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Democratic Integrity: Mexico 2024

MEDIA AND ELECTIONS



Summary

**"Today, it can be said that there is no mass politics (i.e. modern politics) without mass media. But it can also be said that there is no mass communication without politics."
Raúl Trejo Delarbre, *Mediocracia sin mediaciones* (Media-crazy without mediation)**

There can be no politics without communication, and no democratic elections without the media. It is essential for competing parties and candidates to have access to the media so that citizens can learn about the political options and cast an informed vote.

This edition of "Democratic Integrity: Mexico 2024" discusses how Mexican law regulates the access of political actors to radio and television airtime, as well as the obligations of publicly-concessioned media outlets during electoral processes.

In the case of Mexico, the Constitution provides political parties and candidates with access to broadcast radio and television, under a certain set of conditions. Electoral law establishes a legal framework that respects the freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and the editorial freedom of radio and television outlets. At the same time, this oversight promotes fairness in coverage of different political options.

Of particular significance is the system through which Mexican political parties and candidates access radio and television through so-called "state time." Unlike in other countries, such as the United States, political communication is officially regulated and advertising time cannot be sold. Rather, allocations of airtime are administered by the INE during election season and the purchase of campaign advertising on radio and television, even by third parties, is prohibited. This newsletter examines how that airtime is distributed.

The newsletter's "Last Glance" section reports results from the National Electoral Institute (INE) monitoring of radio and television coverage of the federal presidential pre-campaign from November 20 to January 7.

Media and Elections

The Ban on Buying Political Advertising

The ban on buying political advertising in Mexico was introduced in 2007. Until then, parties and candidates had access to radio and television airtime provided by the electoral authority, but they could also purchase additional advertising to promote their campaigns.

Two main factors drove a reform to this system. First, radio and television expenses were the main costs of election campaigns, and represented substantial expenditures.

Second, radio and television outlets charged different rates to political parties, meaning private agents had an impact on the fairness of political competition.

48 minutes per day on each radio and television station for political parties and election authorities.



	Pre-campaign November 20 - January 18	Intercampaign January 19 - February 29	Campaign March 1 - May 28
Political parties	18 minutes	24 minutes	41 minutes
Electoral authorities	30 minutes	24 minutes	7 minutes
 Total spots	21,363,840	14,954,688	32,106,240

In addition, there are an estimated 1,424,256 spots during the three days before election day (“reflection period”) and on election day:

more than 69 million spots to be broadcast during the electoral process

48 Daily Minutes on Radio and Television

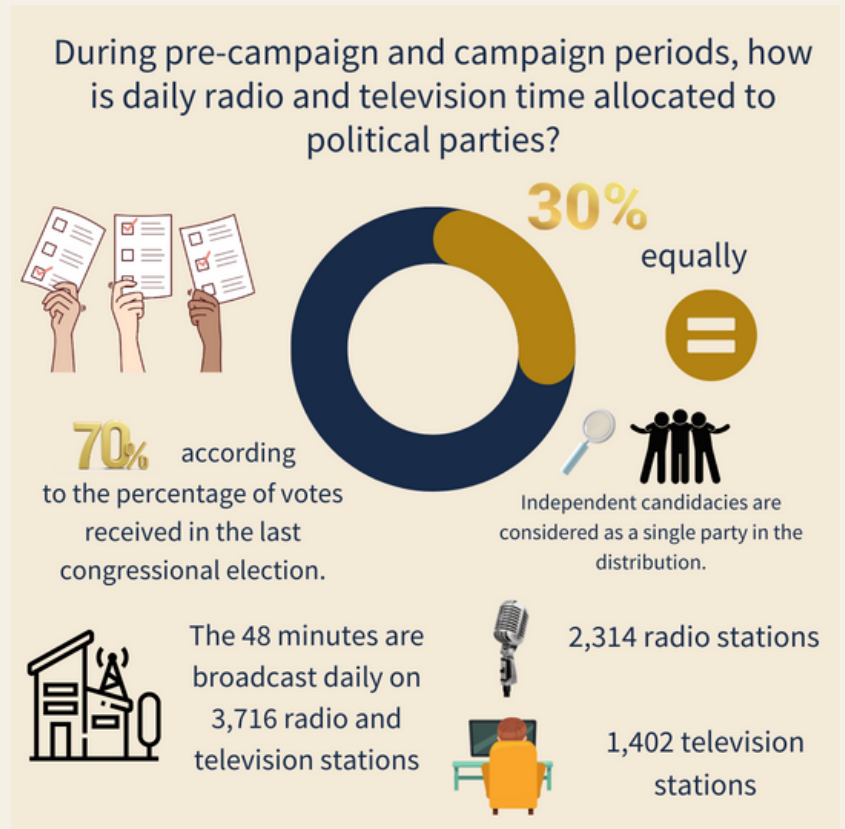
In Mexico, the state has 48 minutes per day on each radio and television station to broadcast public interest messages. When elections are held, these 48 minutes are managed exclusively by the INE, from the beginning of the pre-election campaign until election day. Thus, the INE determines the schedule for the broadcast of campaign advertisements and their distribution to all radio and television media outlets.

This constitutional provision allows parties access to airtime on all public television and radio stations. Moreover, this access is provided at no cost to the parties and candidates. However, to ensure fairness, Mexican law also prohibits third parties from buying media advertising for or against any political party or candidacy.

How those 48 minutes of airtime are distributed changes during the different phases of the electoral process. During the pre-campaign period, which began on November 20, 2023 and ended on January 18, 2024, the parties were granted 18 minutes and the electoral authorities 30 minutes per day.

After the end of the pre-campaign and until the start of the campaign period, the parties are assigned half the time and the electoral authorities the other half (24 minutes for the parties and 24 minutes for the electoral authorities). During the campaign, which in 2024 will run from March 1 to May 28, the parties will have 41 minutes and the electoral authorities will have 7 minutes.

Radio and television airtime allocated to the electoral authorities is used to promote citizen participation in the elections.



There are certain guidelines for how parties may use their advertising time. On October 26, the INE General Council unanimously approved an increase from 40 to 50 percent of the public radio and television airtime that the political parties must dedicate to their female candidates, "to avoid a discriminatory practice that creates a disadvantage by giving them a lower positioning during the campaigns, as well as limiting the possibility of women candidates winning in electoral contests."

Responsibilities of Radio and Television Outlets

The 48 minutes of daily official time administered by the INE must be broadcast in 2 to 3-minute segments between 6 a.m. and midnight each day.

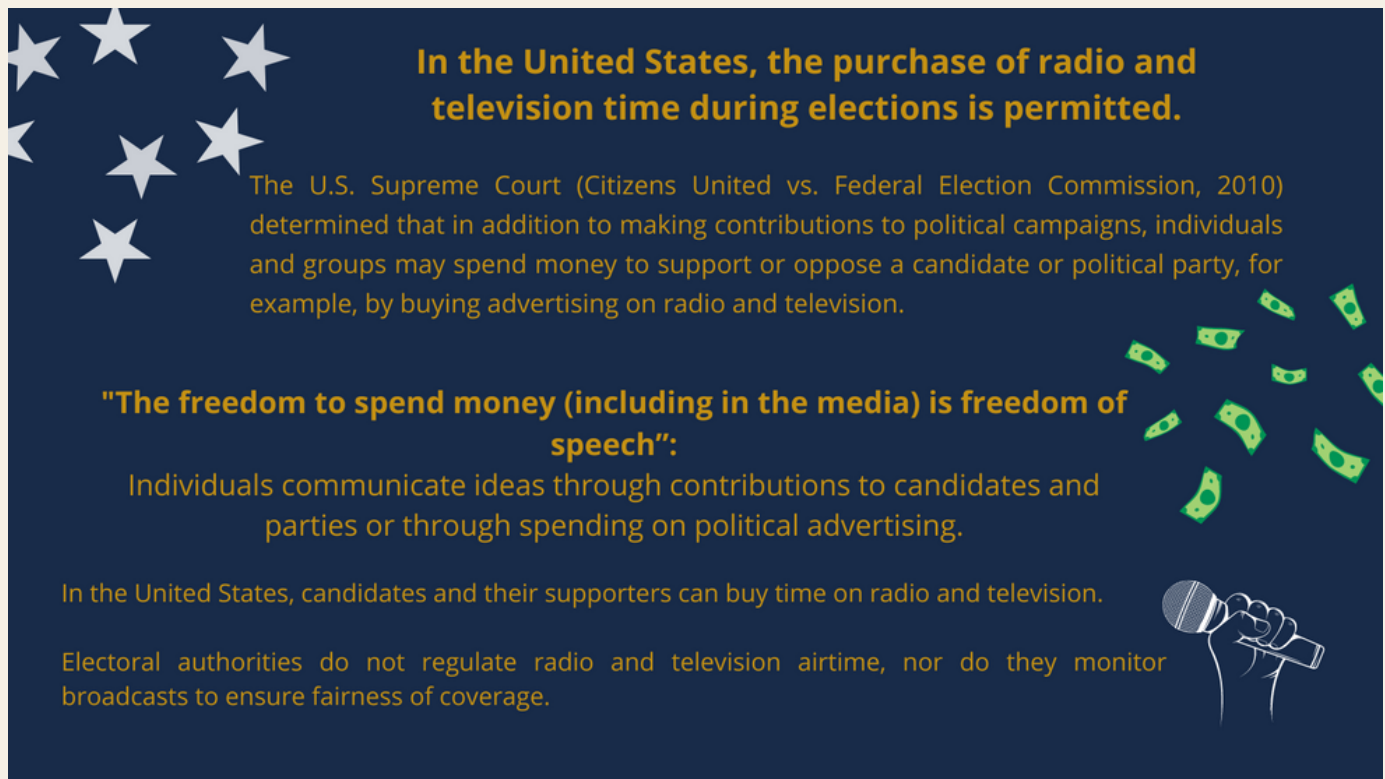
Radio and television outlets cannot fail to broadcast the messages of parties and authorities alike that are provided by the INE, nor can they broadcast more messages than those determined by the electoral authority, since this would favor one or more parties. Radio and television concessionaires, as legal entities, cannot make financial or material contributions to any party or candidacy.

1. INE increases funding and access to radio and television time for women candidates to 50 percent. Central Electoral. Press Release No. 403. See at: <https://centralelectoral.ine.mx/2023/10/26/aumenta-ine-a-50-por-ciento-financiamiento-y-acceso-a-tiempos-en-radio-y-television-para-mujeres-candidatas/>

In order to verify timely compliance with the broadcasting of messages by the parties and the electoral authorities, the INE electronically monitors radio and television signals throughout Mexico through its Executive Directorate of Prerogatives and Political Parties, and 143 offices throughout the country.

INE captures radio and television signals, records them, determines whether the spots broadcast comply with the guidelines, stores the information, and issues periodic reports on its findings. Radio and television concessionaires may be sanctioned if they do not comply with their legal obligation to broadcast without interference during public time. The Constitution even provides for the possible annulment of an election as a sanction for the purchase or acquisition of news coverage or radio and television time outside that which is allotted by law.

In addition to the ban on the purchase of political advertising, the Mexican Constitution also requires that government advertising be suspended during the pre-campaign and campaign periods and until the end of election day. The law also prohibits the use of public resources for self-promotion by public officials, as well as the use of government campaigns to influence the vote.



In the United States, the purchase of radio and television time during elections is permitted.




The U.S. Supreme Court (*Citizens United vs. Federal Election Commission*, 2010) determined that in addition to making contributions to political campaigns, individuals and groups may spend money to support or oppose a candidate or political party, for example, by buying advertising on radio and television.

"The freedom to spend money (including in the media) is freedom of speech":

Individuals communicate ideas through contributions to candidates and parties or through spending on political advertising.

In the United States, candidates and their supporters can buy time on radio and television.









Electoral authorities do not regulate radio and television airtime, nor do they monitor broadcasts to ensure fairness of coverage.



Political Party Airtime in 2024

Media access affects the conditions of electoral competition. In Mexico, the electoral law seeks to ensure equality among the different political options, and therefore the distribution of radio and television airtime among the political parties is based on the same criteria as the distribution of public funds (see issue #7 of "Democratic Integrity: Mexico 2024"). As a result, 30 percent of the spots are allocated equally and 70 percent proportionally according the votes obtained by each party in the previous congressional election.

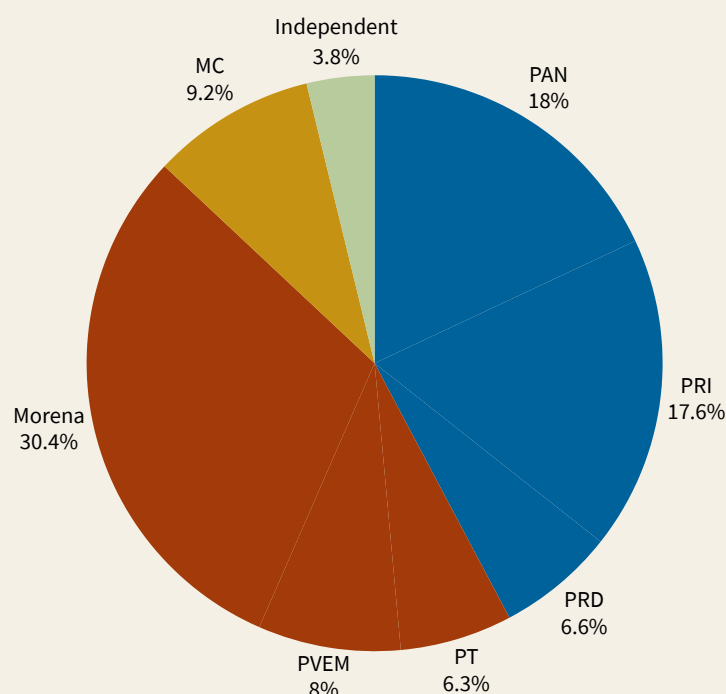
The following table shows the number of advertisements allocated per party on each radio and television channel during the March 1 to May 28 electoral campaign.

Political Party	30% Equal	Voting 2021	70% proportional	Total of spots	Percentage
 Partido Acción Nacional (PAN)	276	20.38%	1,052	1,328	18.0%
 Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)	276	19.85%	1,025	1,301	17.6%
 Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD)	276	4.09%	211	487	6.6%
 Partido del Trabajo (PT)	276	3.64%	187	463	6.3%
 Partido Verde Ecologista de México (PVEM)	276	6.09%	314	590	8.0%
 Movimiento Ciudadano (MC)	276	7.85%	405	681	9.2%
 Morena	276	38.10%	1,968	2,244	30.4%
 Independent Candidacies	276	0%	0	276	3.8%
Total	2,208	100%	5,162	7,378	100.0%

Source: compiled by the authors based on information from INE.

In the 2024 presidential elections in Mexico, two electoral coalitions will be competing for the presidency ("Sigamos Haciendo Historia" formed by Morena, Partido del Trabajo, and Partido Verde; and "Fuerza y Corazón por México" formed by Partido Acción Nacional, Partido Revolucionario Institucional, and Partido de la Revolución Democrática) and a single party, Movimiento Ciudadano.

Adding up the radio and television time allocated to each party, the members of the Sigamos Haciendo Historia coalition will have 44.7 percent of the total time, Fuerza y Corazón por México 42.3 percent, and Movimiento Ciudadano 9.2 percent.



32 Million Radio and TV Spots During Campaigns

The 48 daily minutes of airtime administered by the INE on each public television and radio station will be used through 30-second spots, totaling 96 campaign spots per day per outlet.

According to INE's National Catalogue of Radio and Television Stations, there are 2,314 radio stations and 1,402 public television channels in Mexico, for a total of 3,716 different broadcast signals.

Thus, the 2024 election will have a total of 356,736 spots broadcast during each day of the campaign, and over the 90 day campaigning period, a total of 32.1 million spots.

Radio and Television Spots During the 2024 Campaign				
	Daily Spots	Stations	Total Daily	Total 90-day campaign
Electoral Authorities	14	3,716	52,024	4,682,160
Political Parties	82		304,712	27,424,080
Total spots	96		356,736	32,106,240

Source: compiled by the authors based on information from INE.

Monitoring of Radio and Television Programs

Before Mexico had a competitive electoral system, media coverage was strongly biased in favor of the ruling party's candidates. In the 1988 elections, for example, the main television news programs devoted almost 92 percent of their time to covering the campaigns of the ruling party and only 8 percent to all opposition candidates.

As a result, a mechanism was devised to ensure more objective and balanced coverage of radio and television programs without interfering with the freedom of the press and the editorial freedom of the media and journalists.

Thus, electoral law provides that the INE will monitor radio and television news programs for coverage of pre-election and election campaigning. The results of this monitoring are regularly published on the INE website.

INE's monitoring exercise is not intended to censor the media or sanction journalists. Rather, it aims to promote public awareness of potential media biases and encourage citizens to demand balanced coverage.

Last Glance

Pre-Campaign Radio and Television Monitoring

For the presidential pre-campaign of the 2023-2024 federal election process, 73 programs were monitored and analyzed, distributed as follows: 59 news programs, 10 entertainment or magazine programs, and 4 debate, opinion, and analysis programs.

From November 20 to January 7, 2024, more than 4,200 hours of broadcasts were monitored, of which 321 hours were dedicated to the presidential pre-campaigns, producing 19,576 informative pieces, of which 14,649 were broadcast on radio and 4,003 on television.

Main Results:

Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, of the Sigamos Haciendo Historia (SHH) coalition, was the pre-candidate who received the most coverage on radio and television, with 131 hours (42 percent of the total). She was followed by Xóchitl Gálvez Ruiz of the Fuerza y Corazón por México (FCM) coalition, with 122 hours (37 percent). Pre-candidate Samuel Alejandro García Sepúlveda (now out of the race) of the Movimiento Ciudadano party had the least coverage, with 26 hours (21 percent) (see Figure 1).

INE analysis of the news pieces (9,131 in total) found that 7,943 (87 percent) were neutral. The remaining 1,188 news pieces found some positive or negative evaluation of political actors. The highest number of both positive and negative evaluations was for pre-candidate Xóchitl Gálvez (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Time and pieces of monitoring. Pre-campaign for the presidency.

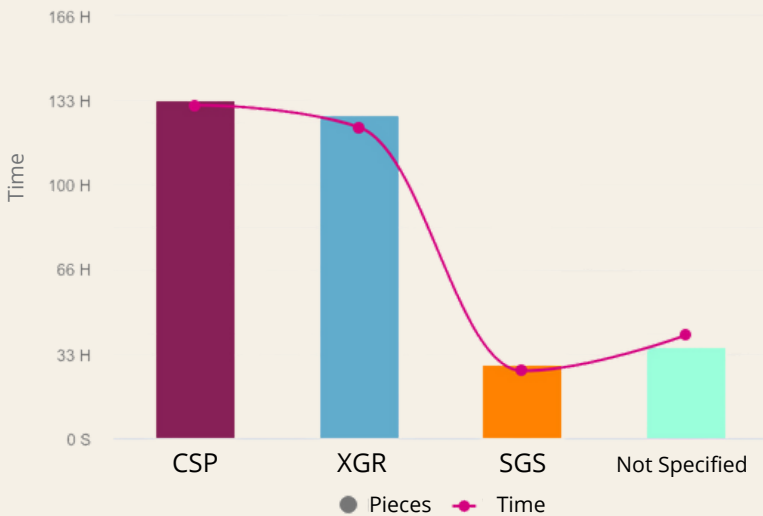
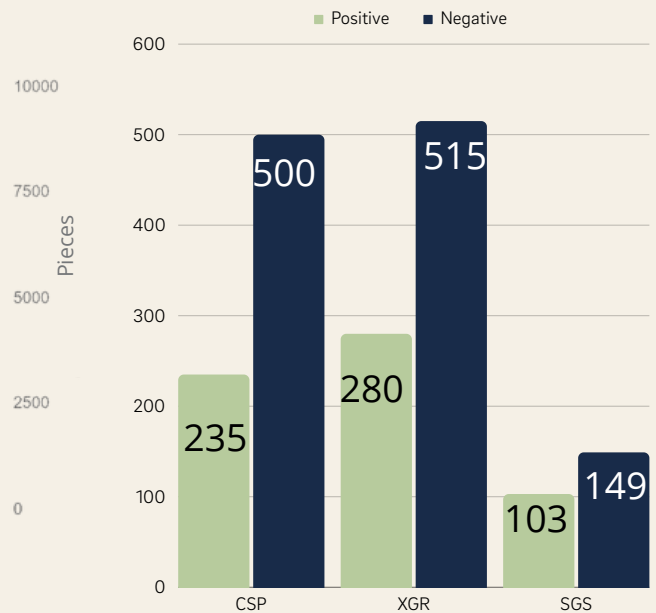


Figure 2. Evaluation of the informative pieces by pre-candidacy for the presidency (radio and television)



To learn more about INE's monitoring, consult the microsite at <https://monitoreo2024.ine.mx/inicio>.

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