
Religion

Mexico is an overwhelmingly Catholic country with a long history of struggling against the power of the church. Mexican Catholics are distinguished from those in other parts of the world by their veneration of certain saints, many of which have pre-Columbian models. Shrines to the *Virgen de Guadalupe*, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico, are widespread. References to *Dios*, God, are often heard in Mexican speech, even among the non-religious. They are especially common when explaining good or bad luck as in *Asi lo quiso Dios*, "It was God's will" and *Si Dios quiere*, "God willing". These should be interpreted as linguistic artifacts rather than expressions of religious faith. Just as in Canada, most young people are less religious than their parents. In fact, the level of religious practice is lower than in the United States.

Education and Language

Mexicans place enormous value on education. The nation's educational infrastructure is not adequate to meet the needs of the population, and a university education is a luxury enjoyed mainly by children of wealthy and middle class families. Nonetheless, some Mexican private schools have achieved levels of excellence.

Learning English is an important objective for many Mexicans, especially professionals. In most private schools, English is a mandatory subject, and there are many non-university adult language schools in Mexico. French is often the third language of choice, usually for the sake of cultural more for the sale of sultural appreciation than for business.

Mexicans generally try to speak English when dealing with Canadians or Americans but they appreciate a visitor's effort to speak Spanish. Canadians need to remember to speak slowly and simply, making constant efforts to express their ideas clearly.