, and guarantee human rights under universality, interdependency indivisibility, and progressivity principles.	Civil organization representatives labeled as ineptitude and setback in human rights matter the elimination of the Fund of Protection of journalists and Civilian Person advocate of human rights' trusts and the Fund of Help, Assistance and Full Compensation to victims. Thus, the Deputies Chamber was called not to disappear these funds and protect people at risk who are benefited from these funds
31. The Federal Expenditure Budget 2021 does not include resources for developing the local policies and stipulates the removal of the Strengthening of Public Safety Perfor–mance Program (Fortaseg for its acronym in Spanish).	There was a violation of the articles transitional seventh of the con- stitutional reform in the matter of the National Guard of 2019 and the constitutional article 21 for not assigning enough resources for the local policies development.	Governors and mayors took a stance against the elimi-na- tion of FORTASEG since it helps in the public safety field to the municipalities, and it is to go against the citizens.

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TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 7/8

LAW	VIOLATED TREATY	REACTIONS
32.Reforms aimed to take all the port admin- istrative positions in the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (SCT for its acronym in Spanish) to the Marine Secretary (SEMAR for its acronym in Spanish).	Article 129 of the Constitution since the army forces in peacetime can perform activities exclusively related to army discipline.	The United Front of Merchant Seafarer spoke out against the initiative that the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation (SCT) promoted for the Navy Secretary (SEMAR) to take charge of particular functions that today are port authorities' responsibility. The United Front as- sured there would be "militarization" of the activity, and the merchant seafarer would disappear.
33.The personal protection supplies sourcing to the sanitary personnel that combat the COVID–19 omission.	Constitutional Articles 1, 4 y 123 are violated by affecting the right to healthcare, the human rights progressivity of medical staff, and the sanitary personnel labor rights.	
34. Decree that commands to create the Mobile Telephone Users Na- tional Roll (Panuat)	It would violate fundamental rights such as the right to the presump- tion of innocence, privacy, and the right to personal data protection.	The opposition parties are analyzing the legal modifications to file legal remedies that can invalidate it and avoid the risk of per–sonal data infringement. In addition, R3D demands its rejection because there is no proof it reduces the extortion crime, infringes upon the presumption of innocence, human rights are violated, and it puts at risk the safety of people, among others.
35. Decree to issue the New Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office	It violates judiciary safety, freedom of work rights, legality, and pre- sumption of innocence principles.	"Considering it infringes the judiciary safety and freedom of work rights and the presumption of innocence, the CNDH file in SCJN an action of unconstitutionality against diverse dis- positions of the New Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office.
36."Nahle Decree"	It violates Constitutional Articles 28 y 133 by affecting the free eco- nomic competition and the protection of international treaties the government is obliged and must protect.	The fractions of the competing opposition in the Depu-ties Chamber(PAN, PRI, MC, and PRD) will file an action of uncon- stitutionality against the Electricity Indus-try Law reform proposed by the president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and endorsed by the parliamentary majority of MORENA, PT and PES.

TABLE 1. LAW VIOLATIONS BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT 8/8

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LAW	VIOLATED TREATY	REACTIONS
37.The National Fund for Tour- ism Development (FONATUR) general director announced that the army would receive the obtained resources from Tren Maya's operation. In addition, all the railways will be Sedena's property.	This action would violate the constitutional process through which the states' secretariats are assigned their budget.	The lawmakers from the opposition accused Lopez Obrador government of encouraging "militarization" and of using na- tional security as an excuse to defend the Tren Maya from inter- rogations and questioning.
38.The president used religious imagery and phrases in a spot to justify his government's labor.	Constitutional articles 24 and 40. 24 establishes that nobody can use public acts of creed free- dom expression with political, proselytism, or political pro- paganda. 40 establishes the Mexican people's will to constitute a repre- sentative, democratic, federal, and laity Republic	The National Electoral Institute's (INE for its acronym in Span- ish) complaint's committee commanded the removal of an ad- vertising spot to the president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, arguing its content violates the laity state's religious neutrality.
39.The Financial Intelligence Unit froze the Delicias local council in Chihuahua due to protests caused by the water in the dam La Boquilla conflict.	It violates the constitutional articles 14 and 16 that contain the legality principle and articles 19 and 20 by affecting the presumption of innocence.	The Delicias mayor informs on the accounting blocking as a re- taliation act done by the federal government, which impeded the operativity in many municipality services, including labor in public work. This will affect citizenship current expenditure, payrolls significantly in general since many of the payments are made by bank transference
40.Use of "servants of the nation" as electoral propaganda in the vaccination process	Article 134 of the Constitution establishes that public servants must distribute the public resources impartially under their responsibility without influencing the equality of competition between political parties.	The Federal Electoral Court of the Judiciary Federation (TEPJK for its acronym Spanish) determined 36 public servants, among them the so-called servants of the nation, made acts of gov- ernmental propaganda with personalized promotions and im- proper use of public resources handing over social problems. However, the Specialized Sub Tribunal exonerates the resident and two Cabinet secretaries.

Source: In-house elaboration with information from Aristegui Noticias (2019b), Artículo 19 (2020), Alcalá (2019), Casar (2020), Caso (2020), Causa en Común (2021b), CNDH (2018), DOF (2020a), DOF (2020b), DOF (2020c), Damián (2021), Dosal and Castellanosz (2021), El Siglo de Torreón (2021), Espino (2021), Expansión Política (2019a), Forbes (2019), Forbes (2021a), Galván (2021), García (2020), La Jornada (2021), Marin (2021), Nava and Vela (2020), Padilla (2021), Pantín and Quesada (2021), Ponce (2020), Reyes (2020), Tourliere (2021), Vanguardia (2020), Vela (2021), Vivanco (2019).

DEPUTIES	SENATORS	BOTH
	» Attorney–General of the Republic	
	» Circuit Magistrates and district court judges	
	» The President and Councillor	
	» Electoral counselors and National Electoral Institute executive secretary	
	» Electoral Tribunal magistrates	
	» Constitutional autonomous bodies' members	
	» General directors and their equivalents in the decentralized bodies, majority State-owned corporations, societies, and associations assimilated to the corporation and public trust	
	» Federative entities executives	
	» Local Deputies	
	» In their case, local Supreme Court of Justice magistrates members of the local judiciary council and members of the bodies that the local constitution gives autonomy,	
<i>Source</i> : In-house elaboration wit	h information from CPEUM (2021).	

TABLE 4. CONSTITUTIONAL ACTIONS THAT REQUIRE QUALIFIED VOTING IN THE CONGRESS (CONT)





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August 2021

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MEXICO: ACCUMULATION OF DEBITS MAKES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

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> Electronic version. First Edition ISBN: 978-1-967204-11-3