

Cultural wealth

The geographically diverse scenery of Mexico has allowed the development of a wealth of knowledge, traditions and languages in our region, that reflects our natural richness. This diversity gives us a variety of approaches and options for better understanding and use of nature.

Vavilov centres. Mexico is one of the Vavilov centres (named in honour of the Russian biologist Nikolai I. Vavilov 1887-1943, who described them), in which the major food crops of the world have their origin. These centres include: Southeast Asia (coconut, rice, sugar cane), China (soybean, Chinese cabbage), India (cucumber, aubergine), Turkey-Iran (wheat, barley, oats, figs), Mediterranean (almonds, cabbage, olives), the Andes (potatoes, peppers, rubber), and Mexico and Central America (maize, tomato, beans, squash).

Some of the species which have been domesticated in Mexico are chile, maize, beans, squash, cacao, peanut,



avocado, vanilla, amaranth, maguey, tomato, sweet potato, cotton, papaya, henequen, the *huexolotl* (turkey) and the dog *xoloitzcuintle* brought from Asia.

Indigenous cultures. Traditional knowledge of environmental practice is mainly maintained and transmitted orally and is associated with regional-specific vocabularies. Many regional cultures are assimilating with the national culture and take Spanish as a language, while losing their own. With this loss of indigenous languages, local knowledge of the environment is also being lost.

In Mexico large numbers of cultures settled, many of which developed sophisticated mathematical and astronomical knowledge. Their world view has had a considerable influence on the daily life of Mexican society.

The archaeological remains of Olmec, Mayan, Teotihuacan, Toltec, Zapotec, Mixtec, Aztec and many other cultures, are widely spread in the country.

Currently, **12.4 million** Mexicans (13%) are of indigenous descent and are divided into about **80** peoples: Aguacatecos, Amuzgos, Cahítas, Cakchiqueles, Chatinos, Chiapanecos, Chicomuceltecós, Chichimecas jonaz, Chinantecos, Chocho, Choles, Chontales of Oaxaca and Tabasco, Chujes, Cochimies, Coras, Cucapas, Cuicatecos, Guarijíos, Huastecos of San Luís Potosí and Veracruz, Huaves, Huicholes, Ixcatecos, Ixiles, Jacaltecos, Kanjobal, Kekchi, Kikapúes, Kiliwas, Lacandones, Mames, Matlatzincas, Mayas, Mayos, Mazahuas, Mazatecos, Mecos, Mexicaneros, Mixes, Mixtecos, Mochos, Nahuas of Guerrero, Veracruz, Milpa Alta, Morelos, and Puebla, Otomíes of the State of México and Hidalgo, Paipais, Pames of Querétaro and San Luís Potosí, Pápagos, Pimas, Popolucas, Purépechas, Quiches, Soltecos, Tarahumaras or Rarámuris, Tepehuas, Northern and Southern Tepehuas, Tlapanecos, Tojolabales, Totonacas, Triquis, Tzotziles y Tzeltales, Yaquis, Yunas, Zapotecos of the Isthmus, Sierra Norte and Central Valleys and the Zoques.

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Approximately **300,000 km²** of Mexico (15%) are under indigenous ownership. The vast majority of these people live in **4374** ejidos and **1258** comunidades. Some have ownership of private territories. **90%** of the indigenous population live in areas with forests and woodlands. **60%** of the land defined as priority areas, are in indigenous territory.

Languages. It is estimated that there are currently about **7000** languages on the five continents of the world. **97%** of the population uses **250** languages while

3% use the rest. **50%** of the world's languages are in danger of disappearing. Half of the world's languages are concentrated in **eight** countries: Papua New Guinea (820), Indonesia (742), Nigeria (516), India (427), Mexico (297), Cameroon (280), Australia (275) and China (241). **Etnologue.**

According to the National Indigenous Languages Catalogue of the National Institute of Indigenous Languages in Mexico, **364** variants of **66** groups in **11** language families are recognized.

