

# [***Migration roils US elections. Mexico sees mass migration too, but its politicians rarely mention it***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BWT-VYV1-JC5B-G4GH-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

BRIGHTON, Colo. — Republican activists gathered in a school lunchroom last month to hear political pitches from candidates and agreed on [*the top issue in the Denver suburbs*](https://sentinelcolorado.com/metro/polarizing-conservatives-go-to-red-states-and-liberals-colorado-too/) these days: immigration.

The area has been disrupted by the arrival of largely [*Venezuelan*](https://apnews.com/hub/venezuela) migrants coming north through [*Mexico*](https://apnews.com/hub/mexico), they said. Virtually everyone in the meeting said they were uncomfortable with the new population, which has overwhelmed public services and become a flashpoint in [*local and national elections*](https://apnews.com/hub/elections).

“We’ve lived here our whole lives, and now we have to pay for hotels and debit cards and health care” for the migrants, through government spending, said Toni Starner, a marketing consultant. “My daughter’s 22 and she can’t even [*afford to buy a house*](https://apnews.com/article/aarp-older-adults-retirement-savings-prices-c4f1353d97e8c0a9973c9c67a8eab800).”

Some 1,200 miles to the south, migrants are also transforming the prosperous industrial city of Monterrey, Mexico. [*Haitian*](https://apnews.com/hub/haiti) migrants speak Creole on downtown streets and [*Central American*](https://apnews.com/hub/central-america) migrants ask motorists for help at intersections.

But the new arrivals aren’t even part of [*Mexico’s political conversation*](https://apnews.com/hub/mexico-government) as the country gears up for its [*presidential vote on June 2*](https://apnews.com/article/mexico-president-projects-rushing-mistakes-lopez-obrador-1d287dc9ebf4872ce7ef9e742a2bc232).

“If it were a problem, the politicians would already be mentioning it in their campaigns,” said Ingrid Morales, a 66-year-old retired academic who lives on Monterrey’s south side.

Every 12 years, the coincidence of presidential elections in the U.S. and Mexico provides a valuable comparative snapshot. The different ways migration is resonating in the two countries’ elections this year reflects the neighbors' very different styles of democracy.

Mexican ***politics*** are still dominated by institutional political parties, while Donald Trump disrupted the United States’ two-party system with his more populist approach, and moved anti-immigration sentiment to center stage in U.S. ***politics***.

Mexican ***politics*** also revolve more around “bread-and-butter” issues like the economy than in the wealthier United States, which is increasingly consumed with questions of national identity, said Andrew Selee, president of the Migration Policy Institute.

What’s more, just about every Mexican family has an immediate experience with migration, with many still having relatives living in other countries. While migrants must travel through Mexico to enter the U.S., they are more dispersed as they travel and have not generated similar scenes of an overwhelmed Mexican side of the border.

“In Mexico, there isn’t that same perception of chaos,” Selee said.

Trump is making that perception of chaos his campaign’s main theme as he tries to return to the White House. AP VoteCast, a survey of the national electorate, found immigration was a top issue among voters in the Republican presidential primary’s initial states. An AP-NORC poll conducted last month found that 58% of Americans say immigration is an extremely or very important issue for them personally.

In contrast, Mexico’s presidential frontrunner, Claudia Sheinbaum, didn’t even include a mention of immigration when she announced 100 campaign commitments last month. When she came to the state where Monterrey sits — Nuevo Leon — in February she talked about security and the water supply. Her main opponent, Xochitl Gálvez, visited the city last month and talked about her proposals to raise police salaries and combat gender violence.

But Monterrey, a three-hour drive from the Texas border, has increasingly become a critical waystation, even destination, for tens of thousands of migrants. Local authorities and international organizations have scrambled to find a place for the new arrivals.

Femsa, the owner of the ubiquitous convenience store chain Oxxo, has hired hundreds of migrants to work in its stores through a program with the United Nations refugee agency.

An annual survey of Nuevo Leon found last year that nearly nine in 10 residents noticed an increase in migrants and about seven in 10 felt that they should be provided work. It’s not as if Mexicans aren’t divided over the issue: Those surveyed in Nuevo Leon were split over whether Mexico should admit more migrants or stop the flow.

The lack of clear political advantage could explain why politicians have stayed away from talking about immigration, said Luis Mendoza Ovando, a political analyst and columnist with the main local newspaper, El Norte.

“Ultimately, society says if there are more migrants, give them work and everything is good,” he said.

Ricardo Cobián, 30, runs a beauty salon in downtown Monterrey. The next administration will have to deal with immigration but it is not a top priority for the nation, he said.

“The main issues for the candidates must be resolving security and ensuring economic stability,” said Cobián, adding that he has sympathy for migrants because he knows of his own relatives’ recent struggles to reach the United States.

Colorado became a stop on the migrant trail even more recently than Monterrey. In late 2022, Venezuelans crossing into Texas from Mexico found that it costs less to take a bus from the border city of El Paso to Denver than many of the United States’ better-known metropolises. And Denver — a liberal, fast-growing city — offered migrants food and shelter.

Now, Denver’s mayor, Mike Johnston, reports that his city of 710,000 has received nearly 40,000 migrants, what he calls the highest number of new migrants per capita of any city in the United States. The largely Venezuelan population is mainly confined to Denver but has started to trickle into surrounding suburbs like Brighton, often selling flowers or window-washes at streetcorners.

Unlike in Monterrey, where many migrants found jobs with established employers, paperwork hassles and federal regulations have prevented most migrants in Denver from receiving authorization to work. Irregular labor like yard work or housecleaning is their only way of making a living.

That’s led to a heavy burden on Denver’s coffers, and other cities in Colorado have watched in alarm. The two next largest after Denver, Aurora and Colorado Springs, both passed resolutions saying they don’t want large numbers of migrants sent to their cities.

The migrants in Denver say they feel increased pressure in the form of fewer city benefits and stepped up warnings from local police that they can't sell windshield washes, flowers or home-cooked food from streetcorners without a permit. The wary feelings towards them extend to the heavily Hispanic suburbs just north of Denver that comprise the state’s 8th congressional district, likely to be one of the most heated fights in this year’s battle for control of the House of Representatives.

State Rep. Gabe Evans, one of the Republicans competing for the party’s nomination against Democratic Rep. Yadira Caraveo, said that the district’s residents are fed up.

Evans’ grandfather immigrated from Mexico and earned his U.S. citizenship by serving in World War 2.

“The citizenship for the Chavez family was paid for in blood,” Evans said. “Then you have people crossing the border and just getting handed things.”

Cynthia Moreno, a Democrat, said her father came from Mexico legally in the 1920s. Though she has personal sympathy for the migrants’ plight, she’s aghast they’re allowed to stay.

“If I lived in Denver, I’d be pissed right now,” Moreno said, calling immigration “the nation’s top priority.”

Far from everyone in the area says it’s overwhelmed.

Alex Marvin lives in the 8th Congressional District but works in personnel for the city of Denver and watches buses drop off new arrivals outside his municipal office building. He thinks the federal government needs to compensate the city for the influx, but is proud the city is welcoming the new arrivals.

“We need to support people and help people the most we can,” said Marvin, a 35-year-old Democrat.

Rep. Caraveo was born in Colorado, but her parents were Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. illegally who obtained legal status under the 1986 immigration bill signed by then-President Ronald Reagan. Caraveo became a pediatrician and state legislator before running for Congress in 2022 and winning by only 1,600 votes.

That 1986 immigration bill was the last significant one passed by Congress, which has deadlocked for decades over whether to legalize additional generations of people living in the country illegally. In a sign of how the ***politics*** of immigration have shifted, that issue didn’t even come up in the bipartisan immigration bill that Trump killed earlier this year. Instead, the proposal focused on border enforcement.

The legislation never made it to the floor of the Republican-controlled House of Representatives. But Caraveo, who introduced her own package of immigration measures last month that included a proposal to legalize those brought to the country illegally as children, said she would have supported the bipartisan immigration bill anyway.

“The process is broken. We’re seeing the brokenness of it in front of our faces,” she said.

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Martínez reported from Monterrey, Mexico.

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