



# Mi Universidad

**Mexico**, [country](#) of southern [North America](#) and the third largest country in [Latin America](#), after [Brazil](#) and [Argentina](#). Mexican society is characterized by extremes

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of wealth and poverty, with a limited middle class wedged between an elite cadre of landowners and investors on the one hand and masses of rural and urban poor on the other. But in spite of the challenges it faces as a developing country, Mexico is one of the chief economic and political forces in Latin America. It has a dynamic industrial base, vast mineral resources, a wide-ranging service sector, and the world’s largest population of Spanish speakers—about two and a half times that of Spain or Colombia. As its official name suggests, the Estados Unidos

Mexicanos (United Mexican States) incorporates 31 socially and physically diverse states and the Federal District.

### Mexico

More than half of the Mexican people live in the centre of the country, whereas vast areas of the arid north and the tropical south are sparsely settled. Migrants from impoverished rural areas have poured into Mexico’s cities, and nearly four-fifths of Mexicans now live in urban areas. Mexico City, the capital, is one of the most populous cities and metropolitan areas in the world. Mexico has experienced a series of economic booms leading to periods of impressive social gains, followed by busts, with significant declines in living standards for the middle and lower classes. The country remains economically fragile despite the forging of stronger ties with the United States and Canada through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Mexico’s urban growing pains are in sharp counterpoint to the traditional lifestyles that prevail in more-isolated rural areas. In states such as Oaxaca or Chiapas, small communal villages remain where indigenous peasants live much as their ancestors did. The cultural remnants of great pre-Columbian civilizations, such as Teotihuacán or the Mayan pyramids at Chichén Itzá and Tulum, provide a contrast to colonial towns such as Taxco or Querétaro. In turn, these towns appear as historical relics when compared with the modern metropolis of Mexico City. Yet even the bustling capital city, which has been continually built and rebuilt on the rubble of past civilizations, reveals Mexico’s wide range of social, economic, and cultural struggles. As the renowned Mexican poet and intellectual Octavio Paz observed



