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# The 2012 Presidential Election and What It Reveals about Mexican Voters

RODERIC AI CAMP\*

*Abstract.* The 2012 presidential election in Mexico is significant for many reasons, not least of which is that it returned the Partido Revolucionario Institucional to power after two Partido Acción Nacional administrations. This essay reviews more than 50 surveys taken before and during the election to determine significant patterns among Mexican voters, comparing the most influential traditional and non-traditional demographic variables, as well as other variables such as partisanship and policy issues in this election, with those of the two previous presidential races. It also analyses other influential variables in the 2012 presidential race, including social media and the application of new electoral legislation. It identifies significant differences and similarities among voters today in contrast to the two prior elections, and suggests long-term patterns among Mexican voters which are likely to influence voting behaviour in future elections, ranging from regionalism and gender to partisanship and social media.

*Keywords:* democracy, presidential election, voters, PRI, Mexico

## Introduction

Most Mexican analysts date Mexico's electoral democracy from the 2000 presidential election, which witnessed the victory of an opposition party candidate for the first time since the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI) established control over the presidency in 1929. Three presidential elections have taken place since that year, during which time Mexico has effectively become a three-party system. The Partido Acción Nacional (National Action Party, PAN) won the 2000 and 2006 presidential contests, and the PRI returned to power in 2012. In the first of those elections, the PAN defeated the PRI; in the second, the PAN barely eked out a victory against the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (Party of the Democratic Revolution, PRD), and in 2012, the PRI successfully held off a

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\* The author would like to express his appreciation for the helpful suggestions from the editors and the three anonymous readers.

strong comeback from the PRD. Moreover, during each election, a different party came in a distant third place. In short, the case can be made that each of the three parties have performed well in two out of three presidential races, suggesting that voter preferences appear to have shifted significantly in just 12 years.

To what degree do traditional demographic variables explain the shifts in voter behaviour and voters' preferences for ideologically distinctive political parties? Have significant changes occurred among these variables which impact on voting behaviour? Are the patterns short- or long-term? Have these demographic variables been affected by institutional or technological alterations? This essay sheds light on where these voting patterns are headed during the next decade and what is likely to be their impact on the future of the three major parties. It examines voter behaviour in the 2000 and 2006 presidential elections, highlighting previous voter trends and examining differences and similarities with voting patterns occurring in 2012.<sup>1</sup> The following analysis reveals important continuities among the three elections, but perhaps surprisingly in such a short period of time, equally important differences, suggesting that it may be difficult to predict which voter behaviours will remain consistent and leading to a deeper understanding of Mexican presidential elections.

In spite of this caveat, we can point to several important conclusions from the two prior Mexican presidential campaigns and their impact on electoral outcomes. The most comprehensive and valuable information available from the 2000 and 2006 races is based on two extensive Mexico Panel Surveys funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). These are surveys which evaluate the same respondents over time. Led by Chappell Lawson, Jorge Domínguez and Alejandro Moreno, and including other leading scholars from Mexico and the United States, these surveys provided detailed information on how likely voters changed their opinions through the course of the two respective campaigns, and why. Alejandro Moreno's own work, relying on both surveys, should also be consulted, as well as individual articles by other participants cited throughout the essay.<sup>2</sup> As Jorge Domínguez aptly concluded from his recent analysis of these campaigns,

In both elections, the principal effect of the campaign was to steer voters to the underlying factors that shape who they are and what they wish. Their experiences, preferences, networks of friends, and hopes for the future predispose them toward a political party. These sentiments and views are activated during campaigns. That is

<sup>1</sup> James A. McCann identifies some of these same variables from the earlier elections in 'Changing Dimensions of National Elections in Mexico', in Roderic Ai Camp (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 510.

<sup>2</sup> Alejandro Moreno, *La decisión electoral: votantes, partidos and democracia* (Mexico: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2009).

why parties and campaigns matter: the first shape the standing decisions of the electorate, and the second induce the electorate to remember those standing decisions and act accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

The two edited volumes which present much of the data from these campaigns provide dozens of valuable insights about Mexican voters; at least four such observations can be considered relevant to the 2012 presidential race.<sup>4</sup>

Firstly, and most importantly, campaigns do change outcomes in Mexican presidential races. For example, Vicente Fox, the PAN candidate, was behind the entire campaign in 2000 and tied the PRI candidate in the last opinion poll before the campaign terminated.<sup>5</sup> Insider polls revealed an important shift among voters immediately after the termination of the campaign but before Mexicans went to vote.<sup>6</sup> Felipe Calderón was also behind his leading opponent, Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the PRD, for most of the campaign, narrowly defeating him by a half per cent of the vote. Mexicans who indicate that they always vote for the same party have declined from 47 per cent of the electorate in 2000 to 44 per cent in 2006, and again to only 37 per cent in 2012, paving the way for candidates in presidential races to convert nearly two-thirds of voters to their cause. In 2006, slightly more than one-third of voters made their decision during the campaign or on the day of the election. In 2012, that figure increased to almost four out of ten Mexicans. López Obrador, who finished in second place, benefited most from the campaign, commanding the largest share of voters who made up their minds during the race.<sup>7</sup>

Secondly, during campaigns, independent voters accounted for anywhere from 35 to 45 per cent of the potential voters (typically only one-fourth of Mexicans express strong partisan allegiances). Although the majority of Mexican voters express some degree of partisan allegiance, the percentage of

<sup>3</sup> Jorge I. Domínguez, 'Mexico's Campaigns and the Benchmark Elections of 2000 and 2006', in Camp (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics*, p. 540.

<sup>4</sup> Jorge I. Domínguez and Chappell Lawson (eds.), *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election: Candidates, Voters, and the Presidential Campaign of 2000* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); Jorge I. Domínguez, Chappell Lawson and Alejandro Moreno (eds.), *Consolidating Mexico's Democracy: The 2006 Presidential Campaign in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). For the most comprehensive Mexican collection, see Adrián Giménez-Welsh (ed.), *Rumbo a los Pinos en el 2006: los candidatos y los partidos en el espacio público* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> For the most detailed analysis of why the PRI lost this election, see Beatriz Magaloni, *Voting for Autocracy: Hegemonic Party Survival and its Demise in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Kenneth F. Greene, *Why Dominant Parties Lose: Mexico's Democratization in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> Brandon Rottinghaus and Irina Alberro, 'Rivaling the PRI: The Image Management of Vicente Fox and the Use of Public Opinion Polling in the 2000 Mexican Election', *Latin American Politics and Society*, 47: 2 (2005), pp. 143–58.

<sup>7</sup> Carta Paramétrica, '¿Cuándo deciden su voto los Mexicanos?', 1 July 2012.

independent voters has increased substantially in recent years, from only 95  
 19 per cent in 1994, to 31 per cent in 2000, to 36 per cent in 2006.<sup>8</sup> 96  
 Independents form a large proportion of the undecided voters during the actual race.<sup>9</sup> 97  
 Thirdly, negative attitudes toward a candidate tend to increase over time and 98  
 produce significant shifts in voter loyalties. Negative views are extremely 99  
 resistant to being altered. Fourthly, party loyalties are highly fluid in Mexican 100  
 presidential races; all parties draw support from partisans of all other parties by 101  
 the end of the campaign. Equally important is the fact that a large percentage 102  
 of partisans at the beginning of the race have only recently joined partisan 103  
 ranks.<sup>10</sup> In short, most voters are not wedded to any specific party beyond 104  
 individual presidential campaigns.<sup>11</sup> 105

### *Traditional Variables: What's New, What's Old*

Past voter behaviour suggested that traditional demographic variables would 107  
 play a significant role in the outcome of the 2012 race. The most influential 108  
 variables in the Mexican case have been age, income, education and region, all 109  
 of which will be analysed here (see Table 1). Gender, a variable which is often 110  
 analysed in electoral contexts elsewhere and played a significant role in the 111  
 outcome of the US presidential election in 2012, has essentially been ignored 112  
 in analyses of Mexican presidential elections, but changes have taken place 113  
 since 2009 which suggest that it should be considered along with the other 114  
 four variables. 115

For the first time in Mexican political history, one of the three major parties 116  
 (ironically the most socially conservative), the PAN, chose a female candidate 117  
 after a fiercely fought primary; this is a gender benchmark which has not yet 118  
 been achieved in the United States. Moreover, one of the leading candidates 119  
 for the PRI nomination, former party president Beatriz Paredes, was also a 120  
 strong early contender until 2011. This suggests a possible shift in voter attit- 121  
 udes in a popular culture known for its machismo. Such attitudes toward 122  
 gender also indicated the potential for affecting the election outcome. 123

<sup>8</sup> Alejandro Moreno, 'Who is the Mexican Voter?', in Camp (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics*, p. 592.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Klesner, 'The Structure of the Mexican Electorate: Social, Attitudinal, and Partisan Bases of Vicente Fox's Victory', in Domínguez and Lawson (eds.), *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election*, pp. 99–103; Roderic Ai Camp, 'Democracy Redux: Mexico's Voters and the 2006 Presidential Race', in Domínguez, Lawson and Moreno (eds.), *Consolidating Mexico's Democracy*, pp. 47–8.

<sup>10</sup> Alejandro Moreno, *El votante mexicano: democracia, actitudes políticas y conducta electoral* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003), pp. 21–49.

<sup>11</sup> Chappell Lawson and James McCann, 'An Electorate Adrift? Public Opinion and the Quality of Democracy in Mexico', *Latin American Research Review*, 38: 3 (2003), pp. 275–7.

Table 1. *Variables and the Presidential Vote in 2012 (%)*

Variable	Vázquez Mota	Peña Nieto	López Obrador	López Obrador 2006
National vote totals	26	<b>39</b>	32	35
Gender				
Male (49%)	25	<b>37</b>	36	<b>37</b>
Female (51%)	<b>27</b>	<b>41</b>	29	29
Age				
18–29 (31%)	23	36	<b>37</b>	34
30–49 ( <b>44%</b> )	27	<b>41</b>	30	35
50+ (25%)	28	<b>40</b>	30	<b>37</b>
Education				
Basic ( <b>49%</b> )	24	<b>48</b>	26	33
Middle (21%)	28	33	<b>37</b>	35
Higher (30%)	29	29	<b>39</b>	38
Income (pesos)*				
Up to 758	24	<b>45</b>	28	31
786–1,517	24	<b>39</b>	34	<b>38</b>
1,518–3,034	23	<b>45</b>	29	<b>37</b>
3,035–4,551	25	<b>41</b>	30	33
4,552–7,585	21	<b>38</b>	37	33
7,586–15,170	25	36	<b>37</b>	34
15,171–20,000	26	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	31
20,000+	26	33	<b>40</b>	29
Residence				
Urban ( <b>76%</b> )	26	<b>37</b>	34	35
Rural (24%)	26	<b>44</b>	29	<b>36</b>
Presidential performance				
Approved of Calderón ( <b>62%</b> )	<b>37</b>	36	25	26
Did not approve (35%)	7	44	<b>47</b>	<b>56</b>
Ideology				
Left (23%)	11	20	<b>67</b>	<b>62</b>
Center (15%)	23	<b>40</b>	32	31
Right ( <b>35%</b> )	36	<b>50</b>	13	24
Partisan supporters				
PRI ( <b>28%</b> )	5	<b>90</b>	4	12
PAN (19%)	<b>85</b>	6	7	5
PRD (16%)	2	4	<b>93</b>	<b>93</b>
Independents (37%)	22	32	<b>41</b>	<b>43</b>
Region				
North ( <b>35%</b> )	33	<b>40</b>	25	24
Centre-west (21%)	29	<b>44</b>	25	27
Centre (26%)	19	35	<b>43</b>	<b>44</b>
South (18%)	20	39	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>
View of future personal economic situation				
Will improve (22%)	<b>55</b>	26	17	20
Will stay the same ( <b>40%</b> )	24	<b>43</b>	30	<b>40</b>
Will get worse (36%)	10	43	<b>45</b>	<b>52</b>
The most important problem in Mexico**				
Economy	22	<b>35</b>	29	—
Security	23	<b>37</b>	25	—



Table 1. (Cont.)

Variable	Vázquez Mota	Peña Nieto	López Obrador	López Obrador 2006
Vote in 2006/2000				
Calderón/Fox (35%)	49	29	20	29
Madrazo/Labastida (17%)	6	82	10	19
López Obrador/Cárdenas (15%)	5	12	83	88
New voters (25%)	22	38	36	37
Reason for vote				
Candidate's ideas and proposals (42%)	25	42	30	—
Change (24%)	20	32	45	—
Candidate's honesty (7%)	30	20	48	—
Always for same party (7%)	25	63	11	—
Continuity (4%)	87	9	4	—
Candidate will help the people (4%)	17	50	32	—
Candidate is the least bad choice (4%)	36	27	32	—

\* This question and the answers came from Parametría's exit poll, 'Cambios de perfil en los votantes de 2006 y 2012', 1 July 2012, 6,026 respondents, +/−1.3 per cent margin of error. Alejandro Moreno, *Reforma's* pollster, was not permitted to ask the standard income question.

\*\* This question and the answers came from Consulta Mitofsky's exit poll, 'México: 1 de julio 2012, perfil del votante', more than 20,000 voters interviewed in 520 balloting stations, +/−1.2 per cent margin of error, 94 per cent level of confidence, 1 July 2012, p. 14.

Source: *Reforma*, exit poll, 3,096 voters in 80 balloting stations from 32 states and entities, +/−1.8 per cent margin of error, 95 per cent level of confidence, 1 July 2012. Courtesy of Alejandro Moreno. 'Don't know' answers are excluded.

Since 2000, gender preferences typically have not been significant on a partisan basis for the winning presidential candidate. However, gender differences have played a role in the votes cast for the losing candidates. For example, in the 2000 presidential election, women favoured the PRI candidate by 40 per cent compared to 32 per cent for men, while they were less likely to support the PRD candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, with 14 per cent compared to 20 per cent for men, on election day.<sup>12</sup> The comparative lack of female support for the PRD candidate continued in the 2006 election. The gender difference among male and female voters for Felipe Calderón, the winning candidate, was less than 2 percentage points. For López Obrador, however, the difference was 5 percentage points (37.3 from men compared to only 32.3 from women).<sup>13</sup> There is no question that if López Obrador had been even slightly more attractive to female voters compared to male voters, he could have defeated Calderón for the presidency.<sup>14</sup> Yet, in gubernatorial races in Coahuila

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Klesner, 'Electoral Competition and the New Party System in Mexico', paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, Sep. 2001, p. 53.

<sup>13</sup> Camp, 'Democracy Redux', p. 42.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph Klesner, 'The Structure of the Mexican Electorate', in Domínguez and Lawson (eds.), *Mexico's Pivotal Democratic Election*, pp. 108–9; and 'A Sociological Analysis of the 2006

and México state in 2011, shortly before the 2012 elections, women and men gave PAN, PRD and PRI candidates equal support. At the beginning of the 2012 presidential race, it appeared that women voters might play as significant a role as they did in the 2006 election, since polls indicated that Josefina Vázquez Mota, the incumbent PAN party's candidate, was attracting 20 per cent more women, while 20 per cent fewer women preferred López Obrador.<sup>15</sup>

Two important gender voting patterns have emerged since 2000. The broadest and potentially most significant but inconsistent trend is the percentage of women compared to men who participate in national elections. In the 2009 congressional elections women accounted for 56 per cent of all actual voters, compared to 48 per cent in the 2006 presidential election and 54 per cent in the 2003 congressional elections.<sup>16</sup> In some states in the 2009 elections, such as Campeche, Coahuila, México and Querétaro, the difference between male and female voting reached 10 per cent!<sup>17</sup> Only among voters older than 64 in 2009 did men outnumber women. A fascinating historical explanation for women beginning to vote in larger percentages below the age of 64 is associated with girls growing up during the years immediately following the granting of voting rights to women at the federal level in 1953. However, in the 2012 presidential election, according to the *Reforma* newspaper exit poll, women voters only slightly exceeded men, in contrast to the major differences in their participation levels in the 2003 and 2009 congressional races. No explanations have been offered in the current Mexican literature as to why women would participate in far greater numbers in recent congressional, compared to presidential, elections.

The second pattern that has begun to emerge is the extent of the impact of gender on partisan preferences during a national election. The exit polls do not offer such clear patterns in female/male preferences for the candidates. Whereas the *Reforma* survey reveals a striking difference in support for López Obrador in 2012 between women and men – seven percentage points, similar to his lower appeal to women in 2006 – it suggests a much smaller favourable bias among women toward Vázquez Mota and Peña Nieto. On the other hand, the Consulta Mitofsky polling firm reported a 5.9 percentage point difference in the preference of women for the female PAN candidate, and a

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Elections', in Domínguez, Lawson and Moreno (eds.), *Consolidating Mexico's Democracy*, p. 52.

<sup>15</sup> Consulta Mitofsky, 'Preferencia para presidente por segmentos', April 2012. That same survey revealed that Peña Nieto had a 40/41 per cent split between women and men, and López Obrador a 16/19 per cent split.

<sup>16</sup> *Reforma*, exit poll, 5,803 voters, +/–1.3 per cent margin of error, 2 July 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Consulta Mitofsky, 'Una verdad: las mujeres votan más que los hombres', Oct. 2011.

5.1 percentage point difference in the preference of men over women for López Obrador.<sup>18</sup> While the difference between male and female preferences for López Obrador was considerable in 2012, it would not have been sufficient by itself to alter the outcome in favour of the PRD. Nevertheless, gender is definitely a variable which deserves far greater attention in the future, both because women may increase their participation levels in presidential races similar to their levels of involvement in congressional elections (an issue that we need to explore much more thoroughly and accurately), and because women not only may disproportionately strongly favour a female presidential candidate in the future, but on three occasions have demonstrated a strong, unfavourable reaction to a PRD presidential candidate.<sup>19</sup>

Recent studies confirm that some biases against female political leadership continue in Mexico, but that these attitudes are on the decline. When Mexicans were asked if men in general were better political leaders than women, only one in four respondents agreed that they were. When asked in which political offices women would do a better job than men, of those who expressed an opinion, nearly half (47 per cent) agreed that women would make a better president, by far the most positive response of any political office listed. Two-thirds or more Mexicans believe a female president would improve Mexico's image, the representation of women in politics, and equality between men and women.<sup>20</sup> But the most important policy information we have about current gender attitudes and their potential influence on a presidential race is that Mexicans consider political corruption to be the number one explanation for the country's drug policy failures and violence, while at the same time six out of ten Mexicans believe a female president would be more effective at reducing corruption.<sup>21</sup>

Generational differences have often played an influential role in presidential outcomes. This has been especially true of younger adults, many of them first-time voters. In the 2000 election, the 18–24 age group consisted entirely of first-time voters, accounting for 18 per cent of all voters. Half of this age group

<sup>18</sup> Consulta Mitofsky, 'Mexico: 1 de Julio 2012, perfil del votante', 20,000 respondents in 520 balloting stations,  $\pm 1.2$  per cent margin of error, 1 July 2012. In the last survey that it took among likely voters, on 24 June, Mitofsky reported that women would account for 57.2 percent of Vázquez Mota's votes.

<sup>19</sup> For valuable insights as to why political parties in Mexico would nominate female candidates, see Kathleen Bruhn, 'Whores and Lesbians: Political Activism, Party Strategies, and Gender Quotas in Mexico', *Electoral Studies*, 22: 1 (2003), pp. 101–19.

<sup>20</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Mujeres en la política, el género a la Presidencia', 500 respondents,  $\pm 4.3$  per cent margin of error, 29 Oct. to 3 Nov. 2011.

<sup>21</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, 'The Armed Forces and Drugs: Public Perceptions and Institutional Challenges', in Eric L. Olson, David A. Shirk and Andrew Selee (eds.), *Shared Responsibility: U.S.–Mexico Policy Options for Confronting Organized Crime* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2010), p. 319.

voted for Vicente Fox, who performed well among all age groups except people of 55 years of age or older, who voted disproportionately for the PRI candidate.<sup>22</sup> In 2006, the 18–29 age cohort accounted for 30 per cent of all voters; Calderón was able to obtain 38 per cent of this group's support. In the 2012 campaign, López Obrador beat Peña Nieto within the 18–29 age group, but only by one percentage point. However, similar to the 2006 race, this group accounted for only 31 per cent of the electorate, whereas the 30–49 age group represented 44 per cent of the voters, and Peña Nieto easily captured their vote compared to his two leading opponents. It is apparent from multiple *Reforma* surveys that the student-dominated Yo Soy 132 movement, which aggressively opposed Peña Nieto's campaign late in the election, affected the candidate's support among younger Mexicans, specifically those who were college students.<sup>23</sup> This movement might well have exerted a decisive influence on the outcome of the election if half of all adult Mexicans surveyed did not believe that the students were manipulated by other political actors, a party or candidate (likely those sympathetic to the PRD, though this was unexpressed), compared to only a third of the respondents who considered it to be a 'genuine' student demonstration.<sup>24</sup>

It is also important to consider that 12 years earlier, younger voters were particularly taken with Vicente Fox largely because, in their view and that of many other Mexicans, he represented change, specifically change from a semi-authoritarian to a democratic political model.<sup>25</sup> Thus Fox earned the overwhelming support of most Mexicans who considered this dramatic form of change to be what the 2000 election was all about. By contrast, the 2012 election was not about basic structural change in the political model, but rather a change in leadership from two administrations led by the PAN to an administration led by the PRI, or late in the campaign, by the PRD. Yet, despite this less radical notion of change, Peña Nieto did well among all three age groups, besting his rivals in the middle and older age cohorts, essentially tying with López Obrador for support among the youngest voters. López Obrador performed less well among the two older groups than he had done six years previously. Nevertheless, one can view Fox in 2000 and López Obrador in 2012 as representing change to college-educated younger Mexicans, who supported both candidates at levels higher than those of young voters generally.

<sup>22</sup> Joseph Klesner, 'The End of Mexico's One Party Regime', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 4: 1 (2001), pp. 107–14.

<sup>23</sup> Alejandro Moreno, '2012: el factor jóvenes', *Reforma*, 2 June 2012.

<sup>24</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Encuesta Parametría – Yo Soy 132', 4 June 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, *Politics in Mexico: The Democratic Consolidation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 220.

Traditionally, one of the most influential demographic variables in presidential elections anywhere, but particularly in Mexico, is income.<sup>26</sup> In the 2006 presidential race, the results were strongly biased on the basis of income. Not surprisingly, Calderón, representing a right-of-centre party ideologically and a macro-economic strategy of neoliberalism, won the lion's share of support from the two highest income categories. López Obrador, representing the only left-of-centre option, the PRD – which was viewed by most Mexicans as being far to the left compared to their own personal ideological beliefs – did well among the three lower income categories, but his range of support did not vary widely among the five income categories and he split the lowest income category relatively equally among the other two candidates (see Table 2). Furthermore, Calderón was equally strong among voters in the middle income category. The PRI candidate represents extreme differences in support among wealthier Mexicans compared to those with modest incomes, who are the most likely to cast votes for his party.

If we compare voter preferences by income from 2006 with those from 2012, several striking comparisons emerge from the data. Most surprisingly, the PAN candidate in 2012 essentially produced a flat response among voters based on their incomes. There was little variation in preferences for Vázquez Mota; she performed almost as well among modest income-earners as she did among the wealthiest. Equally striking is the fact that López Obrador attracted the support of the three wealthiest income groups, but even more unexpected is that he captured the wealthiest voters by a large margin – 40 per cent of this group supported his candidacy compared to only 32 per cent of all voters. Indeed, López Obrador received more support proportionately from the highest four income groups. Peña Nieto, who received 38 per cent of the national vote, received proportionately more support from the lowest four income categories, but especially from the poorest and the third-lowest of the eight income categories in Table 1. This widespread support for the PRI among lower-income Mexicans corresponds with the overwhelming preference among those voters who chose their candidate on the basis of whether he or she would 'help people'. Apparently, higher-income Mexicans were attracted to López Obrador for reasons other than his economic proposals, probably because he was perceived as honest and as representing change.

Voters' income levels also played a crucial role in the 2006 election, but in a different fashion. It is not well-known that poor Mexicans who were beneficiaries of government anti-poverty programmes were a critical determinant

<sup>26</sup> For valuable comparative, statistical insights on the importance of income in Mexican and US presidential elections, see Jerónimo Cortina, Andrew Gelman and Narayani Lasala Blanco, 'One Vote, Many Mexicos: Income and Vote Choice in the 1994, 2000, and 2006 Presidential Elections', Columbia University, 28 March 2008.

Table 2. *Voter Support by Income for the Leading Candidates, 2006 (%)*

Income (pesos)	Calderón (PAN)	Madrazo (PRI)	López Obrador (PRD)
2,000	31	30	34
2,000–3,999	32	24	39
4,000–6,499	36	21	37
6,500–9,199	43	16	36
9,200 +	50	14	30

Source: *Reforma*, exit poll, 5,803 voters, +/–1.3 per cent margin of error, 2 July 2006.

of the PAN victory. In spite of the fact that López Obrador made anti-poverty policies the number one issue of his campaign in 2006, Calderón received 41 and 44 per cent support respectively from the beneficiaries of the Oportunidades and Seguro Popular programmes, compared to only 29 and 26 per cent support respectively for the PRD candidate. In the 2009 congressional elections, those Mexicans did not continue to vote in such numbers for the PAN, declining from one-third (33 per cent) of all voters in 2006 to only one-fifth (20 per cent) in 2009. Among those lower-income Mexicans who were not beneficiaries in 2009, two-fifths (38 per cent) voted for PRI candidates, nearly one-third (31 per cent) for the PAN, and only 16 per cent for the PRD (which received more than double that figure, 38 per cent, in 2006).<sup>27</sup> In 2012, 29 per cent of voters said they were beneficiaries of Oportunidades, and half (50 per cent) were beneficiaries of Seguro Popular, a health programme. During the 2012 campaign, when asked early in April about their attitudes toward Oportunidades and Seguro Popular, 86 and 85 per cent of likely voters respectively gave them positive ratings. Vázquez Mota should have campaigned much more strongly on Calderón's anti-poverty record given the overwhelming percentage of voters tied to these two programmes.<sup>28</sup> Such voters did not link her candidacy to these government programmes, and consequently, unlike Calderón, who benefited significantly from Fox's anti-poverty efforts, and Francisco Labastida, who benefited from President Zedillo's efforts (capturing 56 per cent of programme beneficiaries, who then only accounted for 15 per cent of the electorate), income data for poorer Mexicans in Table 1 reflect no such impact on her candidacy.<sup>29</sup>

The demographic variable most associated with income is a voter's level of education. Historically, PRI presidential candidates have done well among voters with elementary school educations. For example, such individuals accounted for 42 per cent of voters in 2000, and Francisco Labastida won 46 per cent of their votes, far ahead of the numbers Fox managed to obtain. This is a

<sup>27</sup> Camp, 'Democracy Redux', pp. 46–7.

<sup>28</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Pierde levadura el PAN', April 2012.

<sup>29</sup> In 2000, only 15 per cent of voters were welfare beneficiaries.

critical group because it made up half of the voters in 2012. What is striking about the results in this category is that the PRI candidate received exactly the same percentage of support (49 per cent) from this group as he did from the total electorate. The PAN and PRD candidates, on the other hand, essentially split their support from such voters. This lower educational category is also important because levels of formal education tend to impact importantly and negatively on Mexican voters' level of interest and knowledge in Mexico. On the other hand, voters with higher levels of interest and correspondingly higher levels of education are more likely to participate in elections. Those Mexicans who were most interested in the campaign in 2000 voted disproportionately in favour of Fox. Moreover, six out of ten students overwhelmingly supported Fox in 2000, demonstrating that he appealed not only to the youngest age group, but also to those young people who were enrolled in college or preparatory schools. Although data are not available on student preferences for the 2012 candidates, López Obrador most closely approximates Fox's appeal, performing strongest among younger voters and among the most well-educated Mexicans, just not comparatively as strongly as did the PAN candidate 12 years earlier.

Finally, region played a significant role in the voting preferences of Mexicans in 2006.<sup>30</sup> Both of the leading candidates performed better in each of two regions. The PAN received 43 and 47 per cent of the vote in the north and centre-west, its traditional strongholds, with figures well above its overall national support, but did especially poorly in the south. López Obrador, on the other hand, performed extremely well in the centre and the south, with 44 and 40 per cent support respectively, but did quite poorly in the north and centre-west. The regional distribution of the vote in 2012 establishes a significant pattern in that the PRD continued to underperform in the same two regions, while achieving almost exactly the same percentage of the vote from the centre and south, at 43 and 40 per cent respectively, as was the case six years earlier.<sup>31</sup> Initially, during 2012, the PRI candidate, Enrique Peña Nieto, essentially received equal support from intended voters in all four regions of Mexico, with slightly stronger support in the north. By election day, however, he equalled or exceeded his national vote total in three of the four regions – performing best in the PAN's traditional base, the centre-west, with 44 per cent of the vote – but was unable to achieve a comparable level of

<sup>30</sup> The most comprehensive analysis of regional patterns in Mexican elections, based on the 2000 election, including influential historical factors, is Simposio Internacional, 'Regionalismo–Federalismo, Aspectos Históricos y Desafíos Actuales en México, Alemania y Otros Países Europeos', Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 2001.

<sup>31</sup> For insights into how these patterns developed and why they are likely to continue, see Joseph L. Klesner, 'Regionalism in Mexican Electoral Politics', in Camp (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics*, pp. 622–45.

support from the centre, largely because of López Obrador's overwhelming level of support from the Federal District, which distorts centre vote totals (see Table 1). Yet, it is important to keep in mind that 56 per cent of the actual voters in 2012 came from just two regions (north and centre-west), from which Peña Nieto earned more than 40 per cent of the vote. The north, which accounts for more than one-third of all Mexican voters, is the decisive region. No winning presidential candidate has lost this region since 2000 (Fox captured a whopping 50 per cent of the vote from the north).

A variable which played a critical role in the 2006 elections, and might be viewed partially as a variation on the traditional region variable, was the performance of state governors. Mexican presidential elections are affected by what can be described as a reverse of the 'coattails effect' found in US politics (in which a popular party leader attracts votes for other candidates in the same party).<sup>32</sup> In other words, the better the performance of a Mexican state's governor, the more likely it is that a resident of that state will consider voting for a leading presidential candidate from that party. Mexican governors generally receive high approval from their residents, stronger than that of the president. In 2006, the PAN controlled nine states; on the day of the election, Calderón received 53 per cent of the vote from those states in contrast to only 36 per cent of the vote nationally. Two-fifths (41 per cent) of voters who approved of a PRI governors' performance voted for the PRI nationally in 2006, and in 2009 that figure increased to almost half of those voters (47 per cent).<sup>33</sup> This is an extraordinary difference. The impact of a governor's performance, in combination with other demographic factors prevailing in the composition of voters in those states or regions where the party has historically been strongest, reinforces strong partisan biases.<sup>34</sup> These gubernatorial ratings reinforce regional biases already existing in the partisan distribution of regional support. Data support the importance of gubernatorial ratings as distinct from existing regional strongholds, which were a critical contributor because the PRI controlled 20 of the 32 states in 2012. In 2009, all PRI governors averaged a 70 per cent approval rating. Unfortunately, no figures for 2012 approval ratings exist, so it is impossible to calculate the precise outcome of the vote on that basis, but according to an analysis by Héctor Ibarra-Rueda, the majority of

<sup>32</sup> For an analysis of the growing influence of governors since democratization, see Caroline Beer, 'Invigorating Federalism: The Emergence of Governors and State Legislatures as Powerbrokers and Policy Innovators', in Camp (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics*, pp. 133–9.

<sup>33</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'El peso de la gestión de los gobernadores en el voto por su partido', 5 July 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Hiskey identifies many of these influences in his recent analysis of 'The Return of "the Local" to Mexican Politics', in Camp (ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Mexican Politics*, pp. 545–67.



voters in 22 of the states, accounting for 69 per cent of the electorate, voted for their incumbent governor's party.<sup>35</sup>

### *Non-Traditional Variables*

A comparative analysis of the five traditional demographic variables offers a number of valuable insights into Mexican voting behaviour in the last 12 years. During this short period since achieving an electoral democracy, voter trends have evolved. It is readily apparent that some of these patterns are linked to all three presidential elections while others have emerged only in 2006 or 2012. The impact of poverty programmes on voter preferences according to level of income, or the influence of state governors' popularity on regional vote distributions, suggests the importance of additional, qualitative factors on those typically more static variables. In Mexico, and in some cases elsewhere, other influences may modify or enhance the impact of the traditional demographic variables. The most influential or potentially influential factors have been social media, policy issues, presidential debates and absentee voters.

By far the most interesting contribution to the 2012 campaign was the widespread use of social media. This may have exerted a profound influence in the final weeks of the campaign, dramatically erasing the PRI candidate's runaway lead over both of his competitors and significantly increasing support for López Obrador, who moved from a distant third place in the polls early in the campaign, replacing Vázquez Mota as a stiff competitor against Peña Nieto. As suggested previously, the Yo Soy 132 movement, led by college students, exerted less influence on other voters than many pundits expected because of Mexican voters' general lack of trust in the origins of politically motivated activities.<sup>36</sup> What is more significant is the extent to which social media was used to communicate political ideas and interpretations to fellow citizens, and the extent to which Mexicans have access to and are currently using social media. Moreover, for the first time, we have information about social media users, whose characteristics make them a much more potentially powerful force in future elections.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> 'PRI: States & Return to the Presidency', presentation at the workshop 'The Return of the PRI: What Does it Mean for Democracy & Policy Making in Mexico?', Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas, 21 Sep. 2012. To understand better how some of these regional patterns evolved in the 1990s, see Joseph L. Klesner, 'Electoral Competition and the New Party System in Mexico', *Latin American Politics and Society*, 47: 2 (2005), pp. 103–42.

<sup>36</sup> On the movement's lack of an early impact, even among its peers, see Carta Paramétrica, 'El movimiento Yo Soy 132 y el voto de los jóvenes', 4 June 2012.

<sup>37</sup> For a wide-ranging analysis of other forms of non-voting participation in Mexican elections through 2001, see María Fernanda Somuano Ventura's excellent 'Más allá del voto: modos de participación política no electoral en México', *Foro Internacional*, 45: 1 (2005), pp. 65–88.

Table 3. *Social Media Followers in the 2012 Presidential Election*

Month	Facebook 'likes'				Twitter followers			
	1/12	4/12	5/12	6/10	1/12	4/12	5/12	6/10
Peña Nieto	1.3mn	1.8mn	2.9mn	3mn	319,000	473,000	736,000	794,000
Vázquez Mota	94,000	1.4mn	1.5mn	1.7mn	233,000	385,000	793,000	840,000
López Obrador	78,000	330,000	423,000	488,000	214,000	330,000	600,000	687,000

*Note:* Vázquez Mota was still a primary candidate in January 2012.

*Sources:* author's calculations from candidates' accounts – exact dates were 16 Jan., 1 April, 29 May and 10 June; Eric L. Olson and Diana Murray Watts, 'Social Media in the 2012 Presidential Elections: A Testing Ground', Mexico Institute, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 30 April 2012; and Alejandro Moreno, *Reforma*, 16 Jan. 2012.

The volume of social media users in Mexico is impressive. As the data 401  
in Table 3 demonstrate, Peña Nieto and his advisers, far from behaving like his 402  
traditional PRI presidential candidate predecessors Francisco Labastida and 403  
Roberto Madrazo, understood the importance of both Facebook and Twitter. 404  
Peña Nieto maintained a huge lead over his opponents in the category of 405  
Facebook 'likes', achieving more than three million just weeks before the 406  
election – nearly twice that of Vázquez Mota and six times that of López 407  
Obrador. All three candidates made equal use of Twitter, although Vázquez 408  
Mota attracted the most followers. In 2012 there were 33 million members of 409  
Facebook in Mexico, and 12 million Twitter accounts, 26 per cent of which 410  
were active. Not surprisingly, account users tend to be young and over- 411  
whelmingly urban, and have high levels of education and comparable incomes. 412

Far more interesting than their predictable demographic qualities are the 413  
politically oriented attitudes of social media users. One of the most valuable 414  
measurements of likely voters in Mexico is their level of interest in politics. 415  
Interest in politics is generally quite low, and has been so for years. Mexico is 416  
an outlier compared to most other Latin American countries, where interest 417  
has increased in the last decade.<sup>38</sup> In 2011, of those who do not use social 418  
media – the vast majority of Mexicans and more than half of registered 419  
voters – only 8 per cent expressed a strong interest in politics.<sup>39</sup> Among 420  
Facebook members, however, half again as many were *very interested* in politics 421  
(12 per cent), while among Twitter users, twice as many (16 per cent) 422

<sup>38</sup> Mitchell A. Seligson and Amy Erica Smith (eds.), *Political Culture of Democracy, 2010: Democratic Consolidation in the Americas during Hard Times* (Nashville, TN: Latin American Public Opinion Project, Vanderbilt University, 2010), p. 125.

<sup>39</sup> In fact, a strong interest in politics expressed among all Mexicans has rarely exceeded 10 per cent since 2003. During both the 2006 and 2012 presidential campaigns, however, the average level of citizen interest had typically doubled by the end of the campaign – see Consulta Mitofsky, 'Preferencias ciudadanas', 19 June 2012; and 'Preferencias ciudadanas', 29 April 2012.

expressed that intensity of political interest. Both groups are composed of an educated elite, with 32 per cent of Twitter users and 24 per cent of Facebook members boasting a college education. On average, only 5 per cent of non-users are college-educated. Not only is their political interest much higher than that of the average Mexican, but the fact that they are far less trusting of Mexican institutions also makes them more receptive to critical interpretations of Mexican politics and electoral institutions. Strikingly, less than 1 per cent of Twitter users expressed strong confidence in labour unions, senators, police, political parties or members of Congress. Even with regard to the most respected institutions in Mexico, the universities, the armed forces and the Church, fewer than 7 per cent expressed a great deal of trust in those organizations compared to three out of ten non-users. A similar pattern can be found among Facebook users, but the gap between users' and non-users' trust was not as wide.<sup>40</sup>

The effect that a small group of activist college students using social media can have is noteworthy, but it overshadows the more important trend characterising the dramatic growth of that medium's political use in the short period of the elections. In May, during the early phase of the election, of the 30 per cent of Mexicans who used the internet, only 12 per cent of voters used it to obtain information about the election. Less than two months later, on 1 July, 39 per cent of Mexicans were using the internet and a whopping 64 per cent of those individuals, a fivefold increase, admitted using it to obtain political information. Equally significant was the fact that Facebook, Twitter and MySpace users increased their frequency of use at an extraordinary rate, from only 7 per cent to 40 per cent daily by election day. The actual impact of internet users and other media users is reflected in the data in Table 4. Not surprisingly, Mexicans who selected the internet as the most reliable, objective source of information on the election voted overwhelmingly for López Obrador, who benefited significantly from the Yo Soy 132 movement. Although the internet turned out to be the second most influential media source of information among 10 per cent of Mexicans who voted, 64 per cent of voters chose television as their most objective source of election information (see Table 4). This overwhelming figure corresponds to prior surveys in which both Americans and Mexicans have indicated that their primary source of information about politics is television.<sup>41</sup> Given their proportion of the

<sup>40</sup> Consulta Mitofsky, 'Perfil de usuario de redes sociales en internet, Facebook y Twitter', Dec. 2011; Alejandro Moreno and Yuritzi Mendizábal, 'El uso de las redes sociales y el comportamiento político en México', paper presented at the Latin American Studies Association, San Francisco, CA, May 2012.

<sup>41</sup> For background on the influence of television and other media on elections, see Chappell Lawson, *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 157–72; and Chappell Lawson and

Table 4. *How Mexican Media Users Voted in 2012 (%)*

Medium chosen*	Percentage of votes (national totals in parentheses)			
	Total	PAN (25)	PRI (38)	PRD (32)
Television	64	23	45	29
Internet	10	14	21	63
Cable television	7	27	48	24
Radio	7	22	43	35
Newspapers	4	13	32	55
All	3	26	29	41
None	4	20	60	20

\* Question: 'Which medium provided the most objective information about the presidential election?'

Source: Parametría, 'Uso de internet y redes sociales en la elección presidencial', 1,474 respondents, 95 per cent level of confidence, +/– 2.6 per cent margin of error, 1 July 2012.

electorate, television viewers were by far the most influential group of voters that a candidate would want to attract, and Peña Nieto captured nearly half of those individuals while his opponents split the remainder. Peña Nieto also out-competed his two opponents by a sizeable margin for the next two largest trusted media sources, cable television and radio, selected by 14 per cent of voters. While López Obrador did extremely well among newspaper readers, only 4 per cent of voters relied on that medium.

Regardless of where voters obtained their political information, the fact that 63 per cent of Mexicans voted in this election, the highest turnout for a presidential election since 1994, suggests that an increasing percentage of Mexicans are taking their civic responsibilities seriously even though interest in politics generally remains low. The level of participation is linked to the fact that more citizens knew the date of this election at the beginning of the race than in any previous election, and that their knowledge of that date increased 40 percentage points from February to April.<sup>42</sup>

Analysts of electoral politics are typically most interested in how voters view the major issues during a campaign, and how those views affected their choices. Perhaps the most interesting quality that firmly links the last three Mexican presidential elections is that the central issues have, remarkably, remained the same in 2000, 2006 and 2012 (indeed, most were the central issues in 1994).

Jay McCann, 'Television News, Mexico's 2000 Elections and Media Effects in Emerging Democracies', *British Journal of Political Science*, 35: 1 (2005), pp. 1–30. For the impact of the content of the media on the 2006 race, see Sebastián Valenzuela and Maxwell McCombs, 'Agenda-Setting Effects on Vote Choice: Evidence from the 2006 Mexican Election', International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA, 18 May 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Conocimiento de la elección y probabilidad de ir a votar', June 2012.

Three major issues in Mexican politics exist today, just as they did in 2006: one's personal economic situation, insecurity, and unemployment. In 2012, half of all Mexicans selected these three issues combined as most important in the last 11 years. If one adds inflation, low salaries and poverty to one's personal economic situation and unemployment, economic issues alone account for almost half (47 per cent) of all responses in 2011. Today, Mexicans are nearly evenly divided between economic issues and security issues.

If we look at individual responses, insecurity was the number one response in 2012, chosen by one-third of Mexicans; this was the highest response ever given to that single issue (it was also the number one choice in 2005 and 2006).<sup>43</sup> This issue has become dominant because of the level of drug-related homicides since Calderón took office, exceeding 50,000 deaths during his term. In the war against drugs, citizens viewed the government's chances of winning or losing the battle against the cartels as equal as late as March 2010; by the election, however, a sizable majority (six out of ten) viewed organised crime as winning this conflict. Half or more of Mexicans perceived the government's policy direction on this issue to be mistaken in 2012, a consistent figure since 2002. The data in Table 1 indicate that Peña Nieto, not surprisingly, easily captured the votes of those Mexicans who considered the security situation in a negative light on election day. Neither of the other two candidates were competitive with the PRI candidate among voters who were oriented toward this single issue.<sup>44</sup>

The Calderón government's perceived performance on other policy issues is also a critical variable in determining voter attitudes. For example, more Mexicans believed his administration performed badly or very badly on increasing jobs, helping rural Mexicans and combating poverty, as well as combating crime and drug traffickers. On people's personal economic situation, voter responses were more complex. In 2006, López Obrador attracted more than half of the voters who thought their personal economic situation would become worse after Fox left office. Importantly, he also received the strongest support from those Mexicans who believed their situation would remain unchanged. Six years later, however, although he continued to better

<sup>43</sup> Consulta Mitofsky, 'Felipe Calderón, evaluación de 19 trimestres de gobierno', Aug. 2011; and 'Décima encuesta nacional sobre percepción de inseguridad ciudadana en México', March 2012, available at [www.consulta.mx](http://www.consulta.mx).

<sup>44</sup> In part, this may well have been the result of an unstated expectation among the voting public. There is a belief among many Mexicans who are personally affected in dozens of ways by drug-related violence and the perceived or real consequences of it on their personal security that the PRI can solve this issue through some informal arrangement with the cartels, returning Mexico to a period where such violence is minor, as during the PRI reign. Peña Nieto did not offer any new, concrete ways to address the problem. The likelihood of such a behind-the-scenes solution being possible is not high given the increased number of cartels and the fluidity of their influence.

his opponents among those Mexicans who thought economic conditions would worsen, he did not perform well among those who thought their situation would remain the same. Instead, Peña Nieto did extremely well among this sector of the voting population, and almost as well as López Obrador among the most economically disenchanted citizens. The PAN candidate, predictably, received strong support from those who believed their situation would continue to improve after Calderón left office.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, given the criticism that Peña Nieto generated among some sources in the media for his lack of intellectual depth, he attracted significantly more voters than the other two candidates for his ideas and proposals. In contrast, López Obrador was a preferred choice among voters who wanted a change, which could have meant from PAN to PRD or, as suggested earlier, a version of the Fox voter's notion of change, in this case preventing a return of the PRI, as was the case 12 years earlier. Perhaps most surprisingly, half of all voters cast their ballot for the PRI candidate because they believed he would help people, which surely included economic improvement too; this was much higher than the number of López Obrador voters who cited this reason.

The most important group of Mexicans whose attitudes toward policy issues would be translated into more definitive voting patterns in 2012 are what Alejandro Moreno aptly labelled 'indignant citizens' – that is, those individuals who have been directly affected by these same three policy issues: having a reduced income, having been a victim of crime, and having lost a job. They account for between one-sixth and two-fifths (13 and 38 per cent) of the population depending on which issue one examines. More significantly, Moreno has discovered that this group's attitude has serious implications for the legitimacy of the democratic model. Specifically, only one in four Mexicans who have lost a job, who have been affected by violence or whose personal economic situation has declined is satisfied with democracy (see Table 5).

### *Democratic Consolidation, Partisanship, Electoral Processes and Institutional Legitimacy*

Each presidential election since 2000 provides a critical test of Mexican attitudes toward the electoral process, and fundamentally their democratic polity. Voter surveys have also helped to explain the extent to which Mexico

<sup>45</sup> For evidence that campaigns can increase the importance of the incumbent government's economic performance on the outcome, see the excellent paper by Austin Hart, 'Can Candidates Activate or Deactivate the Economic Vote? Evidence from Two Mexican Elections', paper prepared for the American Political Science Association, 21 Aug. 2012, p. 26.

Table 5. 'Indignant' Citizens' Responses to Policy Issues (%)

	'Indignant' citizens	All others
Unsatisfied or only partly satisfied with democracy	73	47
View the economy's direction negatively	75	38
View security negatively	63	36

Source: Alejandro Moreno, 'Radiografía de los indignados', *Enfoque, Reforma*, 7 Aug. 2011.

has or has not moved from achieving an electoral democracy to the funda- 544  
mentally more complex and difficult achievement of a consolidated 545  
democracy. What is most striking after 12 years of efforts toward democratic 546  
consolidation is that Mexicans remain highly sceptical about their elections. In 547  
2011, less than a year before the presidential election began, two-fifths (39 per 548  
cent) of citizens believed that elections in their state were not free, clean or 549  
fair, versus only half (49 per cent) who believed they were. Expressed differ- 550  
ently, only half of all Mexicans believed that the winning candidate actually 551  
received the majority of votes. In terms of the conduct of elections, a fourth 552  
of Mexicans (24 per cent) reported that they personally, or someone they 553  
trusted, had witnessed a fraudulent action during a recent election.<sup>46</sup> Such 554  
behaviour, specifically that the PRI had engaged in various forms of 'vote 555  
buying' in 2012, became the centrepiece of López Obrador's unsuccessful 556  
formal complaint to the Federal Electoral Court to overturn the election 557  
results.<sup>47</sup> In the same year, 4 to 13 per cent of Mexicans indicated that a party 558  
or candidate offered them one of seven different forms of services, food or 559  
supplies, and one- to two-thirds accepted these 'bribes'.<sup>48</sup> When asked if their 560  
state Electoral Institute consisted of impartial counsellors, half (49 per cent) 561  
said yes, versus a third (34 per cent) who believed it was composed of partisan 562  
members. Only half of Mexicans believed that their state Electoral Court, 563  
which rules on electoral controversies over the outcome, was composed of 564  
impartial judges. Finally, more than half of all Mexicans, the second-highest 565  
response among all Latin Americans, believe that a lot of corruption would 566  
justify a military coup in their country – a view that is seriously dangerous to 567  
the health of Mexico's democratic institutions.<sup>49</sup> 568

<sup>46</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'La desconfianza en las elecciones', April 2011.

<sup>47</sup> The court ruled in September 2012 that such behaviour had occurred, but that there was no persuasive evidence that it determined how voters cast their ballots or that it affected the election's outcome. The electoral law specifies that such a linkage must be proven to determine a clear violation of the law.

<sup>48</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Pierde levadura el PAN', April 2012.

<sup>49</sup> Brandon Bell, 'When Do High Levels of Corruption Justify a Military Coup?', *AmericasBarometer Insights* 2012, 79 (2012), p. 1.

An argument can be made that while Mexicans view corruption as a serious obstacle to Mexico's political and economic development, a significant portion of Mexicans expect elections to be corrupt whether or not that is actually the case. This belief stems in part from older Mexicans' personal experience with fraudulent elections before the late 1990s. Such attitudes are reflected in the data on honesty in Table 1. While half of all voters who on election day considered honesty the most important issue in determining their presidential choice selected López Obrador, only one in five chose Peña Nieto. Second, voting results and surveys from the two previous elections clearly indicate that those Mexicans whose candidate lost the election, specifically the PRI candidate in 2000 and the PRD candidate in 2006, believed that the election was fraudulent. A large minority of voters who fall into this category have not matured in their civic attitudes in rejecting the notion that elections can only be fair if their candidate wins. A 2012 poll by BGC Ulises Beltrán and Associates, published in *Excelsior*, points to a more mature electorate in that 54 per cent of all voters viewed the voting as clean, versus 20 per cent who thought it was dirty. Among those voters supporting López Obrador, half again as many (29 per cent) thought the voting was tainted, proportionately similar to 2006. Moreover, among the general population in 2012, 43 per cent still believed there was fraud in the 2006 presidential election.<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the greater level of satisfaction with the electoral process, 53 per cent expressed little or no satisfaction with democracy on 1 July.<sup>51</sup>

Three additional conditions contributed to explaining the outcome of the 2012 election. The PRI continued to maintain, in spite of its dramatic losses in the two previous presidential races, the largest percentage of partisan supporters of the three leading parties. Among those voters who strongly identified with a political party, 25 per cent chose the PRI, 15 per cent the PAN, and only 10 per cent the PRD. Mexicans are among the least declared partisans of political parties in Latin America.<sup>52</sup> A miniscule number of Mexicans, 3 per cent, are formally members of any political party; they are nine times more likely to be members of religious organisations or churches.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Mexicanos avalan petición de la ONU para no destruir boletas electorales de 2006', 12 Dec. 2012. In 2006, 46 per cent of the general population, as well as a similar percentage of those who actually voted in the election, believed this to be the case.

<sup>51</sup> The survey also concluded that nearly three-quarters of voters believed their vote did make a difference, and 47 per cent expressed some or great trust in the IFE, while only 22 percent expressed little or no trust in the institution. 'Perciben elecciones transparentes, según encuesta de *Excelsior*', *Excelsior*, 23 July 2012.

<sup>52</sup> Federico Batista Pereira, 'Why Are There More Partisans in Some Countries Than Others?', *AmericasBarometer Insights* 2012, 71 (2012), p.1. Some scholars view the level of partisanship as a reflection of the level of development in party systems: see Russell Dalton and Steven Weldon, 'Partisanship and Party System Institutionalization', *Party Politics*, 13: 2 (2007), pp. 179–96.




<sup>53</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Identificación partidista', Nov. 2011.



Consequently, in 2012 Mexicans ranked near the bottom, only above 600  
Uruguayans and Peruvians, of those citizens in Latin America who work for a 601  
party or candidate during an election.<sup>54</sup> 602

In presidential races in Mexico, where the winning percentage has been 603  
determined by only a 35 and 39 per cent plurality in the last two elections 604  
respectively, any party boasting a strong allegiance among a quarter of 605  
potential voters is in an enviable position given that it has to persuade a much 606  
smaller percentage of additional voters to support its candidate.<sup>55</sup> Importantly, 607  
the PRI's image changed dramatically between the 2006 and 2012 elections: 608  
from being a party with a highly negative image in the 2000 and 2006 609  
elections, it became the only party for much of the 2012 race with a significant 610  
positive ranking if you subtracted voters' negative opinions from their positive 611  
opinions. This was a remarkable turnaround for a party that most Mexicans 612  
despised in 2000. Several months before the 2012 campaign began, the PRI led 613  
with a 14 per cent positive rating, compared to just 3 per cent for the PAN and 614  
a negative 19 per cent for the PRD.<sup>56</sup> When voters went to the polls they 615  
demonstrated just how important core partisanship can be in an election, since 616  
90 per cent of PRI party partisans voted for their candidate. Only 9 per cent of 617  
PRI partisans voted for the other two candidates. López Obrador drew an even 618  
stronger turnout among hardcore PRD partisans, equal to his 2006 619  
performance, but they were a much smaller percentage of the electorate. 620  
Such high loyalty rates among core partisans on election day have been true in 621  
the past. López Obrador did much better among PRI partisans who left the 622  
fold in 2006 than in 2012, obtaining 12 and 4 per cent of their votes in those 623  
two elections respectively. López Obrador was able to close the gap with Peña 624  
Nieto, in part because together they essentially split 84 per cent of the 625  
independent voters who accounted for 37 per cent of the electorate on 1 July 626  
(see Table 1). 627

Had the election timeframe been longer, López Obrador might well have 628  
been able to overcome an intensely negative image at the beginning of the race. 629  
In March 2012, nearly two-thirds of Mexicans recalled the phrase from the 630  
2006 election, 'López Obrador is a danger for Mexico'.<sup>57</sup> More importantly, a 631  
third of Mexicans continued to believe that this statement was true. At that 632

<sup>54</sup> Erica Graff, Maranda Orrell and Alex Rigl, 'Riches Don't Explain Campaign Participation in the Americas but Community Involvement Does', *AmericasBarometer Insights* 2012, 82, pp. 1–4.  <sup>55</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'La batalla de Andrés Manuel', 28 Sep. 2011.

<sup>56</sup> Consulta Mitofsky, 'Así van ... elección presidencial 2012 en México', Documento ejecutivo, 23 Feb. 2012.

<sup>57</sup> One of the most unique analyses emerging from the 2006 race is that of Allyson Lucinda Benton, who explores the impact of López Obrador's candidacy on economic markets in '¿Quién está preocupado por López Obrador?: las respuestas del mercado a las tendencias electorales durante la campaña presidencial mexicana del 2006', *Colombia Internacional*, 64 (July–Dec. 2006), pp. 68–95.

time 45 per cent of Mexicans expressed a positive opinion of López Obrador, while an equal number, 44 per cent, viewed him negatively, leaving him with just a 1 per cent effective positive opinion.<sup>58</sup> By the election, López Obrador had increased that to 14 per cent. By contrast, Peña Nieto in March boasted a 50 per cent effective positive rating, which declined to only 12 per cent positive on 1 July. Interestingly, in 2006, López Obrador also began with a relatively strong 31 per cent positive perception in March, dropping drastically to only 9 per cent positive on election day. Calderón, who was viewed positively by only 12 per cent, declined to 10 per cent, almost even with López Obrador.<sup>59</sup> Throughout the entire 2012 campaign, López Obrador was challenged by having to overcome a hugely negative view of his candidacy. It is relevant to point out here that core PRI partisans tend to stick to their party's candidate more strongly over time. As voters indicated in exit polls in 2012, nearly two-thirds of voters who always voted for the same party cast their vote for Peña Nieto, compared to just 11 per cent of such voters who favoured his PRD opponent.

Secondly, observers who were willing to write off a return of the PRI after each of these earlier elections ignored the fact that at the local and regional level the PRI continued to dominate state legislative elections and local elections with pluralities ranging in the high 30 to low 40 percentages, thus providing the party with a strong grassroots base. Thirdly, although Mexican ideological preferences continue to be fluid, the PRI and PAN are both the likely beneficiaries of any potential linkage between ideology and voting. On a 1–7 ideological scale (with 1 being Left and 7 being Right), the average voter ranks 4.7. If we ask voters to describe the ideological placement of the three parties, the PAN averages 4.8, the PRI 5.1 and the PRD, 2.9, suggesting just how far afield the PRD is ideologically from the typical voter compared to the other two parties. Indeed, only 35 per cent of Mexicans described themselves as somewhere on the left or the centre ideologically in 2011, corresponding quite closely to the vote totals received by the PRD presidential candidate in 2006 and 2012.<sup>60</sup>

Three potential contributors to the outcome of the 2012 election were the televised presidential debates, the role of absentee voters (largely residing in the United States), and the application of a new electoral law since the 2006 race. In 2000, there was 'no question that the televised presidential debates significantly helped shift voter interest to Fox, who was viewed as a clear winner of the debates'.<sup>61</sup> In 2006, López Obrador made a fateful decision to

<sup>58</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Evaluación de la campañas de 2006', March 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'El impacto de las campañas en la imagen de los candidatos', 26 Sep. 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Carta Paramétrica, '¿Identificación ideológica?', July 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Roderic Ai Camp, 'Democracy Redux', pp. 36–7.

skip one of the debates. As Kathleen Bruhn has argued, 'The decision to skip the debate was a mistake. Calderón appeared statesmanlike and sensible, winning the debate handily.'<sup>62</sup> The NSF Mexico Panel Survey revealed that López Obrador's absence tended to confirm the PAN's portrayal of him as high-handed and autocratic. In 2012, two debates were held, one in May and the other in June. A poll in late April determined not only that was there significantly less knowledge as to when the first debate would be held compared to that stage of the campaign six years earlier, but also that citizens expressed less intense interest in the 2012 debate.<sup>63</sup> The only candidate who benefited significantly from the debate was Gabriel Quadri of the small New Alliance Party.<sup>64</sup> A month later, in the second debate, Peña Nieto held his position in the polls before and after the event, and was seen by likely voters as the overwhelming winner in that debate.<sup>65</sup>

Scholars originally believed that absentee voters living in the United States, given the millions of Mexicans residing there, would take advantage of the implementation of a new law allowing Mexicans to vote from abroad. Since the 1990s, Mexicans have requested the right to vote by absentee ballot.<sup>66</sup> Surveys from the 2000 presidential race reveal that if the law had gone into effect for that election, such voters would have opted overwhelmingly for Fox. Instead, Mexicans residing outside of Mexico were not allowed to vote until 2005, just in time for the 2006 presidential race. Some predictions suggested that potentially up to a million such Mexicans might participate. Instead, only 56,749 Mexicans who were registered voters requested ballots (45,478 resided in the United States), and only 33,000 actually voted, the majority for Calderón.<sup>67</sup> In 2012 only 62,000 requested ballots, a minimal increase from 2006, and the majority voted for Josefina Vázquez Mota, suggesting that absentee ballots have not played an important role in Mexican presidential elections, nor will they in the foreseeable future.<sup>68</sup>

The 2012 election was the first presidential election since 2000 where major alterations in the electoral laws were implemented. They included numerous,

<sup>62</sup> Kathleen Bruhn, 'Lopez Obrador, Calderón, and the 2006 Presidential Campaign', in Domínguez, Lawson and Moreno (eds.), *Consolidating Mexico's Democracy*, p. 179.

<sup>63</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Debate presidencial', 30 April 2012.

<sup>64</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Debate presidencial', 14 May 2012.

<sup>65</sup> Carta Paramétrica, 'Segundo debate presidencial', 18 June 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Symposium on Mexican Electoral Reform, Institute of Latin American Studies, University of Texas, March 1991.

<sup>67</sup> The most detailed analysis of why this vote was so low can be found in Jean-Michel Lafleur and Leticia Calderón Chelius, 'Assessing Emigrant Participation in Home Country Elections: The Case of Mexico's 2006 Presidential Election', *International Migration*, 43: 3 (2011), pp. 99–124.

<sup>68</sup> See [www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm](http://www.migrationinformation.org/usfocus/display.cfm), June 2012; and Dolia Estévez, 'Modelo anacrónico, por qué el voto en el extranjero no sería decisivo en las elecciones de Julio', *Poder*, June 2012, pp. 2–4.

controversial changes based on electoral experiences and complaints dating from that era. The most influential changes included: substantial cuts in public funding for elections and a significant alteration in the funding formula for each party, of which 30 per cent is an equal amount assigned to all parties and the other 70 per cent is determined by the vote totals that each party received in the previous election; parties may contribute from private sources no more than 10 per cent of the total amount that they received from the Instituto Federal Electoral (Federal Electoral Institute, IFE) in the previous campaign; parties must present regular financial and campaign reports to the IFE; and candidates may not use language in their statements about their opponents which slanders or denigrates those individuals.<sup>69</sup> A number of analysts have viewed some of these changes as impinging on democratic behaviour rather than encouraging it. For example, terms like 'slander' and 'denigrate' have not been well-defined, thus preventing candidates in the 2012 race from making more critical comments about their opponents' past performance or public policy positions. This latter provision contributed to a rather bland campaign compared to the tone of the 2000 and 2006 races. It could also be argued that it may have devalued the importance of some policy positions among the candidates. While voter perceptions of policy issues (both pro and con) in the previous two elections were sharpened by the intensity with which presidential candidates were able to criticise their opponents, in 2012 such perceptions were significantly tempered.

Perhaps the most significant change imposed by the new electoral law was the 90-day campaign limit, which confined the campaign to April, May and June and was strictly enforced. Typically, the longer the campaign, the greater the opportunity for voters to alter their opinions about each candidate. The only significant alternation in the tone of the campaign occurred through the independent actions of the Yo Soy 132 movement, largely through social media (which were not affected by the new law). For example, by election day, of the 39 per cent of voters who use social media, two-fifths were posting questions daily about politics, and an additional fifth did so at least three times a week.<sup>70</sup> During the last two weeks of June, many voters began switching their preferences from Peña Nieto to López Obrador. There is no way to know for sure whether López Obrador might have eked out a victory if the pace at which those voters were changing their preferences had continued and the length of the campaign had been extended by as little as two additional weeks. What we do know for sure, as pointed out in the introduction to this paper, is that a significant decline occurred between 2006 and 2012 among those voters

<sup>69</sup> See [www.ife.org.mx](http://www.ife.org.mx); and Julio Juárez Gámiz, 'El papel de la publicidad política en la nueva ley electoral: una mirada crítica', *Sociológica*, 25: 72 (2010), pp. 43–70.

<sup>70</sup> Parametría, 'Uso de internet y redes sociales en la elección presidencial'.

who always vote for the same party (from 44 to 37 per cent). More than one-  
fifth in both elections (21 and 23 per cent respectively) had already made their  
choice when they learned the names of the parties' candidates. During the  
2012 presidential campaign, however, 38 per cent made their choice during the  
90-day campaign, and one-fourth did so on the day of the election, the highest  
figure since 2003.<sup>71</sup>

### *Conclusions*

An examination of voting patterns in state and local elections since 2000  
provides a preview of some of the persisting patterns in voter behaviour during  
the three Mexican democratic presidential elections. The most influential  
conclusion that can be drawn from a comparative assessment of these three  
elections, mirrored in hundreds of local and state election results, is the fluidity  
of preferences among Mexican voters. Before the late 1990s, party incum-  
bency, dominated by the PRI, was a typical predictor of electoral outcomes,  
often at a level of 90 per cent victories. Mexican voters since 2000, at all levels,  
can be viewed as pragmatic. Only a small number can be described as express-  
ing decisive, partisan loyalty over time to a specific party. The fluidity with  
which voters shift from one party to another in presidential races, and in races  
for other executive posts in Mexico, reflects Mexicans' desire to identify and  
vote for candidates who meet their expectations regardless of political party  
affiliation, as well as their ability since 1994 to actually influence the outcome  
of an election, thus ensuring that they can achieve, in sufficient numbers, their  
political and economic goals. Interestingly, however, it is questionable, based  
on case studies, that elections have affected governmental performance in  
Mexico, thus suggesting the possibility that the pragmatic voter may decline in  
the long term.<sup>72</sup>

Over time, our analysis of demographic variables demonstrates some  
influential, repeated patterns, either in the importance of a given variable or, in  
some cases, specific longer-term tendencies occurring within each of those  
variables. It is clear that if women translate their disproportionate partici-  
pation in Mexican congressional elections to presidential elections, they could  
exert a decisive influence on the outcome given the relatively narrow margins  
between the winning and the second-place party. Female voters harmed the  
candidacy of López Obrador in both elections. On the one hand, this outcome  
is surprising because, despite the fact that analysts of elections elsewhere have

<sup>71</sup> Carta Paramétrica, '¿Cuando deciden su voto los Mexicanos?'.  
<sup>72</sup> Carlos Moreno Jaimes, 'Do Competitive Elections Produce Better-Quality Governments? Evidence from Mexican Municipalities, 1990–2000', *Latin American Research Review*, 42: 2 (2007), pp. 136–53.

long viewed women generally as more conservative than men in their choices of candidates, a recent in-depth examination of how women conceptualize democracy in Mexico concluded that:

when gender views of democracy are compared across cultures, including a hybrid culture of Mexican Americans, based on procedural versus non-procedural conceptualizations, women were more likely than men to choose equality, progress, and respect/lawfulness over the procedural response regarding expectations of democracy ... One could speculate that women, in terms of these issues specifically, feel inadequately served by democratic procedures.<sup>73</sup>

Given the fact that in both elections the PRD stressed integrity, social justice and anti-poverty issues as the leading themes in López Obrador's campaign, one might logically expect a higher level of support from women voters. On the other hand, because he was viewed by both men and women as the most 'radical' or non-traditional candidate, he would likely elicit less support from female voters generally. However, his deficit in female support might well have been greater if the perceptual differences of democracy between women and men did not exist.

An analysis of voters' incomes reveals important divisions in support for presidential candidates. Unlike the gender factor, however, income levels did not produce consistent outcomes in 2006 and 2012. To no one's surprise, in 2006, López Obrador received more support from low-income Mexicans and Calderón captured high-income voters. Six years later, as has been demonstrated, López Obrador won support among two out of three high income categories, while his PRI opponent performed more strongly in the lower and middle income categories.<sup>74</sup> This sharp difference in voter preferences suggests that many wealthier voters were willing to place less emphasis on their own economic interests and instead likely chose a candidate on the basis of his perceived integrity and his ability to change the governing process. If this is truly the case, it suggests, similarly to 2000, that well-educated Mexicans, who make up the majority of higher-income voters, saw the PRD candidate in the same light as they saw Fox – as the candidate symbolising change – although each represented wildly different macro-economic views. It is important to emphasize that better-educated and higher-income voters will continue to

<sup>73</sup> Roderic Ai Camp and Keith Yanner, 'Democracy Across Cultures: Does Gender Make a Difference?', in Joseph Tulchin and Meg Ruthenburg (eds.), *Citizenship in Latin America* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner and the Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), p. 145. For examples of the conservative findings, see María Braun, 'Actitudes políticas de las mujeres en el Cono Sur', *Desarrollo Económico*, 31: 4 (1992), p. 576.

<sup>74</sup> PRI candidates have traditionally performed well among low-income and less educated voters. These individuals are often viewed as more likely to be 'clientelistic' voters. For their continued importance through the 2000 elections, see Ricardo Aparicio and David H. Corrochano, 'El perfil del votante clientelar en México durante las elecciones de 2000', *Estudios Sociológicos*, 223: 68 (2005), pp. 375–96.

increase their importance, largely because they express a higher interest in politics, and that interest is translated to higher levels of voter participation.<sup>75</sup>

The regional distribution of the vote continues to be an influential but inconsistent variable. Fox won overwhelmingly in all four regions, but especially in the north, exceeding his PRI opponent by 13 percentage points. No other candidate since has been able to sweep all four regions so strongly. Further, Fox's performance regionally was not translated into support for the PAN nationally in 2006. Instead, what emerged regionally in 2006 was a bifurcated distribution among the two leading parties in each presidential race, with Calderón over-performing in the north and centre-west and López Obrador doing so in the centre and south. Six years later, the PRD candidate continued to do well in the centre and the south, but Peña Nieto received support above his national vote total in three of the four regions, while underperforming in the South. The only consistent regional pattern existing in all three elections is that of Peña Nieto, similar to the two previous winning candidates, capturing the north, which typically accounts for one-third of the national vote. Unlike Calderón, however, his overall regional vote was well-distributed, giving the PRI broader regional strengths compared to any other party. That solid regional distribution will be helpful to the PRI in strengthening its voter allegiances in the future, leaving the party with the broadest grassroots support.

Political parties, and the partisan preferences they engender, naturally play an essential role in electoral politics. However, in Mexico, and elsewhere in the region, large numbers of citizens believe that democracy can exist without political parties. Indeed, Mexicans who hold such a belief rank at the top with Haitians, Panamanians and Hondurans, representing countries that are not identified strongly with democratic political roots.<sup>76</sup> Despite three competitive democratic elections, parties have not registered an increasing level of interest in becoming active members among citizens. As noted above, only a miniscule percentage of citizens are members, and only half express strong partisan preferences during elections. The distribution of those preferences among the three leading parties, despite ups and downs since 2000, remains remarkably stable, with the PRI leading the pack, the PRD at the bottom, and the PAN in the middle. Presidential elections demonstrate three long-term patterns with regard to parties and partisanship among voters. First, typically the candidates

<sup>75</sup> A recent study by two leading Mexican economists argues that Mexico's middle class has continued to increase significantly in the last decade and is likely to continue to do so in the foreseeable future. See Luis de la Calle and Luis Rubio, *Mexico: A Middle Class Society; Poor no More, Developed Not Yet* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2012).

<sup>76</sup> Patrick Ahern, Neal Cotter and Duncan Hall, 'Can Democracy Exist Without Parties?', *AmericasBarometer Insights* 2012, 83 (June 2012), p. 1. The authors note that for Latin America as a whole, the average citizen displays only a slight preference for party-based democracy.

are more important than the parties in turning out voters and winning the elections. In the first two elections, both Fox and Calderón more than doubled their existing partisan support, with Fox establishing a historic benchmark for the margin of voters he attracted personally beyond those who identified with the PAN. Second, López Obrador demonstrated an extraordinary ability to duplicate Fox's electoral impact, at least tripling his limited partisan support for the PRD in both 2006 and 2012. His announced decision in September 2012 to leave the PRD and create his own party introduces serious, unpredictable consequences for the PRD's future electoral influence. Third, Peña Nieto is the first candidate in three presidential races to win the election by attracting fewer voters personally and instead relying heavily on citizens who were associated with the PRI. This fact may also explain why some of Peña Nieto's demographic support is comparatively balanced; it relies more heavily on long-term, grassroots party affiliations than on the personality or attractiveness of a given candidate.

The newest and likely the most interesting and unpredictable yet persistent variable in future elections is sure to be the role of social media. The rapid growth of social media usage and the extreme levels of differentiation in attitudes toward institutions and interest in politics among such groups as Twitter and Facebook users makes this a slice of the voter demographics that deserves far more attention and careful analysis. While the Yo Soy 132 movement demonstrates the potential for altering electoral outcomes in a condensed period of time, what may actually be more valuable to assess is how candidates can reach those voters and motivate them to become involved in their campaigns.<sup>77</sup> Because social media users are overwhelmingly college-educated and typically in a higher income category, and therefore participate in higher percentages in presidential races, they increase the importance of income and education demographics for understanding the outcomes of Mexican elections.

Policy issues provide the greatest consistency of any potential variable which might influence presidential outcomes. There is little disagreement that economic and security issues are paramount, and as suggested, together they have accounted for nearly half of the most important issues in the eyes of voters since 1994. What is more difficult to assess, however, is what characteristics among voters most drive their responses to these issues. Alejandro Moreno's efforts to shed fresh light on issue-oriented responses and their

<sup>77</sup> For insights from the US 2008 presidential race, see Aaron Smith, 'The Internet's Role in Campaign 2008', Pew Internet and American Life Project, April 2009; and on the state level, Paul S. Herrnson, Atiya Kai Stokes-Brown and Matthew Hindman, 'Campaign Politics and the Digital Divide: Constituency Characteristics, Strategic Considerations, and Candidate Internet Use in State Legislative Elections', *Political Research Quarterly*, 6: 1 (2007), pp. 31–42.



consequences demonstrate just how significant policy perceptions can become when there is a personal experience associated with economic or security issues. His conclusions are supported by the extensive surveys from the Latin American Public Opinion Project of Vanderbilt University, which reveal that statistically the most telling impact on citizens' political attitudes regarding their willingness to dispense with democratic political models and embark on authoritarian or militarily dominated regimes is related to personal experiences with corruption and crime.<sup>78</sup>

An analysis of traditional demographic variables in Mexican presidential elections reveals that traditional demographic variables remain significant, if not consistently so, from one election to the other. Specific demographic variables such as education, income and age are likely to become more influential in determining the outcomes of presidential races as increasing numbers of Mexicans adopt behaviours found in other, more economically advanced democracies, including the widespread use of internet technologies and social media. Given the legal setting of Mexican presidential elections, characterized by strict controls over tone and language on the campaign trail but no controls over individual internet users, and the truncated campaign calendar, social media have become a new, influential variable in the campaign that operates effectively within condensed time parameters. Their increasing use will enhance the importance of specific, traditional demographic variables, including age, education, income and urban residence. Not only have social media become a powerful tool among presidential candidates who wish to reach a large percentage of voters on a daily basis, but they have also created a newly important political actor in the campaign process, the voters, who are becoming equally adept at campaigning and therefore influencing each other.

### *Spanish and Portuguese abstracts*

*Spanish abstract.* La elección presidencial de 2012 en México es importante por muchas razones, en particular por el retorno del Partido Revolucionario Institucional al poder después de dos administraciones del Partido Acción Nacional. Este ensayo revisa más de 50 encuestas hechas antes y durante las elecciones para determinar qué patrones significativos existen entre los votantes mexicanos. Aquí se comparan, junto a las dos elecciones pasadas, variables demográficas tradicionales y no tradicionales que ejercieron mayor influencia, así como otras como simpatías partidarias y asuntos políticos durante las votaciones. También analiza otras variables significativas en las elecciones de 2012 como las redes sociales y la aplicación de una nueva legislación electoral. Identifica diferencias y similitudes significativas entre los votantes de hoy con los de las dos elecciones pasadas, y sugiere patrones de largo plazo entre los votantes

<sup>78</sup> See Brandon Bell, 'When Do High Levels of Corruption Justify a Military Coup?'; and Cornelia Buchanan et. al., 'Mano Dura in the Americas: Who Supports Iron Fist Rule?', *AmericasBarometer Insights* 2012, 80 (2012).

que pudieran influir en el comportamiento electoral en futuras elecciones que van 913  
desde regionalismo y género hasta las simpatías partidarias y redes sociales. 914

*Spanish keywords:* democracia, elecciones presidenciales, votantes, PRI, México 915

*Portuguese abstract.* A eleição de 2012 no México é significativa por diversas razões, 916  
dentre quais se destaca o fato de ter retornado ao poder o Partido Revolucionário 917  
Institucional após duas administrações do Partido Acción Nacional. Este ensaio revisa 918  
mais de 50 pesquisas eleitorais feitas antes e durante as eleições para determinar 919  
padrões significativos entre eleitores mexicanos. Compara esta eleição com as duas 920  
disputas anteriores, analisando as variáveis demográficas (tradicionais e não- 921  
tradicionais) mais influentes, assim como outras variáveis, como o partidarismo e 922  
propostas políticas. Também analisa outras variáveis influentes na disputa presidencial 923  
de 2012, incluindo as mídias sociais e a aplicação de nova legislação eleitoral. São 924  
identificadas diferenças e semelhanças significativas entre eleitores hoje em contraste 925  
com as duas eleições anteriores e sugere-se padrões de longo prazo dentre eleitores 926  
mexicanos que deverão influenciar o comportamento eleitoral em eleições futuras, 927  
desde o regionalismo e o gênero, até o partidarismo e as mídias sociais. 928

*Portuguese keywords:* democracia, eleição presidencial, eleitores, PRI, México 929